

POST-FINALIZATION ADOPTION SERVICES



Strong Families. Safe & Strong Kansas

AN ADOPTION PERSPECTIVE

“The child who is born into his family is like a board that’s nailed down from the start. But the adopted child, him the parents have to nail down, otherwise he is like a loose board in mid-air...”

~ Peter Kirk, Age 12



Strong Families. Safe & Strong Kansas

- ## AGENDA
- Rationale for post-adoption services
 - Issues/developmental triggers
 - What are post-adoption services?
 - Search/reunion
- 
- Strong Families. Safe & Strong Kansas

RATIONALE FOR POST-ADOPTION SERVICES



WHAT ARE CHILDREN BRINGING TO THEIR ADOPTIVE HOMES?

| | | | |
|---|-----|---|-----|
| Serious neglect | 63% |  | |
| Physical abuse | 33% | | |
| Sexual abuse (placed young; didn't know) | 17% | | |
| Prenatal substance exposure | 60% | | |
| Multiple moves home | 18% | | |
| | | Experienced 2 factors | 61% |
| | | Experienced 3 or more factors | 39% |



Post Adoption Challenges Confronting Families

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|---|
| Behavior problems | 51% | <p>Smith and Howard, 2003. <i>After Adoption: The Needs of Adopted Youth.</i></p> |
| Learning disabilities | 47% | |
| Emotional disturbance | 35% | |
| Developmental delays | 32% | |
| Chronic medical problems | 18% | |
| Mental or physical handicap | 15% | |

**Most common unmet need:
educational services; tutoring**



CHILD FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DISRUPTION/DISSOLUTION

- Age
- History of severe abuse/neglect
- Multiple losses of caregivers
- Early trauma
- Multiple placements
- Severe behavior, health, mental health or developmental problems
- Desire to be reunited with birth family
- Continuing relationships with birth family, not supportive of adoption



NACAC, 2010



PARENT FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DISRUPTION/DISSOLUTION

- Inadequate understanding
- Unrealistic expectations
- Inability to meet child's needs
- Conscious or unconscious deception in assessment process
- Unresolved infertility issues
- Parental loss
- Inexperience as parents
- Divorce or death of parents



NACAC, 2010



PROGRAM FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DISRUPTION/DISSOLUTION...

- Poor prep of child
- Poor prep of parents
- Inadequate support for family
- Expensive services
- Lack of information re: services



NACAC, 2010



SYSTEM FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DISRUPTION/DISSOLUTION

- Lack of available services
- Lack of expertise
- Lack of services to preserve birth family
- Lack of training to develop assessment, case management skills
- Policies that promote quantity over quality

NACAC, 2010



95% OF FAMILIES EXPRESS SATISFACTION WITH ADOPTION

When compared with youth emancipating from foster care, adopted youth are:

- More likely to complete high school or equivalent
- More likely to attend and complete college
- Less likely to be teen parents
- Less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol
- Less likely to have mental health problems
- Less likely to be arrested and incarcerated
- More likely to be employed
- More likely to have adequate incomes



DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARENTING BY BIRTH AND BY ADOPTION?

- Positive differences?
- Challenging differences?



COPING WITH ADOPTION ISSUES

- Deny differences
- Insist on differences
- Acknowledge differences

H. David Kirk, *Shared Fate*



ADOPTIVE FAMILIES DO FACE RISKS...

What are they?



PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESENCE

"The symbolic existence of an individual in the perception of other family members in a way that influences thoughts, emotions, behavior, identity or unity of remaining family members..."

Dr. Deborah Fravel



TASKS OF CARING FOR TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN

- Believe and validate experiences
- Tolerate child's affect
- Manage own emotional responses

Cook, et.al. Complex trauma in Children and Adolescents, 2005



COMPASSION FATIGUE

Feeling numb, burned out and unable to emotionally handle the child's sad history



ADOPTION ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERSTANDING OF ADOPTION

Age 0-3

- Practice story
- Collect info

Age 3-7

- Concrete thinking
- Parrot story
- Magical thinking



DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERSTANDING OF ADOPTION

Age 8-11

- Understand story
- Concerned with fairness
- May go "underground"

Age 12-15

- Identity concerns
- Wants control, independence
- Anger, confusion



DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERSTANDING OF ADOPTION

Age 16-18

- Intimacy issues
- Emancipation concerns
- Considering search

Age 19+

- Establishing independence
- Ambivalence about their birth family



ADOPTION ISSUES

- Loss/Ambiguous Loss
- Control
- Divided Loyalty
- Abandonment/Fear of Rejection
- Shame/Guilt
- Trust
- Identity



AMBIGUOUS LOSS

A physical loss of someone or something remaining as a psychological presence



"With ambiguous loss, there is no closure; the challenge is to learn how to live with the ambiguity."

Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief, Pauline Boss



LOSS/GRIEF

Child has lost:

- Birth parents, siblings, grandparents, pets, information, history, culture, control. (Why)
- Lifelong, especially when triggered by losses (When)

Possible Indicators:

- Over-reactions to loss of pets, friends
- Panic if parents become ill or go on a trip
- Panic with sleepovers, camp
- School phobia
- Difficulty emancipating after graduation



YOUR TURN

- Why is this an adoption issue?
- Are there times it might be more likely to surface?
- What are the behavioral indicators a child/teen is struggling with this issue?



EVENTS THAT MIGHT TRIGGER ISSUES

- Child's birthday
- Anniversaries of separations
- Mother's Day
- Holidays
- Transitions/Moves/Losses
- Medical crises (parent or child)
- Adolescence
- Graduation
- Engagement/Marriage
- Pregnancy
- Mid-life crisis
- Death of adoptive parents



ADOPTION ISSUES FOR PARENTS

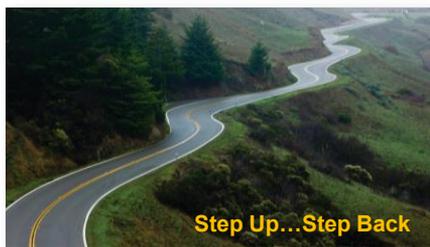
- Loss
- Unmet expectations
- Infertility
- Feelings of failure/guilt
- Entitlement
- Fear/threat of birth parent
- Isolation
- Control
- Relationship of birth and adopted siblings



WHAT CONSTITUTES POST-LEGALIZATION ADOPTION SERVICES



LONG-TERM BRIEF THERAPY



POST ADOPTION SERVICES

- Education/Training
- Associations
- Support groups
- Crisis intervention
- Family networking/mentoring
- Family therapy
- Respite care
- Day treatment
- Kinship placement
- Residential treatment and...



