

Positive Adoption Language

The way we talk—and the words we choose—say a lot about what we think and value. When we use positive adoption language, we say that adoption is a way to build a family just as birth is. Both are important, but one is not more important than the other.

Choose the following positive adoption language instead of the negative talk that helps perpetuate the myth that adoption is second best. By using positive adoption language, you'll reflect the true nature of adoption, free of innuendo.

Positive Language	Negative Language
Birthparent	Real parent
Biological parent	Natural parent
Birth child	Own child
My child	Adopted child; Own child
Born to unmarried parents	Illegitimate
Terminate parental rights	Give up
Make an adoption plan	Give away
To parent	To keep
Waiting child	Adoptable child; available child
Biological or birthfather	Real father
Making contact with	Reunion
Parent	Adoptive parent
Intercountry adoption	Foreign adoption
Adoption triad	Adoption triangle
Permission to sign a release	Disclosure
Search	Track down parents
Child placed for adoption	An unwanted child
Court termination	Child taken away
Child with special needs	Handicapped child
Child from abroad	Foreign child
Was adopted	Is adopted

Words not only convey facts, they also evoke feelings. When a TV movie talks about a "custody battle" between "real parents" and "other parents," society gets the wrong impression that only birthparents are real parents and that adoptive parents aren't real parents. Members of society may also wrongly conclude that all adoptions are "battles."

Positive adoption language can stop the spread of misconceptions such as these. By using positive adoption language, we educate others about adoption. We choose emotionally "correct" words over emotionally-laden words. We speak and write in positive adoption language with the hopes of impacting others so that this language will someday become the norm.

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