

# *The Hidden Danger of Adoption Myths*



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Cliches, fables, and myths endure because they hold a kernel of truth or satisfy a need for a simple view of very complex situations. However, that core truth is often obscured by layers of distortion, exaggeration and outright falsehoods. When adoption myths obscure the truth, they can cause harm—even if no harm was intended.

For example, when cultural mythology portrays adoption as totally benign it dismisses the reality of adoption loss and grief. When myths minimize the emotional pain adoptees feel as a result of being relinquished by their birth families, their pain does not go away. It is internalized and then adoptees must struggle without support. This causes adoptees additional suffering that leaves them feeling invisible, objectified, and invalidated. They feel compelled to pretend that all is well when the reality is far different.

So, why do adoption myths persist? First, because people find comfort in the reassurance they offer. They like the pretty picture that myths offer and want it to be true. This serves both our culture which knows adoption only in the abstract, but also adoptive parents.

Adoptive parents want to believe that they can be *everything* their children need. Myths reinforce their belief systems, calm fears and reassure adoptive parents that their families will fulfill all their idealized dreams about parenthood.

Cultural myths advance the idea that children can be separated from one family and grafted to another with little or no suffering. This is inaccurate. Adoption is not a totally benign, painless experience. Adoptive families live a truth that is far more complex. Adoption creates a life interrupted and realigned for the adoptee. It separates their lives into two sections: before they were adopted and after they were adopted.

When the myth overrides or denies reality, children and families suffer. It imposes a level of denial that transforms relationships from genuineness into role-playing. It complicates the adoptive family's ability to build healthy, reciprocal, loving connections because it overlays reality with a fantasy of wishful hope. Instead of jointly working through the tough stuff of adoptive family life, it pretends those issues do not exist.

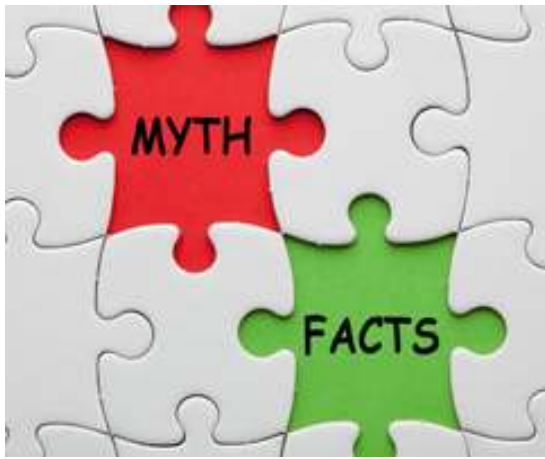
What options do adoptive parents have? Renounce the myths. Muster the courage to acknowledge adoption complexity. When parents choose to handle adoption issues together, they nurture deep connection. They acknowledge their mutual needs and rely on each other for support.

Adoption Attuned parents refuse to sweep the tough stuff under the rug. Instead, they offer one another the grace of truth, seeing and loving each other as their genuine selves, facing real challenges. They form a loving family team.

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Children need parents to be their safe harbor where they can seek and find strength, security, honesty, and refuge. Without parental support, children will flounder on their own struggling to handle issues of great complexity --issues for which they lack the experience, understanding, and tools to handle.

When parents see the realities of adoption and become the source of comfort, light, and truth even when it is difficult or painful, they embody unconditional love. They do not rely on the smokescreen of mythology. Instead they stand securely on the steadying foundation of truth and the reassuring guardrails of love. Children and their families benefit from this commitment to honesty.



## MYTH #1: LOVE IS ENOUGH

Of course, love is essential. Without love, infants fail to thrive and in some cases they actually die. Yet love alone is not enough to create secure, healthy family attachments. Love is akin to the soil that nurtures life yet also requires sunshine, rain, and minerals. Truth-telling is the sunlight of relationships. Validation is the soothing rain. Acceptance is the nutrient that nurtures. All are necessary.

All children have fundamental needs. AND, adopted children have some additional ones as well. For example, they need guidance and support to work through the **Seven Core Issues of Adoption**. (See Myth #2.) For example, they need help in developing a cohesive identity that unifies the influences of both their biology and their nurturing. They need information about who they are, where they came from and how all these pieces assemble into the mosaic that is their personal life story.

