



April Showers





By Nicole Witt

Tips on Throwing a Baby Shower for Adoptive Parents

Traditionally, baby showers are all about the pregnant mother and soon-to-arrive baby. The décor, food and themes all revolve around the baby bump and delivery. Parents who are adopting often want a shower of some kind, but those around them don't know how to throw one that is sensitive to their particular circumstances. Adoptive parents already struggle with feelings of being "left out" from the traditional baby process and not having a proper shower that honors their journey can make their new family feel more isolated from the traditions.

Not to worry! Throwing an adoption shower is not as difficult as it may seem. There are many ways you can skirt around traditional themes, games and images to throw a party that adoptive parents will cherish.

Keep an Open Dialogue with Adoptive Parents

Many people want to try and throw a surprise baby shower, but for adoptive parents this is not a wise decision. Adoption is a different process and there are a number of timing options to consider. It is best to ask the prospective parents what they feel most comfortable with.

Some parents want to keep their journey as traditional as possible and want to enjoy the same things other women get to enjoy when they are pregnant. Because of this, they will want to have the shower before the baby joins the family. Others are worried about the adoption falling through and would rather have the shower after the baby is placed with them. Some want time to bond with the baby on their own before introducing him or her to a room full of strangers.

You will need to communicate with the parents to see what works best for them. Once they tell you what they prefer, don't immediately send out invitations. A lot of things can happen during the

adoption process and parents may decide they need more time before attending a shower. Keep the date flexible to coincide with their journey.

Choose a Unique Theme

The adoption journey is unique and the baby shower should be as well! This is also a great way to work around the traditional baby shower imagery with baby bumps and storks. Choosing a great theme that matches the adoption journey is a point of adoption shower planning that many struggle with. There are many great ways you can focus on their individual journey.

Consider where the baby was born. For example, if he or she was born in Chicago, you can make a cloud theme based on the Windy City. If they were born in Florida, make a beach or sun theme. You can also investigate the baby's cultural history and make it a cultural theme. If those ideas don't work, let it reflect the nursery design the parents have created.

Get Everyone Involved

Usually baby showers are all about the mother and only women are allowed. This journey is a little bit different. Think of it a bit more like a birthday party than a baby shower.

Make the party a co-ed event so both parents can celebrate the success of their adoption journey with friends and family. If the adoptive parents are comfortable with it, you can even serve champagne, mimosas or a specialty cocktail. This can give the adoptive mom a little "benefit" from not being pregnant and can make the party feel more celebratory. Along with baby gifts, make sure the parents get to celebrate with gifts of their own. Spoil the parents and make them feel special for the amazing feat they have accomplished.

Pick Different Baby Shower Games

Traditional baby shower games usually revolve around pregnancy and birth. Adoptive parents

can't participate in these games, especially if their shower is after placement. Instead, choose some shower games that match better with their journey. When choosing games, look at the child's age to help define what they should be. Some common ones I suggest to adoptive parents are Nursery Rhyme Jeopardy or a Baby Item Scavenger Hunt. These are centered on the baby already being home, eliminating the pregnancy focus.

Clue the Guests In

The guests that you invite may not know about their adoption journey. You need to let them know on the invitation that it is an adoption shower. Tell guests the theme of the event and to bring a little something special for the parents as well as the child. One of the most important things to tell guests on the invitation is the age and the size of the child. Adopted children may not always be newborns. Let the guests know this information so they can buy appropriate toys and clothes for the child.

Apart from the invitation, make the feeling of the party about the family as a whole. To prevent intrusive questions that can put the adoptive parents in an uncomfortable position, you can start the party with a cute children's book-esque story of the adoption so the guests get the 411 without the nitty gritty. Keep the party focused on the positives and make it a joyful celebration.

An adoption baby shower is a different kind of celebration of life. Being mindful of the parents and their journey to get to that point will help you plan an amazing shower they will always remember.

Nicole Witt is the creator of Beyond Infertility, a community support site and online magazine geared towards families who have gone through infertility. You can visit the website at BeyondInfertility.com. She is also the owner of The Adoption Consultancy.