

Transracial Adoption



The advice in this guide aims to help families understand what transracial adoption is and explore whether you would be able to meet the cultural and identity needs of a child from a different ethnicity to you.

Ideally, social workers like to place a child with adopters who closely match their ethnicity. However, there are not enough Black and minority ethnic adopters coming forward, so families from other ethnicities and cultures are being considered, as long as they are deemed able to meet the child's other needs, in order to reduce the delay in finding permanence for that child.

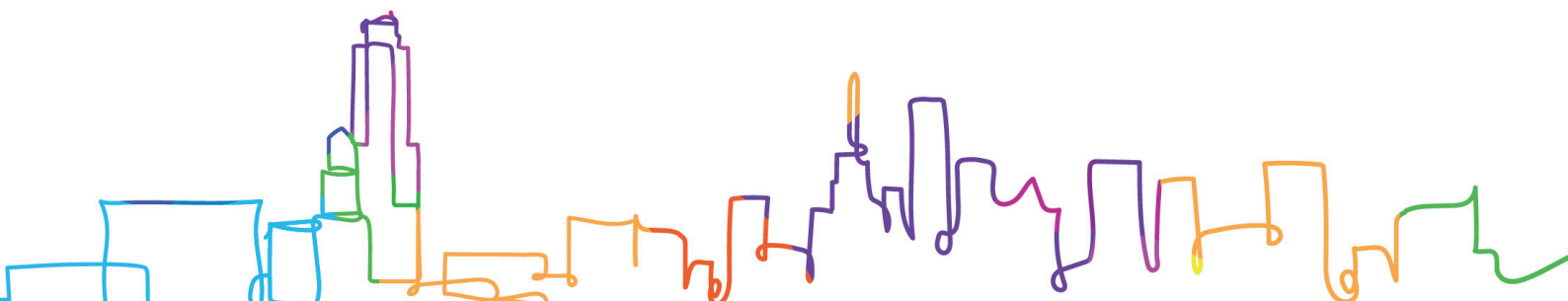
It is still important to recognise that having their ethnic and cultural needs met is an essential part of a child's development and sense of identity and will help them develop secure and healthy relationships within their new adoptive family network and within peer groups throughout their life.

Parents caring for a child of a different ethnicity from themselves have a responsibility to help a child define themselves as a member of their own culture and ethnicity, at the same time as bringing them into the new culture that is already present in the family, for example; choosing a school with a diverse representation in the students and staff, a barber or hairdresser experienced with different hair textures and styles, a dentist or doctor, a babysitter or sporting activity group, as well as having artwork, music and food from their heritage in the home.

If you do not have family members who reflect the child's ethnicity and cultural identity, it is important to have friends and other significant people, especially those with lived experience of racism, in your network who will be good cultural role models.

Making connections with other cultures and ethnicities for the benefit of your child might seem daunting, but, with some effort and thought given to your child's ethnicity and their need to immerse themselves in that, it can be done. Imagine how much that will mean to a child, how it will help build a bond and gain their trust.

Of course, the child may not wish to claim aspects of their background and ethnicity as they grow up and find their own voice and opinions, but it is important that adoptive parents maintain a steadfast and consistent approach to valuing and accepting their child's ethnicity and continue to be involved in culturally appropriate events and communities as part of everyday normal family life.



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Because you are not raised in that culture and don't come home to that culture you will never be like those that have been. This was the one thing that I mourned and grieved about the most. I wasn't as in touch with the culture like my Black friends were. But I was so blessed to have been exposed to my culture through my close friends at school that I was able to develop my racial identity and pride in my ethnicity. My parents did some extreme things, like moving us to a Black neighbourhood, to assure that I would be in touch with my race and culture. That has made a HUGE difference in my upbringing. It allowed me to feel normal around people like me and feel a sense of belonging. So, in that aspect I don't feel deprived at all."

Kevin Hoffman – transracial adoptee and author of *Growing up White in Black*.

Black and minority ethnic children need to be prepared for any racism or discrimination they may encounter in their lives. Any racism must be seen by your children to be dealt with, openly acknowledged and not tolerated. This increases a child's security and value within the family and helps them feel listened to.

The first step to helping a child deal with any prejudice and racism is to instil strong self-esteem. With a positive view of themselves, they will be more able to move forwards. Children need to help in understanding that they are not alone in experiencing racism or in challenging it. Talk to them about how certain comments or attitudes make them feel and how they would like to respond while validating any feelings of being hurt. Let them know you will go into battle for them.

It can be hard for parents to accept that children are subjected to racism when they themselves do not face it. Support from those in your network who have a lived experience of racism will be key role models for adopters and their children, as well as helping to think of a range of effective strategies against racism.

To better understand how a person from minority ethnic background may feel in challenge yourself to go somewhere where you are in the minority. What are you feeling? How do you hold yourself? What are you noticing that you may otherwise take for granted?

In conclusion, as a transracial adopter can you:

- **Immerse your family home in appropriate cultural references such as culture, music and food?**
- **Surround yourself with people from the same ethnic background so there are people around the child who mirror them and who can be a role model and great mentor?**
- **Be strong for a child when they experience racism and work out strategies to help them manage those life experience?**