



# Helpful vs. Hurtful Language

Words matter, and using the right words can help set the stage for a healthy relationship with your birthmother.

Instead of saying this	Say this	Here's why
<p>Real parent, natural parent, biological parent            Real mother or natural mother            Real father or natural father</p>	<p>Birth parent            Birthmother or first mother            First father</p>	<p>Terms like “real,” “natural,” and “biological” feel judgmental. They imply that there is a fake or artificial parent and send a negative message about the roles of adoptive parents and birth parents.</p>
<p>My own child</p>	<p>Our child</p>	<p>“My own child” is possessive and negative. A child does not belong to the adoptive or birth parents.</p>
<p>Give up or give away            Put up for adoption</p>	<p>Relinquish parental rights            Place for adoption</p>	<p>These terms cast a negative light on birthmothers and deny the trauma they’ve gone through placing a child.</p>
<p>Decide to give away</p>	<p>Make an adoption plan</p>	<p>Birthmothers don’t callously “give away” their children. They create a plan for adoption, which takes time and emotional struggle to follow through with.</p>
<p>Decided to keep            Decided not to keep</p>	<p>Decided to parent            Decided not to parent</p>	<p>To say a birthmother “decided to keep” her child sounds as if she took the child from someone else when in fact, we’re talking about the child she conceived and carried.</p>
<p>Kids she wanted or kids she kept            Kept some of her kids</p>	<p>Children she is parenting            Is parenting other children</p>	<p>The idea of birthmothers being good parents and deserving of relationships with all their children needs to be normalized. Saying she “kept” some of her children implies that the child placed for adoption was unwanted, unloved, or unfavored compared to other children she may be parenting.</p>
<p>The Adoption triangle</p>	<p>The Adoption constellation</p>	<p>Adoption Triangle indicates there are only three parties involved in adoption — birth parents, adoptive parents, and the adoptee. In fact, extended family should be included and celebrated.</p>
<p>Unwanted child</p>	<p>Child placed for adoption or an adoptee</p>	<p>Calling an adoptee “unwanted” opens up layers of trauma surrounding their adoption and is simply not true. Many birthmothers wanted to parent their child but couldn’t.</p>
<p>Is adopted</p>	<p>Was adopted</p>	<p>Saying “is adopted” implies that being adopted is the core of an adoptee’s identity, when in fact it was an event in their lives and doesn’t wholly define them. Saying “was adopted” acknowledges the rest of the adoptee’s life experiences.</p>