



# ADOPTIVE PARENT SUPPORT

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FACING THE HEART OF ADOPTION: GRIEF, LOSS & HEALING



### What's Inside ?

#### Listen



In this episode of A Place of Yes, Heather and adoption coach Francine Apy discuss keeping adoption conversations open, tackling tough topics, and understanding ambiguous grief in adoptive families.

#### Read



This article describes common grief responses in foster and adopted children—shock, anger, negotiating, sadness, and understanding—and explains how they revisit and process grief over time.

#### Watch



Adoptee and adoption expert Jeanette Yoffe offers a detailed memo and supports strategies for caregivers facilitating healing and adjustment.

### 7 THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN DEALING WITH GRIEF IN ADOPTION

- 1 Grief Is Always Present
- 2 Adoptees Grieve Lifelong
- 3 Parents Grieve Too
- 4 Love Doesn't Erase Loss
- 5 Become a Safe Place
- 6 Adoption Is Gain *and* Loss
- 7 Special Days Can Trigger Sadness

Learn more in our newsletter below!





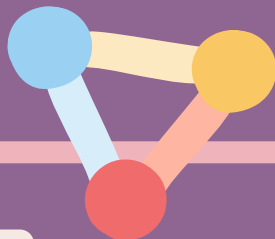
# 7 THINGS ADOPTIVE PARENTS CAN DO TO SUPPORT GRIEF IN ADOPTION

*Our job isn't to protect our kids from grief—it's to help them move through it with support*

## Grief Is Always Present

Every member of the adoption triad—adoptee, birth parent, and adoptive parent—experiences grief, even when adoption is loving and intentional.

01



## Adoptees Grieve Lifelong

Adoptee grief often surfaces at different life stages and events. It's not something they "get over," but something they learn to live with and understand.

02



## Parents Grieve Too

Adoptive parents may grieve infertility, imagined futures, or the emotional complexities of not being their child's first parent.

– *"We grieve the child we thought we'd have."*

03

**SCROLL FOR MORE!**



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## Love Doesn't Erase Loss

Many adoptive parents fear they'll never be enough. Grief and love can coexist—acknowledging both is key to deeper connection.

04

## Become a Safe Place

Adoptees need to process their pain in their own time. The role of the parent isn't to erase the grief, but to be a steady presence through it.

05



## Adoption Is Gain *and* Loss

While adoption brings connection and hope, it also starts with separation. Recognizing this duality helps everyone approach it with more compassion.

06

## Special Days Can Trigger Sadness

Parents should be prepared for difficult feelings to emerge on holidays and milestones—even when everything seems fine on the surface.

– “Mother’s Day, Father’s Day... these can be really hard.”



07



Many people don't recognize adoption as a loss. Adoptees may grieve the loss of birth family, heritage, or identity. These losses are ongoing and may resurface at different ages or events.

– “Adoption is not a one-time event—it’s a lifelong process that evolves with age.”



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# FIVE RECOGNIZED STAGES OF GRIEF IN ADOPTEES

These stages are drawn from Kübler-Ross's grief model but adapted for adoption-related experiences:



## DENIAL

- "Everything's fine" mask
- Behavior: Detached, overly compliant
- Support: Be present and gentle, don't push for disclosure

## BARGAINING

- "If I'm good enough, they won't leave"
- Behavior: Overachieving, people-pleasing
- Support: Reassure permanence and love regardless of performance

## ANGER

- Misunderstood as misbehavior
- Behavior: Outbursts, tantrums, defiance
- Support: Offer safe spaces for emotional release; name the feelings

## SADNESS

- May show up as depression or withdrawal
- Behavior: Fatigue, tearfulness, isolation
- Support: Validate feelings, don't try to fix or distract right away

## ACCEPTANCE

- Child begins to integrate their story
- Behavior: Curiosity, openness, asking questions
- Support: Share age-appropriate information, affirm identity



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# 3 PERSPECTIVES ON ADOPTION GRIEF & LOSS

Understanding the adoption experience through the lens of each member of the triad

## Adoptee

Even if adoptees were infants at the time of relinquishment, many experience feelings of:

- Deep loss and abandonment
- Conflicted loyalty toward both families
- Disconnection from identity, race, or culture

*"I don't know what I lost, but I still feel it."*

## Birth Parent

Birth parents may struggle with:

- Unresolved sorrow or regret
- Guilt, shame, and isolation
- A lifetime of unanswered questions

*"Was placing my child the right choice? Do they know I love them?"*

## Adoptive Parent

Adoptive parents may face:

- Grief for their child's loss (even if joyful adoption)
- Guilt when unable to fix their child's pain
- Fear of not being "enough" as their child seeks their roots

*"My child's grief doesn't mean I'm failing—it means they're healing."*

## RECOGNIZING THE UNSPOKEN

- **Silence Isn't Absence**
  - Just because a child doesn't voice adoption-related grief doesn't mean they aren't feeling it.
- **Protective Silence**
  - Many adoptees hide their true emotions to protect their parents' feelings.
- **Grief in Disguise**
  - Behaviors like perfectionism or emotional distance can be hidden signs of loss.
- **Triggered by Milestones**
  - Life events often resurface buried feelings about adoption and identity.
- **"Real Mom/Dad" Moments**
  - Emotional outbursts may signal grief or longing, not rejection.
- **Connection Over Correction**
  - Responding with empathy and listening builds trust and deeper relationship.



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# HELPFUL RESOURCES

*Explore a range of resources on grief in adoption, including articles on ambiguous loss, disenfranchised grief, and the lifelong impacts of separation and trauma; podcasts featuring adoptive parents, adoptees, and experts discussing emotional healing, identity, and open conversations around grief; and videos offering practical guidance for caregivers supporting children through the complexities of adoption-related grief. These insights highlight how grief in adoption is real, often hidden, and needs understanding, compassion, and space to heal.*

1. [Adoption and Trauma: Risks, Recovery, and the Lived Experience of Adoptees](#)– Explores how early loss and trauma impact adoptees' development, identity, and emotional well-being, highlighting the grief and healing journey.
2. [Ambiguous Loss Haunts Foster and Adopted Children](#)– Looks at ambiguous loss—when the birth family is absent but still psychologically present—and how this complicates children's grief in foster/adoptive situations.
3. [Helping Foster and Adopted Children to Grieve the Loss of Birth Parents: A Case Study](#)– Uses real-life cases to illustrate grief in adopted and fostered children, offering practical approaches for caregivers to support them.
4. [Nancy Verrier's The Primal Wound](#) – A seminal book proposing that adoption inherently involves early loss and grief, with lifelong effects on attachment and identity.
5. [Grief is Part of the Fabric of Adoption](#)– Grief is a very real part of adoption. Hear from adoptive parents and an adult adoptee as they share their unique perspectives.
6. [Helping Adopted Children With Grief Part II Jeanette Yoffe MFT Adoption Competent Therapist](#) – Part 2 of the first YouTube video recommended on page 1 with helpful tools and resources.
7. [Grief, Adoption, and Uncovering Hidden Truths](#) – Adoptee Bethany Fraser explores grief in adoption through her personal story for interracial adoption
8. [Birth Parent Grief in Adoption](#) – Over the 30-year period between 1980–2010, there was a shift in the general consensus: The grief following relinquishment was now documented and confirmed.

**Need additional support? Contact our post adoption team!**



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