



Support. Education. Local Events.  
*for Adoptive Families*



## The seven core issues of adoption continued

### Exploring control and shame

Our 2023 newsletters are featuring the seven core issues of adoption: grief, loss, rejection, intimacy, identity, control, and shame. These were first identified in the 1980s by adoption educators Deborah Silverstein and Sharon Kaplan Roszia. They emphasized that adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents commonly experience these issues at various times throughout their lives.

#### Control

Feeling in control provides a sense of safety, security, and mastery over one's life. But adoption, for everyone, is marked by loss of control.

- **Adoptees** do not choose to lose their birth families or participate in the adoption plan. Some older children may choose whether they want to be adopted, but the circumstances leading to that option were out of their control.
- **Birth parents** may feel like adoption is their only choice following an unintended pregnancy, or it may be court-mandated after a child is placed in foster care. They lose control over how their child is raised.
- **Adoptive parents** often face long time frames, unexpected challenges, and delays while waiting for a referral, placement, or finalization. They also navigate unknowns about a child's history,

including incomplete information about a child's emotional, developmental, or physical needs.

Adults and children commonly try to regain a sense of control by controlling other areas of their lives. The following can reduce the power of "control issues" in one's life:

- Identify what pushes your buttons and in what situations you find yourself trying to exert control.
- Explore opportunities for choices you can control and keep a flexible agenda.
- Nurture a talent or determination to do what makes you or your child feel productive and proud. Feeling successful in one area can ease the urgency to feel in control of everything.

#### Shame

Brené Brown, a well-known vulnerability researcher, defines shame as "the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. Something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection."

Shame is the least discussed of the core issues. But when we avoid exploring this feeling, especially among those in the adoption triad, we only give shame more power.

- **Adoptees** may experience shame, believing that something inherently wrong with them made them unworthy of being raised by their birth family.

"I learned you can't control everything. You've got to roll with the dice sometimes."

— Anthony Johnson

## The seven core issues of adoption continued

- **Birth parents** may experience shame over their unintended pregnancy or for feeling they could not meet their child's needs.
- **Adoptive parents** may experience shame about infertility, or they may fear they are not worthy to parent a child they did not biologically create.

Sharing our feelings of shame with others requires vulnerability. And vulnerability—met with judgment, misunderstanding, or ridicule—further fuels shame.

Yet shame cannot be resolved without courageous vulnerability, met with empathy and connection. Connection can be terrifying for some in the adoption network because it can trigger fear of abandonment, grief, and loss.

This is why adoption professionals so often encourage support groups. If there's one place where shame is familiar, welcome, and has room to heal, it's with others with similar experiences who can genuinely show empathy and be vulnerable too.

*You can find many resources online that go deeper into the seven core issues of adoption, including this article from Child Welfare Information Gateway: [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/factsheets\\_families\\_adoptionimpact.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/factsheets_families_adoptionimpact.pdf)*



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Check out [postadoptionrc.org](https://postadoptionrc.org) for past editions of our newsletter, events, helpful articles, and more information about us and services we offer.

All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page or website, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.

### REGION 2

Bethany Christian Services  
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2  
Traverse City, MI 49686  
**231-995-0870**

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[facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI](https://facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI)

Charlevoix, Emmett, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties

### REGION 3

Bethany Christian Services  
175 W Apple Ave  
Muskegon, MI 49440  
**231-733-1618**

[bethany.org/muskegon](https://bethany.org/muskegon)

[parcfr@bethany.org](mailto:parcfr@bethany.org)

[facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan](https://facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan)

Mason, Lake, Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay, Montcalm, Gratiot, Saginaw, Ionia, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties

### REGION 4

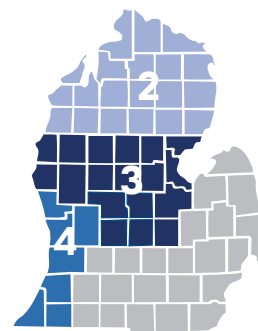
Bethany Christian Services  
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Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
**616-224-7565**

[bethany.org/grandrapids](https://bethany.org/grandrapids)

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[facebook.com/PARCRegion4](https://facebook.com/PARCRegion4)

Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



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[postadoptionrc.org](https://postadoptionrc.org)

Other suggested websites: [adoptivefamilies.com](https://adoptivefamilies.com) [adoptioninstitute.org](https://adoptioninstitute.org)