



The Balancing Act

Work/Life balance tips

New Adoption? Adoption Considerations

You're thinking about expanding your family through adoption. But before you end up with a whole new set of rule-enforcing, potty-training and baby-rocking duties, there are a lot of vital questions to answer. Will a new addition fit in with your family? Where will you adopt from? Are you interested in welcoming a boy or girl? With so many children waiting to be adopted in Canada and abroad, your decision will not only bring you joy, but significantly impact the life of a child in need of a loving family. Help make the right choices for you and your family by considering the following issues.

Fitting in. Think about your family structure. If you have biological children, their temperament, acceptance and enthusiasm should be considered. To become a true family, you'll all need to accept any challenges that come with adopting a child. A temper-tantrum-throwing toddler may not be the best fit when you have older children. Or maybe you'll need to cancel nights out on the party circuit. For single parents, honestly assess whether you'll have the time, resources and support needed to adopt a child. All children—biological or not—trigger lifestyle changes. When you pick an adoption agency, they'll help you try to find a suitable fit. Any new addition, however, will always bring an amount of uncertainty the entire family needs to prepare for.

The emotional roller coaster. You need to be ready for some challenging times as an adoptive parent and family. Deciding when and how to tell kids they're adopted and questions about their birth family will eventually come up. Uncertainty about their background and health may concern you at times. While grief and loss over children's birth families can come into play, there'll be the first moments of trust, security and unconditional love every child and parent feels that make it all worthwhile. Just remember, thousands of adoptive families successfully deal with these challenges.

Your support network. Do you have a support network in place? Family and friends who offer assistance in nurturing and caring for your child, while also lending you emotional support can be a great asset. Also, many adopted children will have emotional, physical or mental difficulties. Decide if you're prepared and willing to take on a child with special needs. Whether it's a learning disability or a serious health problem, your child will need dedicated care and help.

Who will it be? Will you adopt a child from a different culture? Are you going to try using the domestic or international system? There's a cluster of questions to

answer when it comes to adoption, but it's most important to agree as a family. You may be able to adopt faster if you have more general preferences. If you take on children from another race, you'll need to think about how you can help connect them to their heritage. The home study and application process prior to adoption will help you take into account all these important factors.

Your finances. Adopting a child domestically may cost tens of thousands of dollars, and internationally even more. And private adoption is usually much more costly than the public system. Then add clothes, food, books, toys, outings and vacations. You also need to consider any additional educational or specialized costs if you've adopted a child who has special needs. Some families can receive adoption subsidies or tax credits to help, but the availability is different in each province and is usually decided on a case-by-case basis. Be sure to review your financial situation before you enter into the adoption process.

The birth parents. Closed or open adoption is an important consideration as your child will one day grow up and ask about his or her past. In some cases, safety issues with birth parents may be a concern. There are pros and cons to both types of adoption. Your decision may be based on your current family situation, comfort between the birth and adoptive parents and the amount of effort you're willing to commit to managing these relationships. If you decide on an open adoption, be straightforward with your expectations and be sure to practice good communication with the birth parents.

The decision to adopt is different for everyone. Your family, lifestyle and motivations will be very personal factors in your adoption choices. Regardless, every prospective adoptive parent and family needs to consider the history of the child they want to adopt, what adoption route they'll take and if they're truly prepared to care for and love an adopted child. Research the process and related issues, then sit down as a family and decide together if adoption is right for you.

Need more help making adoption decisions? Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help. You can receive support through a variety of resources. Call your EAP to see if you are eligible at 1.800.387.4765 for service in English, 1.800.361.5676 for service in French.

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