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# Expectations to Let Go of as an Adoptive Parent

Unspoken expectations can shape how we parent. This guide outlines five expectations to notice, question, and let go of.



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**Unspoken expectations can shape how we parent. They influence how we respond to behavior, how we measure progress, and how we define success. But many adoptive parents are holding expectations that were never realistic to begin with, and those expectations often get in the way of connection. This guide outlines five expectations to notice, question, and let go of.**





## **“We Should Be Bonded by Now”**

**There's no timeline for attachment. Bonding can take years, and it's rarely a straight path, especially when a child has experienced early loss, disruption, or trauma. Expecting emotional closeness too soon can create pressure for both you and your child. When connection doesn't come easily, some parents begin to question themselves or their child. But attachment is built through consistent presence, not instant feelings. Releasing the timeline allows both you and your child to move at a pace that honors trust, not urgency.**





## 2

# **If I Do Everything Right, My Child Will Heal"**

**This expectation places the burden of healing solely on the parents' performance. It suggests that with enough love, structure, and effort, things should improve. But healing from loss and grief is a lifelong journey, and it's not always visible. Even when you're doing all the right things, your child may still struggle. Letting go of the idea that progress should follow a predictable path makes space for flexibility, patience, and deeper compassion both for your child and yourself.**



## **My Child Will Be Grateful**

**Gratitude is a complicated expectation in adoption. Children don't owe you a thanks for being adopted; they are navigating loss, identity confusion, and a reality they didn't choose. Expecting gratitude can make children feel responsible for your emotions, especially when they sense disappointment. When parents let go of this expectation, it frees the child to be honest about their feelings without fear of rejection or guilt and opens the door for more authentic connection over time.**





# 4

## I Shouldn't Feel This Way

**Adoptive parents often silence their own emotions, especially anger, resentment, fear, or regret. They may believe that struggling means they aren't cut out for the role. But big emotions are not evidence of failure; they're evidence of how much the relationship matters. Releasing the idea that you "shouldn't" feel a certain way makes room for honesty, reflection, and repair. Emotional discomfort doesn't mean something is broken. It means something is being asked to grow.**

# 5

## Love Will Be Enough

Love is powerful, but it's not a replacement for trauma-informed tools, emotional safety, or long-term regulation. Many adoptive parents were taught that love could fill in the gaps of a child's story. But children need more than love; they need understanding, patience, and a parent who can tolerate their pain without taking it personally. Letting go of this expectation doesn't minimize your love. It expands it into something more honest, more informed, and more healing for you and your child.



# Letting Go Makes Room for Real Connection

When you stop parenting from pressure, you create room to parent from presence.

Expectations, especially unspoken ones, can quietly block connection. They can cause you to miss the beauty of who your child is because you're still reaching for who you hoped they'd be. Letting go isn't a sign of giving up. It's a sign that you're willing to grow. It's a shift from trying to make the story fit your plan to learning how to love the real story that's unfolding. And that's where deep connection begins, not when everything looks perfect, but when both you and your child feel safe to be fully yourselves.



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