



One consistent thing I have learned about adoption is that there is nothing consistent in adoption. No matter how many stories you hear about, no two adoptions are the same. In each story, the adoptive parents will have encountered something that they did not expect along the way. It may be something concerning the legal paperwork, a medical concern with the Birthmother, or feelings that are experienced during the adoption process.

After we adopted our first child, I had assumed that I was an adoption expert. I was positive that I knew what to expect along every step of the process when we decided to adopt our second child. Why would it be any different? We were using the exact same agency and were open to similar Birthparent history. Our first adoption was quick and easy. We hit no major bumps along the way and assumed it was going to be the same again for this adoption. Little did we know that this second adoption was going to be a lot longer and harder than we ever expected.

Our Adoption Expectations

For our first adoption, we completed all the paperwork for our Homestudy in about a month. Our profile for the potential Birthparents to view was completed within days. We were selected by potential Birthparents only three weeks after it became active. We communicated with the potential Birthparents and they welcomed us into their

lives. Two months later, I was present when my son was born and witnessed his first breath of life. From us filling out the first piece of adoption paperwork to having our son in our arms it took five months.

Naturally we expected the same quick process with adoption number two. We moved our son, then almost 18 months, out of his crib and read him Big Brother books because we knew he was going to have a sibling very soon. We told everyone to be prepared that within a few months we would be a family of four. We got the baby gear out and the infant clothes washed because we knew the time before we got our baby would just fly by.

We filled out the adoption paperwork and prepared our Homestudy. Instead of being completed in a month like before, our Homestudy took closer to three months. This was because we now needed a FBI background check and the FBI didn't like the way our fingerprints were being taken by the local police department. After our third set of prints, we finally got the clearance we needed for our adoption file to become active with our agency.

We thought that would be the only problem we'd encounter and soon enough "The Call" that our profile was selected by potential Birthparents would be coming. For this adoption we were only open to a Hispanic baby. That was because our son was Hispanic and before we adopted him we agreed that the ethnicity of our first child would determine the ethnicity of the rest of our children. Since we only wanted a Hispanic baby, which is a minority, we were sure we'd be selected soon.

Wait?Wait?Wait?

The first month of waiting without "The Call" happening was surprising to us but acceptable. Eventually, the second, third and fourth month passed without any action. I would call our adoption agency each month on the anniversary of our profile being active (the 28th of the month) and casually ask what our "status" was.

There were a few active profiles ahead of ours but the waiting list for Hispanic wasn't getting any smaller. For some reason, it seemed like there weren't as many Birthmothers and especially not with Hispanic babies. This was not what we expected with an agency in Southern Texas. I have since learned that with domestic adoption there is usually an ebb and flow with the number of Birthmothers which no one can predict.

Decisions, Decisions

Soon we got calls to be prescreened for some cases. This only happened with our agency when there was something different with a potential case. They would call the couple, discuss the details and let the couple decide whether they want their profile to be viewed by the potential Birthparents. We had never had to do this before and I assumed it always would be an easy decision because we knew what we were capable of handling. However, when you are waiting for a baby and the possibility of a baby is presented to you it is so difficult to say no.

You have to remind yourself what decisions you made when you weren't emotionally involved in a case. You don't want to base the decision of whether your profile is to be shown to be determined by your emotions. But as soon as a case is presented to you, even if it's way outside your comfort zone, in your mind you have already named the baby and decorated their room.

You start to question the doctors on their opinions on medical issues such as bipolar disease or exposure to illegal substances. You may think, "Everything else about the case is perfect so maybe I can overlook that one thing." Being prescreened tore my heart apart each time and I was not prepared for it to be that difficult. When we agreed to adopt again, we were not ready to make such emotional decisions so often while waiting.

Was This Our Baby?

Nine months passed by before we received "The Call". By then we felt as if we had been waiting for years and I doubted that we were ever going to be selected. The potential Birthparents were excited to talk to us and the situation seemed great. We had two months to get to know them before their baby boy's due date. My husband, our two year-old son and I flew to spend a weekend with the potential Birthparents. It was a wonderful visit. Everything seemed to be back on track with our adoption plan. We finally were going to adopt our second child.

When it was close the baby's due date I carried our cell phone with me at all times and leapt out of my skin each time it rang. One day I was out on a playdate and the potential Birthmother called to tell me she was in labor. Something sounded different in her voice. She continued to tell me that they had decided to parent their baby. The pre-adoption counseling that I think every potential Birthparent should receive helped bring this couple together. They now knew they were strong enough to properly raise this baby boy. I calmly said I was happy for them, hung up and then collapsed to the floor crying my eyes out.

I knew there was always the risk of potential Birthparents deciding to parent but never gave it much thought. I didn't think it would happen to me. I was positive I'd notice the red flags if an adoption plan wasn't going to happen. Along this route of us adopting our second child, we never expected to feel the terrible emotional pain of having an adoption fall through. We weren't sure what to feel. We knew that baby was never ours but we felt as if the baby had been taken away from us. Our sadness was countered by the happiness that the baby was chosen to be loved and cared for by his parents who we had come to adore over the previous two months.

