

## **11 ways to prepare to adopt a child transracially so they are confident and well supported.**

This may seem a bit controversial but I will say, as a transracially adopted adult and an adopted parent, in an ideal world all children would be placed with at least one parent from a similar background. However, there is a disproportion of the small number of black and ethnic minority adopters and the significant number of Black and Ethnically Diverse children in need of families. This is true in the UK, US or in many other countries, so same race placements are not currently always possible.

Black children should have the same opportunity to live in a family, as other children. I have supported young people leaving residential or foster care for the first time and I have seen how adrift they can feel, going out into the world, often without a family to back them up.

If you are someone who is considering caring for a child and you do not share their cultural background, it is important to be mindful of the implications of caring for a black or ethnic minority child, trans-racially.

In my view Adoption Agencies struggle to sufficiently prepare adopters, explain the importance of bringing up children understanding black culture and their own identity. I have provided 11 key approaches which will reduce the search your trans-racially adopted child will have in learning about their own identity as young adults.

### **1. Access individual counselling or therapy to better understand the impact of your own parenting history.**

Parenting is a challenge. And can trigger us as adults in many unexpected ways. If it goes wrong it can be because as adopters we are unaware of how it impacts us and our thoughts, or what stories we tell ourselves. So get to know yourself better.

### **2. Find out ACCURATELY about your child's background**

To find out as much as you can about your child's background. Social workers do not always ask the correct questions, so it is critical while in touch with workers to find out exactly where the child's parents come from. And to push for more information if adopters are given vague answers. Afro-Caribbean tells the child nothing, so don't accept it.

When this is not possible, perhaps if the father's details are unknown at some point in the future a DNA search can be completed to tie heritage down to as much specifics as you can. This is helpful to do early on, as the child can learn about the specific countries, and cultures they hail from.

### **3. Learn about the child's culture**

Where they are known, adopters should learn about their culture, the country's history, food, traditions and ideally the birth language. From a very early age, learn with the child and make it fun. Children can feel reluctant to talk about the culture that can, in their eyes, set them apart. However if you can make it fun for the whole family, it will be less of a struggle.

It is important to normalise your experience so they don't feel it is a chore, or that they are negatively different from the people around them.

### **4. Be ready to be uncomfortable and challenged**

Both you as an adopter, the child, and everyone around you will have grown up experiencing *Unconscious Bias*. Unconscious bias, also known as implicit biases, are “inherent or learned stereotypes about people that everyone forms without realising it. Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about an individual, group or institution”.

As a result of these learnt biases you will need to work on your self-knowledge and understanding of racism, white privilege, and stereotyping. You will begin to see discrimination as it happens to your child in way you may never have seen before.

**5. Promote direct and indirect contact with birth family**

It is crucial in nurturing your child’s self-knowledge by promoting contact, indirect contact and where possible and safe, infrequent contact with birth parents, and/or family, while children will help them to fully understand who they are. However this has to be fully considered and agreed to facilitate contact safely.

**6. Recognise they (and you) are on a journey, requiring self-development**

As an adopter how the arrangement goes will be in large part down to how mindful, self-aware and open you are as a parent to learning about yourself and your emotional triggers, gaining knowledge and working on yourself.

**7. Surround your family with people and images who look like them.**

Surround them with images and people who reflect a variety of backgrounds. Research indicates that babies of only a few month’s old recognise the colour of the faces they see around them, so adopters can teach all their children from day one that black and brown people are familiar and safe. If they never see people looking like them, they may grow up to believe the media that black and brown people are unfamiliar and potentially intimidating.

**8. Broaden your family and friend networks**

It is important that you broaden family and friend networks to a range of people from different backgrounds, if the adopter does not yet have them. Given the strong negative messages that pervade across the media, society, criminal justice etc, the child is going to struggle to feel positive about their own identity if the only people they know about who share their background are their parents who for whatever reason could not care for them/keep them safe.

**9. Always consider the child’s long term identity**

Teenage years for any child is a period of search, refining their image, themselves and learning their self identity. They will need all the information available. It is crucial to collate and record all the information given to you for discussion with the child at an appropriate time.

**10. Do not lie or ‘sugar coat’ information**

It is often hard to discuss a child’s history with them, but it is important to NEVER lie or mislead a child. This will completely erode their trust in you when it comes to light, and it will. During your lifetime or even worse afterwards.

**11. Constantly research and learn**

It is important to develop a culture of learning, developing and exploring. Ideally to take the child (with the whole family) to cultural events, activities, carnivals, churches, mosques wherever they can immerse themselves in the child's birth culture.

And most importantly enjoy the time with your trans-racially adopted child.  
If you have found this useful perhaps you would like to learn more?

This guide is based on numerous conversations with adoptees, adopters and professionals, and I have collated an online course:

**ANTI-RACIST TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION; A PRACTICAL STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO PARENT A CONFIDENT BLACK CHILD.**

This course guides you to enable your child by learning, recognising, and celebrating their heritage with them.

If you want to find out more how you can help your child here is the link.

<https://www.communityohana.com/anti-racist-adoption>

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