

A Book Review of Adopting Older Children: A Practical Guide to Adopting and Parenting children

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Abstract

Adopting Older Children is a guide to show families who are looking into adopting a child over the age of four how to go about it. Whether it is married families, single parents, African American, Caucasians, or gay/lesbian families this book illustrates different steps to not only go about the adoption process but also how to educate your friends and family about adoption, how to blend adopted and non-adopted children, what to do if your adopted child wants to know about their biological parents and how to get into contact with them. This book also explains the importance of knowing different cultures when you are adopting interracially. This book has three coauthors, Stephanie Bosco-Ruggiero, Gloria Russo-Wassell, and Victor Groza who have expertise in trauma, educational development psychology, and mental health, respectively. By reading this book you would get a better understanding of adoption and how it may benefit you personally.

Keywords: Book review, child welfare, social work

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Adopting Older Children is a guide to show families who are looking into adopting a child over the age of four how to go about it. Whether it is married families, single parents, African American, Caucasians, or gay/lesbian families this book illustrates different steps to not only go about the adoption process but also how to educate your friends and family about adoption, how to blend adopted and non-adopted children, what to do if your adopted child wants to know about their biological parents and how to get into contact with them. This book also explains the importance of knowing different cultures when you are adopting interracially. This book has three coauthors, Stephanie Bosco-Ruggiero, Gloria Russo-Wassell, and Victor Groza who have expertise in trauma, educational development psychology, and mental health, respectively. By reading this book you would get a better understanding of adoption and how it may benefit you personally.

Adopting Older Children is split into four sections. The first section of the book is the adoption process tailored to focus on the decision to adopt older children. Reasons to adopt an older child include infertility, affection for a specific child, and the belief that an older child may fit better into the parents' life. Older adoptive parents, single parents, kinship care/adoption, military parents, gay/lesbian, and adoptive parents of color may all adopt older children. There is a chapter about adopting children in the United States, and a chapter about intercountry adoption. Both chapters discuss the process, requirements, and costs of adoption, as well as, how the needs of children in the US differ from the needs of children who are adopted from another country. The last chapter in this section of the book is about post-adoption services that may benefit the new family.

The next section of *Adopting Older Children* is about adoptive families. First this section talks about welcoming the child home. Before the child is completely moved in with their new family, the agency arranges times for the child and the adoptive parents to meet so that they are able to get comfortable with one another. This chapter also discusses preventing adoption disruption, introducing the child to your relatives and family, and setting routines and expectations. A chapter addresses how to talk with your family and relatives about your new addition to the family, and how to educate your friends and family about older child adoption. Another chapter discusses multicultural and multiracial adoptive families and how important it is for the parents to increase their knowledge the child's different race/culture. Native child adoption and Native tribal communities receive special attention. Another chapter discusses siblings of the adopted child. Whether it be sibling placements in adoption, siblings in separate adoptive homes, a sibling in the role of the caregiver, or siblings through adoption, adoptive parents will want to consider the questions this chapter raises. The last chapter in this section of the book is navigating biological family relationships and understanding adoption. This chapter talks about how to talk to your adoptive child about their biological parents, especially if they are able to contact them. If the child is able to contact their biological parents, it is important to prepare the child for that experience to avoid emotional pain.

The third section of *Adopting Older Children* is understanding your child and the traumatic things that the child could have gone through. Traumatic experiences, may include abuse and neglect, maltreatment, bereavement, and natural or manmade disasters. A chapter provides examples of ways that these children may cope with

trauma, and how trauma may lead to the development of mental health disorders. There is a chapter that helps adoptive parents talk about grief and loss with their adopted children to strengthen the child's coping ability: a chapter about attachment and adoption that explains ways to comfort your child if they are scared or nervous- as well as how to bond with your child; and the chapter emerging sense of self that adopted children go through. In elementary school the child may struggle with rejection by peers, and during the teen years may struggle with a sense of isolation and lack of belonging. Two chapters talk about the physical and mental health of the child, and another discusses development and learning, especially the specific effects trauma may have on a child's cognitive, emotional and social development. The developmental age of the child may be different than the biological age of a child. If a child does not have a mother at a young age, he/she may not develop like children who do have a caring mother. The last chapter of the section suggests parenting methods to build the child's resilience and enhance behavioral functioning.

The last section of *Adopting Older Children* focuses on the strengths adoptive parents will need to develop when adopting an older child. Adoptive parents grow stronger together as they fight for resources, support, and assistance for their children. Two chapters address the importance of social support/ community and adoptive parent's self-care, factors that join together to sustain their new family. The last chapter deals with serious issues like trauma, loss, grief, abuse or neglect that will be hard not only on the child but the parent as well. The authors urge the adoptive parents to stay committed to the child and to be there for them in their time of need.

Adults who are looking into adoption will benefit from this book. It not only talks about the child's perspective but also the parent's. *Adopting Older Children* is a comprehensive guide to those who are thinking about adoption. The personal stories from parents who have adopted children either in the United States or internationally bring the book to life. I recommend it to social workers and social work students who are considering adoption work. It is filled with helpful tips that you will want to pass along to clients.

References

Ruggiero, S., Wassell, G., & Groza, V. (2014). *Adopting older children: A practical guide to adopting and parenting children over age four*. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press.

About the Author

McKenzie Peterson is a BSSW student at the University of South Dakota. She plans to get her degree in child welfare upon graduation.