

Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Mishpachah: The Modern Jewish Family

Conversation Piece

Maya: Proud Mother of Two

Choose your words carefully. Ask your questions respectfully and recognize the privacy involved in creating a family, no matter how one chooses to do it.

I am a mother of two. Our daughter was born in Kazakhstan and was adopted as an infant. When she was four years old, I gave birth to her brother. I appreciate that people are curious when they see us. I recognize that they can't quite figure out what the deal is. Our daughter is ethnically Asian, but she looks enough like me and enough like her brother for people to pause when they see our family, simply in an attempt to figure us out.

I do not mind the questions. I try to view each inquiry as an opportunity to educate another person on the remarkable experience of adoption. But I wish people would think before opening their mouths. Using phrases like "real" parent, whispering questions about whether our daughter knows she is adopted right in front of her (she has known since before she could talk), asking about her personal story/birthparents, introducing her as our "adopted" daughter, making comments about how you "cannot imagine how anyone could ever give a child up for adoption," analogizing adopting a dog with adopting a child... I could go on and on. I've heard it all, from friends, from family members and from strangers in line at the grocery store.

Some of the most frustrating comments came after we announced our pregnancy. Sure, we heard the incredibly irritating, yet standard, "Oh, of course you got pregnant now that you have adopted," but the comment that made my blood boil was the one I heard many times about how different it would be now that I was having "one of my own." Newsflash: I clean up her vomit in the middle of the night. I schlep her to school, gymnastics, birthday parties, and everywhere else. I am the one who comforted her in the hospital when she needed stitches. I help her with homework. I am a room mom in her kindergarten. She is my own. And I can say now, two years later, as the proud mother of a 6-year-old girl through adoption and a homegrown 2-year-old boy, the love is no different. They are both mine, 100 percent.

My request to others: Choose your words carefully. Ask your questions respectfully and recognize the privacy involved in creating a family, no matter how one chooses to do it. Treat a woman who is adopting as if she is giving birth, regardless of whether she is adopting a newborn or a seven-year-



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old. Throw a baby shower, bring dinner over when she brings her new addition home. And, most importantly, teach your children that families are formed in many different ways. Not all kids have a mommy and a daddy, not all kids look like their parents, and just because one family is different from your family, it doesn't mean it is less or worse. If you take nothing else away from this, please educate your children, so that my daughter doesn't have to.