



Support. Education. Local Events.
for Adoptive Families



The seven core issues of adoption *continued*

Exploring loss and rejection

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.

Loss

While we readily understand concrete loss, such as the death of a loved one or the separation of a child from birth family or birth culture, ambiguous loss is harder to grasp. This form of loss can include loss of relationships, unmet expectations, and unfulfilled dreams.

Someone grieving ambiguous loss may have related behaviors or emotions they can't explain. And without words to name what they are missing, they may not recognize their overall experience as grief. Lack of closure and understanding can lead to unhealthy coping skills, but a person can still process ambiguous loss with acknowledgment and support.

- **When possible, maintain relationships between birth families and adopted children.** Open adoption, now the norm in domestic adoption, was designed to alleviate the pain

of loss for everyone in the relationship. We acknowledge that openness may not be possible for international or other forms of adoption.

- **Create a life book.** Pairing the child's adoption story with photographs makes a life book more than a photo album. Make one for the adopted child, and be sure it's easily accessible. If you're in contact with the child's birth family, they may appreciate a copy.
- **Gather with others.** Those who have an intimate understanding of similar loss can validate your experience in a deeper way. Support groups exist for this reason and are a helpful resource.

Rejection

For adoptees, feelings of rejection may initially relate to the birth family. In adolescence, it may surface if an adoptee struggles to fit in with peers. For adoptive families, parents may experience rejection by others who see their family or adopted child as second-best. For birth parents, rejection may represent how they feel society views them or their child.

Rejection can become a lens through which they filter thoughts and feelings:

- School-aged peer asks an **adoptee**, "Why did your mother give you up?" An adopted child may hear, "Why did your mother refuse to raise you?"

"Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it."

— Charles R. Swindoll

The seven core issues of adoption continued

- Friend says to a **birth parent**, "I don't think I could choose adoption for my child." A birth parent may hear, "You rejected the child you created, so I reject you."
- Relative says to an **adoptive mother**, "Is it a good idea to keep a relationship with his birth mother?" An adoptive mother may hear, "Won't your child reject you as his mother with his birth mother in the picture?"

When we care for someone who is hurting, it can feel uncomfortable to sit with their pain. Our instinct may be to "fix the problem" or change the topic, but these approaches are usually ineffective. Offering empathy can go a long way to helping the person feel better. You might say, "I'm here for you if you'd like to tell me more about it."

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



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Check out 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

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REGION 3

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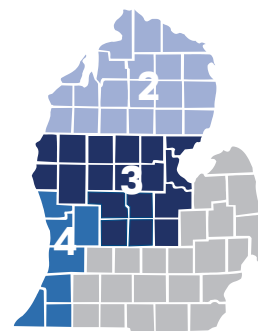
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Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



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postadoptionrc.org

Other suggested websites: adoptivefamilies.com adoptioninstitute.org