HANDLING INQUIRIES FROM TRIAD MEMBERS...DO NOT DISCLOSE:

- Name: first, last, alias or maiden
- Social Security number
- Address
- Telephone number
- Place of employment



TOP BARRIERS TO ACCESSING POST ADOPTION SERVICES...

| | |
|---|-----|
| Inability to find needed services | 43% |
| Providers who don't understand adoption | 39% |
| Services that cost too much | 33% |
| Providers who don't accept Medicaid | 30% |



MEET MARCUS

- Issues?
- Triggers?
- Services?

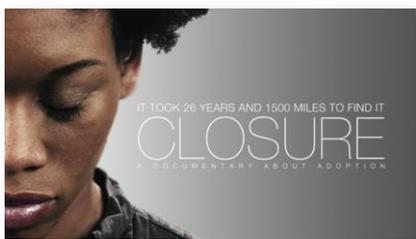


THE LIFELONG JOURNEY -

Dealing with Issues of Search and Reunion



CLOSURE



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- How did adoption issues play out in the lives of all parties involved: Brian, Angela, adoptive mom, adoptive sister, birth mother, birth siblings, birth father?
- What are your thoughts about her adoptive mother's response to her need to search? Her sister's response?
- What are your thoughts about how Angela initiated her search and how she contacted her birth parents for the first time?
- Why did Angela's birth mother initially reject her?



THE SEARCH

- Read your role.
- Begin your search.
- Get to know one another.



WHY DO TRIAD MEMBERS SEARCH?

- Need medical information
- Identity—Who am I like?
- Facing a life transition
- Answers....Why?
- Need to connect
- Others?



WHY DO TRIAD MEMBERS DECIDE NOT TO SEARCH?

- Lack of interest
- Loyalty to adoptive parents
- Wonder if they have a right
- Fear of rejection
- Others?



EXPECTATIONS

Adoptees

- Emotions/fears
- Fantasies: "perfect family"
- What will be role of birth family in life?
- Do I want answers or relationship?

Adoptive Parents

- Reminder of failure/loss
- Inadequacy/rejection
- Fear adoptee may be hurt



PHASES OF REUNION



- May happen in any order
- Some do not experience all phases
- Most logical progression



PHASES OF REUNION

- May happen in any order
- Some do not experience all phases
- Most logical progression



FACTS OR FANTASY QUIZ

Would any of your answers change after attending this workshop?



QUESTIONS

How will you use this information in your practice?



Adoption Assessor – Tier I

Post-Finalization Adoption Services

Agenda

Section I: Introduction: Setting the Stage

Section II: Rationale for Post-Adoption Services

Section III: Adoption Issues for Children and Families

Section IV: What Constitutes Post-Legalization Adoption Services

Section V: The Lifelong Journey: Dealing with Issues of Search and Reunion

Section VI: Transfer of Learning

Post-Finalization Adoption Services Competencies

201-07-001

Knows the predictable phases and tasks to be resolved by children and their adoptive families during their adjustment to adoption

201-07-002

Knows the events, circumstances and types of activities that can trigger emotional distress or crisis for adopted children and their families

201-07-003

Knows the laws, regulations and ethics regarding confidentiality in disclosing information among birth parents, adoptive parents and minor and adult adoptees

201-07-004

Understands the emotional reactions, including ambivalence, often experienced by children and their adoptive families before and after adoption finalization

201-07-005

Understands how a child's adoption-related distress may manifest in anxiety, depression or unruly/disruptive behavior

201-07-008

Understands how adoption may affect adopted children and their families throughout their lives and the life stages and events when adoption issues are most likely to resurface

201-07-009

Understands the reasons adopted children and their birth families may search for each other and the potential psychological conflicts that may occur

201-07-014

Can educate adoptive families and children about post-adoption issues and normalize their experiences and feelings to help reduce their distress

201-07-015

Can work within legal and ethical confidentiality guidelines when providing information about adopted children and birth family members who are searching for each other

201-07-016

Can prepare adoptive families to share information about the child's birth family and placement circumstances in greater depth and detail as the child grows

Adoption: Facts or Fantasy

Please discuss and answer these questions.

| Question | True | False | Just Not Sure |
|---|------|-------|---------------|
| 1. The issues of parenting a child by birth are just like parenting a child by adoption. | | | |
| 2. Adoptive parents who are experiencing trouble with the adoptive child are often afraid to ask anyone for help. | | | |
| 3. Adopted children are glad to be adopted. | | | |
| 4. Dealing with the issues of adoption is a process usually completed by young adulthood. | | | |
| 5. Middle childhood years are important years for understanding adoption. | | | |
| 6. Older adoptions experience trouble more frequently than infant adoptions. | | | |
| 7. Only a small percentage of adoptees consider searching for birth parents. | | | |
| 8. Adoptive parents might intellectually support the search, but emotionally dread it. | | | |
| 9. Birth parents “forget” about their children in a few years. | | | |
| 10. Many adoptees feel rejected by their birth families. | | | |

Factors Associated with Adoption Disruption and Dissolution

Post Permanency Services, M. Freundlich and L. Wright, Casey Family Programs

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Child Factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age at time of placement• History of severe abuse/neglect• Multiple losses of caregivers• Early trauma• Multiple placements• Severe behavior problems• Severe or extensive health problems, mental health or developmental problems• Attachment problems• Rejection of adoptive family or desire to return to birth family• Continuing relationships with birth family that pose barriers to adoption. |
| Parent Factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inadequate understanding of realities associated with parenting a child with special needs• Unrealistic expectations• Acceptance of a child into family when family does not have capacity to meet child's needs• Conscious or unconscious deception in the assessment process• Unresolved infertility issues• Parental loss (e.g. death of a child prior to adoption)• Lack of awareness of or disregard for importance of race/culture in adoption• Inexperience as parents• Divorce• Death of adoptive parent |
| Service/Program Factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor preparation of child for adoption• Inadequate preparation of prospective adoptive parents• Inadequate agency support provided to the family pre-and post-placement and post-adoption• Prohibitively expensive services• Failure to provide information on services and how to obtain them |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Systems Factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of available, accessible services across all systems• Lack of adoption expertise among mental health and education professionals• Lack of commitment and resources to address general poverty, family support and family preservation services (to reduce the need for adoption)• Lack of emphasis on and commitment of resources to develop professionals' assessment, case management and intervention skills• Lack of resources to develop effective service delivery systems• Policies that emphasize the numbers of and timelines for adoptions at the expense of quality services |
|------------------------|---|

