

Positive Adoption Language

The way we talk—and the words we choose—say a lot about what we think and value. When we use positive adoption language, we say that adoption is a way to build a family just as birth is. Both are important, but one is not more important than the other.

Choose the following positive adoption language instead of the negative talk that helps perpetuate the myth that adoption is second best. By using positive adoption language, you'll reflect the true nature of adoption, free of innuendo.

| Positive Language | Negative Language |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Birthparent | Real parent |
| Biological parent | Natural parent |
| Birth child | Own child |
| My child | Adopted child; Own child |
| Born to unmarried parents | Illegitimate |
| Terminate parental rights | Give up |
| Make an adoption plan | Give away |
| To parent | To keep |
| Waiting child | Adoptable child; available child |
| Biological or birthfather | Real father |
| Making contact with | Reunion |
| Parent | Adoptive parent |
| Intercountry adoption | Foreign adoption |
| Adoption triad | Adoption triangle |
| Permission to sign a release | Disclosure |
| Search | Track down parents |
| Child placed for adoption | An unwanted child |
| Court termination | Child taken away |
| Child with special needs | Handicapped child |
| Child from abroad | Foreign child |
| Was adopted | Is adopted |

Words not only convey facts, they also evoke feelings. When a TV movie talks about a "custody battle" between "real parents" and "other parents," society gets the wrong impression that only birthparents are real parents and that adoptive parents aren't real parents. Members of society may also wrongly conclude that all adoptions are "battles."

Positive adoption language can stop the spread of misconceptions such as these. By using positive adoption language, we educate others about adoption. We choose emotionally "correct" words over emotionally-laden words. We speak and write in positive adoption language with the hopes of impacting others so that this language will someday become the norm.

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