

Making Ripples

by Amanda Bancroft

To give love to a child in need, to fulfill the dream of becoming a parent, and sometimes also to help our overpopulated planet, would-be parents are considering adoption. But it can be confusing to know where to start, whether you're just weighing the options or have already decided that adoption is right for your family. Even if adoption isn't possible for you, merely carrying this general knowledge around in our minds can help connect potential parents to the resources they might need to start the adoption process. Ignorance can be a wall, and the unknown is scary. The more people who know about adoption, the easier it will be for parents as well as adopted children who often find themselves living in a world that misunderstands them.

Adoption can be a great choice to protect the environment and bring joy to a child, and there are services that help inquiring adults understand that choice. AdoptUSKids.org has a great FAQ page to get you started, or call them at (888) 200-4005, a hotline available Monday-Friday, 8am – 3pm CST. According to their website, most adoptions from the United States foster care system are free, and you could be eligible for an adoption tax credit as well as financial assistance for the child's education and medical needs. You don't even need to be married to foster or adopt a child! “You don't need to own your own home, be wealthy, have children already, have a college degree, or be a stay-at-home parent to adopt. However, you do need to demonstrate that you can support yourself without any additional income,” states the FAQ. You may also contact the Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services at (888) 736-2820.

Learn about the National Adoption Center's “Ten Step Overview” at Adopt.org. This includes information on selecting a licensed agency, going through a home study, and the pre- and post-adoption process.

Thinking about adopting a baby or toddler? Great! Have you given a glance to a teenager in need? If it's right for your family, there are actually benefits to adopting older children. Plus, nobody is too old to have a family! Teenagers need parents and relatives to help them succeed through life's transitions. Depending on the state, older children must also consent to their adoption – meaning that your child is choosing you, too, not just being selected. That could make for a better match once everyone gets to know each other.

These roughly 500 words could never be enough to explain all the reasons why we should love our planet and our kids by adopting children, and not even a book could cover all the specific legal, financial, and emotional topics that the adoption process brings. If you're considering adoption, be like a magnet and stick to the idea, at least until you've learned enough to make an informed choice. It makes a difference just to think about these options and share our knowledge with others! It also helps to change the way society sees adoption: once informed, we can participate in eliminating prejudices against adoptees and further the idea that family is beyond blood. May everyone's family, regardless of shape, size and color, be full of love now and forever.

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist living in an off-grid tiny house on Kessler Mountain. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer tips to those wanting to make a difference at www.MakeRipples.org.