Continuum of Development of Adopted Children

Adapted from a handout developed by Parenthesis Family Advocates, Columbus, Ohio

| 0-3 Years | 3-7 Years | 8-12 Years | 12-16 Years | 16-19 Years |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Adopted child does not realize difference between himself/herself and non-adopted children | Child asks a lot of questions. Loves to hear adoption story. Can repeat it verbatim but has little understanding of the concepts | Child understands concept of adoption. Begins grieving process. May stop asking questions as part of denial. Realizes he/she had to lose something to be adopted | Child enters anger stage of grieving. May resist authority and try on new identities. May be angry over loss of control in his/her life | Young adult may be depressed and over-react to losses. May be anxious about growing up and leaving home |
| Strategies for Parents | | | | |
| Collect as much concrete information as possible (goodbye letters from birthparents and pictures are helpful) Develop "Life Book" for child, including these concrete bits of information. Begin talking comfortably and positively with your infant, family and friends about adoption. | Encourage questions and answer honestly. Difficult issues may be omitted (but never changed) until child is older. Tell Adoption Story as a favorite bedtime story. Use and add to Life Book. Reassure child that he/she will not lose adoptive family | Don't force child to discuss issues but let him/her know you are open and comfortable when he/she is ready. Let child know it is understood that he/she can love both sets of parents. He/she does not have to choose. Ask if child has questions or feelings he/she would like to discuss. Let child know you are not threatened or angry about questions regarding birth family and/or past history. | Allow child to exercise control whenever possible. Provide opportunities for decision-making. Child has a right to his/her birth information. Help child access and accept information. Avoid responding to child's anger with anger. Know that much of this anger is directed at the birthparent. Set firm limits with clear consequences for broken rules. Allow child to experience natural consequences of behavior. Let child know you love him/her no matter what. | Let child know he/she may remain at home after graduation if he/she chooses. Be alert for sadness when relationships with peers fail or during anniversary reactions, such as birthdays or Mother's Day. Continue to keep adoption topic open within the home. Provide supportive opportunities for independence and freedom. |

The Biological Clock: Key Times in an Adopted Person's Life

By Carol L. Demuth, CSW-ACP
Adapted from "Adoptalk Newsletter" Fall 1991

The non-adopted person is surrounded by genetic heritage and has easy access to family history. In families formed biologically, answers abound and are absorbed before the need for a question arises. Feelings of belonging and relatedness are taken for granted as they develop gradually and become a part of the person's identity.

Shared ancestry, family resemblances, and in some cases, cultural heritage are denied the adopted person, who grows up separated from blood relations. As the adopted person matures, the need for information about his/her birth family grows. Both external life events and internal processes may trigger the desire for additional knowledge or bring to the surface the need to know one's roots.

The following outline will give both the professional working with the adopted person and the adopting parents an idea of the key times at which an adopted person may need more information or may have increased wonderings about his/her birth heritage. The list is not exhaustive, nor is it meant to imply that every adopted person will have the same need for information at each of these times. An increased awareness of these times, however, will aid those who interact with adopted persons in being more emotionally available and in being better able to meet the adopted person's needs.

Preschool Years (2-5 years)

- When the child becomes aware of a pregnant woman in his/her environment this causes him/her to approach his/her parents with questions about his/her own birth, which he/she initially will probably connect with his/her adoptive parents.

Entrance into School

- The child must deal with adoption outside of the family for the first time, often the first time he/she has done so on his/her own.
- He/she may feel different from his/her peers.
- He/she may be faced with questions for which he/she has been ill prepared.

- He/she begins to become aware of society's views about adoption, which may differ from those held by his/her parents.
- Realization of "how babies are made".
- The child realizes there are two people who are not his/her adoptive parents that made him/her, but chose not to keep him/her.
- He/she may wish he/she had been born to his/her adoptive parents.

Birthdays

- This becomes a natural day to "connect" with the birthmother psychologically. As the adopted person reflects on his/her own birth, he/she will wonder if his/her birthmother is thinking of him/her too.
- Although primary thoughts will concern the birthmother, there may also be thoughts about the birthfather.

Times of Loss

- Death, divorce, a move, rejection by a friend, etc., any loss has the potential of triggering the original loss of the birthparents, once the child is aware of their existence.
- Also, TV programs, movies or books about loss may have the same effect.

Medical Appointments, Illness or Medical Crises

- Because the adopted person does not live within his/her biological family, he/she rarely has as much medical history as a non-adopted person.
- The adopted person's access to updated medical information is rarely equal to that of a non-adopted person.
- An adopted person may feel disconnected, experience heightened anxiety and possibly anger at the lack of medical history.

Adolescence

- The presence of abstract thinking allows for a more thorough and complex processing of the "whys" of the adoption.
- The adopted adolescent may wonder about what "might have been," and entertain fantasies, both positive and negative, about birthparents.
- The absence of biological role models may lead to feelings of disconnectedness and heightened anxiety about bodily changes.
- Entrance into male/female relationships and the accompanying feelings of sexual attraction may cause speculation about the relationship between birthparents.

- The adopted adolescent may try to use his/her adoptive status as a tool for manipulating his/her parents, if he/she senses they are unsure of their role or threatened by birthparents.

Attainment of Adult Status (18-21 years)

- An adopted person may feel this is the first time he/she has a “right” to information on his/her birth family. Also, he/she may feel more comfortable seeking information directly, rather than going through his/her adoptive parents.

Engagement or Marriage

- The adopted person may have fantasies of marrying someone to whom he/she is related, if the birth family is totally unknown.
- Contemplation of having children may be fraught with fear and anxiety, if medical history is unknown.

Pregnancy/Birth of a Child

- Will often cause the adopted person to reflect on his/her own birth and his/her position in the chain of life.
- The adopted person may experience anger and/or feelings of loss and depression as he/she reflects on not being kept by birthparents.
- Often has increased expectations of feelings towards the baby born to him/her, as the child frequently is the first person he/she knows to whom he/she is related.
- A female adoptee may be particularly reflective during pregnancy, labor and delivery.

Mid-Life Crisis

- Sometimes this is the turning point to seek information if it has been thought about, but postponed before.
- An adopted person becomes aware of birthparents’ increasing age and possibility of their impending death.

Death of Adoptive Parents

- May trigger original loss of birthparents
- An adopted person may feel freed for the first time to pursue personal information without fear of hurting the adoptive parents.
- He/she may unconsciously be seeking to replace lost family.

Questions from Children

- Even when adopted person has not sought information, his/her children may raise questions or need information that will cause an adoptee to pursue more information or possibly search for birth relatives.

Old Age

- An adopted person may realize this is his/her last chance to seek information before his/her own death. Often, he/she realizes his/her birthparents are deceased, but he/she may want information or contact with siblings.
- Often the adopted person wants to leave information to his/her own children.

Themes in Adoption

Parenthesis Post Adoption Program

Children who have suffered a loss through death, divorce, foster care, adoption or other separation seem to share several common issues. However, each child will react or respond to the loss dependent upon:

- The significance of the loss
- Whether the loss is temporary or permanent
- Inherent coping abilities of the child
- Availability of supports
- Age and cognitive abilities of the child
 - At the time of the loss
 - At the present time

Consequently, while some children may react in very extreme ways, others may respond mildly or not at all. In addition, while one child may be affected in the area of loyalty, for example, another may be preoccupied with identity issues. What follows is a discussion of these common themes with particular attention to their appearance in adoption.

