**Adoption**

Adoption is a process whereby a person assumes the parenting of another, usually a child, from that person's biological or legal parent or parents. Legal adoptions permanently transfers all rights and responsibilities from the biological parent or parents.

The following extracts provide an insight into the living and lived experiences of adoptive families (taken from Adoption UK: A Different Kind of Parenting, Healthy Children.org: Parenting after Trauma ***and*** DDP Network.org: PACE)

**Adoption UK**

**A different kind of parenting**

Adopted children’s early experiences mean they can often struggle with relationships and day-to-day life.

Instead of traditional parenting techniques, adopted children require a style of parenting which is more sensitive to their needs and helps them overcome these difficulties.

Although this can present certain challenges, being an adoptive parent is hugely rewarding and can provide the stable, understanding and loving homes these children need.

**A difficult start to life**

During our early years, we rely on our parents to meet our **physical** and **emotional** needs.

How these needs are met impacts on how we grow up, our sense of self and our understanding of the world around us.

Well-cared-for children will grow up feeling comfortable, safe, valued and loved - to use the analogy of a ‘wall’ made of development-need ‘bricks’, their walls would be well built and strong.

But adopted children’s early needs have often gone unmet and all have experienced some form of loss or trauma.

Many have suffered abuse or neglect, all have been separated from their birth families and all have spent time in the care system.

Many will have grown up feeling unsafe, uncared for and alone – their ‘walls’ will be incomplete and fragile.

[**Find out more about The Wall**](https://www.slideshare.net/AdoptionUK/the-wall-53186287)

The Wall is a graphic illustration of how unmet physical and emotional needs early in life affect children’s later development, requiring different parenting techniques and support for adoptive parents.

**Filling in the gaps and healing the trauma**

Adopted children’s early experiences often cause deep-set confusion, fear and anger and so they can struggle with relationships and day-to-day life.

This can lead to behaviour which is, initially, difficult to understand.

**Love alone cannot always heal the hurt.**

Traditional parenting techniques are often unsuitable for adopted children - imagine how frightening ‘time out’ would be for a child who had experienced neglect.

Adoptive parenting works to restore unmet development needs and heal trauma.

Adopted children need love, understanding and patience to help them overcome their difficulties and go on to lead confident, happy lives –**something often referred to as ‘therapeutic parenting’.**

(Therapeutic Parenting is the term used to describe the type of high structure/high nurture intentional parenting that fosters the feelings of safety and connectedness so that a traumatized child can begin to heal and attach. See full text on the following website - <https://www.attachmenttraumanetwork.org/parenting/>)

## **Healthy Children.org**

**Types of Trauma**

An event is traumatic when it threatens the child or someone the child depends on for safety and love. Abuse may be traumatic, but trauma may take many forms. It includes:

* Neglect
* Separations
* Violence between caregivers
* Natural disasters
* Accidents
* (also illness (not from extract))

A frightened child may feel out-of-control and helpless. When this happens, the body’s protective reflexes are triggered. This can make a child’s heart pound and blood pressure rise. The “fight or flight” panic response can kick in.

## **What Foster and Adoptive Parents Can Do to Help**

Usual parenting practices may not work.

* Children who have been adopted or are in foster care have often suffered trauma, and live with more anxiety. They see and respond to threats that others do not.
* Their brains might always be “on guard.” It might be hard to ignore things or focus on a book or a lesson.
* It may be hard to earn their trust and respect, even over time. Many children have never learned to depend on consistent, reliable adults.

Parents may need to [seek help](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Mental-Health-Care-Who%27s-Who.aspx) and this is common. Paediatricians, developmental specialists, and therapists can give you effective ways to respond. They can help you see how your child relates to the world. Kids are doing the best they can, with what they have been given.

**DDP Network.org**

What is meant by PACE?

## Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy - [PACE](https://ddpnetwork.org/glossary/pace/) is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the [child](https://ddpnetwork.org/glossary/child/) feel safe. It is based upon how [parents](https://ddpnetwork.org/glossary/parent/) connect with their very young infants. As with young toddlers, with safety the child can begin to explore. With PACE, the troubled child can start to look at himself and let others start to see him, or get closer emotionally. He can start to trust. Further information available via:- <https://ddpnetwork.org/about-ddp/meant-pace/>

The following resources also provide helpful insights into adoption, adoptees and adopters. Below is a list of websites which you may find useful.

***Please note that the listed resources are not Nottingham City Council recommendations but may be helpful as part of research into information and services that you or the family feel may meet adoptive family’s needs*.**

* [Developing Emotional Attachments in Adopted Children](http://www.attachmentparenting.org/support/articles/adoption)
* [Parenting After Trauma](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/adoption-and-foster-care/Pages/Parenting-Foster-Adoptive-Children-After-Trauma.aspx)
* [Adoption UK - A Different Kind of Parenting](https://www.adoptionuk.org/faqs/a-different-kind-of-parenting)
* [Education Support for Adopted Children](https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/adoption-support/education-support/)
* [Supporting Adoptive Parents and Foster Carers](https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/working-with-families/facilitator-articles/698665-2)
* Why Can't My Child Behave?: Empathic Parenting Strategies that Work for Adoptive and Foster Families – Book by Dr Amber Elliott
* Nurturing Adoptions – Book by Deborah D Gray
* Journey of the Adopted Self (A Quest for Wholeness) – Book by Betty Jean Lifton
* Building the Bonds of Attachment: Awakening Love in Deeply Traumatized Children – Book by Daniel A Hughes
* The Simple Guide to Attachment Difficulties in Children: What They Are and How to Help – Book by Betsy de Thierry
* The Trauma and Attachment-Aware Classroom: A Practical Guide to Supporting Children Who Have Encountered Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences – Book by Rebecca Brooks