

Seven suggestions for a successful transracial adoption

Advice and considerations shared by adoptive parents and child welfare professionals



When planning to adopt, many people say that the child's race or ethnicity does not matter.

Parents mean this in the best possible way. They mean that they could love a child unconditionally, regardless of whether they look like them or share their cultural heritage and traditions.

But race and culture do matter—especially to children who have already lost so much. Losing connections to their culture and racial heritage—or being raised in households where their importance is not acknowledged—can affect children throughout their lives.

Learning about and respecting a child's culture—and finding ways to maintain their connections to it—are critical components to helping an adopted child thrive.

Adoptive families and child welfare professionals provide the following advice on transracial adoption.

Talk with your family and friends

When you are deciding whether transracial adoption is right for you, talk with your family about what becoming a multiracial family will mean. How will they respond to the changes it brings? Are your extended family members enthusiastic about your decision and ready to support you and your child? Do you live in a community that values racial and cultural diversity and is likely to be accepting of the child you bring into your family?

Find mentors and role models for your child

Because you are their parent, your child will turn to you for guidance in many areas. But there may be questions related to their race and culture that you cannot answer and problems you simply cannot understand. Involving adults in your child's life who share their culture will give them valuable role models and allies.

Also, surround your child with positive images and stories of people from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, including their own.

Make new connections in your community

Adopting a child of a different race or culture is an opportunity to explore new resources and get involved with organizations in your community.

- Enroll your child in a diverse school.
- Join community groups dedicated to racial or social justice.
- Participate in a faith community that reflects your adopted child's heritage.
- Seek out cultural events, but be sure that your involvement does not end with attending an annual celebration.

Keep children talking!

Find opportunities to bring up topics of race and culture in everyday life. Do not wait for your child to introduce the topic. The news, popular media, music, art, and books all offer platforms for discussing race, culture, assumptions, and diversity.

Encouraging honest conversations will help create an environment where your child feels safe to explore their heritage.

Acknowledge racism

Part of adopting a child of another background can be helping them cope with and respond to racism. As a parent of a different race or culture from your child,

you may have to educate yourself before you can help your child navigate the complicated racial landscape of our country.

You can read more about understanding racism and find [five tips to help adoptive parents address racial trauma](#) in this blog post published by Psychology@Pepperdine University.

Embrace new traditions

In addition to celebrating your child's traditions and the traditions of their heritage, celebrate those of other cultures. Your child will learn to value and respect diversity and see that you value the positive contributions that people of all cultures make to society.

Consider adopting a sibling group

[Keeping siblings together](#) is always an important consideration and often a goal in adoption. In transracial adoptions, keeping siblings together can help to reduce any feelings of isolation or differentness the children may experience.

Looking for more information?

You can find [more advice and a comprehensive list of resources](#) for transracial and transcultural families at the Child Welfare Information Gateway website, including [Parenting in Racially and Culturally Diverse Adoptive Families](#), one of their fact sheets for families.

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