Grief

When children have been separated from significant figures, their emotional response is one of grief and mourning. For the infant adoptee, the loss is of the fantasy or dream parent he/she have never met and of “what might have been”. For the older adoptee, it most likely is a real loss of biological family or foster family. Grief is a process. There are five identifiable stages. However, not every individual will experience each stage or experience them in the order presented:

Shock/Denial

The child is emotionally numb and cannot accept the loss. The child may deny his/her own past or ethnicity. The child denies that he/she is adopted or may refuse to talk about being adopted. This stage is the mind’s attempt to prevent the individual from feeling the pain of loss.

Anger/Rage

Now the numbness has worn off. Unfortunately, for the adoptee, this stage frequently coincides with adolescence, creating great chaos and confusion. The teen may be angry with himself/herself for causing the separation, thus feeling guilty, and many teens punish themselves via self-defeating behavior. The youth may be angry with the adoptive parents, perceiving the adoption as a kidnapping and may be verbally abusive, defiant, physically aggressive, truant, irritable or oppositional. And the teen may be angry at the birth family for abandoning him/her.

Bargaining

In this stage, the youth attempts to regain the “lost” figure through manipulation. The sophistication of the bargaining behaviors is dependent upon the child’s cognitive and developmental level. Younger children may be “as good as gold” thinking that they’ll be rewarded for their behavior. Older children may attempt to disrupt the placement via acting out behavior. Adolescents may run away, make allegations of abuse or try to “negotiate” the return of the lost figure. Children in this stage of grief also spend a great deal of time fantasizing about the birth family, often looking for them in favorite teachers, movies stars or even in crowds.

Depression

Once the youth recognizes that the attachment figure is not returning, he/she will enter into depression, a state of mourning and sadness. Here, the youth withdraws from normal activities; eating and sleeping patterns change. He/she is moody and cries easily. Suicidal ideations and gestures as well as substance abuse may also appear as problems for some youth.

Resolution/ Understanding

Under normal circumstances, one cannot tolerate lengthy periods of psychic pain or depression. Consequently, the youth will begin to move towards resolution, slowly at first. It should be noted though, that grief is never fully resolved. Given time and support, it does become manageable. Occasions will arise, such as holidays, anniversaries or other significant events during which the youth may “re-grieve” their loss. When a child enters resolution, there is a return to age-appropriate activities and developmental tasks. Life is fun again. School performance and appearance improve. The child re-engages in the family.

Control

For children who have experienced a loss, many feel they had had no control or decision-making power over their own lives. The adoptees did not choose to lose their birth family, etc. This generates a feeling of frustration and helplessness for many children. Consequently, they may try to regain control of their lives by being orderly, compulsive, neat—needing routine or planning ahead. Other youth may demonstrate their need for control via constant power struggles with authority figures, truancy, defiance, substance abuse or tantrums. The bright, sophisticated child

may hide things, hoard food, develop eating disorders or utilize more creative means to control family life. In fact, some adoptees create chaos in the family as a means of controlling other family members.

Loyalty

Having at least two sets of parents creates quite a conflict for the child (whether the parents are real or fantasy). This is also frequently the case for children of divorce. The child may feel that closeness and love for one set of parents may be an act of disloyalty towards the other set of parents, thus hurting them. The child finds himself/herself in a dilemma and may be overrun by feelings of guilt. Behaviors frequently seen are: distancing from family members, fantasizing about birth family, confusion/conflict regarding search, guilt over being happy in the adoptive family, denial of having questions or curiosity regarding his/her adoption. The issue of divided loyalty frequently crops up around the time of the child's birthday or around Mother's Day.

Rejection / Fear of Abandonment

Regardless of the actual circumstances surrounding the child's adoption, the child's perception is frequently one that he/she was rejected and subsequently abandoned by the birth family. Consequently, some adoptees may feel hurt or angry toward their birth parents. Some adoptees feel that they are unlovable and "unkeepable," and they may act out to test the commitment of the adoptive family. To avoid rejection, some adoptees may not allow themselves to get close to others, or they will reject others before they can be rejected. Some adoptees react by continually seeking acceptance and approval from those around them, being almost too good. It is not surprising that developing and maintaining relationships is a difficult task for some.

Self-Esteem

The perception of being rejected is a direct blow to the adoptee's self-esteem. As one adoptee said, "How can someone who never knew me give me away?" Some adoptees believe that something is wrong with them. They may feel unwanted. Some adopted individuals assume the worst about their birth families and believe that their genetic makeup is far from ideal. School performance and self-confidence are frequently affected. Because they believe themselves to be less, they may settle for less-than-ideal friends or act out their self-image. They may engage in self-endangering behaviors. Some adopted youth seem to fear success, which would challenge their self-concept.

Trust

This is a particularly crucial issue for children who have had multiple moves during their young lives. Separations at an early age may threaten the establishment of a basic trust and attachment, which is so necessary for healthy growth and development. Many older adoptees come from a history of abuse and neglect and homes where broken promises are the norm. These children may avoid closeness or require longer times to "warm up". They may have difficulty with

intimacy or become involved in clinging, dependent relationships. Stealing, lying and delayed conscience development may occur in some cases.

Identity

The lack of information and secrecy that frequently surrounds the child's history and birth family make it difficult for the adoptee to establish his/her identity, a major task of adolescent development. The teen may find this issue confusing, frustrating and scary. He/she may have no known history or connection to formulate a base for the "self". "Who am I?" is no longer a rhetorical question. For the child adopted at an older age, the information may be negative (mental illness, substance abuse, abuse/ neglect) or chaotic.

Adolescents who are experiencing extreme difficulty may resort to running away, trying on multiple (and usually bizarre) identities, hanging out with "low-life" peers, promiscuity, pregnancy, depression or anger. Some adoptees state that they have always felt different and have never fit in with their peers, as being adopted prevented them from "being like everyone else". Consequently, they may initiate a search to satisfy this need, or they may create a blood tie through a pregnancy.

Conclusion

Not all adoptees experience problems with these issues. Some may experience minor difficulties at different developmental stages. The adoptive family, sometimes with the help of a knowledgeable professional, may handle these minor difficulties successfully. A small percentage of adoptees find these issues overwhelming and require services that are more intensive. It is recommended that adoptive families experiencing extreme distress find post-adoptive services that can provide support and assistance that is specific to the adoption-related issues of the child.

Developed by:
Denise Goodman, PhD
Betsy Keefer, LSW

The Seven Wonders of Adoption

Wonder # 1: Loss and Grief

*"I wonder why I lose everyone and everything that is important to me.
What is the matter with me?"*

Wonder # 2: Rejection/Abandonment

"I wonder if these people are really going to keep me."

