

7 CORE ISSUES for ADOPTED CHILDREN and ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Adoptee	Adoptive Parent
<p><u>Loss</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fears ultimate abandonment • Loss of biological, genetic, and cultural history • Issues of holding on and letting go 	<p><u>Loss</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infertility equates with loss of self and immortality • Issues of entitlement lead to fear of loss of child and overprotection
<p><u>Rejection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement for adoption as personal rejection • Can only be “chosen” if first rejected • Issues of self-esteem • Anticipates rejection • Misperceives situations 	<p><u>Rejection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling of being ostracized because of procreation difficulties • May make partner the scapegoat • May expel adopted child to avoid anticipated rejection
<p><u>Guilt/Shame</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feels deserving of misfortune • Ashamed of being different • May take defensive stance • Anger 	<p><u>Guilt/Shame</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashamed of infertility • May believe childlessness is a curse or punishment • Religious crisis
<p><u>Grief</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grief overlooked in childhood or blocked by adult leading to depression and/or acting out • May grieve lack of “fit” in adoptive family 	<p><u>Grief</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grieve loss of “fantasy” child • Unresolved grief may block attachment to adopted child • May experience adopted child’s grief as rejection
<p><u>Identity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficits in information about birth parents, birthplace, etc. may impede integration of identity • May seek identity in early pregnancies or extreme behaviors in order to create a sense of belonging 	<p><u>Identity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences a diminished sense of continuity of self • “Role Handicap” – I am a parent/I am not a parent
<p><u>Intimacy & Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fears getting close and risking reenactment of earlier losses • Concerns over possible incest (unrecognized sibling) • Bonding issues may lower capacity for intimacy 	<p><u>Intimacy & Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unresolved grief over losses may lead to intimacy and marital problems • May avoid closeness with adopted child to avoid loss
<p><u>Control/Gains</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption alters life course • Aware of not being a party to initial adoption decisions, in which adults made life-altering choices • Haphazard nature of adoption removes cause-and-effect continuum 	<p><u>Control/Gains</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption experiences lead to “learned helplessness” where sense of mastery is linked to procreation • Lack of initiative

Successful Adoptive Families <i>Holt International Children Services</i>	Successful Adoptive Parents <i>Spaulding for Children</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have realistic expectations for the adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible family expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are fully aware of the child's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance for the child's rejection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a proven ability to handle problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to set structure and limits in a caring way
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are flexible, optimistic, and have a sense of humor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of humor • Flexible family roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the ability to maintain a commitment to the child in spite of challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting commitment – ability to fully claim the child as theirs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can appreciate the small gains the child makes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to use resources and meet personal needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are comfortable using resources and treatment services when needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance for their own ambivalent and negative feelings about the child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can attach and bond to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to delay parenting gratification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have strong marital relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness to connections with birth family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an open communication style 	

Characteristics of Foster Parents who Do Not Adopt Successfully
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unresolved losses in the past and present, resulting in a need to revisit past relationships and an inability to meet the child's needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possessiveness of the child and an unwillingness to acknowledge and work with important people from the child's past
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigidity in the family system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desperation for a child, resulting in unrealistic expectations of foster care and adoption
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High stress and anxiety levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power and control issues