Adoption: Sharing the Journey

“Sometimes I forget I am adopted,” exclaims my amazing son as he grabs his backpack to head off to college. I had just let him know that his birthday this year falls on National Adoption Day. “So cool! We will need to do something special this year on my birthday, to celebrate both my birthday and my adoption! See ya, mom!” To Shaun, adoption is as easy as one, two, three, and just a part of everyday life. As anyone who’s been through adoption knows, this is simply not the case much of the time. While adoption helped us complete our family, the process can be exciting, thrilling and scary all at the same time! When another woman is carrying the baby that will become your child, you worry. Was she drinking alcohol? Taking a pain killer? What if she was using illegal drugs?! It can literally lead to countless anxious days and sleepless nights. I understand these concerns as I shared the same worries.

National Adoption Day, started in the United States in 1999, is celebrated each year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This year it happens to fall on Shaun’s birthday and reminds me of when we adopted him, many years ago. That time in my life was so powerful, but it was easier for me than it is for others as I was part of MotherToBaby and already knew where to find the answers to my pregnancy exposure questions.

My adoption journey has helped shape who I am today – a genetic counselor and a teratogen information expert who specializes in understanding exposures that can cause birth defects. The non-profit I work for provides this crucial service all across North America and I’m proud that my journey has brought me into a position to ease the minds of other prospective parents starting down the wonderful path of adoption. It reminds me of Austin and Drew, a prospective adoptive couple whom I helped in their adoption journey, “My partner and I did a lot of research as we started exploring adoption. After we started working with an agency, there were lots of questions about prenatal exposures, birth parent medical histories, etc. A lot of the information we found on these topics seemed to be contradictory and some of it was downright scary.” My job allows me to be on the other end of the line talking to this couple, and others like them, helping fill out intake forms and providing evidence-based answers to some of their questions. “Luckily for us, our adoption agency suggested we reach out to Lori. After our conversation we felt much more at ease, and we felt like we had the information we needed to make informed decisions.”

My own journey has come full circle, utilizing my training to help those going through what I went through years ago. MotherToBaby specialists are here to help you too! As Rory Hall, Executive Director of Adoption Advocates, states, “couples approach the adoption process with so many myths about prenatal exposures and health concerns that might affect a baby. MotherToBaby experts help them approach adoption with relevant, scientific backed information so they can make informed decisions about the children they are hoping to adopt.”

Just before Shaun shuts the door to drive to school, he pauses. Sometimes wise beyond his years, he turns and says, “Mom, adoption is so wonderful because your birth parents gave you up so you could have a better life. Love you!” And just like that, the anxiety, and struggle during the adoption process go back to their place of being a very distant memory. #WorthIt.

More about National Adoption Day

National Adoption Day has been celebrated across the United States since 1999, helping to raise the awareness of the more than 100,000 children who are in foster care each year in the U.S. waiting for permanent families. For more information, see www.nationaladoptionday.org. And when you are going through your adoption journey, and have questions about exposures during pregnancy, contact an expert at MotherToBaby. You can reach us by phone at 866-626-6847 or by text at 855-999-3525.

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Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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