Wonder # 3: Guilt and Shame

"I wonder what I did to make my own parents throw me away."

Wonder # 4: Trust

"I wonder if I can believe what these people are telling me."

Wonder # 5: Identity

"I wonder who my people are and if I will be like them."

Wonder # 6: Control

*"I wonder why everyone else makes decisions about my family, my name, how
much information I get, how old I have to be to meet my siblings or birth
parents... When do I get to make important decisions about my life?"*

Wonder # 7: Divided Loyalties

*"I wonder if I should remain loyal to my birth mother or if I should allow
myself to love and be loved by my adoptive mother."*

Adoption Terminology

Parenthesis Post Adoption Program

Words and phrases to watch for positive and negative connotations.

| Positive | Negative |
|---|--|
| Birth parent (father, mother) Biological (parent, child, ancestry) Woman (lady) who gave birth | Real parent Natural parent |
| Adopted person Adoptee Adult Adoptee | Adopted child (when speaking of an adult) |
| Adoption Triad Adoption Triangle | Adoption Triad (when it applies to the negative connotation associated with triangulation) |
| Adoption plan was made for... The baby joined the family The older child moved in with his/her family An adoption was arranged for... He/she was placed | Adopted out Put up for adoption Given away Given up |
| Birth child | Their own child Their real children |
| To opt for, to take on, to choose, to continue Parenting | Keeping |
| Born outside of marriage Born to a single person (divorced single, never married, unwed mother) | Illegitimate child Bastard Unwanted child |

| Positive | Negative |
|---|--|
| Termination of parental rights; unable to continue parenting (older child) Court termination | Gave up |
| Made an adoption plan Legally released Voluntary release | Gave away |
| My child | Adopted (when it is used constantly, can become a label) |
| The waiting child Child with special needs Child available for adoption | Hard-to-place child |
| Search Reunion Making contact | |

- Language is important in describing adoption.
- Adoptees are sensitive to feeling different.
- We want to try to avoid negative terms and use less judgmental language.
- How is language manifested in your own family? What does Grandma say? Peers? Outsiders?

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSING ADOPTION WITH CHILDREN

Adapted from *Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child: Making Sense of the Past* (Keefer, Schooler, 2000) and *Children's Understanding of Adoption: Developmental and Clinical Implications* (Brodzinsky, 2011)

- **Adoption communication is a process, not an event.**

This is an ongoing process that occurs over time as the child develops more understanding and maturity.

- **Adoption communication is a dialogue, not a lecture.**

Parents should determine the child's level of understanding through a give-and-take discussion. Adoption communication should be a two-way street.

- **Be emotionally available and listen.**

Parents should be prepared to listen actively and be attuned to what their child is thinking and feeling.

- **Be aware of the child's developmental level and ability to understand adoption information.**

Parents should use age-appropriate language and be aware of the child's ability to understand abstract concepts related to adoption and relationships.

- **Validate and normalize the child's curiosity, questions and feelings about adoption, birth families and heritage.**

It may be necessary for adoptive parents to initiate communication about adoption and birth families. Children may need help in understanding that having feelings for their birth family, or questions about adoption are expected and normal. This curiosity does not reflect a lack of loyalty to the adoptive family.

- **Avoid negative judgments about the birth family or the child's heritage.**

To develop positive self-esteem, children need to have positive feelings about their birth origins, including their cultural or racial group and their families.

- **Some information may be deferred, but never changed. Do not lie.**

To develop trust, children should feel comfortable that information they receive is accurate. If a child is too young to understand complete information, details can wait for the child to mature. Children can be helped to differentiate between intent and action; that is, birth parents may have wanted to provide care for the child but may have been unable to do so due to substance abuse, mental health issues or situations which could not be overcome, etc.

- **Be prepared to help children cope with adoption-related grief.**

Parents and mental health providers may not recognize sadness, confusion, anxiety and anger as reactions to loss. Parents should be prepared to anticipate feelings and reactions associated with adoption losses.

Life Cycle Tasks of Adoptive Parents and Adopted Children¹

| Age/Period | Adoptive Parents | Adopted Children |
|--------------|---|------------------|
| Pre-adoption | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coping with infertility• Making an adoption decision• Coping with the uncertainty/anxiety related to placement• Coping with social stigma regarding adoption• Developing family and social support for adoption decision | |
| Infancy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking on identity as adoptive parents• Finding appropriate role models and developing realistic expectations regarding adoption• Integrating child into family/fostering secure attachments• Exploring thoughts/feelings regarding child's birth family | |

¹ Adapted from Brodzinsky, David; Smith, Daniel; and Brodzinsky, Anne. 1998. *Children's Adjustment to Adoption: Developmental and Clinical Issues*. Sage Publications. London.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Toddlerhood and Preschool Years</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning the telling process • Creating a family atmosphere conducive to open communication regarding adoption | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning one’s adoption story • Questioning parents about adoption |
| <p>Middle Childhood</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping child master the meaning of adoption • Helping child cope with adoption loss • Validating child’s connection to both adoptive and birth families • Fostering a positive view of the birth family • Maintaining open communication regarding adoption | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastering the meaning of adoption • Coping with adoption loss • Exploring thoughts and feelings regarding birth parents and relinquishment • Coping with stigma regarding being adopted • Maintaining open communication with adoptive parents regarding adoption • Validating one’s dual connection to two families |
| <p>Adolescence</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping teen cope with ongoing adoption-related loss • Fostering positive view of birth family • Supporting the teen’s search interests/plans • Supporting teen’s positive self-image and information regarding cultural heritage • Helping teen develop realistic expectations regarding search • Maintaining open communication re: adoption | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating adoption into stable, secure identity • Coping with adoption loss • Exploring thoughts/feelings regarding birth family and birth heritage • Exploring feelings regarding search process • Maintaining open communication with adoptive parents regarding adoption |

Intergenerational Issues in Adoption

Seven Core Issues of Adoption and Intergenerational Issues in Adoption developed by Sharon Kaplan Roszia and Deborah Silverstein.

