

Explaining the Reasons

So, you want to complete a lifebook for your child but you're not quite sure how to explain the reason behind the relinquishment or abandonment. You're not alone! Many I've talked to say that this page in the lifebook is the hardest to write. Justifiably so!

We may never know the real reason -- plain and simple. However, there are probably preconceived ideas that we have, based on our knowledge of the socio-political climate of the area where our children lived prior to the adoption. Perhaps the region was war torn or was experiencing civil unrest. Perhaps a natural disaster left many children with sufficient care. Perhaps unemployment or lack of natural resources affected a birthparent's decision.

Will your young child understand any of these reasons? Not fully. Is one of them more valid in your child's unique situation? Probably.

A solution? Write using age-appropriate contextual clues and admit to know knowing "for sure" if you really are not. Here is an example:

"Alex, sometimes children do not always stay with the same parents they had when they were born. There are many possible reasons, but we do not know for sure in your case. The papers we received when we adopted you suggest that your birth mother had some grownup problems that would have made it very hard for her to give you even the basic things that little boys need. Whatever the reason, I am 100% positive that it had nothing to do with you, and you did not do anything wrong. After all, you were just a little baby!"

The text above does not go into a specific "adult" problem that may be too difficult to understand at given ages, such as abuse, addiction, poverty, etc. (While it's important to share those details, perhaps age three or four is too young to address them.) This example also doesn't make any assumptions about the reason for the adoption and admits that there are a variety of possible reasons. It uses documentation to support a specific statement so that when a child wishes to view their adoption paperwork later in life things will be consistent. Most importantly, as children sometimes feel like it was their fault that they did not stay with their birth family or that they were unloved, it confirms that they are not to blame.

If there are other lifebook topics that leave you perplexed, feel free to join my discussion group for answers and support!

Written by Jennifer Demar, adoptive parent of two and owner of www.scrapandtell.com, an online store specializing in adoption scrapbooking supplies and multi-cultural products perfect for lifebooks. With a layouts section and discussion board too!