

Responding to Unnecessary Comments with Education & Humor

Adjust your responses as the situation warrants.

1. Do you have an ongoing relationship with the individual?
2. Are their insensitive comments likely to be a reoccurring problem?
3. Are they asking private information that you uncomfortable sharing?
4. Is this the location you want to have this conversation? Should you make plans to talk later?
5. Does the person have a legitimate concern or question?
6. Is the person just curious?
7. Is the person trying to say something that is valuable but is using language that is insensitive or outdated?
8. If the comment is made in front of a parent & child, should the parent or the child respond?
9. Is the person's brain just momentarily disconnected from their mouth?

Generic Responses

1. Educate the person on adoption/foster care issue while maintaining your privacy.
 - a. Children don't cost anything. Fees are paid for legal and agency services.
2. Use humor.
 - a. Didn't anyone ever explain to you where children come from?
3. Privacy responses:
 - a. That's private.
 - b. That's a very personal question that I have no intention of answering.
 - c. I can't believe you're asking such a personal question.
 - d. I know it is natural to be curious, but what you asking is personal and not your business.
 - e. I don't know one reason I need to answer your question.
 - f. Information on birthparents is our family's personal information.
4. Deflection responses:
 - a. You're confused about that.
 - b. Ignore the person or comment.
 - c. I'm surprised you would ask/think that.
 - d. Children are priceless.
5. Why do you want to know?
6. Call it what it is:
 - a. That's rude.
 - b. Your comment is offensive.
 - c. That is none of your business.
 - d. You shouldn't talk about things you know nothing about.

Books/Online Articles

- Adoption is a Family Affair, Patricia Irwin Johnson
- In On It: What Adoptive Parents Would Like You To Know About Adoption. A Guide for Relatives and Friends, Elisabeth O'Toole
- Adoption Awareness: Handling Awkward Adoption Questions & Comments – A Guide for Adoptive Families, Christine Mitchell
- Adoption.com <http://library.adoption.com/articles/answering-adoption-questions.html>
- Center for Adoption Support & Education, <http://adoptionssupport.org/>
 - Numerous books: WISE UP PowerBook, WISE UP- Children in Foster Care, Safe at School- A manual for teachers, educators & school counselors
- Adoptive Families Magazine, www.adoptivefamilies.com/
- “You Were Adopted?!: An Exploratory Analysis of Microaggressions Experienced by Adolescent Adopted Individuals”, Karin Garber, University of Massachusetts Dissertation/Thesis
- “Unmasking Racial Microaggressions”, Tori DeAngelis, American Psychological Assoc., 2009, Vol. 40, No. 2 <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2009/02/microaggression.aspx>

Bullying Resources

- <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

For Children

<i>INSENSITIVE COMMENT</i>	<i>POSSIBLE RESPONSES</i>
1. Where are your real parents? Do you know your real parents?	1. I live with my real parents. My mom & dad are my real parents. Why would I call him "Dad" if he wasn't my dad? I have birth parents and adoptive parents – all are real.
2. Why didn't your real parents keep you? Why did they give you away? Why didn't your real mom want you?	2. My birthparents couldn't raise any child (if all children in family were placed). Most kids are adopted because their birth parents can't take care of a child, so they are adopted by family who could. She didn't give me away, she gave me parents. Actually I was always wanted. My parents wanted me before I was born.
3. Is he (or she) your real brother (sister)?	3. Yes, can't you tell?
4. Where are you from?	4. Albany (or the town you live in). Didn't anyone tell you where babies come from? I was born _____ and live here _____ now.
5. You don't look like your parents.	5. People in families don't always look alike. You're real observant! I look like other members of my family. We may not look alike but we are alike in other ways.
6. Where did you get that hair?	6. It is a gift from God.
7. For kids living with 1 parent Where is your father (mother)?	7. My family is me, my mother (or father), brother & sisters.
8. Do you see your birthparents?	8. I know you're curious but I don't know you well enough to talk about my birth parents.
9. Do you want to meet your real parents?	9. I live with my real parent(s). Information about my birth parents is personal.
10. How does it feel to be adopted?	10. It feels like I live with a family that loves me very much.
11. Do you wish you lived with your birth parents? Do you miss your birth parents?	11. I'm very happy living with my family. That is too personal a question.
12. What are you? (meaning racial or ethnic)?	12. Do you mean racially - I have relatives that are _____. I am a kid. I'm a mix of different backgrounds. My birth parents are _____, my parents' are _____.
13. Why do you have a new last name?	13. I wanted to have the same last name as my parents. My last name changed when my adoption was finalized.
14. Which is your real mom/dad? (same sex parents)	14. Both of them. I know it can be confusing, but they are both my parents.
15. Do you worry your real parents will come back for you?	15. My parents are my forever parents by law no one can come back and get me.
16. Did your parents pay a lot of money for you?	16. People don't buy children. Professionals that help with the adoption get paid for their help. Just like hospitals & doctors get paid.
17. You're lucky your parents adopted you.	17. Like most kids, I'm lucky to have a family that loves me.
18. I hear adopted (foster) kids have problems.	18. That is a hurtful thing to say. How could someone say that without knowing the person?
19. Does he feel like a "real" brother/sister?	19. You don't need a biological connection to be a brother/sister.
20. Why don't you speak Spanish/Chinese?	20. I don't speak Spanish/Chinese the same reasons you don't speak the language. I'm an American so I speak English.
21. You don't act/talk black.	21. You don't have to act like you're from the "hood" to be black I'm more of Oprah Winfrey, ML King, Michelle Obama, Nelson Mandela... type I'm the real thing.