| | Adoptee | Adoptee as Parent | Birth Parents | Birth Parents as Parents | Adoptive Parents | Adoptive Parent as Grandparent | Birth Grandparent | Siblings |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Loss | | | | | | | | |
| Rejection | | | | | | | | |
| Guilt and shame | | | | | | | | |
| Grief | | | | | | | | |
| Identity | | | | | | | | |
| Intimacy | | | | | | | | |
| Control and Mastery | | | | | | | | |

| | Adoptee | Adoptee as Parent | Birth Parents | Birth Parents as Parents |
|------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Loss | I lost both parents, extended family, cultural and genealogical heritage, sense of connectedness, sense of self, social status | I lost the ability to pass on history of extended family, cultural heritage, medical history, loss of extended biological relationships (cousins, aunt, uncles) | I lost social status, loss of acceptance, loss of lifelong relationship with child, loss of relationship with child's father/mother, loss of genealogical connectedness | I lost the experience of raising biological children together, loss of trust from other birth children - "am I secure here?" |
| Rejection | I feel rejection by birth family, "like I was gotten rid of," or "thrown-away" | I feel vulnerability in marital relationship and with in-laws, I fear rejection by child so I become overprotective | I fear rejection by peers and parents, rejection by the other birth parent after adoption plan, and I feel self-hatred (rejection of self) | I fear rejection by other child when learn they of relinquishment |
| Guilt and Shame | If I had been different, would they have kept me? - Guilt What was so wrong with me as a person. They dumped me? - Shame | If something was wrong with me to be given away, will I feel the same about my child? - Guilt Am I making the same mistakes my birth parents did? - Shame | No good person would place a child for adoption - Guilt I am truly a worthless person for doing this - Shame | Why couldn't I have cared for this child? - Guilt What good parent would allow a family to be separated by adoption? - Shame |
| Grief | I may never know my birth family roots or background, may never know bio siblings, may never feel truly connected | I will never have a genealogical connection to the past, or I will never look into the eyes of my birth parent or siblings | I will never know (in closed adoption) how child is doing, never see first day of school, first date, graduation, etc. | I will never be able to share the joys of raising children together |

| | Adoptee | Adoptee as Parent | Birth Parents | Birth Parents as Parents |
|-----------------|---|---|---|--|
| Identity | Who am I? Who do I look like? Who do I act like? | What identity do I pass on to my children? Who are they in light of my adoption? | I may never have another child and never have the identity of being a mother or father. | Can I truly feel good about my identity as a parent since I allowed for this adoption plan? |
| Intimacy | How close can I become? Will I be rejected in this relationship too? | I fear intimate relationships - what will I pass on genetically to my offspring? | I fear intimacy because other close relationships have led to significant losses. | Can I really be close to these children because of my past? |
| Control | I never had any say about being placed for adoption (especially issue for child adopted as older). No one ever asked me how I felt. | I have no control over my child knowing any genetic or past medical history or having a sense of connectedness. | My parents made this decision for me. I fear powerless, like a victim. | I cannot control how my other children will feel about the issue of adoption in this family. |

| | Adoptive Parents | Adoptive Parents as Grandparents | Birth Grandparents | Siblings |
|------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Loss | I suffer the loss of biological child, loss of genealogical connection to the future, loss of social status, loss of sharing a child together, loss of birthing experience, loss of time with child | I experience the loss of biological child, loss of genealogical connection to the future | I experience the loss of relationship with grandchild, loss of information about child, loss of genealogical connection to the future | We experience the loss of relationship to birth sibling, loss of trust in birth parent if disclosed later in life, and possible loss of security |
| Rejection | By each - for infertility reasons, By society - what's wrong with you, By parents subconsciously - couldn't produce grandchild | Fears rejection by grandchildren if birth grandparents come into the picture | Might experience rejection by child (birth parent) because they didn't support them and enabled them to keep child? | "If they got rid of one, if I do something wrong, will I be rejected." |
| Guilt and Shame | If I were a better person, would I conceive? - Guilt What is so bad about me that I cannot become a biological parent? - Shame | I don't want my child to search in case I will be replaced, and I feel badly about that. - Guilt When they said they wanted to search, I was again reminded of my inadequacies as a person. - Shame | Why couldn't I have cared for this child? - Guilt What good grandparent would allow for a family to be separated by adoption? - Shame | I can't believe my mother would give a child away. - Guilt If she is like that, maybe I am too. - Shame |

| | Adoptive Parents | Adoptive Parents as Grandparents | Birth Grandparents | Siblings |
|-----------------|---|--|---|---|
| Grief | I will never have a genealogical connection to the future; will never look into the eyes of a biological child. | I will never have a genealogical connection to the future; I will never look into the eyes of a biological grandchild. | I will never be able to share in the joys of grand-parenting this child, or to share with friends about them. | We will never share the same memories of growing up together; we may never meet. |
| Identity | Am I truly entitled to the identity of being this child's parent - am I a "real" parent? | Am I truly entitled to the identity of being this child's grandparent - am I a "real" grandparent? | Can I even consider myself a grandparent to a child I do not know? | I grew up as an only child after my sibling's birth and relinquishment. Am I a "real" sister/brother? What is my identity in this regard? |
| Intimacy | I fear intimacy because it reminds me of the pain of infertility. I fear closeness with my children because of rejection by them. | I fear closeness with my grandchildren because of rejection by them, especially if the birth grandparents return. | Can I be close to other grandchildren if I allowed one to be placed for adoption? | I fear close relationships because my older sibling was placed for adoption, and how close can I really get to my parent? |
| Control | I have had no control over my body or circumstances leading to adoption. | I have no control over my place in my grandchild's life if birth parents return. | I had no choice whether the adoption occurred or not. I would have raised the child. | I had no input on this adoption. I wasn't born yet, but I wish it hadn't happened. |

Mastery and growth comes as a result of working through these issues - recognizing a person has a right to be happy and losses can lead to growth and depth. -- Sharon Kaplan Roszia

Marcus

Marcus is a 14-year-old boy who was placed with his adoptive family at 12 months of age following one foster placement. There was an older adopted sister (not biologically related to Marcus) in the adoptive family. The sister became pregnant and delivered a baby on the preceding Christmas Day. She decided to keep the baby; both the sister and her baby were living in the adoptive home.

Marcus began doing very poorly in school when he entered middle school. His grades were even worse, often to the point of failing, when he entered high school. He was often verbally abusive, and he was particularly angry at his sister for becoming pregnant. He was embarrassed that his first year in high school was spent as the brother of the only pregnant girl in the school.

Marcus searched for and found his birth mother. He made contact with her before even telling the adoptive parents about the search. The adoptive parents first became aware of the search when the birth mother called them to talk about her recent conversation with Marcus. The adoptive parents were horrified and were still reeling from the pregnancy of the older child. The entire family immediately went into crisis.

What are the adoption issues you perceive for Marcus? For the adoptive parents?

What are the triggers you notice in the family's recent predicaments?

Where is Marcus developmentally in considering his adoption issues?

How would you intervene? What services would be useful for this family?

Discussion Questions: Thoughts, Reaction, Insights

1. What appeared to be the adoptive parents' primary motivations in adopting?
Mother? Father?
2. What were some of the possible expectations of the adoptive parents?
3. In what ways did they fail (unintentionally and uninformed) to meet Deann's cultural needs?
4. What unspoken message did Deann possibly receive from what she perceived were her parents' expectations for her?
5. What did you sense were some of the real feelings of the adoptive siblings?
6. What feelings and issues did you sense from the birthmother? How did she attempt to rectify those at this point in her life?
7. What feelings and issues did you sense from the birth siblings, especially the brother?
8. What did Deann's entrance into the adoptive family and reentrance into the birthfamily potentially represent to all her siblings?
9. What did people in Deann's life fail (unintentionally and uninformed) to do for her?
10. Where were those missed opportunities in Deann's life to validate her needs and issues?