## MYTH #2: MY CHILD SHOULD FEEL GRATEFUL AND LUCKY THAT HE/SHE WAS ADOPTED

Adult adoptees consistently say that they feel offended by people telling them what they should do, think, and feel. In particular, they are burdened by people's expectation that gratitude should be the primary emotion an adoptee feels regarding being adopted. Of course, they appreciate having loving parents, secure homes and many additional opportunities that their birth families could not provide.

What irks adoptees is that this hyper focus on gratitude totally ignores the profound loss that they feel regarding their separation from their birth parents and first families. Their loss is glossed over and viewed as a small cost for the benefits adoptees receive. This is unfair and callous.

In an ideal world, they would have remained with their birth families unscathed by the trauma of separation, and relinquishment. The reality is they *were* adopted, *did* lose their first family and *are* striving to learn to love and be part of a new family. In reality, adoption is very much a Both/And experience; it includes both gains and losses, love and rejection, security and insecurity.

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In 1982 Deborah N. Silverstein and Sharon Kaplan first proposed these issues The Seven Core Issues faced by adoptee: **Loss, Rejection, Guilt, Shame, Grief, Identity, Intimacy, Mastery and Control**. None of these issues is a small thing.

Most adoptees feel a life-long hypersensitivity to rejection which stems from the painful reality that their birth parents could not make space for the adoptee in their lives. Regardless of the reasonableness of their birth parents' decision, this rejection still hurts and influences adoptees. It also gives rise to a tendency to feel shame about being relinquished for adoption.

Because they are not being raised in the families that created them, most adoptees also struggle to figure out who they are. They try to blend their dual experience of nurture and nature to create a healthy identity that blends both.

Relinquishment also complicates most adoptees' confidence and openness in relationships. Often, they are told that they were placed for adoption because their birth mother loved them so much. On the surface this may seem like a comforting thing to say. However, the opposite is true. What adoptees actually hear is: *People who love you will leave you*. Is it any wonder, that when they hear this particular message, they feel on shaky relationship ground?

Imagine for a moment how you might feel if your partner said *I love you so much, I'm going to marry you off to another man?* The emotional whiplash of that statement is obvious. Your next logical question might be *Why don't you love me enough to keep me?* You might wonder , *Where is the tipping point for staying and leaving?*

The *I love you so much, I'm giving you to another family* message provokes a lingering question in the back of an adoptee's mind in relation to every significant relationship: *When will **you** love me enough to leave me?*

This chronic fear of another rejection causes many adoptees to remain on high alert for rejection and abandonment. Not surprisingly, adoptees also tend to have difficulty trusting others. To avert rejection, they may resist starting a relationship or will break off a salvageable relationship. They prefer to be the person doing the rejecting and abandoning. They don't ever want to be on the receiving end of that agonizing cut to the soul again.



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## **MYTH #3: MY PARTNER AND I ARE MY CHILD'S 'REAL' PARENTS**

This myth is rooted in a language deficit. Most people—sometimes even adoptive families—lack the appropriate vocabulary for naming people and emotions related to adoption. Parents may be identified as either adoptive or birth/first/genetic/gestational/surrogate parents. Children may be identified as either biological/birth or adoptive children. All of them are real.

Even in the most completely open adoption arrangement, adoptive parents are parents in the fullest extent of the word. They raise, love, educate and support their child. They make any decisions about their child's health. The adoptive parents are the legal parent and have all the rights and responsibilities associated with being a parent.

The birth parents will always be the biological parent. It is their DNA which created the adoptee's biological blueprint. Adoption does not erase DNA. This part of their biological parents' legacy is permanent. Similarly, the emotional connection and love birth parents feel for their child persists across time.

Adoptees have two sets of parents: adoptive parents and birth parents. (They may also have one or more foster parents.) None is imaginary or unreal. All are forever a part of the child. Only one set of parents is raising the child—the adoptive parents.

