

TOOLS THAT HELP BUILD RELATIONSHIPS DURING TRANSITIONS

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ACT Participant Resource Notebook

A Developmental Perspective- Practice Tools

- Taking photographs

The adoptive family can compile a photo album of themselves, of family members and significant friends, and of their home. The photo album is left with the child to have free access to look at anytime. Additional photos can be taken during the relationship-building process and added to the album.

- Creating calendars

If the child can understand a calendar, using one to mark off the days until the next meeting may relieve anxiety. It also may make children more anxious as the days to the next meeting come closer, so attention should be given to this.

- Going to new sites

Use some of the meeting time to see the child's new school, the local park, and stores. The adoptive parents including the child in their normal routine, grocery shopping, for example, can give the child a taste of the adoptive parent's lifestyle.

- Making phone calls, and sending emails and letters

Use the phone back and forth for touching base with both the current caregiving family and the adoptive parents. A child's memory fades quickly, so it is helpful to keep voice familiarity constant. Sending emails and letters (or post cards) are also helpful.

- Maintaining nighttime routines

Nighttime routines are essential to children and should be replicated as much as possible from the previous family's routine. Dinner, bedtime, story reading, and snuggling should occur close to the same time every evening. This helps the child feel some control and be able to predict what is coming next. It also helps children claim adoptive parents' ways as their own early on. Walking children through what to do and where to go if they wake up or have a nightmare is also a good idea. Going back and forth to the bathroom is essential, so use fun night lights or flashlights.

- Preparing food

Make sure that children have access to their own comfort foods.



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- Transferring possessions

Gradually increase the transfer of possessions, so that when children move, there is little left to transfer. Bring children's "snuggle" items, such as pillows, stuffed animals or blankets back and forth between families. Allow the children to give input regarding the decorating of their new room.

- Scheduling foster parent meetings and "blessings"

Current caregivers should come to the adoptive family's home at least once, when the children are present, to let children know that they can be found, that they are not just disappearing, and that they are valued. In addition, in the best of all possible situations, there would be an overlapping of parenting, where adoptive parents begin seeing the child in the home of the current caregivers, and sharing daily child caring routines. Shared meals may be appropriate or any activity relevant to the child's age and stage of development.

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