



*Hi there.*

Maybe you never dreamed you'd find yourself here. This isn't what you planned for or imagined for yourself right now - raising a child, becoming a mother, or just being pregnant.

Here you are, and you've taken a big step by starting to weigh your options... parent, get married, have an abortion, place for adoption? We understand that the decisions you have to make can be overwhelming. As you've probably heard, it's important to know your options, educate yourself and take your time.

The purpose of BraveLove is to provide a place for you to explore adoption on your own time. Adoption is not easy – but it is a brave decision you can make for yourself and a loving decision for your child. It may not be the right choice for you, or it may be exactly what you're looking for.

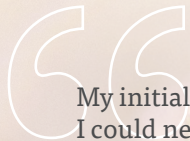
Our friend Hannah got pregnant when she was 16 and placed her daughter for adoption. Recently, we asked what she would say to other women in unplanned pregnancies. We'll pass along her advice: "Take a deep breath - you are going to be ok."

Sincerely, 

## ADOPTION TODAY

It's important to know the facts about all your options, including adoption, so you can make a well-informed decision. *Consider these facts...*

- A birth mother can pick the family to parent her child.
- Making an adoption plan is free for birth parents.
- Birth mothers can choose how open they want the relationship to be with their child and the adoptive family.
- Birth parents can choose to work with a licensed adoption agency or an independent adoption attorney or facilitator.
- A birth father's rights in adoption are the same as the birth mother's unless determined otherwise by the court.
- Some adoption agencies provide assistance with prenatal support, housing and other living and medical expenses.
- Agencies generally provide services before, during and after the adoption, such as counseling and even assistance on planning for the future.
- Most state laws require the final decision to place a child for adoption be made after the baby is born.
- Birth parents can stay a part of their child's life through pictures, letters, phone calls and even visits, if desired.
- Choosing adoption is not giving up.



My initial thoughts on adoption were absolutely not. I could never do that. In my mind, I thought that it meant I would have this child and give him to a stranger and never know anything about him or her. And that scared me.

It was not until my mom educated me on how adoption had changed that it made me realize that I do have more options, I can get to know this child, and I can choose his family. That ultimately was why I chose adoption."

**Janice**

BIRTH MOTHER / TEXAN / WIFE / ADOPTEE /  
SHARES A LOVE FOR WOODWORKING AND MUSIC WITH HER SON

## **TYPES OF** **ADOPTION** *Open, Semi-Open and Closed*

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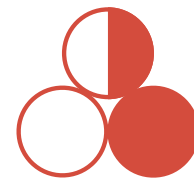
What's empowering about adoption today is that birth parents can *choose* the family to raise their child.

Also, birth parents get to decide how open or closed they want the relationship to be with the adoptive family. Then the adoption agencies help place them with a family that is willing to agree to the birth parents' terms and act as a liaison between adoptive family and birth family.

These days open and semi-open adoptions are becoming more and more common. **A closed adoption means there's no contact or identifying information shared** between birth parents and adoptive parents.

The difference in terms varies between open and semi-open, but usually **there's more direct contact and communication with open adoptions.**

With semi-open, there's a liaison from the adoption agency that helps facilitate communications and openness agreements.



**100%**

**OF BIRTH MOTHERS** have the right to choose the amount of openness in the relationship with their child and the adoptive family.

# WHAT TO *Expect*

## A GATHER INFORMATION

The more you understand your options and talk to those you trust, the more confident you will feel about making the best choice for you. (See the questions listed a few pages back.)

## B CONTACT A LICENSED ADOPTION AGENCY OR ATTORNEY

Your phone call does not mean you've decided on adoption. But it helps to talk to someone who cares and can also provide you with factual information to better understand the different aspects – legal, social and emotional – of the process.

## C CHOOSE AN ADOPTION AGENCY OR ADOPTION ATTORNEY/FACILITATOR

### ADOPTION AGENCY:

Look for a licensed agency that cares about you and not just the adoption. Find an agency that will help you craft a personalized plan and provide lifelong services to you, your child, and the adoptive parents. For your emotional support, the agency should provide services and resources with a warm and personal approach.

### ADOPTION ATTORNEY OR FACILITATOR:

If you choose to work with an attorney, be sure that he/she has experience with adoption, is licensed to practice law in your state, and is in good standing with the State Bar Association. Be sure to ask what services and fees are included (if any).

## D DEVELOP A PERSONALIZED ADOPTION PLAN

This happens with the help of a caseworker from an adoption agency. He/She will help you navigate some of the following decisions:

- Living arrangements
- Choosing a family
- Birth father's role
- Legal terminology and paperwork
- Delivery planning and hospital stay
- Openness agreement with adoptive family, if desired
- Post-placement support

## E SIGN LEGAL PAPERS TO RELINQUISH PARENTAL RIGHTS

This can arguably be the hardest part of the process because it's when you make your official decision to terminate your rights as the parent(s) and place your child for adoption. Until the final papers are signed, you have parental rights to make decisions regarding your child. Ask your agency or attorney about the time frame between birth and signing the papers because it varies by state.

## F SUPPORT AND NEXT STEPS

Here are some other services you deserve from your agency or attorney after the adoption has been finalized:

- Counseling and support resources
- Facilitation of continued contact with the adoptive family
- Assistance and encouragement to develop goals, plans and next steps for you

## QUESTIONS TO *Ask*

- 1 If you knew that you could tell your child your reasons for choosing adoption, do you think that would make your decision easier?
- 2 If you knew that all of the adoptive parents you had to choose from had first been required to go through an extensive process before being approved to adopt a child, would that help you feel more certain about your child's safety and security?

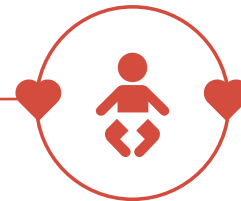
- 3 If you were able to receive counseling and emotional support both during and after your pregnancy, would that help you deal with making an adoption plan?
- 4 If you could talk to someone who was in the process of placing a child for adoption or who had already placed her child for adoption, would that help answer some of your personal questions?

- 5 Do you think that your chances of accomplishing your personal goals would be greater if you were not a parent at this time in your life?

- 6 What do you imagine the long-term effects of adoption to be?



**99%**  
of adopted children  
(ages 5 and older)  
know that they  
were adopted.



**90%**  
of United States  
infant adoptions are  
**open** or **semi-open**.

- 7 If you could choose the parents to adopt your child, would that make you feel more comfortable with adoption?
- 8 Do you feel like your baby would have a better life if he/she were raised by a family who could offer him/her more than you can right now?





Of two things I am certain,  
1: that my daughter loves me and  
2: that I made the right choice.  
I am a birth father and 15 years ago I chose  
to place my daughter in open adoption.”

***Rick***

BIRTH FATHER / GEOLOGIST / HUSBAND /  
ADORES HIS TWO BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS

Want to  
*Talk to  
someone*  
about your questions?

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Visit **BRAVELOVE.ORG** for a list  
of trusted adoption agencies.

The caseworkers at each of the agencies  
listed on BraveLove.org are professionals  
who are happy to answer your questions,  
regardless of what you decide to do.



*Want to know what others who have placed a child for adoption have to say?*  
Visit **BraveLove.org** to explore adoption from the perspective of real people and their real life adoption stories.