

stress, without this being viewed as failure.

Biological children in the family often help to build bonds with the new child, as it may be easier for a disrupted child to relate to other children than to new parents. However, biological children may also serve to heighten negative comparisons with the adopted child and this can be difficult [Katz, 1986; Thoburn et al, 1986]. Existing children may also grow to resent the enormous emotional effort put in to the adopted sister or brother by the parents, which inevitably lessens the time which was hitherto available for themselves.

Bonding depends very much on shared activities, social and physical. When families have fun together or carry out routine activities as a group, the feelings of attachment can almost visibly grow [Fahlberg, 1988; Smith & Sherwen, 1983; Thoburn et al, 1986; Ward, 1981]. While some lucky families bond immediately to their new child, others say that the relationship grows more slowly or that the relationship will always be different to that with their biological children [Thoburn et al, 1986].

Some families may never feel particularly bonded to their child, feeling more like caretakers [Reid et al, 1987; Thoburn et al, 1986]. Nevertheless, they may continue to give the security and continuity of a family to their children and this is worthwhile and valuable in itself. The initially high expectations of pre-adoptive parents set the scene for a great deal of striving, perhaps more so than for foster parents and family group home parents. This in turn may lead to considerable sadness when love just doesn't happen. However, whether the bond turns out to be a deep and loving attachment or involving a role as loving caretaker, most families who adopt, or permanently care for, older age children, find the experience a profound one, which leads to growth in all sorts of unexpected ways. ♦

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