

PSYCHOLOGY OF ADOPTION

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To the parents –

- " Which one is your real child? "
- " Your so courageous to raise someone else's child "
- " Thank God he looks like both of you and that he's healthy "
- "Do you love them both the same ?"



To the child -

- " Do you know who your real parents are ? "
- " Are your parents mean to you because your adopted ?"
- " Do you feel your sister gets more love because she's theirs ? "
- " Thank God your fair like your parents "

WHY DO WE NEED ADOPTION ?

For the child -

- Unwanted pregnancies (young age, rape or out of wedlock)
- Abandonment
- Death or loss of parents - Approximately 4% of the 304 million children in India are orphaned (Bharat 2002)
- Natural disasters, calamities, refugees or war
- Homelessness, financial losses or poverty
- Medical or Mental health problems

For the parents -

- Social responsibility or psychological reasons (being adopted themselves, unfulfilled needs, giving back)
- Infertility or medical problems
- Family reasons

ADOPTION AND STRESS

- Mutual / personal; Emotional / Practical decision
- Social, cultural, community or religious factors
- Preparedness and Awareness in the decision
- Open or closed adoption policies
- Legalities



FOR THE CHILD - Where did I come from ?

- Perinatal factors and psychological distress around pregnancy
- Feelings of loss, rejection, abandonment, insecurity and lack of attachment
- Non disclosure
- Inner doubts and feelings regarding Self (confidence, self worth and esteem, physical attributes)
- Finding out - feeling abandoned, confused, rejected, hurt, shame, guilt , embarrassment, insecure and anger (towards both adopted and biological parents)
- Curiosity and obsession to find out, search or contact Birth parents
- Non- Biological Sibling - Intense rivalry, isolation, jealousy or insecurity
- Predisposition for emotional, psychological, academic or behavioral problems
(1 in 4 adopted children have a diagnosed learning disability/ ADHD; 10% of adoptions end in 'disruptions' Especially with children adopted after the first of life.
Ruth Graham 2015 National Centre for Educational Statistics, Boston, USA)



WARNING SIGNS

- Mood swings
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Acting out behaviors
- Opposition and defiance
- Severe sibling rivalry or comparisons
- Obsessive need for the search
- Questioning of the abandonment
- Difficulty with focus and concentration
- Academic or school related concerns
- Guilt over love, gratitude and acceptance



FOR THE PARENTS - Have I made the right Choice ?

- Acknowledgement of Difference
- (Genetically, Personality traits, Physical attributes, behaviors)
- Rejection / insistence of differences
- Birth of a biological child after adoption and Comparisons
- When and If to disclose (30 % had informed their children and only 50% of mothers thought it important to disclose - Bhargava 2005).
- Parenting inconsistencies
- Feelings of guilt , shame and embarrassment
- Marital discord and blame
- Obsession to find the cause of the problem
- Depressive symptoms



INSIGHTS FROM A COUNSELLING PERSPECTIVE

(Geraldine Casswell 2012 Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy - used for children with attachment difficulties usually with Looked after Children / history of trauma)

- Preparedness and awareness
- Openness and age appropriate Disclosure
- Embracing Differences
- Consistency in Parenting and other approaches
- Insight into ones own insecurities, apprehensions and fears
- Trust and Security



FOR PARENTS -

Honesty -

- To work out what they are feeling, needing and to normalise the concept of adoption
- To respond in a different way to previous carers
- To help them feel safe especially during disclosure
- To be reliable and stable
- To be available particularly at times of stress

Consistency-

- The predictability of routines and responses
- Being available- create times when your child knows you will be there
- Helping them to know you are there, even when apart
- Creating fairness in parenting and discipline between siblings



Acceptance -

- This refers to the unconditional, non-judgemental attitude and acknowledgment of who your child is.
- You are open to your child's inner life- to understand it not evaluate. Love is the absence of judgement.
- What are their feelings, wishes, hopes, dreams?
- We show our acceptance largely through our tone of voice, body language and choice of words
- Accepting the inner world doesn't mean accepting the behaviour, which should be evaluated.
- Acceptance of the choice to contact their Birth parents

Empathy –

To Building an honest, trusting, non judgemental and unconditional loving partnership





Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you;
And though they are from you, yet they belong not to you.
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow ,
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams....

- Kahlil Gibran.