For Adults

<i>INSENSITIVE COMMENT</i>	<i>POSSIBLE RESPONSES</i>
1. Now that you've adopted your probably get pregnant and have a child of your own.	1. I have a child of my own. It is a myth that many woman get pregnant after adopting.
2. How much did he (she) cost?	2. Children don't cost anything. Adoption costs are for services only. Children are priceless.
3. I hear adoption is extremely expensive.	3. After adoption tax credit &, employee benefits, adoption is not as expensive as most people think.
4. What a shame you can't have kids of your own.	4. (Child's Name) is my own child.
5. Your kids look so different, which one is yours? Are they brother & sister?	5. They're my kids. They're brother & sister.
6. Do you have any children of your own?	6. These children are my own children. We have children by birth and adoption and they are all my own.
7. What do you know about his (her) parents?	7. I'm his (her) parents. Is there something you need to know about me? If you're asking about his or her birthparents we have information we can share with our child. My child will choose to share that information as they see fit.
8. Aren't you worried that the birth parents will want their child back?	8. No, we're their parents by law. It is a myth that birthparents frequently come back to reclaim their child.
9. Where is your child from?	9. Respond with ethnic history of everyone in the family –adults & children. Didn't anyone tell you where babies come from?
10. What is she (he) mixed with?	10. She (he) is part child, part angel.
11. Do you love him (her) like your own?	11. Of course, I don't know why you would think anything different he (she) is my own child.
12. Don't most adoptees have emotional problems?	12. No, research has shown that adoptees are just as well adjusted as their non-adopted peers.
13. Why would you want to keep in touch with their birthparents?	13. There are many great reasons to keep in touch with them.
14. Don't you worry open adoption will just confuse the children?	14. Children are capable of understanding the complexities of different types of families and there are benefits of having their birth parents in their lives.
15. How could anyone give up such a beautiful child?	15. They didn't give them up. By choosing adoption, they made the unselfish decision to put their child's future first.
16. Why couldn't she take care of him?	16. She couldn't take care of any child.
17. You're so special for adopting. They are so lucky.	17. I think families formed by adoption and birth are equally special. We're the lucky ones.
18. You're a saint for being a foster parent!	18. Loving children and providing them with a good home is something I love to do.
19. Your son (daughter) doesn't look like you!	19. He (she) looks like other members of the family.
20. Was he/she abused?	20. We don't share personal information, just like you keep your personal business private.
21. I could never raise/love someone else's child.	21. Adoption (or foster care) is not for everyone.
22. I couldn't be a foster parent, I would get too attached to the child.	22. I do get attached to the children, but my missing them is a small price to pay for them having a good home when they needed it the most.
23. Why would you want to take on someone else's problems?	23. I don't view it as a problem. It is a wonderful way to build a family.
24. Aren't you worried he/she will have problems?	24. There is never a guarantee a family won't face problems. Children born to families sometimes have problems too.
25. The children should be grateful you took them in.	25. I don't want them to feel grateful to me.
26. You must get paid a lot to foster the children.	26. The state provides funds for food, clothes and basic necessities for the children. Most of the time it doesn't cover all the needs of the children and I pay out of my own pocket to make sure the children have what they need.
27. You should have adopted a foster child. I never would have adopted internationally.	27. All children deserve loving families.