## **MYTH #4: IF WE ADOPT OUR CHILD AS A BABY OR TODDLER, THEY WON'T EXPERIENCE GRIEF/LOSS/TRAUMA.**



It is tempting to believe an infant transitions from his birth family to his adoptive family with little difficulty and heartache. The truth is far more complicated and sobering. While developing in his mother's uterus, baby experiences a unique world of sounds, rhythms, emotions etc. This is the world he knows. He feels a sense of place and belonging. This is where he expects to be after birth.

Adoption changes all that; and babies do notice the switch from birth family to adoptive family. Nothing about the adoptive family is familiar to the newborn. This loss of the familiar causes stress, discomfort and fear. Baby grieves the loss of his "known" world even as he seeks a new equilibrium.

It takes time for baby and parent to become acquainted and comfortable with each other. In the interim, baby experiences distress. Because he has not yet learned language, his brain stores this distress in the body. Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk writes eloquently about this in his seminal book "The Body Keeps the Score."

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The idea that babies are not aware of their shift into a new family and that they do not remember the separation from their birth mother is simply untrue. Belief in this myth is dangerous. It will deny babies the gentle, insightful nurturing they will need to weather this fracture from their birth family and their engrafting to their adoptive family. When parents ignore this loss, it does not go away, it goes deeper—unacknowledged, unhealed and often becomes destructive.

### MYTH #5: ADOPTIVE FAMILIES ARE EXACTLY THE SAME AS BIO FAMILIES.

Families built through adoption are genuine *and* they have unique distinctions and challenges that families built solely through biology do not. The both/and reality of adoption means that adoptees have two sets of parents. (Family of origin and family of experience.) One set gave them life; one set raised and nurtured them. Whether or not there is ongoing physical interaction, each family is a permanent part of the adoptee--biologically, psychologically, and emotionally.

One of the differences between bio families and adoptive families is that biological families have an uninterrupted presence with their children from the moment of conception through gestation, birth, and into the length of the child's life. On the other hand, adoptees experience a gaping fracture in their sense of stability and continuity within their families. This break is real, significant, and substantial. It has a transformative impact on their sense of security.—Adoptees know in a visceral way, that families *can* reject you because it did in fact happen to them. Regardless of how much they are loved, how well they mesh into their adoptive family, and how necessary the adoption was, the fallout of relinquishment shapes adoptees and persists throughout their lives. It spirals in and out of consciousness and importance, activated or dulled by life's events and milestones.

Consequently, adoptive parents must support their children as they work through this emotional fallout, as they work through work through the Seven Core Issues of Adoption and as they factor in the influences of the adoptee's emotional hotspots regarding trust, rejection, and self-worth.

### MYTH #6: WE CAN MOLD AND SHAPE OUR CHILD INTO OUR VISION OF HIM/HER.



This myth is often described as seeing a child as a blank slate which parents can nurture according to their vision for the child without considering the child's own natural instincts, inclinations and aptitudes.

This ignores the reality that exists in their child's DNA, in their bodies' own cellular knowledge. Their DNA prepared them to be the continuation of their birth family's lineage. Adoption moved them to another. This transplantation makes a difference and children feel it physically as well as emotionally.

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Their DNA determines their natural abilities, personality traits, body types, body size etc. These factors influence the person they will become in partnership with the influences of the nurturing, guidance, encouragement and experiences that your child absorbs as a result of being part of your family. Since they do not carry the combined DNA of yourself and your partner, they can never be a perfect expression of your combined genes nor can they exactly become the child whom you fantasized raising. Instead, they will be a wonderful blend of nature and nurture, uniquely themselves.

### **MYTH #7: MY CHILD ISN'T INTERESTED IN HIS/HER BIRTH FAMILY.**

Let's be honest, for most of us, the person we find the most interesting and important is ourselves. We yearn to understand who we are, where we came from and how we fit into the flow of the generations. Having this knowledge provides us a stable base and a steadying guard rail. Our children experience a similar drive to understand their origins and to blend it with the influences of their adoptive families. Given verbal and emotional permission to acknowledge their interest in their own roots, most adoptees want information even if they do not want to have physical contact. As Intentional Adoptive Parents we will ensure that our children know that we acknowledge the importance of their biological truth, that we are not threatened by it and that we will support them in discovering their story.

