



## **Growing Intentional Families Together, LLC**

# **Adoption Philosophy**

- Adoption is an authentic and important way to become a family.
- Adoption is a difficult choice for a birth parent that deserves respect and empathy.
- An adoptive family is as real as being a biological family. However, there are differences.
- At its core, adoption is a relationship affirmed by law and built through agreement, not biology. Its success depends on the love, intentionality, integrity, and commitment of those involved.
- Adoption is a relationship built on love, commitment, and connection rather than a transaction with an expectation of gratitude.
- Adoption influences a family throughout their lives.
- Adoption encompasses a wide range of emotions and experiences. A safe harbor to discuss adoption requires invitation and permission rather than demand and intrusion.
- People have the right to their feelings. It is healthy and normal to grieve adoption-related losses. Denial of feelings leads to loneliness, confusion, and further pain.
- Adoptive and birth families have an added layer of societal expectations that can place additional pressure on each family member.
- Unfortunately adoptees and their families -- birth and adoptive -- sometimes face demeaning communication and attitudes that label, minimize, stereotype, shame, or ridicule.
- Adoption brings coexisting gains and losses to all parties involved and influences how they respond within their families.

 Every member of the adoption constellation may experience a multitude of issues around loss, rejection, guilt and shame, identity, intimacy, and grief. \*

 Many adoptees and their families face unique challenges some of which might include:

- fears of abandonment and rejection
- sadness or loss that is hard to identify because it may have occurred in utero
- divided loyalties between adoptive and biological families
- living simultaneously with two opposite experiences -- love and relinquishment
- feeling different, othered, and as if they do not belong
- uneasiness about the permanency of the adoption
- ambivalence or even distress over milestone events such as birthday, holidays, etc.
- lack of access to health history impacts knowledge and decision making through life
- longing for some type of connection with birth parents and birth families
- yearning to see a reflection of oneself through the birth family and/or birth culture

 Support systems are vital in assisting families with the realities of living as an adopted family.

 Adoption impacts the extended family of both the adoptive and birth family. These issues should be acknowledged and addressed and not excused.

 The unique challenges of being an adoptee spiral in and out of awareness, with varying levels of consciousness, understanding, and resolution as the adoptee matures.

 Adoptees can be attached and devoted to their adoptive families and still be attached to, devoted to, and miss their biological families.

 Adoptees may have fantasies of having been birthed into their adoptive families. Likewise, many adoptees harbor fantasies about their biological families.

 The adoptee's experience of adoption does not exactly match the adoptive parent's experience.

 At appropriate ages, adoptees deserve to hear the sadness that the complexities of adoption create for adoptive parents as well. Talking about this is a practice of unconditional love.

 Adoptees own their adoption stories. They should decide when and with whom to share it. Adoptive parents model healthy boundaries when it comes to discussing adoption in public as well as with friends and extended families.

 Adoptive parents benefit as much as their children when they become a family.

 Adoptive parents validate their children by positively affirming that birthparents are an integral and permanent part of an adoptee's identity.

 Love is essential but it is not all that it takes to create a successful and healthy adoptive family. Adoption Attunement Intelligence (“AQ”) supports a healthy adoptive family.

 Growing Intentional Families Together’s Adoption Attunement Intelligence (“AQ”) framework encourages adoptive parents to

- Operate with a child-centric focus
- Follow ethical practices
- Acknowledge the grief and loss issues of all members in the adoption constellation
- Understand the attachment process
- Respect birth parents and first families
- Recognize adoption as a family experience
- Honor a child’s need to know and connect with their birth family
- Integrate a child’s birth heritage
- Remember a child’s story belongs to them
- Model, teach, and hold healthy boundaries
- Use sound adoption language
- Embrace, when appropriate, moments to enlighten family, friends, teachers, and faith communities about adoption
- Encourage playfulness and good humor as a family value
- Nurture and value a child’s innate talents and encourage them to be themselves

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\*Sharon Kaplan Roszia and Allison Davis Maxon, *Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency: A Comprehensive Guide to Promoting Understanding and Healing in Adoption, Foster Care, Kinship Families, and Third Party Reproduction*

Some of the concepts listed above were generally influenced by Daniel J. Siegel, *The Neurobiology of We*; Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson, *The Whole-Brain Child*; Pauline Boss, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*; Association for Treatment and Training in the Attachment of Children (ATTACH), *Hope for Healing: A Parent’s Guide to Trauma and Attachment*