
List three ways you will use the information from this training.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

MODULE XI: LONG TERM SEPARATION

The Seven Wonders of Adoption

ADOPTION ISSUE	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE TRIGGERS	BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS
<p>Grief & Loss</p> <p><i>"I wonder why I lose everyone and everything that is important to me. What is the matter with me?"</i></p>	<p>Children will grieve, at some level, the loss of their primary parents. Even children separated from their parents in infancy will grieve the dream parent and "what might have been." Common reactions to this loss include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Child's birthday -Anniversaries of prior separations -Holidays -Adoptive family moves -Any loss (pet dies, friend moves away) -Transition from one school level to another -High school graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Over-reaction to real or perceived losses -Difficulty with any separations from adoptive parents (school or day care, camp, sleep-overs, parents' getaway or business trips, hospitalizations) -Difficulty emancipating from the adoptive home and may try to unconsciously delay emancipation through self-induced failure
<p>Rejection/Fear of Abandonment</p> <p><i>"I wonder if these people are really going to keep me."</i></p>	<p>Regardless of the actual circumstances surrounding separation, children often feel rejected and abandoned by the primary parents. They may feel that they are unlovable and "unkeepable," and they may act out to test the commitment of the caregiving or adoptive family.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -First day of school -Going to sleep-over camp -Being "dumped" by significant other -High school graduation -Divorce of adoptive parents -Adoptive family moves -Anniversaries of prior separations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Negative behavior to speed the anticipated rejection and test the commitment of others to a relationship -Rejecting others before they can be rejected ("I will 'quit' before I get fired") -Attempting to be "perfect" to avoid rejection and over-reacting to small failures (a need to be "the best" at everything) -Continually seeking acceptance and approval from those around them -Patterns of pursuing acceptance and backing away from it when emotional intimacy appears close, especially with adoptive parent(s), but occurring also in relationships with peers and extended family members -Younger children may display great anxiety during short separations such as

			<p>sleepovers or camp or they may develop school phobia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adolescent adoptees may have difficulty going away to college or growing up and emancipating from the adoptive home.
<p>Identity</p> <p><i>"I wonder who my people are and if I will be like them."</i></p>	<p>The lack of information and secrecy that frequently surround the child's history and primary parents make it difficult for children to establish an identity. They may feel different or like they don't fit in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adolescence -Insensitive remarks from family, friends, strangers -School assignments (Family tree) -Critical incidents involving racism for a transracially adopted child -Pregnancy -Mid-life crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hanging out with "inappropriate" peers -Promiscuity, or pregnancy -Looking and behaving in ways that are very different from the adoptive family -Changing identities frequently in a search for one that is like the birth family -Recurring episodes of running away from the adoptive home
<p>Divided Loyalties</p> <p><i>"I wonder if I should remain loyal to my birth mother or if I should allow myself to love and be loved by my adoptive mother."</i></p>	<p>Children may feel that closeness and love for the caregivers or adoptive parents may be an act of disloyalty towards the primary parents, and visa versa. They find themselves in a dilemma and may be overwhelmed by feelings of guilt.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mother's Day -Engagement or marriage -Visits or contact with birth siblings or other birth relatives -Holidays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acting out during the holidays or near Mother's Day -Refusal to attach to the adoptive parent(s) -Modeling after the birth parents or the fantasy of the birth parents (getting pregnant at the age the birthmother was when she had the child; getting tattoos, or hair dyed the same color as one of the birth parents; following career path of one of the birth parents, etc.)
<p>Trust</p> <p><i>"I wonder if I can believe what these people are telling me."</i></p>	<p>Separation from the primary parents, especially at an early age, may threaten the ability to form basic trust and attachment. They may have difficulty forming and maintaining relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Felt betrayal in a relationship -Being "dumped" by significant other -Discovery of information that had not been shared honestly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Refusal to attach -Either clinging, inappropriately dependent behavior or early, inappropriate self-care and distancing from nurturing caregivers -Stealing -Caring for own needs and desires because child has not learned that others will meet his needs -Lack of interest in pleasing others (related