It is equally important that we allow our children to determine when they want to talk about and explore their heritage. The decision and the timing must be theirs. Our responsibility as parents is to support them, to create a secure space for them to conduct their explorations. As Adoption Attuned parents we choose not to impose emotional and psychological barriers. We are intentional about creating a family culture that welcomes and encourages conversations about the difficult aspects as well as the benefits of adoption.

### **MYTH #8: WE ARE MULTI-RACIAL FAMILY AND WE PARENT WITH COLORBLIND LENS.**

Some parents who adopt transracially-believe color blindness is the most loving approach to the racial differences within their family. However, color blindness has proven to be a failed approach. It left transracial adoptees feeling invisible and devalued. But race does matter. It is very visible. It matters in our society; it is naïve and dangerous to pretend it does not. The racial turmoil that currently bubbles throughout our country proves that race matters, that it affects the way people are treated, seen, and valued. It is dangerous to pretend race is a neutral factor in the lives of transracial adoptees. Its influence is in fact, substantive, perhaps even definitive.

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Of course, parents who adopt transracially love their children. To them, their child's race is not an impediment. They do not think I love my African-American child or I love my Chinese child, or I love my Korean child. They simply think I love my child.

Similarly, they think I love my son and/or my daughter. They don't pretend their child is gender less. It is equally damaging to treat children as race-less. Race like gender, innate talents, and personalities is a real element of the recipe that makes children their unique selves. Thus, it is something to be treasured, celebrated, acknowledged and seen.

Color blindness fails transracial adoptees in another way. While adoption is a deeply personal aspect of their lives, it is one which transracial adoptees never have the luxury of keeping private. They cannot step out of their race. They have no respite from this public state of otherness. It is vital, therefore that parents validate the impact that race has on their child. Have conversations that reveal how a child's race is influencing their lives at home, school, and in the community. This is too important a topic to ignore or deny.

### **MYTH #9: ADOPTIVE PARENTS ARE HEROS.**

On the surface, they intended to convey admiration and be flattering. In reality, they deliver a left-handed insult. They imply that choosing to parent adopted children is something others are reluctant to do. In fact, people say they could only love a child born to them.



Loving a child is a very natural, human thing to do, one must conclude that adopted children are the issue here. For many folks, a lack of genetic connection makes adopting an unpalatable, impossible option. People suspect adoptee's are damaged goods, bad seeds, second-choice, or some other fault-finding descriptors. Sadly, some adoptive parents learned that their extended families refused to accept their children because of this lack of genetic link.

So, society views adoptive parents as heroes because adoptive parents can simply love their children for who they are without the presence of shared genes.

Another reason society tends to put adoptive parents on a pedestal is because adopting is definitely seen as an option chosen out of desperation not preference.

Of course, for most adoptive parents, adoption is not how they initially thought they would build their family. Infertility is the most common reason people consider adoption. Once pregnancy is off the table, if the desire to parent remained, adoption is the option. Adoptive parents choose to love a child created by others. They made this choice because parenting was more important than procreating.



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Adoptive parents recognize that they are not heroes. They are simply folks who yearned to love and raise children—even without the link of genetic connection. The real heroes are our children who shoulder so many additional emotional and psychological burdens which they must process on their way to an identity of healthy wholeness.

**MYTH #10: BIRTH MOTHER ARE [ ]...** insert a variety of words from one extreme to the other. Some attributions are positive like: birth mothers are brave, making the loving choice, doing what's best for their child. Others are less complimentary, like: birth mothers are selfish, of low moral character, are drug addicts and partyers. We have had many people ask me if any of these horrible things were true of our children's birth mothers. It shocks us every time it happens.



As a culture, we place mother love on the highest pedestal. No other love is seen as the equivalent. No other bond is seen as strong. So, people wonder how can any woman ever decide to relinquish her child? How does she remove him from her care and place him into the arms of another? A stranger? How does the birth mother do the unthinkable?

