

Q&A with Dale and Raquel

Responding to Insensitive Comments

“Well, now that you’ve adopted, I’m sure you’ll get pregnant!”

“Are you ever worried that his/her real mother will take him back?”

“I really admire you; I don’t think I could love another person’s child as much as one of my own.”

“I’ve heard adoption is expensive. How much did he/she cost?”

“He/she is so lucky that you came along!”

“What kind of person just gives their child away?”

The list of shocking comments can go on and on. They are difficult to hear from strangers, but they are even harder to hear from family and friends. Family and friends are supposed to support us in our decisions not cause us pain. More importantly, as people who are central figures in your child’s life, you don’t want their insensitive remarks to hurt your child.

Begin by understanding that most of their remarks come from a lack of education not malice. Think back to before you began your adoption journey and realize how much you have learned along the way. Their ignorance of the adoption process may make them afraid for you – afraid that continued contact with a birth family puts your family at risk, afraid of unknown medical issues, etc. It can also make them afraid for themselves, afraid to attach to a child if they fear he/she may not be part of your family forever. It’s also important to acknowledge that grandparents may be grieving the loss of a genetic grandchild.

Use each remark as an opportunity to educate. Be sure to speak up at the time and not save up the comments until you reach a boiling point. It is best to keep the discussion short and to the

point and be gentle in your explanation. Acknowledge to yourself that many people’s knowledge about adoption is acquired through sensational media reports. In response to comments about loving a child who is not your “own,” simply respond that “Janie is my own child.” To remarks that refer to “real parents,” you can respond “I assume you mean Sam’s birth parents?” Questions concerning fears of losing your child to his/her birthparents can be answered with “We are Sally’s family according to the law.”

You can offer other ways to educate to family members or friends who seem receptive. Take them to the ODS conference. Have them talk to other grandparents or other extended family members who have personal experience with adoption. Get them a subscription to a newsletter or magazine. As these family members or friends become more educated, they can be ambassadors to other important people in your lives.