

Sharing of an adoptive parents experience of key Themes central to adoptions

Growing up adopted can be tough since many adoptees struggle with feelings of loss and abandonment. Over the next few days we will be sharing on 7 core themes reported to be potentially central to adoption.

As an adoptive parent it is important that you understand and validate your child's feelings. You cannot eliminate the pain of your child's past experiences. You can however provide space and opportunities for your child to explore their feelings about adoptions at the various stages in their lives which will help them integrate these experiences better. Start by letting them know that it is always okay to talk about adoptions and to ask questions.

Some of the key themes include:

Loss: Adopted children mourn the loss of their birth parents, even when they are happy with their adoptive family. Their loss can feel more prominent at various developmental stages, but especially as a teenager or young adult.

Rejection: Adopted children may often feel rejected by their birth parents and subsequently avoid situations where they might be rejected or provoke others to reject them to validate their negative self-perceptions.

Guilt/Shame: Adopted children often believe there is something intrinsically wrong with them and that they deserved to lose their birth parents, which causes them to feel guilt and shame.

Grief: There is no ritual to grieve the loss of a birth parent. Suppressed or delayed grief can cause depression, substance abuse, or aggressive behaviors.

Identity: Adopted children often feel incomplete and at a loss regarding their identity because of gaps in their genetic and family history.

Intimacy: Many adopted children, especially those with multiple placements or histories of abuse, have difficulty attaching to members of their new family. Early life experiences may affect an adopted child's ability to form an intimate relationship.

Mastery and Control: Adopted children sometimes engage in power struggles with their adoptive parents or other authority figures in an attempt to master the loss of control they experienced in adoption.