She hears the dominant message that society asserts an affluent adoptive parent family can offer a "better" than she can. She should make the loving choice, the right choice and opt to place her child for adoption.

The people judge the birth mother for the choice. She is seen as having violated this sacred bond and is reviled for it. Instead of being the epitome of human love, she is seen as evil, lacking in feeling and character and worse—that she deserves to lose her child.

The truth is birth mothers are women who, when confronted with an unplanned pregnancy had to make a gut-wrenching decision to ensure the best care for their child. Most birth mothers wish their circumstances, support systems, and resources were better so that they could choose to parent instead of relinquish.

They are neither heroes nor evil, heartless immoral people. Just like us, they are human beings with feelings, abilities, challenges and limited resources. But in their cases, overwhelming circumstances compelled them to make a traumatic decision and place their child for adoption.

Their separation from their child affects them deeply. Whether they are in open or closed adoptions, birth mothers are permanently shaped by their choice. They remember. They mourn. They regret. Some believe they made the best decision and find some comfort in that. Some feel they were coerced and never gain any sense of mental peace about their decision. Most feel guilt and shame and struggle to cope. Regardless of their feelings, there is no going back. Adoption is permanent.

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Birth mothers who had their parental rights taken away, also feel the loss of their child. These women shoulder an additional burden: the realization that they failed or were unable to make the changes necessary to keep their child with them. Most grieve deeply. Birth mothers need our compassion and empathy not our judgment. For truly they had to face a choice all of us would never want to make or consider.

## **MYTH #11: MY CHILD DOESN'T NEED TO KNOW HE'S/SHE'S ADOPTED**

Most adoptive parents recognize that they have a duty to tell their child she was adopted. Some struggle to find the "correct" time to accomplish this. The best rule of thumb is to begin mentioning adoption from the time your baby or child arrives. This helps parents become comfortable with the topic. When children are little, they are able to internalize the message as a simple part of their lives.

Problems creep up when parents delay the telling. In such circumstances the information comes as a shock that reverberates deeply and shakes children to their core. They question everything about the relationship with their parents and wonder what else parents have hidden, lied about and/or distorted. This leaves children feeling unsettled **and** it echoes the pain and loss of their separation which most adoptees interpret as "rejection" from their birth families. The bottom line is, don't think you can hide your child's adoptive status from them. Research has proven that at some level, even if only subconsciously, adoptees know.



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## **Myth # 12: My Child Doesn't Need to Know...[insert any difficult, traumatic information]**

The basic danger in hiding any significant information from your child is pretty similar to the fallout of not revealing that they were adopted: i.e., loss of security, broken trust, doubting parental truthfulness, etc.

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If your child was conceived by rape or incest, e.g., of course you would not tell that to a little child. However, you can lay the foundation by planting seeds of information which can be expanded on as they age and which can be communicated with age-appropriate sensitivity. Families facing this type of challenge may benefit from consulting a therapist or coach to help them lay the appropriate groundwork and to develop a blueprint that will guide parents along their journey to full disclosure. Be sure to work with an adoption attuned, adoption competent professional. Many therapists and coaches have received little or no education on the repercussions of adoption and can inadvertently offer guidance that can be more harmful than helpful.

### MYTH #13: MY CHILD DOES NOT NEED HIS/HER ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE



This myth presumes that original records hold information that is unnecessary, unimportant and easily replaced. Nowadays most adoptions are open, at least to some degree so the *information* is likely known to the adoptive family. Even for adoptees in open adoptions, yearn for this piece of factual evidence. Like all humans adoptee feel entitled to their original birth certificate. It reflects the part of their story that began before they joined their adoptive family. It is the proof of a significant part of their life journey.

Some closed adoptions still occur which means large numbers of adoptees do not have access to this information.

Gaining this piece of their personal history provides adoptees with concrete data on which to construct their identity—one that blends all of their pieces—adoptive and birth. This enables adoptees to build a truthful, cohesive, and complete narrative of their life journey. Research has proven that a coherent narrative directly contributes to one's ability to feel purposeful, empowered and to engage in intimate relationships. Dealing with facts instead of fantasy roots adoptees self-image on firm ground and is much more stabilizing and steadying for them.

