

Holiday Gifts and the Family-Building Journey 2009 - 2010

by Joni S. Mantell, LCSW

The holidays can be particularly difficult for people when they are in the midst of their family building journey and buying the right gift may be challenging. You can Google as well as I can so I just want to share some highlights of my search for gifts for people whose lives are touched by infertility or adoption. I also want to address a few of the more delicate issues in gift giving to people dealing with infertility and all members of the adoption triad. The following are some ideas about gifts and holiday issues for:

1. People dealing with infertility
2. For everyone who relates to adoption
3. For people waiting to adopt
4. For new adoptive families
5. For birth parents
6. For Kids

For People Dealing with Infertility:

Pamper, pamper, pamper! And give them a genuine pass if they need to escape and do something private, hedonistic and self-indulgent rather than attend obligatory holiday events. What they are experiencing is both intense and temporary. They will celebrate with you in the near future and hopefully you will all forget the holiday events they missed. (This can also be said for many people who are waiting to adopt because the wait is also very difficult.)

1. Gifts related to infertility directly are unlikely although I did find some tee-shirts at the [Evil Genius Store](#). Some are crass IMHO and others are funny.
2. On a sweeter note: While true about ALL babies, parents who have endured a long and difficult family building journey may enjoy seeing their babies wearing the "[I am a miracle one piece and hat.](#)"
3. IAC Center Workshop [Family Stories: Creating and Parenting Children through Adoption and Donor Origins](#) that IAC Center is so happy to offer again in conjunction with [Judy Kottick](#).

For Everyone Who Relates to Adoption: An adoption related gift, stocking stuffer or item for one night of Hanukah is a thoughtful touch. You might consider:

1. Give a subscription of [Adoptive Families Magazine](#) to your friends, family-- or your local school or library.
2. [Tapestry Books](#) - The best site to find or get guidance in finding an adoption related book for yourself, your child or your friends and family. And if you cannot decide just get a [Tapestry Books gift certificate](#).
3. Many IAC Center Families like to get books to help in educating family or friends about adoption. See Tapestry Books' special section on [Educating Others](#)
4. Cultural cookbooks, music or tickets to related events are an interesting choice for a multi-cultural family.
5. [Adoption tee-shirts from CaféPress.com](#) - You will probably find a tee-shirt that is inspiring, uplifting or just plain sweet on this site. One of my favorites is "[Don't tell my Parent but they don't look a thing like me](#)"

- and I also love **"I am a dream come true"**. Another great place for adoption themed clothing is at **Esperanzas Hope**. See what speaks to you!
6. A 10-pack of **We Support Adoption Buttons** is a meaningful and cost-efficient stocking stuffer for family and friends.
 7. Sponsoring a child from the child's birth country or an animal from that country via the **World Wildlife Fund**.
 8. Personalized **ornaments** and **stuffed animals** at Mandy's Moon.
 9. **An IAC Center Workshops** - We hope you will join us for at least one workshop in 2010. Our most popular workshops are:
 - a. **Crossing the Bridge from Infertility to Adoption**
 - b. **Family Stories: Creating and Parenting Children through Adoption and Donor Options**
 - c. A workshop we learned from C.A.S.E. - **W.I.S.E. Up! For parents and children ages 6 to 11**
 - d. Our brand new **Children's Lifebook Workshop**

Grandparents who attend ANY IAC Center workshops are invited for free. This is one of our gifts to you. Email info@iaccenter.com for our most up-to-date workshop lists and please note that the IAC Center web site will be fully updated by January 2010.

For People Waiting to Adopt:

1. For an uplifting mantra, try the **Café Press.com's "I Believe in Miracles"** tee, or if you need to stop the flow of constant questions try the **"No, still waiting. No, No News. Yes, make mine a double"** tee.
2. And either now or right after your baby arrives, a MUST HAVE is a **Some things Are Worth the Wait baby tee and hat**. This is one of my favorites.
3. Journals: Consider Travel Journals for international adoption; and any beautiful journal for domestic prospective adoptive parents to record their journey and/or information they learn about the birth family to keep for the child.
4. Language Tapes for families who will be traveling to meet their child.
5. Parenting books like the encyclopedic **"What to Expect in the First Year"** or any of your favorites that you may also want to share with the expectant adoptive parent. A lot of adoptive parents like **The Attachment Parenting Book: A Commonsense Guide to Understanding and Nurturing Your Baby**. "Attachment Parenting" encourages early, strong, and sustained attention to the new baby's needs and many adoptive parents like this approach. This book is about building lasting bonds between parents and their children, and NOT a book about attachment disorders.
6. An **IAC Center Workshop**
 - **Baby Care for Adoptive Parents**
 - **Baby, Toddler and Child Care for International Adoptive Parents**
 - **Family Stories: Creating and Parenting Children through Adoption and Donor Options**
 - **Transracial Adoptive Family Issues**
 - **Domestic Adoption Workshop** and many others.

Email workshops@iaccenter.com for our most up-to-date workshop lists and please note that the IAC Center web site will be fully updated by January 2010.

