

Culture, Heritage, and Stereotypes in Adoption

1. All children who are adopted have both a culture and a heritage.
2. At the point of adoption, most children will change their culture, but not their heritage.
3. Children in domestic adoption also change their culture when they are adopted.
4. Heritage is what belongs to you by virtue of your birth--genetic background, physical features, ethnic origin, family history. Heritage is based on facts, not values.
5. Culture is based on values that tells you how to live your life-- what to eat; how to dress; how to speak, sit, or stand; what is most important, your family or job.
6. You can change your culture, but not your heritage.
7. The older you are, the harder it is to change your culture.
8. Classifying a person solely by heritage is what we call stereotyping. A blonde woman is considered air-headed or clueless, all Asian are good at math, etc.
9. If we don't teach our children positive things about their heritage, they may learn the stereotypes or negative things from others.
10. It is impossible to teach another culture unless you are living it. So adoptive parents cannot be expected to maintain their child's culture. The best we can do is learn as much as possible about it, and of course, to emphasize the positive aspects of their culture, so they can be proud of it.
11. We are obligated, however, to help our children discover their heritage. In other words, we must help them learn the facts about themselves so that they can refute or ignore some of the negative stuff that may come later. It is our job, not our children's, to do this.
12. This applies to all children who were adopted. Even if they are from the same cultures, their heritage is automatically different and the fact they were adopted is another factor that can be subject to stereotyping by the media and by those who are uninformed.