

Smart Responses to Stupid Adoption Comments

Things to Consider Before Responding to Insensitive Comments

1. Do I have an ongoing relationship with the individual?
2. Are their insensitive thoughts/comments on adoption likely to be a reoccurring problem?
3. Are they asking private information that I'm comfortable sharing?
4. Is this the location I want to talk about this? Should I make plans to talk later?
5. Does the person have a legitimate concern or question?
6. Is the person just curious or noisy?
7. Is the person trying to say something that is valuable but is using adoption language that is insensitive or outdated?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 issues while maintaining your privacy.
 - a. Children don't cost anything. Costs are 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 do not want to answer.
 - c. I can't believe you're asking a personal question like that.
 - d. Excuse me, but I don't know one reason I need to answer your question.
 - e. Information on birthparents is our personal information.
4. Deflection responses:
 - a. You're confused about that.
 - b. Ignore the person or comment.
 - c. How surprising that you would ask that?
 - d. Children are priceless.
5. Why do you want (need) to know?
6. That's unkind. It is not ok to talk to someone that way.

Places to read more:

- Adoption Awareness: Handling Awkward Adoption Questions & Comments – A Guide for Adoptive Families by Christine Mitchell, Tapestry Books
- Adoption.com <http://library.adoption.com/articles/answering-adoption-questions.html>
- Center for Adoption Support & Education <http://www.adoptionssupport.org/pub/index.php>
 - Adoptive Families Magazine – online articles <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/>

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?
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 Birthparents aren't always able to provide and raise their child. 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? Are you asking where I was born or where I live now?
5. You don't look like your parents?	5. 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. Why don't you look like your parents?	6. Why do you need to know that?
7. Where did you get that hair?	7. It is a gift from God.
8. For kids living with 1 parent Where is your father (mother)?	8. My family is me, my mother (or father), brother & sisters.
9. Do you see your birthparents? Do you want to meet your real parents?	9. I know you're curious but I don't want to talk about my birthparents right now.

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.
3. I hear adoption is extremely expensive.	3. After adoption tax credit &, employee benefits adoption is usually no more expensive than giving birth to a child
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. What do you know about his (her) parents?	6. 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.
7. Aren't you worried that the birth parents will want their child back?	7. No, we're their parents by law. It is a myth that birthparents frequently come back to reclaim their child.
8. Where is your child from?	8. Respond with ethnic history of everyone in the family –adults & children. Didn't anyone tell you where babies come from?
9. What is she (he) mixed with?	9. She (he) is part child, part angel.
10. Do you love him (her) like your own?	10. Of course, I don't know why you would think anything different he (she) is my own child.
11. Don't most adoptees have emotional problems?	11. No, research has shown that adoptees are just as well adjusted as their non-adopted peers.
12. Why would you want to keep in touch with their birthparents?	12. There are many great reasons to keep in touch with them.
13. How could anyone give up such a beautiful child?	13. They didn't give them up. By choosing adoption, they made the unselfish decision to put their child's future first.
14. Why couldn't she take care of him?	14. She couldn't take care of any child.
15. You're so special for adopting.	15. I think families formed by adoption and birth are equally special.
16. Your son (daughter) doesn't look like you!	16. He (she) looks like other members of the family.