



In the dating world, people have to make many choices. Who do I find attractive? How old can they be? Do they have to have a college degree? Must they like sports? Should they live in town? And the questions go on and on. People don't usually sit down and list out all their requirements but just "know" in their gut what their answers are. Their best friend may vehemently disagree with their answers but that can be just fine. You are the best judge for what you should look for in a relationship. Yes, there are dating matching programs but ultimately the person follows their instincts to decide whether or not to take the relationship further.

Those pursuing adoption also have to make a lot of choices based on many factors. These choices can be minor ones (like whether to fly or drive to pick up your child) or major ones (like whether or not to adopt from foster care). While you go through the process it will seem like everyone, including those not educated about adoption, will have opinions on your choices. It's difficult to explain that your decisions are ones you have educated yourself about, followed your instincts on and that you did not decide lightly.

### **You're Questioning What?**

When I chose adoption, I figured I'd have questions from people on *why* I was adopting. Never did I imagine that most of the questions would be about all of my choices along the way. When I chose domestic adoption, I heard "But there are so many orphans overseas." When I chose newborn adoption, I heard "But there are so many children in foster care." When I chose to use an agency, I heard "But why not a lawyer? It's so much cheaper." When I chose not to adopt a child with

special needs, I heard ?But if the child was born to you you'd parent them. So why is it any different??

Of course all of these questions bothered me and caught me off guard. I had to keep reminding myself that my husband and I made the best decisions for ourselves and our family. No one can completely understand our choices. All of my decisions felt right at the time and I have no regrets.

### **Choosing Someone Else's Footsteps**

After hearing someone tell you about their successful adoption, it's difficult not to want to make all the same choices they did. If it worked for them, then why shouldn't it work for you? If someone suggested you to do that for dating, you'd think they were crazy. Pretend you were looking for a husband and I told you all you had to do was make the choices I did. I looked for a college educated, self-employed man who lived in a big city. He had to have blue eyes, like movies and the NFL. If you don't make these exact same choices, then you'll forever be alone. Why would you choose anything different when I am the one who got married?

Unfortunately the choices that made somebody else happy, won't necessarily make you happy. You won't be successful in getting exactly what you want by simply following their lead. I've had people ask me what route I took to adopt. I'm always happy to lead them in the correct direction but I'm not going to look over their shoulder as they fill out their adoption application. I wouldn't say, ?I was open to children with hearing loss but not with blindness. You better mark that down or it will be a mistake.?

### **Have Confidence in Your Choices**

One question that arises during my Adoption Support meetings, is ?When do I tell people that I'm adopting?? Again, this is a personal decision but I do make a recommendation. Before you announce their decision, you should have confidence

in the decisions you have made thus far. So if someone says in a snotty voice, "Why are you only doing a semi-open and not a fully open adoption? What are you so scared about?" you could respond with "We've put thought into it and we'd rather see how close our relationship is with the potential birthparents before we tell them where we live." That response sounds much better than, "Oh, I just thought it was good to do because that's what my neighbor did." You may come across as unsure of your decision and therefore unsure about deciding to adopt.

People will say some frustrating things and question you often along the adoption process. Remember that you have put a lot more time in educating yourself on adoption than most of them have. You also have put more thought in the long term effects of your personal decisions. Try not to be offended or swayed by these people. Just because they would have made different decisions doesn't mean your decisions are wrong. Also remember that just because someone is an adoptive parent doesn't give them the right to make you question your choices. Of all people, they should know better.

How can you respond to these questioning remarks? "Thanks for sharing your opinion." "It's too late for us to change anything and we wouldn't even if we could." "We're happy with our choices thus far." "It's great you feel so strongly. Have you thought of adopting?" "I didn't give my two-cents when you created your family so please don't give me yours." "I can recommend some adoption websites or books if you want to learn more about why we made the choices we did."

### **Many Different Routes**

Just as I have seen my friends choose husbands who I could not imagine marrying, I see friends adopting in routes that I would never do. Does that mean that my friends' marriages are not strong and that the children who are adopted weren't meant to be in their new families? Absolutely not.

People should not judge one another or their decisions concerning adoption. The numerous choices along the way are very personal. If I was open to different

ethnicities of my future child but my friend is in her agency's Caucasian-only program, then I'm not going to question her. If a church-goer decides not to use a Christian adoption agency, then don't make them feel guilty. Your cousin is not selfish because she wants to adopt a newborn and not an older child from a poverty stricken country.

Big life changing events, like adoption, consist of many personal choices. Not everyone will understand them but have confidence that you are making the best ones for you and your future child.

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