For New Adoptive families

1. **Tapestry Books** - Offers adoption related books and gifts. I just love **The Baby Memory Book** for families adopting a child. The book features special pages that allow parents to describe the unique aspects of becoming a family through adoption such as "Our forever family tree," "The Story of our Sweet Path to You" and "Welcome Home".
2. Another beautiful customizable memory book for domestic and international adoption can be ordered at **AdoptShoppe**
3. **Red Thread Families** has China adoption gifts for both children and their parents
4. Ideas for families adopting from Korea: **The Heart and Seoul site**
5. Nice gifts for families adopting from **Ethiopia**: where I also found a fantastic **Giraffe tee-shirt** for giraffe-lovers, a group that includes me!
6. Some Mayan crafted gifts for families who have adopted from **Guatemala**
7. Check out **Born in the U.S.S.R.** for everything from a Russian Barbie to art, jewelry and lacquered eggs!
8. Commemorate a child's arrival with a donation to the adoption agency the adoptive family worked with. Many agencies have foundations which family and friends can make a tax deductible contribution.
9. The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption has teamed with artist Christopher Radko to offer a **unique, limited edition, hand-painted, blown glass ornament** that you can order at Macy's. Ten percent of the price will be donated to the Foundation which helps children to find homes.
10. Unique holiday cards, ornaments, crib sets, t-shirts and artwork can be found at adoption specialty site **Born in Our Hearts**.
11. And remember that adoptive parents are always grateful to receive a gift card to buy whatever their child needs!

For Your Child's Birth Parents

What do you send your child's birthmother for Hanukah or Christmas? I am not suggesting everyone will be doing this or that you will be doing it for many years. But if you do feel like sending a gift and many people feel that way, what is appropriate to send?

As one adoptive mother said, "We gave her a beautiful necklace when the baby was born. Now our little girl is 8 months old and everything is finalized. I send her pictures every couple of months however she never expressed the level of contact she desired. Would it be too much to send her a gift? And what would be an appropriate gift?"

At the IAC Center we hear that adoption-related or symbolic jewelry and photo albums or picture frames are the most frequent gifts given by adoptive parents to birth parents. Some adoptive parents even make photo or scrap books with pictures of the baby. If you haven't given these at the time of birth or shortly after, they are still really nice choices.

There are some Adoption Jewelry sites:

1. [Many Hearts One Beat](#)
2. Handmade [adoption jewelry](#)

If you search through these you might find something you like or take my advice, and head straight to Tiffany & Company. After all this is a gift she will treasure forever.

1. My favorite has always been the [Elsa Peretti® Open Heart pendant](#)
2. Now I have a second Tiffany's favorite, [The 2 Hearts Pendant](#). I really like the symbolism of one heart touching another. There are some other great choices on this website as well. After all the message you want to communicate is yours and you may find something symbolic to communicate what you want to say.

Keep in mind you don't have to make a holiday gift "baby associated." At this point, it is probably nicer to send gifts that aren't so much about her being a birth mother, but more about her being an important person that you feel very close to and want to do something special for.

You could give her something related to one of her interests or share something your family enjoys, like a favorite movie on a DVD or tickets to an activity like a movie, a concert, a restaurant, a spa day or a sports event etc. One family who loves renting movies every weekend, filled a holiday bowl with a container of popcorn, a few cans of a soda they found called "St. Nicks" (made by Shasta) and sprinkled a bag of individually wrapped chocolates all around in the bowl. They purchased a gift certificate at their local Blockbuster and put it in, wrapped it all up and tied it with a bow. Not that this is everyone's style but I must add their last touch for your amusement. They put a tag on this gift that said "Just Poppin' by for a Holiday Hi!"

Another family filled a holiday bag with Hershey Kisses and attached a large paper heart with their daughter's hand print on it. They punched a hole in one side of the heart and put a pretty ribbon in it so the heart could hang as an ornament. Their tag said "With a Heart full of Love and a Hand full of Kisses we wish you a Merry Christmas!" Clearly straight Happy Holiday tags will do too.

Think about things you love or something that is special to her or them if the birth father is involved. Whatever you send she will love it because it means you thought of her. And anything you give from the heart will be well received.

Small gifts for birth parents' children or involved grand parents can be considered as well. For the kids, send something related to their interests or some simple, basic toys. Home baked cookies, seasonal or favorite store-bought goodies or something to eat that is indigenous to where you live are some other good ideas.

For Your Children: Let's face it kid's love toys. If a few are adoption related, so be it! You can always find adoption-related:

1. Kid's books such as folktales from the child's birth country or a Compact disc of children's music from the adopted child's birth country or heritage. Amazon is a good place to begin your search.
2. A few books about adoption and the unconditional love of parents we recommend are: **In Case You Ever Wonder** by Max Lucado; **We Belong Together: A Book About Adoption and Families** <http://www.tapestrybooks.com/product.asp?plD=735&cID=105> by Todd Parr; **I Wished For You: An Adoption Story** <http://www.tapestrybooks.com/product.asp?plD=1067&cID=356> by Marianne Richmond; **Over the Moon: An Adoption Tale** by Karen Katz <http://www.tapestrybooks.com/product.asp?plD=186&cID=205> ; **Tell Me Again About the Night That I Was Born** <http://www.tapestrybooks.com/product.asp?plD=238&cID=99> by Jamie Lee Curtis and **My New Family: A First Look at Adoption** <http://www.tapestrybooks.com/product.asp?plD=172&cID=203> by Pat Thomas.
3. **Mandy's Moon** features unique personalized gifts especially for adoptive families. A huge selection of multicultural dolls, Asian treetop angels, and personalized adoption ornaments.
4. **Custom Storybooks** or if they like to scrapbook, you can find country specific and adoption lifebook supplies at **ScrapandTell**.
5. Crayola's brand new **Color Explosion Glow™ Board** will bring out your child's creative side with this fun board with see through drawing surfaces and alternating lights that change the colors.
6. Or bring them to the IAC Center's **WISE Up Workshop** for kids and parents; or **Children's Lifebook Workshop** for a post-holiday gift your whole family will treasure forever.

Enjoy your holidays and send me your gift-giving tips and Google finds too!

Joni S. Mantell, LCSW
JMantellMSW@iaccenter.com