

MAP Family Newsletter



7 Ways to Support Adoptive Parents While They Wait

These tips go beyond checking in with the typical (and sometimes wearying), "Any adoption news?"

We all know that the standard pregnancy timeline is around nine months, but adoption waits are much less predictable. Sometimes there doesn't appear to be waiting time at all, while others seem to wait indefinitely. Regardless of how long the wait is, it will feel the longest for the adoptive parents-to-be. The wait can be painstaking, and the emotions can heighten any time someone asks, "Any adoption news?" Even when people are well meaning, this question can make every minute of the adoption wait longer, especially when there isn't anything to report. Here are a few things you can

do to help support hopeful adoptive parents through the wait.

1. Share their profile . After getting permission, spread the word. Volunteer to give out pass-along cards. Share their profile on Facebook or Instagram. If they don't have an adoption group, volunteer to make one. Word-of-mouth is a very large part of finding the perfect match.

2. Give a sentimental gift . My next door neighbor had battled infertility for a few years. During that time, my own grandmother made her a baby blanket. It was a hand-quilted baby blanket with pink and blue squares. There wasn't anything elaborate about it, but it was made with love. When my grandmother gave her the blanket, she said she made the blanket pink and blue, so it would work for a boy or a girl. The gift was treasured by my next-door neighbor. She felt loved and supported through a quiet trial. She never used the blanket, but kept it set aside as a keepsake. The story could end there and be a great example of kindness through waiting, but it holds an ever deeper place in my heart. After hearing that we were hoping to adopt, my neighbor brought over that very blanket for me. My grandmother died when I was only three years old, and now I have a handmade gift for my child, made by her hands. It was an unexpected treasure that I will remember forever. Other ideas could be a scrapbook or journal they can add to through their journey, a piece of artwork that represents their desire for a family, a piece of jewelry that symbolizes their search, a children's book, or even a hand-written note.

3. Share a favorite book . Waiting is awful. In my experience, time seems to stand still while you're waiting. It is therapeutic to be able to look back and see that progress has been made, even in small ways. When I could see that the bookmark moved forward a few pages, it helped me realize that time was still moving, and I was growing closer to my chance at motherhood.

4. Help them plan a babymoon . It seemed silly to me to

think about a babymoon. We had plenty of time for the two of us before our oldest arrived. When people asked about our plans for a babymoon, I think I had an automatic look of confusion. But in retrospect, it was really a great idea. My husband and I ended up taking a scuba diving trip in Monterey, California. I had wanted to scuba dive for years, and the opportunity presented itself during our adoption wait. It was the perfect activity for my husband and I to connect with each other, make amazing memories, and do something that we wouldn't be able to do for a while after having children. A babymoon doesn't need to be elaborate or expensive, but it should be something that allows the couple to focus on each other. It is a nice way to gain closure on that chapter of their lives.

5. Plan a baby shower . I honestly hadn't thought that anyone would give me a baby shower. It wasn't that I didn't want one, it just never occurred to me. I guess I felt very different from other (biological) mothers. I thought that my situation would be overlooked, so I overlooked it too. Several of my friends and coworkers went out of their way to ensure I wasn't overlooked for a moment. I was overwhelmed and humbled as people came together to celebrate this miracle in my life. Showers can be held early in the adoption process as a sort of fundraiser, or after placement when more details are known.

6. Go out for a spa day . Prenatal massage has become a regular part of pregnancy. Although hopeful adoptive mothers don't share the same physical burden of pregnancy, a chance to reduce stress will definitely be needed. Treat her to a massage or pedicure. It's always appropriate to pamper a mother-to-be.

7. Be joyful in their journey . Ask about what baby names they have thought about. Find out how they will decorate the nursery. Do they plan to cloth diaper or use disposables? When my husband and I first started trying to have a baby, we would stay up at night talking about all the details of having a baby. It was exciting! As the month turned to years,

talking (or even thinking) about the baby-to-come was painful. I avoided it whenever possible. I didn't want to picture my life with a child, because it made the pain of infertility sting that much more. Then we announced our plans to adopt. I was caught off guard when talking about those simple choices became exciting again. I had longed for that feeling for over eight years, and there it was. Even though the couple may have had years to consider names and decorations and baby showers, it is very likely that they haven't really thought about it. And they may love a chance to enjoy the excitement that every new parent is entitled to feel.

The addition of a child is something to celebrate. The waiting time doesn't have to be drawn out and empty. It can be full of excitement, personal growth, and preparation. How have you supported friends in their adoption wait? How have others supported you?

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