

My family is my husband and I and we have three birth children who are now adults and two adopted children and at the moment we have two foster children as well. This little one is two next month and he has chronic lung disease he masters physical things and is coming off oxygen. He is a delight to all of us.

For us adoption was a decision that we made not because we had first thought about as something we wanted to do. We actually adopted the two children that we have as foster children and we just couldn't bear the thought of them having any more moves. We felt that they deserved a constant family and we love them very much ourselves so we couldn't bear to let them go.

Both our adopted children in a way have got special needs in a way. Our eldest one had a lot of changes at the beginning of his life and we felt he needed a lot of emotional and physical support. He is now 17 and he has had quite a traumatic life altogether and it is now coming to fruition the damage that those early changes have made and we just hope we are the rock to stand behind him and help him through this bad time for him. Our youngest son who is quite severely disabled is a treasure. We just love doing all the things that need to be done to help him get as much independence and love as we can.

I think you do need special skills to adopt but parenting skills are the most basic. To be able to support a child through quite tough times which is what adoption is really about. Children who have been moved show often signs of stress and trauma and you need to be there to recognise that their past has been there and help them move forward to better things I hope.

Dominic was placed with us as a child with disabilities and he needed a lot of nursing care and serious operations and surgery. When it came to the point of saying 'well Dominic is ready for adoption we just as family felt that if we didn't keep him, he would probably have die of a broken heart, because everybody loved him so much. That move would have been so traumatic and difficult for him, so we adopted him. He has gone from strength to strength and is a charming, charming, lovely boy.

We have received a lot of training in how to deal with each aspect of their care from the medical professionals. They are always ready to help if we have a particular problem or difficulty in doing something and nurses will come around to the house to help us. We are never short of help when we need it.

There are some myths about adoption which should be scoured from history and as my husband and I adopted both our children in our late forties, early fifties that is one myth I'd like to eradicate. If you are ready and steady enough to look after a child then the authorities will look at your application with true regard, you'll get there if that is what you are determined to do. Another myth is that people can be too young. I've had youngsters as me 'could I do that?' I think there is something to be said for a young couple or family looking for young children, to be there and ready, to have the energy to look after the children, because often if they are traumatised, the younger people seem to have the energy needed for those situations. The other thing is the difficulty that the authorities have in placing children with disabilities and families' fears of adopting a child with disabilities or special needs. I can only say that my husband and I have had a wonderful time with both of our children. If you are ready

and prepared there is no need to be frightened or scared of a disability or a special need because you will always get the help and support you need, if you are ready to ask for it. It will always be there.