

PARENT GUIDE



Welcome to the Transracial Journeys/June-in-April calendar activity deck. Each month has a theme and corresponding questions, conversation starters, and prompts for having more regular and intentional conversations about adoption, identity, and differences of race. ***We hope you find this 12-month guide meaningful and fun!***

Activating a new family ritual

Unless otherwise specified, the questions are designed for the children to ask the adults/grown-ups. Here is a suggested weekly breakdown for using the cards each month.

Week 1: Parents prep and reflect

- Review the month's theme and prompts
- Check-in with any emotions that come up for you and discuss with your partner, a trusted friend, or loved one
- Be intentional when thinking about the best time to create the family ritual

Week 2: Pick card 1 read/discuss

Week 3: Pick card 2 read/discuss

Week 4: Pick card 3 read/discuss and close out the month with any insights, challenges and new ideas for the next month.

Parents/Grown-ups: Read these tips before you jump in with the young people entrusted to you:

- Explore the calendar and deck on your own and think about the prompts/questions - maybe even write a few things down
- Have conversations with other trusted grown-ups first and anticipate any questions that may come from the children/young people
- Be sure you are centered and ready before diving into the conversations
- If you already have these kinds of conversations with children/young people, challenge yourself to take it to the next level
- Explain to children their role and how they will be able to ask questions to you as their parent

Tips

- Notice how you felt before, during, and after the conversations
- Notice any conversations that come up within a couple of days after you have your family "calendar time" and maybe even send yourself a calendar reminder to check in with your kids in a few days - "I was just thinking about how (insert feeling here) it felt to talk to you about (insert topic here) and wondered how you were feeling?"
- If your kids want to skip a month or a week, give grace but you as parents/grown-ups should still make the effort to explore the questions/prompts without them
- If you are inspired, ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going

Note: Planning for conversations surrounding this calendar does not mean that the only time you spend talking about adoption and differences of race will be when engaging with the prompts, questions, and thought starters. Doing more of this will give everyone in the family practice in steering into topics that may, at times, be uncomfortable or hard and continue to build your family's culture of openness and transparency.



PARENT GUIDE



AUGUST GROWTH: ALWAYS LEARNING AND GROWING

It's back to school time, but not just for kids! Parents can and should stay curious and committed to learning and growing especially when they are parenting children of another race. There will always be so much to learn! Having intentional and planned conversations about adoption and race will give everyone in the family an opportunity to get in touch with their thoughts and feelings and will augment the conversations you are already having.

Card 1: Identity

- Close your eyes and think of being a kid at school: What is the first word that comes to mind?
- Can you describe what your school was like?
 - How big was it?
 - How many other kids were there?
- What was your favorite subject?

Card 2: Relationships

- Who were some of your favorite teachers and why?
- Were there any kids or teachers who looked like me in your school?
- Were there any kids or teachers that were a different race than you?

Card 3: Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- Did you ever see black or brown students being treated differently?
- How do you think your experiences in school were different from mine?
- What can you do better to prepare me for what I might face at school?

August Pro-Tip: As the conversation about adoption and differences of race expands at home, be sure you are talking with teachers and educational professionals to make sure they are also creating space to learn and grow in what they know about differences of family structure and differences of race and culture.

SEPTEMBER CURIOSITY: RECLAIMING THE CALENDAR

The calendar is the perfect tool to:

- Celebrate the special moments and prepare for the harder ones.
- Honor every person in the family who is connected to your child and to you.
- Ensure you are making time each month to talk with intention about adoption and differences of race, culture, and class.

Card 1: Identity

- When you were a kid what was your favorite and least favorite month of the year and why?

Card 2: Relationships

- What special days do you put on the calendar every year so you don't forget?

Card 3 Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- What are some new holidays and activities we have added or can add to our calendar to celebrate the cultures that are unique to our family?



PARENT GUIDE



September Pro-Tip: It's a good idea to add the birthday of your child's family of origin. If you do not know the dates make an effort to find out and if that is not possible, pick a day where you will honor them in some way and start to institutionalize that on your calendars every year. This will make space to honor those that came before you and while birth parents may not be physically present every day they remain attached to your child and your family in spirit. Make plans to have special treats on these days to celebrate the people that are connected to your children and to you.

OCTOBER REVEAL: THE MASKS WE SEE AND THOSE WE DON'T

Whether you participate in Halloween or not, October 31st has many children and the young at heart dressing up in costumes and wearing masks. Today, the pandemic has given many of us cause to wear masks to protect ourselves from the Covid-19. But what is behind the masks you don't see? What do they reveal?

