

Why Should You Join an Adoption Support Group?

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Some of us may attend the Annual Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA) conference, a social event, read a book with the discussion group, surf the webpage or even check out the CPFA Facebook page, but may never commit to membership. After all, we are raising our children, maintaining a home and, honestly, just trying to make a living. All this takes time. So why should we dedicate time to a support group? Why join one at all?

Information on the Adoption Network Law Center recognizes the importance of support groups on its website:

As an adoptive parent you will find yourself in a unique situation relating to other parents. Even if you have other friends who are parents, if they are raising their biological children, you might find a certain disconnect in some of your parenting discussions. This does not mean that you should drop or distance yourself from these friends, rather it means that finding a support group filled with parents like yourself who are dealing with a similar experience may be beneficial for all. A support group is a great way to relate to other people who have experienced the same or similar challenges to you. It will connect you with people who have gone through the adoption journey. No two adoption stories are alike, but most all adoptive parents can relate to the adoption journey. Solidarity on this topic is helpful and can give you an outlet when things get hard, making a support group a worthy invest of your time.

(Adoptionnetwork.com, 2018)¹

A support group helps us parent and provide lifelong lessons for our children. As volunteers at CPFA, we'd like to share a few of our personal stories.

One long-term volunteer shared that the other day their son, who currently works part-time in a local restaurant, came home and told them that he discovered one of his co-workers was also adopted. Somehow, it came up in conversation. He said that they shared with each other some thoughts about adoption, their home country, languages, and some of their own histories. The fact that he felt comfortable sharing and verbalizing this experience was impressive. What was even more impressive was that he felt secure enough to talk about his adoption to someone outside of his inner circle. Why? We believe it's because he and his family had been so involved with CPFA. Not only had his parents learned about having honest adoption-related discussions, but by participating in the social events and mini conferences over the years, he had met other adopted kids with whom he could relate.

Another volunteer's family had been involved with CPFA for more than a year before their son came home. They felt that through networking with other post-adoptive parents who understood their process and their challenge, CPFA was like their second family. They felt that there were people who welcomed their questions, shared in their hearts' desire, and provided them with the tools to appropriately speak with their families about

¹ Adoptionnetwork.com. (2018). How to Find Support Groups for Adoptive Parents | Adoption Network. [online] Available at: <https://adoptionnetwork.com/how-to-find-support-groups-for-adoptive-parents> [Accessed 2 Mar. 2018].

the process. More importantly, they felt prepared to have those conversations with their son. Once he came home at one week old, their son spent many holiday and social events at CPFA, with other adopted children, becoming comfortable talking about adoption. Today, he has open dialogues with his classmates and other friends. He even educates them about appropriate adoption language such as, “no my birthmother was not mean”, and “yes, this is my real family.” He is confident and comfortable deciding when and if he chooses to talk about adoption; his world is normalized. Additionally, networking with other parents can provide career advice, educational and school options, pediatric recommendations, books, etc.; the resources are endless.

Finally, a veteran volunteer of the group relates how her adult daughters, who now both work as social workers, have, on numerous occasions, helped adoptees and adoptive parents. They learned over the years how to appropriately and compassionately talk about their experience in the adoption triad. How? As little girls listening to their mom on the telephone assisting the adoption community, attending CPFA events as teens and as young adults, speaking on numerous adoptee panels at conferences.

As parents we want our children to be the best they can be. Offering the opportunities for our children to make friends and meet others who are also adopted or fostered can help make our children confident adolescents, teens and young adults. Participating in live events and discussions makes us better at talking with our kids about adoption, helps the whole family get through those rough times, and gives our children valuable communication skills and knowledge that few people have about the adoption journey.

According to the American Adoption Congress,² an international organization devoted to providing the needed education for all members of the adoption constellation, many people find that attending an adoption support group helps them gain a better understanding of the adoption experience and its impact. (Americanadoptioncongress.org, 2018)

In her March 2013 blog on HuffPost, *10 Things Adoptees Want you to Know*, Lesli Johnson³ states in #7 that adoptees want to belong. They want to connect and feel connected. Like everyone else, adoptees strive to find connection and acceptance. Although this idea of affiliation is sometimes inherent with those we are biologically related to, adoptees can find connection through support groups, interaction with other adoptees or identification with their birth country. (Johnson, 2018)

By joining CPFA you are not only investing in today, but also investing in your child’s and family’s tomorrow. It’s a long journey to raise our children; let CPFA be your GPS!

What is the value of a CPFA membership? Well, we can attest that the nominal fee has been returned to us in many heartwarming and tangible ways.

Want to share your talents or help others on their journey? If you would like to help CPFA even in the smallest of ways, please contact us at info@cpfanj.org. We would love to speak with you. We think you will be glad you did!

² Americanadoptioncongress.org. (2018). Who We Are - American Adoption Congress. [online] Available at: https://www.americanadoptioncongress.org/who_we_are.php [Accessed 2 Mar. 2018].

³ Johnson, L. (2018). 10 Things Adoptees Want You to Know. [online] HuffPost. Available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/lesli-johnson/adoption_b_2161590.html [Accessed 2 Mar. 2018].