Access to the truth means they can stop grabbing at clouds and instead deal with the facts and circumstances of their own story. They replace an infinite number of variations of an invented story and with the most important story of all: the one that reflects the personal circumstances of their life journey. This results in an obvious benefit to their mental health and frees them from the agony of not knowing, always wondering, and endless yearning. .

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## **MYTH #14: CLOSED RECORDS ARE BETTER FOR BIRTH PARENTS, ADOPTees AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

Our previous lessons have laid the groundwork for debunking this myth. Secrets are unhealthy and contribute to feelings of shame. They block open discussions of important and difficult information. Unless these conversations happen, adoptees cannot acknowledge, process, and heal the grief, loss, and hurt that is present whenever adoption occurs. In every adoption the birth family must be broken apart before the adoptive family can be created.

The psychological impact of this separation cannot be avoided or neutralized behind secrecy and closed records. Often referred to as the Primal Wound, to heal this injury to self, adoptees must deal with it. To deal with it, they need information, complete, true information.



With the advent of commercial DNA testing, no one can expect or be guaranteed secrecy and anonymity. Open records actually offer a more private way of accessing information because in the absence of open access, many adoptees turn to forums like Facebook to reach birth relatives. Being outed on Facebook is a far more public process than obtaining information from the Bureau of Vital Statistics. At the very least, parties to an adoption should have access to this information even if the records remain closed from the general public.

The stigma of out-of-wedlock pregnancy has been removed.

Research shows that most birth mothers are relieved to hear that their child is safe and well and are open to some contact.

It is true that adoptees who want their records typically also seek reconnection. Equally true, they know that some birth mothers will not consent to reunion. In such cases, adoptees still want to obtain their records.

Adoptive parents can be reassured that searching for this reconnection is not a rejection of adoptive parents and adoptive families. All the years of love and nurture, of experiences and memories won't be erased or forgotten.

Adoptees are demonstrating a normal and healthy need to learn about their roots. Adoptive parents have an opportunity to step up and support their children in an expansive and inclusive way. Offer to help them, then back off if they prefer to handle it themselves. Just be sure to let them know you support their search. Do not ask adoptees to choose between their families. Reassure them that you understand they are the sum of these two families and both families are important to them.

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## MYTH #15: AFTER YOU ADOPT YOU WILL GET PREGNANT

This myth is quite popular and persistent. It is frequently offered as advice before you adopt: *You should adopt; you'll surely get pregnant then*

After you adopt people will suggest, *Just watch—wink, wink—now you'll get pregnant.*

At first glance, these remarks may sound fairly innocent. Between the lines however, lurks a callous assumption: that it is okay to use an adopted child like a fertility charm. Even if offered only as a jest, this suggestion is offensive. This objectifies the child. They are being valued not for who they are but for the potential effect they might have on the couple's ability to conceive.



This suggestion is made with only the needs of the adults in mind. It specifically and intentionally seeks to use the child as a means to an end. It values the child like a tool, not for himself. Every child in need of a family deserves to be wanted for himself not for his potential ability to cure infertility. Adoption must be an act of open-hearted welcome, of unconditional love for the living, breathing, feeling person you are adopting.

## MYTH #16: BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT IS A GOOD WAY TO ADOPT

Often foster care is touted as a low-cost way to adopt a baby or toddler. An unfortunate reality is that money and adoption are inextricably linked. It is one of the primary reasons that cause birth mothers to choose adoption in the first place.

But foster care is not intended to provide a channel to adopt. Foster care is meant to be temporary and focused on the reunification of the child's family if it is at all possible and safe.



So, when one uses foster parenting as a way to access children, it undermines the focus on family reunification. Foster parents cannot simultaneously have a self-serving hidden agenda of hoping to adopt the child. This might dilute their efforts to prepare their foster child to return to their family.

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Foster parents are tasked with a herculean challenge: to provide the child an experience of living in a functioning, loving, and attentive family who genuinely cares about and for the child. Fosterees often remain in care for years. AND foster parents must prepare themselves for the heartache of saying goodbye when the child eventually returns to his family. A foster parent's journey is indeed a hero's journey.