Card 1: Identity

- Did you dress up for Halloween as a kid?
- What was your favorite costume?
- Did you wear a mask?

Card 2: Relationships

- Do you think people wear masks that we can't see?

Card 3: Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- Have you ever tried to hide/mask your feelings?

October Pro-Tip: Think about the symbolism of masks and how you might mask your feelings about adoption and differences of race. What can you do to tap into those feelings and let them show in healthy ways? Do you recognize when your child might be masking their feelings? "We Wear the Mask" - Paul Laurence Dunbar

NOVEMBER NOURISHMENT: FOOD AND FAMILY AT THE TABLE

November brings us one of the more complicated historical holidays (Thanksgiving) and for many in the US, one of the more family and food-centric holidays. Whether you are a family that marks Thanksgiving or chooses not to in a traditional way, this month we are thinking about the family table and what might be true when there are differences of race and culture with transracial adoption. November also brings National Adoption Awareness Month, (NAAM) which can be challenging for some adopted persons.

Card 1: Identity

The Family Table:

- Describe your family table when you were growing up.
 - What was the food like?
 - Who was around the table?
- What were the best parts of family dinner-time?
- What were some of the harder parts?

NAAM:

- When did you first learn of NAAM?

Card 2: Relationships

The Family Table:

- Who were the people sitting around your family table?



PARENT GUIDE



NAAM:

- What does NAAM mean to you?

Card 3: Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

The Family Table:

- Were there ever people of different races around your family table?

NAAM:

- How can we find our own unique ways to honor and mark NAAM?

November Pro-Tip: Talking about family and complicated history can activate deep-seated emotions and feelings. Make sure you have the support you need to process your feelings before and after the conversations you may have with your children.

DECEMBER REFLECTIONS: MAKING AND BREAKING TRADITIONS

The December holidays give us an opportunity to think about traditions tied to different cultures and religions. Regardless of what you and your family honor and celebrate, we can be inspired to take a closer look at what traditions mean to us and how we can expand our thinking and actions.

Card 1: Identity

- As a kid, did you celebrate any December holidays?
- If so, which ones?

Card 2: Relationships

- Were there things that you would do year after year as a family during the month of December or maybe other months of the year?

Card 3: Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- What are some new traditions or holidays you'd like to learn more about and/or try?

December Pro-Tip: Resist the urge to hold tight onto traditions that may be holding you back from fully embracing new ideas that may better honor your child's culture. Also think about simplifying or modifying some of the traditions you now honor to make room for new ones.

JANUARY RELATIONSHIPS: HONORING THE WHOLE FAMILY

January is a time when folks traditionally take stock of where they are and may even make some resolutions for a new diet, more time exercising, or commitments to spending quality time with family. For families experiencing transracial adoption, January can offer a time to think about the year ahead and together as a family, continue the expansive journey of purposefully navigating family and differences together.

Card 1: Identity

- Each family member thinks about a few dates they want to add to the calendar - from a whimsical day like "national doughnut day" to Birth Mother's Day (the Sat before Mother's Day) to the anniversary of the death of a loved one. Each one of these days can be placed on the calendar with ample time to prepare!

Card 2: Relationships

- Work together to decide the best way to honor both the fun days and make room to honor and prepare for the harder ones.



PARENT GUIDE



Card 3 Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- What are some unlucky things about adoption?

January Pro-Tip: Do some pre-planning so that you have time to process some of the harder anniversaries or days on the calendar before discussing with children. Have some ideas to share for new dates to mark on the calendar so your children can react and be inspired to think about what they'd like to add as well.

FEBRUARY INTERSECTIONS: LOVE AND BLACK HISTORY MONTH

With St. Valentine's Day and Black History Month, this short month brings so many foundational elements of transracial adoption to explore.

Card 1: Identity

- What is one thing you love about yourself?
- What is one thing you love about me?

Card 2: Relationships

- Who was the first person you loved?

Card 3: Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- What makes us different?
- What makes us similar?
- What are some new ways we can honor and celebrate Black Excellence, Joy, Resilience?

February Pro-Tip: Be really honest with yourselves about what may be a real lack of knowledge and experience with differences of race/class/culture prior to parenting transracially. As you think about this, also think about ways you are addressing and will continue to address this lack.

MARCH PREPARATION: TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION: BE READY!