Time to Heal

To grieve our loss of a new baby, we knew we had to escape reality. On a whim, we immediately booked a week long vacation to a Mexican resort. Never would we

have thought we'd do something that spontaneous, especially when waiting to adopt. This is when we should have been saving money and sitting by the phone for 'The Call'. But we learned that we needed some 'us' time to appreciate the family we already had.

For almost two months after the failed adoption, I didn't want the phone to ring from our agency. I was really nervous about being matched with potential Birthparents because I thought I couldn't be nice to them. Earlier in the adoption process, my plan was to be open and accepting of any potential Birthparent but all I had in me now was anger. I was angry that I trusted someone and everything fell apart. Logically, I knew I had no right to be angry because the baby was never ours to begin with. But in my heart I had a lot of healing to do still. Never along this process did I imagine that I didn't want our profile to be selected.

Around 13 months into our adoption wait for our second child, I suddenly noticed that I was with peace about where I was at in the adoption process. I felt as if this was the route I was meant to take and that I could now open my heart to new potential Birthparents. To this day I still have no idea why this happened except to say that time must have healed me.

A Valentine's Day Surprise

Two weeks later on Valentine's Day morning, I was at a Doctor's appointment and my cell phone kept ringing. Rarely my phone rings so I was surprised my husband was calling me over and over. I excused myself from the exam room and called my husband. He informed me that our agency had called. A baby girl was born the day before and our profile was on the way to the Birthmother at the hospital. There was only one other profile to be shown and we were more what the Birthmother was looking for.

I was in shock. This is not the way I pictured all of this to happen. I was supposed

to have time to talk with the potential Birthparents before the birth. I was supposed to have time to wash clothes and prepare a nursery. I was supposed to have time to set up our dog sitters and have someone collect our mail and paper. I was supposed to have time. Never did I expect to have no time!

I drove home in a daze and immediately my husband and I were on the computer looking up airplane ticket prices. Two hours later we officially received "The Call" that we were selected to be parents to a day-old baby girl. Five hours later, my husband, my two and a half year-old son and I were on a plane to meet our newest family member. We also had arranged for my Mother to fly from her home city to be with us to help watch our son.

The chaos of getting us packed, setting up our house for us to be gone, cancelling appointments, and getting on those planes was absolutely something that I did not think would happen in adoption. This was more like the TV show, "The Amazing Race".

On Valentine's night we checked into our hotel and anxiously waited until the next morning to go the hospital. On the way to the hospital we stopped at Target to pick up gifts for the Birthmother and a few baby essentials. This is not how I planned to prepare for this special day.

Really? She's Ours?

When we arrived in the hospital's lobby at 10 AM we called our agency's social worker who was upstairs with the Birthmother. She immediately told us that parental relinquishment papers were signed and we now officially had a daughter. Due to the speed of all of this happening it did not really sink in with me that we were now a family of four. I was very calm and quiet as my husband and I headed up to the Birthmother's hospital room to meet our daughter.

I was still extremely calm as we walked in and saw our baby girl in a bassinet at the foot of the Birthmother's bed. We spoke with the Birthmother for only about ten minutes before she had to rest due to her medications. We followed a nurse when she came in to take the baby to the nursery. The nurses invited my husband and I into the nursery. Quickly the nurses cleared out a supply closet and brought in a rocking chair and the baby bassinet. They told us that area was now our special place to be with our daughter. We were so touched by the unexpected kindness they showed us.

When we were alone with our new baby in the supply closet my emotions finally came out. I suddenly realized that I had a daughter. It's official. I don't have to worry about the Birthmother deciding to parent. No more waiting. I'm bonding with my child in a supply closet. It was as if I had no idea how I ended up in this situation but I was so happy to be there. We made many phone calls from that supply closet to friends and family. Since we left so quickly the day before most people were shocked to hear there was a new family addition.

Officially a Family of Four

Two hours later, we signed our portion of the adoption paperwork and handed over the big adoption check to our agency's social worker in the hospital's cafeteria. My son was there along with my mother. My son and the cafeteria were loud and chaotic which seemed appropriate considering the craziness that led us to this adoption. I always thought the adoption paperwork should be done in an official location sitting across a big desk. Our paperwork was done over hospital food trying to avoid sticky toddler fingers from touching it.

Soon after lunch we got to leave the hospital with our new two-day old daughter in our arms. Once we reached our hotel we finally got to take a breath and appreciate how grand those past 24 hours had been. All of our waiting, stress, worry, anger, and sadness had brought us to this wonderful moment. We were meant to go

through those 13 months in order to adopt this beautiful little girl. No matter how much we thought we were prepared for her adoption, we would have been wrong.

Expect Adoption Inconsistencies

Adoption is a consistent process. You fill out paperwork, wait and eventually adopt your child. The inconsistencies are in the tiny (or not so tiny) details. No matter how many adoption stories you hear they are all different. I highly recommend for people who plan to adopt to read as many stories as possible. Go to speaker panels with adoptive parents even if they pursued a different kind of adoption than you are attempting. You'll never be fully prepared but you'll have a lot more confidence in the process by listening to other's stories.

Speaking as an Adoptive Parent who has adopted three times and has three very different adoption stories, I now will never consider myself an expert on adoption. Each story is so unique that no one can predict what troubles or joys a couple will face while adopting. But that uniqueness is what makes every adoption story so very special and magical.

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