We want to make an important distinction between "fostering to adopt" and adopting a foster child whose parental rights have been severed. Family reunification is no longer possible for these children. Most have been in foster care for a heartbreakingly long time and many have experienced multiple placements. These children genuinely need safe, loving, adoptive parents.

### **MYTH #17: A CHILD'S INTEREST IN HIS/HER BIRTH FAMILY IS DISLOYAL AND SHOWS HE ISN'T BONDED TO HIS ADOPTIVE PARENTS**



This myth arises from fear—not only the adoptive parent's fears but also the society at large. This fear has its roots in the society's skepticism of the depth, authenticity and permanence of adoptive family bonds. Adoptive parents have absorbed the societal messages regarding adoption. In the absence of Adoption Attuned education, these messages will go unchallenged. These presuppositions worsen the adoptive parent's concerns that they will not be fully accepted and loved by their adopted child.

This e-book has described why adoptees have an interest in their roots and connection to birth family. It is another example of the Both/And nature of adoption. It does not indicate lack of bonding. When adoptive parents fully understand that their child needs the presence of both their adoptive and birth families, the question of loyalty becomes moot and irrelevant. With loving compassion, both refrain from asking their child to choose to love only them.

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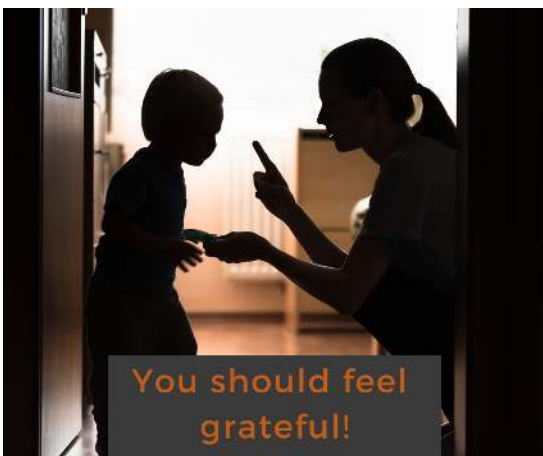
## **MYTH #18: MY CHILD SHOULD FEEL GRATEFUL HE WAS ADOPTED**

The expectation of gratitude is one of the most popular and pervasive beliefs held by our culture. It arises from the belief that adoption is a totally benign win/win, an event from which all parties proceed forward unscathed by loss, without regret or longing and that the benefits of adoption cancel out any pain or sadness.

Usually, this message includes no acknowledgement of what a child has lost. Nor does it recognize the many benefits that the adoptive parents gain. When the assessment is so one-sided, when adoption is viewed as a miracle or blessing, it is easy to overlook, trivialize, and invalidate the profound and lifelong losses an adoptee experiences.

True, adoptees gain a great deal. They also lose a great deal. It is important to keep that mind. Perhaps a metaphor might help. Imagine that you lost both legs in a terrible accident and that you received the top-of-the-line prosthetics to replace them. As much as you would appreciate the mobility provided by these artificial limbs, you would probably wish you had never lost your legs in the first place. You would probably grieve their loss forever and your loss would be acknowledged not minimized or denied. Nor would you be told you were lucky to lose your legs and should feel grateful for the wonderful replacements you received in their stead. You would also experience phantom pain which parallel the adoptee experience of lingering emotional loss.

Bereavement rituals serve an important function in helping people cope with loss and find a way to live with it. For birth mothers and adoptees, however these healing rituals are almost totally absent. In fact, not only are they denied the comfort of such social observances as well as any public acknowledgement of their loss, it is often minimized, trivialized or denied.



Through this e-book you have learned the facts that expose the inaccuracies, exaggerations and misinformation behind popular adoption myths. You have also learned to notice the hidden dangers that lurk between the lines. We challenge you to become an Adoption Myth Buster yourself. Help build awareness and help to correct these widely-held yet false myths. This e-book has shown you how these myths harm our families, our children, and their birth parents. Standing up for the truth helps fuel awareness, empathy, and healing.

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