Have you had strangers ask inappropriate questions of you and your family? "Is she/he/them yours?" - "Where are they from?" - "Your child is SO lucky". These invasive questions are part of being a family that does not match and where differences of race are obvious to the world around you. It is important to be prepared for these intrusions.

Card 1: Identity

- Do you feel lucky to be my parent?
- Do you think I should feel lucky to be your child?

Card 2: Relationships

- How do you explain our family to friends and family? How about to strangers that ask about us?

Card 3 Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- What are some unlucky things about adoption?

March Pro-Tip: Make sure you have thought about specific times when moments of intrusion or inquiry have happened to your family. Think about the conversations you have had with friends and extended family when they were reflecting on how they feel or think you and your children should feel about adoption. These are intricate and complicated realities and thinking about them and talking about them will help ease what often lives under the surface.



PARENT GUIDE



APRIL BEGINNINGS: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Your name is central and significant to who you are and, in essence, can be the keystone of identity. When your child is adopted, there's another world, another narrative, and perhaps another name that accompanies them along with their "who am I?" journey. The way in which we build a strong and healthy identity often begins with our names as one of our central building blocks.

Card 1: Identity

- How do you feel about your name? Love it? Dislike it? Have never really thought about it?
- Did you ever change your name?

Card 2: Relationships

- How did you choose my name?
- Do you know if I had a different name before I was adopted?
- Did you discuss my name with anyone in my family of origin?

Card 3: Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- Does my name have cultural significance?

April Pro-Tip: Becoming more fully aware of the deeper elements of adoption related to names will prepare you to authentically hold the realities of identity formation experiences. Diving into these delicate topics may evoke strong emotions. Have confidence in yourself to take steps on this journey. As part of the TRJ community, you have the support, love, and guidance of this community to commit to moving toward complexities in service of a healthier, fuller experience of adoption for your child/children, your family, and for YOU!

MAY MOTHERS' DAY: CLAIMING FAMILY REALITIES

As a country we have been celebrating Mothers' Day since the 19th century, honoring women who play a pivotal role in the lives of children of any age. For some, Mothers' Day can bring the feelings of both celebration and complexity in very poignant ways. We can both celebrate the mothers/mother figures that are active in our lives and we can also wonder and have emotions surrounding the mother that is not in our life as much or at all.

Card 1: Identity

- How do you identify with Mothers' Day?
- What are the feelings you have about Mothers' Day?

Card 2: Relationships

- How would you describe your relationship with your mother/mothers/mother figures?

Card 3 Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- What are some things that mothers of different races might have in common and what are some things that may be different?

May Pro-Tip: Be sure to build in time for you and your child to process all of the feelings that may come about surrounding Mothers' Day. Resist the urge to expect gifts and instead give yourself something special to honor yourself as a mother or mother figure. Be prepared to help your child hold the both/and of this holiday.



PARENT GUIDE



JUNE FATHERS' DAY: CLAIMING FAMILY REALITIES

Fathers' Day came a bit later than Mothers' Day and there are many of the same things to think about and reflect on as we come to this day and the men that are part of our lives as fathers and father figures.

Card 1: Identity

- How do you identify with Fathers' Day?
- What are the different feelings you have about Fathers' Day?

Card 2: Relationships

- How would you describe your relationship with your father/fathers'/father figures?

Card 3: Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- What are some things that fathers of different races might have in common and what are some things that may be different?

June Pro-Tip: As with May it is important to spend some time reflecting on how you hold Fathers' Day for yourself and how you might be better equipped to hold your child/children as they experience their own version of the holiday. Best to have planned time for conversation with trusted loved ones and/or community members before, during, and after your family conversations.

JULY FREEDOM: EXPLORING OUR UNIQUE IDENTITIES

As we all learn more about our history and what freedom really means, July 4th gives us much to contemplate. Who is really free and when? Freedom related to adoption and exploring the truth of who we are as individuals and families is foundational and important.

Card 1: Identity

- What does freedom mean to you?
- Have you always felt free to explore who you are?

Card 2: Relationships

- Why do you think it is important that we all have the freedom to ask questions and explore everything that makes us unique and amazing?

Card 3: Embracing and facing differences of race and culture

- Can you help me understand why the 4th of July might be complicated for African Americans?

July Pro-Tip: Do your research on the complexities of July 4th and be ready to steer confidently into the conversation with your child/children. Create space to process the emotions that may come up as you prepare to have the conversation about freedom and enslavement with your child. Even if it is hard, don't shy away from moving in the direction of openness related to hard topics like this. It is only when we are confident and centered in the truth of our histories both collective and individual that we can be truly FREE!