Self-Assessment Questions for an Adoptee to Consider when Contemplating a Search

- How do I define “adoption reunion,” and what do I hope to achieve by having one?
- Am I seeking a family in reunion?
- Am I seeking just information (medical, social, cultural, etc.)?
- What do I see as my responsibilities for opening a door into the lives of other people?
- Am I prepared to meet a birth family who wants a relationship? Am I emotionally prepared if they are disinterested in me?
- What am I doing to educate my spouse/partner and children about adoption issues?
- How do I envision the role of the birth family in my life? As family? Extend family? Friends?
- What obligations do I foresee once I open the door of reunion: am I open to meeting siblings? Grandparents? Aunts and uncles?
- Do I anticipate the reunion to hold consequences for my adoptive parents and siblings? If so, what possible consequences could there be?
- Am I emotionally prepared with a backup support system in case I find the other person is not interested in meeting me?
- Am I prepared to find that perhaps the person I am seeking is deceased, in prison or otherwise unreachable in reunion?
- Am I prepared to go on with my life, understanding it is not my fault if I’m rejected? Do I understand it is the circumstances, not me, being rejected?
- Am I prepared to settle for basic answers to questions, but not a relationship?

All these are important issues to filter through one’s present life situation.

Suggested Reading Materials

Charting the Course

Books for Adults

Arms, Suzanne. *To Love and Let Go*. 1983. Stories of birth parent experiences and feelings about their pregnancy and placement of child.

Askin, J & Oskim, B. *Search: A Handbook for Adoptees and Birth Parents*. 1982. Harper & Row, NY. A guide for use in searching. Includes current state policies and techniques for searching.

Bourguignon, Jean Pierre & Watson, K. *After Adoption: A Manual for Professionals Working With Adoptive Families*. An excellent resource regarding attachment disorders and other issues of post-legal adoption services.

Brodzinsky, Schecter, & Henig. *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self*. 1993. Doubleday. A book to help adoptive parents and adoptees understand the struggles and stages of developing an identity when an individual experiences separation from his/her roots.

Cline, Foster. *Parenting with Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility*. 1990. Raising kids who are self-confident and motivated.

Davis, Diane. *Reaching Out to Children with FAS/FAE*. 1994. Offers support and hope and serves as a comprehensive resource to professionals and families.

Delaney, Richard and Kustal, Frank. *Troubled Transplants: Unconventional Strategies for Helping Disturbed Foster and Adopted Children*. 1993. University of Southern Maine. Conventional approaches to parenting do not work for many foster and adopted children. This book is easily understood and should prove useful to parents at the end of their ropes.

Dorner, Patricia. *Talking to Your Child About Adoption*. 1991. The booklet emphasized that communication about adoption is an ongoing process.

Dorris, Michael. *The Broken Cord*. 1989. Harper Collins. A single adoptive father writes about his experiences in parenting a child with fetal alcohol syndrome.

Dusky, Loraine. *Birthmark*. 1979. M. Evans & Co., NY. Ms. Dusky, a birthmother, tells the story of her experiences and adjustment over the years since making an adoption plan for her daughter. (Lorraine and her daughter are featured in *How it Feels to be Adopted: After Reunion*).

Fahlberg, Vera. *Separation and Attachment: Putting the Pieces Together*. 1984. Michigan Department of Social Services, DDS Publication #429. An excellent workbook and overview of attachment and separation issues.

Freundlich, Madelyn and Wright, Lois. *Post-Permanency Services*. 2003. Casey Family Programs. Washington D.C. Explores post adoption services and supports most responsive to the needs of children and families.

Hall, Beth and Steinberg, Gail. *An Insider's Guide to Transracial Adoption*. 1998. Pact Press. San Francisco, CA. A comprehensive guide for families for adopt transracially.

Homes, A.M. *In a Country of Mothers*. 1993. Alfred A. Knopf. A novel which examines contemporary myths surrounding adoption and motherhood.

James, Arleta. 2009. *Brothers and Sisters in Adoption*. Perspectives Press. A comprehensive book about how adoption impacts the equilibrium of families.

Jewitt, Claudia, *Adopting the Older Child*. 1978. Harvard Common Press, Harvard, Mass. Dr. Jewitt, an adoptive parent of older children and a psychotherapist, provides various case histories and experiences of families formed by older child adoption as well as information on the decision to adopt and preparation for children and families.

Jewitt, Claudia. *Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss*. 1982. Harvard Common Press, Harvard, Mass. Very specific guide about helping children cope with separation, loss, and grief. Can be used by professionals and parents.

Keck, Gregory and Kupecky, Regina. *Adopting the Hurt Child: Hope for Families with Special Needs Kids*. 1995. Addresses Attachment Disorder, issues and strategies for healing the hurt child.

Keefer, Betsy and Schooler, Jayne. *Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child: Making Sense of the Past*. 2000. Gives specific techniques for talking with children in a developmentally appropriate way about difficult birth histories.

Komar, Miriam. *Communicating With the Adopted Child*. 1991. Walker, NY. A guide to the how and what of talking about adoptive issues.

Lifton, Betty Jean. *Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter*. 1975. McGraw-Hill Book Co., NY. Adult adoptee autobiography. Explores author's life long process of coping with being adopted, includes search experience.

Lifton, Betty Jean. *Journey of the Adopted Self*. 1994. Provides an insightful, thorough, and compassionate guide to the adoption experience.

Magid, , McKelvey. *High Risk: Children Without a Conscience*. 1989. Bantam Books. A frightening look at the impact of attachment disorder on conscience development.

Mansfield, Lynda and Waldmann, Christopher. *Don't Touch My Heart: Healing the Pain of an Unattached Child*. 1994. Pinon books. A story of holding therapy.

McNamara, Joan. *Adoption and the Sexually Abused Child*. 1990. Addresses needs of the child who has experiences sexual abuse.

Melina, Lois. *Raising Adopted Children*. Harper & Row. This book provides a guide for adoptive parents to assist them with many questions and situations in parenting a child who is adopted. Appropriate for both families who adopted infants and older children.

Melina, Lois. *Making Sense of Adoption*. 1989. Practical help for parents in how to talk to their children about adoption.

Melina, Lois & Roszia, S., *The Open Adoption Experience*. 1993. Harper Collins. Preparation, placement and adjustments through adolescence.