			to refusal to attach) and delayed conscience development
<p>Control</p> <p><i>"I wonder why everyone else makes decisions about my family, my name, how much information I get, how old I have to be to meet my siblings or birth parents...When do I get to make important decisions about my life?"</i></p>	<p>Most often, the children have had no control or decision-making power over the separation from their primary parents. This generates feelings of frustration and helplessness. Consequently, they may try to regain control of their lives in other areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adolescence -School -Parental limits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Constant control battles with authority figures -Lying, even when the lie does not seem to benefit the child -Stealing, hiding things, hoarding food -Truancy -Substance abuse -Developing eating disorders -Creating chaos -Rigid adherence to routine or planning ahead -Obsessive compulsive behavior (list-making, unusual orderliness)
<p>Guilt/Shame</p> <p><i>"I wonder what I did to make my own parents throw me away."</i></p>	<p>Guilt: Child feels badly about what he has done.</p> <p>Shame: Child feels badly about what he is.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Failures (not making the team or winning in sports; school failures) -Rejection experiences (being excluded by peers; feeling as though birth children in the adoptive home are loved or valued more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Magical thinking; the child expresses belief he caused the separation from the birth family -Low self-esteem -Under-performing or not allowing oneself to excel or succeed -Expectations of failure and future rejections

MODULE XI: LONG TERM SEPARATION

Continuum of Development of Adopted Children

0-3 Years	3-7 Years	8-12 Years	12-16 Years	16-19 Years
Adopted child does not realize difference between themselves and non-adopted children	Child asks a lot of questions. Loves to hear his adoption story. Can repeat it verbatim but has little understanding of the concepts.	Child understands concept of adoption. Begins grieving process. May stop asking questions as part of denial. Realizes that he had to lose something to be adopted.	Child enters anger stage of grieving. May resist authority and try on new identities. May be angry over loss of control in his life.	Young adult may be depressed and over-react to losses. May be anxious about growing up and leaving home.
Strategies for Parents	Strategies for Parents	Strategies for Parents	Strategies for Parents	Strategies for Parents
Collect as much concrete information as possible (pictures are helpful). Develop "LifeBook" for child, including these concrete bits of information. Begin talking comfortably and positively with your infant, family, and friends about adoption.	Encourage questions and answer honestly. Difficult issues may be omitted (but never changed) until child is older. Tell Adoption Story as a favorite bedtime story. Use and add to Life Book. Reassure child that he will not lose adoptive family.	Don't force child to discuss issues but let him know you are open and comfortable when he is ready. Let child know it is understood that he can love both sets of parents. He does not have to choose. Ask if child has questions or feelings he would like to discuss. Let child know you are not threatened or angry about questions regarding birth family and past history.	Allow control in decision-making whenever possible. Child has a right to his birth information. Help child access and accept it. Don't respond to child's anger with anger. Know that much of his anger is directed at the birth parent. Establish preset consequences for broken rules. Allow child to experience natural consequences of behavior. Let child know that you love him no matter what.	Let child know he may remain at home after graduation if he chooses. Be alert for sadness when relationships with peers fail or during anniversary reactions such as birthdays or Mother's Day. Continue to keep adoption topic open within the home. Provide supportive opportunities for independence and freedom.

MODULE XI: LONG TERM SEPARATION

Marcus' Story

Marcus is a 14-year-old boy who was placed with his adoptive family at 12 months of age following one foster placement. His adoptive family includes an older adopted sister, now age 17 (not biologically related to Marcus and also placed at age one year). The sister became pregnant when she was a high school junior. She delivered a baby on the preceding Christmas Day. She decided to raise the baby with help and support from the adoptive parents. Both the sister and her baby are now living in the adoptive home.

Marcus began struggling with school work when he entered middle school. His grades became even worse, often to the point of failing, when he entered high school the preceding fall. He is often verbally abusive and he is particularly angry at his sister for becoming pregnant. He is embarrassed that his first year in high school is spent as the brother of the only pregnant girl in his small school.

Marcus searched for and found his birth mother. He made contact with her before even telling the adoptive parents about the search. The adoptive parents first became aware of the search when the birth mother called them to talk about her recent conversation with Marcus. The adoptive parents are horrified and are still reeling from the pregnancy of the older child. The parents feel as though their efforts in raising these two children have been an abject failure. The entire family immediately has gone into crisis.

Questions:

1) What are the adoption issues that you perceive for Marcus? For the adoptive parents?

2) What are the triggers you notice in the family's recent predicaments?

MODULE XI: LONG TERM SEPARATION

Individual Reflection

Please take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned in the Preservice training and how it applies to you. Give this sheet to the agency worker who is completing your homestudy.

1. There are many benefits for a child who has a permanent family. What do you think is the greatest benefit? Why?

2. What strategies can you use to help avoid exposing a child to adoption-related triggers?

3. How would you approach the topic of adoption differently with a four year old compared to a fourteen year old?
