



## Chapter 31 The Parenting Question

### Enrichment Activities

# ADOPTION: TAKING A LONG-TERM VIEW

Maybe you or someone you know comes from an adoptive family. Adopted children sometimes gravitate toward one another as young adults because of a shared perspective. Although they appreciate and love their adoptive parents, they often feel curious about their birth parents and wonder whether to seek them out. They may feel abandoned or rejected and want to know why their parents put them up for adoption. They may want information about genetic health conditions, or they may just want to understand themselves better by discovering something about the parents who conceived them.

At one time, even adoptive parents knew little about their child's birth parents. Changing adoption laws and social customs are making it easier to find information. Still, sometimes the fear of hurting the adoptive parents' feelings prevents even adult children from acting on a deep desire to connect with their birth parents.

Before adopting a child, parents need to anticipate how they will handle these issues as the child grows and matures. In the long term, parents need to realize that:

- The child may need to hear adoptive parents express their unconditional love as the child explores his or her biological identity and heritage.
- The child will not love the adoptive parents less just because he or she gets to know the birth parents.

Just as the parents adopting a child must develop realistic long-term expectations, a young person deciding whether to give a child up for adoption can benefit from the same long-term perspective. When faced with an unplanned pregnancy, adoption is sometimes a loving choice. The following examples illustrate why. In each situation, what would you say to the mother that would help her reach a difficult decision or accept a decision already made? On separate paper, write your responses or discuss possible answers in groups or as a class.

1. Wanda wanted a baby so she would feel that someone truly loved and needed her. However, she was overwhelmed by her new baby's demands. Every time the baby cried, she became upset and left the baby with relatives. She came to realize that she wanted to be the one being cared for instead of the caregiver in the relationship.
2. Julia and Robert got married and had a baby while they were still in high school, but Robert could not handle the pressure of fatherhood and left town. He never told his whereabouts to Julia, who did not have a job and could not provide for the baby. By the end of its first year, the baby was sick and fussy all the time. Julia did not have insurance and could not pay for doctor appointments. Julia was not prepared for the responsibilities of single parenthood.
3. Hazel and Rick had dated only a short time when Hazel became pregnant. Hazel knew that she and Rick should not get married. Hazel did not have the resources to care for the baby herself, and she could not accept abortion as an option. So, Hazel decided to call an adoption agency. At birth, the infant was placed in the home of two parents who had tried for years to have children. They were thrilled to adopt Hazel's child.

### Focus In

Assume you are an adoptive parent. You have just discovered a letter written to your child's birth mother. Write down the points you would make in a conversation with your adopted child.