

Why Grandma Can't Pick Up the Baby



Newly adopted children often arrive into our families stressed by the transition and confused as to what family is and what's special about parents. It's a two-way thing—we also need time to learn our new children! We need also to have courage and knowledge to tell people in our circle of friends and family what we know to be best for this, our child. Here are some tried and tested bonding tips. If friends and family protest, print this sheet and give it to them.

- New experiences are hard to cope with during stressful times so minimize the stimulation your child receives in the early days post-placement. Save the welcome party for later!
- Control the contact your new child has with others until your child understands that family is special; this is especially important if your child is actively seeking to engage others as opposed to you. In the early days and months even Grandma may have to wait to cuddle!
- If you will use caregivers other than yourself from early on, bring them into your bonding circle, but try to ensure that the care givers defer to you on how to feed the child, how much excitement you think is appropriate, etc.
- Keep your child in close proximity to you—carry them if you can. Slings are useful even for older toddlers and pre-schoolers. Your child will begin to recognize your special feel and smell!
- Do not ignore your child's cries to avoid 'spoiling' them or to teach them 'to go to sleep'; this will be detrimental to their developing trust of you.
- Arrange for physical closeness so that you are within arms reach and line of sight of your child at night.
- Avoid hard baby carriers, baby seats, high chairs and strollers which put distance between you and your child. Slings and front-facing strollers allow eye-contact.
- Provide the experience of nurture through food via bottle feeding/feeding games. Hold your child on your lap at mealtimes.
- Provide lots of touch and skin-to-skin contact via massage, swimming together or co-bathing.
- Be persistent but not invasive when nurturing your child. Your child may take some months or more to become comfortable with your caregiving. Becoming familiar rather than strange takes time, but the bond forged will last a lifetime.

Some families use visual aids to help their children understand the 'circle of love'. Draw your child at the heart of concentric circles with those on the outside furthest from your close family relationship, where kisses and cuddles are permitted. Think up your version of this! Display it on the fridge – and live it for real. Show it to doubting friends and family. They – like your child – will get it!

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