

Why Love Isn't Enough: The Introduction

By Arleta James, PCC

This is the first in a series of posts on related challenging topics. The purpose of this series is to make clear that today's waiting children—international and domestic—infants and older children—are a traumatized population. As will become clear over this series of eight articles, the effects of trauma do not fade with love alone! Such myths as—"Love will be enough", "Kids will be fine once in a good family", "A young child won't have problems"—are just that: myths!



This series is written in response to an array of recent news stories—the murder of a Chinese adoptee (the most recent in a growing list of children who have died at the hands of their adoptive parents), a young boy returned to a Russian orphanage and increasing tales of adoption dissolutions—devastating to all involved! This series is also a result of clinical experience with traumatized adoptees and their families. Daily, I hear parents state, "We weren't told about all the problems we would have!" "Our agency should have done more to prepare us!" "Our agency lied to us!" "We adopted so young! We had no idea a young child would have any problems!" All of these tragedies can be offset!

Today we know that children who have experienced institutionalization, neglect, abuse, abandonment, the pre-natal insult of drug and/or alcohol exposure, and so on, can—and often do—arrive in the adoptive family with a myriad of issues. Knowledge of these traumas is the key to your post-placement ability to cope and adapt.



We also know that you—prospective adoptive families—come to the adoption process along many avenues. Yet, in common, is an optimism and excitement for the child who is to arrive in the family! There is a desire to offer an abundance of love to a boy or girl in need. There is an enthusiasm about the opportunity to shape a child's entire future. Likely, without such exuberance there would be fewer adoptions! In this series, we are asking you to temper these feelings with factual information. Consider the topics being put forth, and then educate yourselves accordingly! You must augment your agency's adoption education program. Pre-adoption classes are a beginning! Please see my article, *The Development of Realistic Expectations: Myth or Actuality*, for further food for thought regarding the pre-adoption experience. The article is located under the "Articles" tab on my website. Depth of understanding the journey you are about to embark on can only come from additional reading, attending ongoing trainings and networking with veteran adoptive parents!

I've provided lots of resources throughout the series, and on my [website](#), to help you delve more deeply into the challenges you could face after your son or daughter joins your family! Recently formed adoptive families, and veteran families built by adoption will also find this information useful. As we proceed, keep in mind,

You may want to print this post or others in the series. Study them, returning to them over time. Review the resources that are embedded within the articles. Keep them handy! They will make valuable references post-adoption. As you educate yourself, ask, "What does this information mean for me as the parent?" "What will this mean for the children I already parent?" "What does this mean for the child I am adopting?"

Please know that the purpose of this series is education. It is not meant to discourage any family from adopting. But, it is meant to help families think hard prior to adopting. Our earlier post "While Families Wait: Ongoing Adoption Education for Prospective Adoptive Families", available on my [website](#) under the "Articles" tab, offers concrete steps parents can take to line up post-adoption support and services before the new son or daughter arrives. Early intervention is the key to solving problems once identified and acknowledged!