

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD



TEENS SPEAK OUT ON ADOPTION



The Center for Child & Family Studies
College of Social Work
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
Phone: (803) 777-1378
Fax: (803) 777-1366
www.sc.edu/coaw/center

To Be or Not To Be . . . Adopted, That Is

As a teen in foster care, you probably have mixed emotions about adoption. On one hand, it might be nice to be part of a family and not have to worry about being moved around

again. On the other hand, why bother? You tried the family thing once, and look where it got you. You know how to take care of yourself just fine already, and in a

couple of years, you'll be 18 and won't have to answer to anyone. Besides, who would want to adopt a teenager anyway? It's better not to

even think about what it would be like to be adopted because it'll never happen.

I have more freedom, as in I feel more like a human being and not like I am someone's property. Before I was adopted, I was the property of the state, and when you are a property, you can only do so much. Just being adopted feels better.

- J.B., adopted at 14

I have a mother and a father who love me. I have a family. And no matter what, when I grow up and I move out into my own house, I [will] always have a mother to come back to. When I have kids, they will actually have a grandmother.

- Q.M., adopted at 14

If you've struggled with whether or not to give adoption a try, you're not alone. In a recent study on adoption conducted by the University of South Carolina's Center for

Child and Family Studies, 37

adoptees from around the country—all adopted as teens after spending years in foster care—talked about their adoption experiences. During the interviews, adoptees described

their own struggles with the decision to

I probably would have been a hoodlum or causing a lot of trouble if I didn't come to this choice in my life to be adopted.

- A.H., adopted at 12

be adopted and whether or not it was worth it. In this brochure, they share their thoughts on the best and worst parts of being adopted and offer advice to other teens considering adoption.

This report was made possible by grant #90 C0 0891 from the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services. The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not represent the official views or policies of the funding agency. Publication does not in any way constitute endorsement by the Department of Health and Human Services.

On being adopted as a teenager:
I would recommend it! You are never too old. - S.M., adopted at 14

If you get a chance, it's the greatest thing in the world. . . No matter how old you are, you still need love and you need to give love. You need someone to see on the holidays, and you need grandparents. You need a family and the support they give.

— C.B., adopted at 14

You don't want to be a part of the system until you are 18 because you will have no one . . . It is never too late for a teenager to be adopted.

— G.S., adopted at 13

...Seize the opportunity with both hands... You will have a stable family and someone to fall back on. You will have someone to help you, and you [will] have a last name to call your own. You can be happier knowing that this is [your] mom and [your] dad and not worrying about where you are going to be in a week or a month.

— S.S., adopted at 16

It is better to have a true home—
one place to stay.

— B.H., adopted at 13

Being a teenager is a very crucial point in your life because you need a good foundation for schooling or a good job. If you have the opportunity to have a support system, you should grab it!

— A.C., adopted at 12

THE BEST AND WORST PARTS OF ADOPTION

BEST: The best parts are having a permanent home and having a nice family and people that care.

WORST: The bad part is being treated like a normal child, and you get all the consequences.

— R.E., adopted at 15

BEST: The best part is having a family.

WORST: I can't think of any worst parts.

— J.F., adopted at 11

BEST: The best part is that I have a family now. I have people that love me...My life is structured, and I live in a house. We have a car, a phone, animals, and a life. I don't have to worry about being abused and having to move around...My mom really does care and wants to know where I am and what I am doing.

WORST: The only bad part is leaving your biological family, but I am fine with it now.

— S.H., adopted at 15

BEST: The best part is having a family there when you come home.

WORST: The worst part is not having all of my brothers and sisters living together.

— S.M., adopted at 14

BEST: It is nice to have a family because you are always together, and you do things together. We go out to eat and to the mall and things like that. We actually get treated like we are their kids.

WORST: There are no worst parts.

— A.M., adopted at 16

BEST: Living with someone that wants to take care of you and not being afraid of someone not being there or being able to provide for you was one of the best parts.

WORST: The down side was the huge change in environment and people and knowing that there would be problems, but they eventually do work out.

— M.F., adopted at 12

BEST: The best parts are that I have a family, and I have a place to go to. I have always got a person that I can talk to or confide in.

WORST: I don't have any worst parts.

— J.S., adopted at 16

BEST: THE BEST PART IS THAT I FOUND THE RIGHT FAMILY, AND [WE] GET ALONG.

WORST: THE BAD PART WAS BEING TURNED DOWN BY A LOT OF FAMILIES. THAT CAN BE REALLY PAINFUL.

— S.K., ADOPTED AT 15

BEST: Finally having a family that I knew I was going to be with for the rest of my life and not for 10 years here and for another two years with another person. I knew that once I was adopted, that was it.

WORST: The wait.

— J.S., adopted at 13

BEST: The attention they give you and the love because that was something I never got when I was little.

WORST: The worst part is not being able to see your family, only being able to see them on weekends.

— D.W., adopted at 13

...Be patient and be strong. It is not going to be easy, and you are always going to miss your real parents. It is going to be weird for a while when [you] are going through it. I would recommend that [you] get adopted.

— M.M., adopted at 14

I would say to go with what your heart tells you to do. If you have met the people and you like them, you should take some time and think about it because your life really does change after adoption. Maybe some lives have been changed in a negative way, but mine has been changed in a positive way. I would say, 'Go for it!'

— M.S., adopted at 12

Don't hold back your feelings. If you feel like you want to be adopted, don't hold back because of what your peers might think. Do what you think is right for you and what's going to help you in life.

— T.S., adopted at 17

Don't be pressured by other people...Do what feels right for you. If you can see yourself in 10 years in that family and you feel comfortable, you should go for it.

— E.L., adopted at 19

Make sure that you don't rush into it when you first get placed in foster care. Take time to learn about the family. It is just like having a girlfriend. You need to get to know the person first before you jump into the relationship.

—J.B., adopted at 14