Musser, Sandra Kay. *I Would Have Searched Forever*. 1979. Jan Publications, Division of AIM Inc. Capa Coral, Florida. Sandy explores the struggle for all in the adoption triangle in reconciling with each other, creating comfortable relationships among all in search situations.

Pohl, C. and Harris, K. *Transracial Adoption: Children and Parents Speak*. 1992. Watts, NY. Issues of transracial adoption through words and experiences of families.

Rosenberg, Elinor. *The Adoption Life Cycle: The Children and Their Families Through the Years*. 1992. Free Press, NY. Looks not only at the issues of adoptees, but also at those of birth parents and adoptive parents.

Schaffer, Judith & Lindstrom, Christina. *How to Raise an Adopted Child*. 1989. Crown Publishers. A comprehensive how-to book anticipating nearly every situation adoptive parents may encounter. Chapters cover specific age groups, from infancy to teen years.

Schooler, Jayne. *The Whole Life Adoption Book*. 2009. NavPress, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Realistic advice for building a healthy adoptive family.

Schooler, Jayne. *Searching for a Past*. 1993. Pinon Press, Colorado Springs, Colorado. Adopted adults' unique process for finding identity.

Schooler, Jayne, Keefer Smalley, Betsy, and Callahan, Tim. 2010. *Wounded Children: Healing Homes*. Navpress. A book about the impact of parenting traumatized children on foster and adoptive parents.

Sheehy, Gail. *Spirit of Survival*. 1986. Bantam Books, NY. Gripping story of the journey of Gail's adopted daughter from Cambodian work camps to her adjustment in her adoptive home. Excellent book.

Silber, Kathy & Speedin, Phyllis. *Dear Birthmother*. 1982. Corona Publishing Co., Texas. A creative approach to adoption through letters exchanged by adoptive parents and birth parents.

Watkins, Mary & Fisher, S. *Talking to Young Children About Adoption*. 1993. Yale University Press, New Haven. Accounts with twenty parents of conversations graphically conveying what the process of sharing is like.

Books for Children and Teens

Brown, Irene Bennett, *Answer Me Answer Me*. Bryn Kenney's search for her parentage begins after the death of her Gram when she is unexpectedly provided with a fortune and a clue to her roots.

Bunin, Catherine and Sherry. *Is That Your Sister? A True Story of Adoption*. 1992. Six year old tells what is like to be adopted in a multiracial family.

Cole, Joanna. *How I Was Adopted*. 1995. A story of what makes people different and what makes them the same.

Crook, Marion. *Teenagers Talk About Adoption*. Based on interviews with more than 40 adopted teens in Canada, this book conveys the feelings they have about their birthparents, being adopted, and the attitudes of others toward adoption.

Fredberg, Judy and Gueiss, Tony. *Susan and Gordon Adopt a Baby*. 1992. Big Bird is curious when a baby is adopted on Sesame Street.

Gabel, Susan. *Filling in the Blanks: A Guided Look at Growing Up Adopted*. 1988. Perspectives Press (ages 10-14). A workbook to help pre-adolescents understand their own histories.

Girard, Linda Walford. *Adoption is for Always*. 1986. Celia feels alone, angry and insecure about being adopted. But with her parents' patience and understanding, she accepts it and makes her adoption day into a special family celebration.

Gordon, Shirley. *The Boy Who Wanted a Family*. 1980. Michael's hopes, fears, and experiences with his new mom are explored during the one year waiting period to finalize his adoption.

Greenberg, Judith E. & Carey, Helen H. *Adopted*. 1989. Sarah and Ryan are adopted. To help Sarah understand, her parents and grandfather explain about adoption and being a family member.

Grossnickle, Mary. *A Place in My Heart*. 2004. Speaking of Adoption. Wonderful story for young children about the adoption of chipmunk by a family of squirrels.

Krementz, Jill. *How it Feels to be Adopted*. 1982. Alfred A. Knopf, NY. Nineteen adopted children ages 8-16, of various races and cultures are interviewed. Each describes feelings and thoughts about adoption.

Livingston, Carole. *Why Am I Adopted?* 1978. Lyle Stuart Inc. Appropriate for early elementary age children.

Mandlebaum, Pili. *You Be Me, I'll Be You*. A bi-cultural child decides she dislikes her brown skin. Her father devises a creative alternative.

Mills, Claudia. *Boardwalk With Hotel*. 1985. Eleven year old Jessica becomes angry about her adoption and starts to feel competitive with and jealous of her siblings who are not adopted.

Mitchell, Christine. *Family Day: Celebrating Ethan's Adoption Anniversary*. 2009. Author House. Bloomington, IN. A book explaining adoption to school-age children.

Nerlove, Evelyn. *Who Is David?* 1985. Child Welfare League of America. An excellent novel about an adolescent adoptee struggling with identity who participates in a support group for adopted adolescents.

Rogers, Fred. *Mr. Rogers--Let's Talk About Adoption*. 1995. confronts questions children have about adoption with sensitivity and insight.

Rosenberg, Maxine. *Being Adopted*. Helpful for children, ages 5-10, when they first have questions about adoption. Three children relate their adoption stories.

Stein, Sara Bonnet. *The Adopted One*. 1979. Walker & Co., NY. Unusually insightful book for pre-school and early elementary age children. Outstanding text is provided for adoptive parents and older children about normal feelings of adoptees.



Council on Accreditation Standards Post Adoption Services

PA-AS 11: POST-ADOPTION SERVICES

PURPOSE: *Adoption Services establish a permanent family for children and youth awaiting adoption, and increase the well-being and functioning of birth parents, adoptive families, and adopted individuals.*

Post-adoption services promote child and adult well-being and family functioning and stability.

PA-AS 11.01

When the need for post-adoption services is identified, the agency and the individual or family jointly develop a plan that specifies steps for obtaining these services.

Interpretation: The decision to develop a post-adoption service plan is based on the wishes of the adopted person, adoptive family, or the birth parents unless it is mandated.

PA-AS 11.02

Children, birth parents, adoptive parents, and adopted persons have access to needed post-adoption services that include, and are not limited to:

- a. assessments;
- b. information;
- c. case management;
- d. early intervention for children with developmental delays and educational services;
- e. counseling, mental health treatment, and crisis intervention services;
- f. family preservation and stabilization services;
- g. peer support; and
- h. respite services and out-of-home care.

Interpretation: The agency refers families to adoption competent professionals.

Research Note: Research studies demonstrate that adoptive families seek a wide array of post-adoption services, and needs may vary depending upon the type of adoption. Research and literature suggest that families often seek services in response to: issues of separation and loss, relationship problems, self-development and identity issues, and emotional and behavioral problems resulting from childhood abuse or neglect. Research has shown that financial support, medical services, and respite care were important to families that adopted children with disabilities.

PA-AS 11.03

The agency takes the initiative to explore suitable resources and contact service providers when appropriate, and with the permission of the person or family.

