

Outline:
Talking with Your Adopted or Foster Child's about the Hard Parts of Their Story

1. Adopted and foster children often come to us with hard back stories: his birth parents are in jail, her birth mother used drugs or drank alcohol when she was pregnant, he was conceived via rape, siblings were kept by first family, it's not known where siblings are, her first mother abused him, his birth father abused his mother, her first parents are addicted to drugs or alcohol, ...
2. Should you tell your child these difficult parts of their history?
3. How should you tell your child these hard parts of their background?
4. How do you lay the groundwork with young children in order to fill in the details later?
5. By what age should you have shared all of your child's story with him?
6. Give specific examples of how a conversation might go with a preschooler, and how would you fill in the gaps for a 6 year old, 10, 13 year old, etc.
 - a. Child abuse
 - b. Addiction
 - c. Parent in jail
7. Can you use a lifebook to talk about rape, imprisonment, drug and alcohol addiction?
8. What is a lifebook and what should be included in a lifebook?
9. How to use a lifebook when there is jail, rape, abuse, etc in the child's story?
10. Specifically, how should parents tell their child that they were conceived during a rape?
11. Oversharing can happen with both parents and with children.
12. It's tempting when your child is an infant to tell people private information. Why should foster and adoptive parents avoid this?
13. When might it be important to share some details of the child's background?
14. How do you help your child understand how much of his story he should share with others outside the family?
15. How can adoptive parents help their children understand that they are more than the hard parts of their history and that they are not doomed to repeat their birth parents' mistakes?

Additional Resources

[Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child: Making Sense of the Past](#)

by Betsy Keefer and Jayne E. Schooler

[Talking with Children about Difficult History](#)

by Holly van Gulden

[Lifebooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child](#) (2nd Edition September 21, 2011)

by Beth O'Malley M.Ed