

Jena Heath: Jencie, you were five when your parents adopted Juliann. Do you remember being in China?

Jencie Tomasek: I remember some things, not all the sights or the food. I remember certain things like where we stayed, the hotels and the different people we got to meet and be around. I know that we have some videos that I can go back and watch from our experiences there because we taped everything.

Jena: What was it like to have a new little sister come home?

Jencie: I thought it was cool. It was new for me. I didn't have a sibling for about five years. Then we went to go to China to adopt Jules. Now, I had to share stuff and do all these things that I wouldn't do if I were just an only child. It was a good experience because I got to make a life-long friend from that.

Jena: That's very nice. How do you feel about that, Juliann?

Juliann Tomasek: I'm glad to have an older sister to look up at. I don't remember anything from China.

Jena: No? Nothing at all? Are you girls curious about China?

Jencie: Yes.

Juliann: Yes, I am.

Jena: Tell me about that. What are you curious about?

Juliann: I'm curious about what more things they wear, their traditions, and how they act or how they learn.

Jena: You're curious about the language. Do you think you'd like to learn to speak Chinese sometime?

Juliann: Yes.

Jena: How 'bout you, Jencie?

Jencie: Yes. I would like to learn how to speak their language and include some of their customs and traditions into my own life and learn more about their history.

Jena: Do kids ask you about being Chinese or Chinese things? Do they make assumptions that you might know about China simply because you were born there?

Jencie: Sometimes.

Jena: If they ask you questions, what kind of questions have they asked you?

Jencie: Some of them are like do I know certain people, or have I been to certain places like the Great Wall of China. Some of them I can answer and some of them I can't. Even though I'm Chinese, I haven't done everything that Chinese people do.

Jena: Right. You're growing up in America. Do you ever feel like saying, "Dude, I'm growing up in Temple. I don't know?"

Jencie: I know. They think since we're Chinese that we do everything, we know all of the things about China like it's our life.

Jena: How 'bout you? Do kids ever ask you questions?

Juliann: It depends. Sometimes they ask how it feels to be Chinese and what we know about it. I feel like they should look it up or talk to me privately because I don't want everyone to hear. I feel a little more open whenever I tell them.

Jena: If a kid asks you in front of other kids, it maybe feels a little bit not very considerate?

Juliann: That's how I feel.

Jena: What do you do then when a kid does that? How do you handle them asking at a time when you're not particularly feeling comfortable answering?

Juliann: I stay calm and tell them the things that I know.

Jena: Are you ever tempted to say, "Hey, can I ask you some totally personal questions in front of a group of people and see how you'd like to answer them?"

Juliann: I say something like that, but not mean. I tell them, "I'll talk to you privately and we'll see what happens."

Jena: That's a really interesting response. Did someone help you figure that out? Did that just come to you?

Juliann: I just listen what they're saying, and then I tell them what I know and how I feel.

Jena: That's really awesome. Do you guys think at all or talk very much with your parents about your early origins, about your biological family? Is that something that you think or wonder about at all?

Jencie: Yes, I do. They are my parents but not my biological ones. Sometimes I have questions about that, like who were they? It saddens me not to know that I may never meet them or know who they are. I'm glad I have loving adoptive parents that love me.

Jena: How 'bout you, Juliann?

Juliann: I sort of wonder what it would be like to still have them. I'm glad that my adopted parents adopted me.

Jena: When you get older, do you think about maybe wanting to see if you could find out more information, or is that something that you're not really thinking much about yet?

Juliann: I might whenever I get older. I might go travel back to China and see what I can find and learn. Maybe the people who helped my adopted parents adopt me, they might know something, or at least their relatives.

Jena: How 'bout you, Jencie?

Jencie: It would be cool to go back to China, not just to see the sights or find out where I came from, but to maybe find out more about my parents. I think things happen for a reason, how I ended up with my adopted parents and how my biological parents, they just couldn't have me. I have to accept it and know that everything will be okay. If they're not with me, I still have loving parents that I do know that are with me.

Jena: Is there anything that you wish that other kids knew or would like them to know about being Chinese or being adopted or both? If you could put something in their heads without having to say it, is there something you would like to put out there to tell other kids? Jencie?

Jencie: Being from another culture or not being American or a certain culture doesn't mean you're any different from them. You're still a child just like they are. You do a lot of the things that they do even though you may not be the same culture. We're all basically the same. Just because we're from somewheres else or we look different doesn't mean that we need to be treated different or that we act differently. We should all learn to accept that we're all different and special.

Jena: How 'bout you, Juliann? Anything you want to put out there to other kids?

Juliann: I would like them to know, like Jencie said, even though that we're different, it doesn't mean that we should be treated differently. I would like them to know it's a little hard being adopted, but also fun in a way.

Jena: Thank you both very, very much. It's been wonderful to talk to you.