



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS CONSIDERING BIRTH COUNTRY CONNECTIONS

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How has your family handled communication about adoption and your child's adoption story up until this point?

How much have you shared of what you know?

How often does your child express interest in his story and curiosity to know more?

How well does he understand his country? The culture? The differences? What is his opinion of them?

Can you discuss sexuality openly with your child? Can you address any decisions, social mores, or political situations that led to placement? Does your child feel free to raise questions that he knows you find difficult to answer?

Whose needs will be served by the connections you plan to make at this time?

Is your child interested? Would he feel more comfortable with the connections you plan if he could talk to someone about his feelings?

Are your interests taking over? Is that a problem, or will your child become enthusiastic, too?

Why do you think this is the right time to go?

What is your child expecting from these connections?

Assuming that any connections you make will help your child to learn more about the lives of other people in his country, what is the reality for those children? Is your child comfortable with that reality or does it bother him? Does he have a frame of reference in the United States, for example, will this be his first exposure to the "2nd world" or to poverty or obvious differences in how to handle social issues? How will he relate to the conditions and ways of living in his country? What is his capacity for empathy?

Does your child have fantasies about the country or the birth parents that could be very wrong and need to be discussed?

Have you ever asked your child to update his birth parents, i.e., consider where they are today, some years after his birth, and help him to form a realistic picture of how they might live today?

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What is your child's emotional maturity and what other important issues is he struggling with in his life?

What is his temperament and ability to handle emotionally-laden experiences? Does he have fears about the trip that you know about?

Does he share his true feelings with you, or hold them inside?

If you travel to the birth country, will it be the first time that your family has been in another country recently? How well does your child travel?

Can you handle unpredictable negatives and positives?

How might your child regard your status as his parent when he sees others who appear more like him? How will he regard his status in his country?

Is your child going through other stresses, at school or in peer relationships, that make him more vulnerable when new challenges are presented?

How will other family members be impacted by the connections you choose to make?

How do siblings feel about a trip to your child's country, for example? Consider some of the questions above in relation to your child's siblings.

If you have more than one child through adoption, how might the children compare their adoption stories, their birth countries? Will this rivalry be heightened by the connections you plan? How will you help your children with these feelings?

How does your extended family feel about the connections you plan to make? Have you helped them to know how to talk with your child about those connections in ways that respect your child's heritage and still claim him as part of your family, too?

If you are planning to meet your child's birth parents, have you put in place some supports?

Will there be an experienced social worker on the trip that can help your child to process the roller coaster of emotions of reunion?

Do YOU have a way to discuss choices or challenges that evolve from a reunion?

Have you considered how to help sibling cope with the reunion, particularly if they are unable to have a reunion, as well?

When you return to the United States, will there be support for your child regarding the reunion itself, as well as the ongoing relationship which may evolve?

