



Brothers and Sisters in Adoption: Helping Children Navigate Relationships When New Kids Join the Family

Arleta James

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What about the kids already there? How do they do when a child with a challenging past joins a family by adoption?

When experienced parents decide to adopt an older child or a sibling group, they jump through all kinds of bureaucratic hoops: background checks, interviews, group meetings, reading assignments, classes, etc. But most often the typically developing children these adults are already parenting (whether through birth or adoption) are left out of the process, informed that a new kid is coming, and simply expected to adjust to the addition of another sibling.

The addition of a child with a history of neglect or trauma cannot be a seamless transition. The expectations of everyone involved -- parents, new siblings, and, yes, professionals facilitating the adoption -- must be realistic, taking into account that the new child will need special attention that may take away time and attention from the already resident kids, that family life is likely to be turned topsy turvy until appropriate counseling and support are in place, that relationships will change.

Therapist Arleta James is certainly not the first person to recognize this, but she is the first to do something about it. *Brothers and Sisters in Adoption* offers insights and examples and sturdy, practical, proven tools for helping newly configured families prepare, accept, react, and mobilize to become a new and different family meeting the practical, physical and emotional needs of all its members. These well prepared and supported families are the ones who thrive!

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