

GRIEF ISSUES

What does grief mean to you? How have you handled grief in your past? What are some of the losses you've had in your life and how have you grieved? What has worked and doesn't work for you?

Ex: some people outwardly cry, others talk it through, withdrawal, write, pray.

What do you want from others as you grieve?

When you think about your adoption plan you must think about the loss, and acknowledge this loss. What do you see yourself losing in adoption?

Ex: often times because we know it's an open adoption, we don't think we need to define it as a loss because we are still involved in the child's life.

Adoption loss is losing the parent role and we are forced to define the birth mother role. Losing a child to adoption is one of the most significant losses that birth parents will ever have to face.

The first step in dealing with your grief is knowing how it will affect your life and know that these affects will not be pleasant.

We have to allow ourselves the pain of separation if we are to heal and move on. Some equate it to a death because that is how our body will respond. Everyone defines his or her loss differently. Could be the loss of the parent role, loss of dream of the first child you have, loss of your current life, and possibly adolescence.

We often minimize or deny our loss when it becomes too painful, and that is an unhealthy response and will increase your suffering in the end. This buried grief can cause you more problems in other areas of your life.

It is healthy to take breaks from your grief, do something fun for yourself during this time.

Must incorporate your loss into your life as you re-define relationships with your child. That first visit with your child will be a very painful experience and remind you more and more of your loss.

When you begin to resolve grief, you will see yourself having more of a stable relationship with the adoptive family and can talk with them more easily and you will feel a sense of security in your role in their lives.

You will never fully leave pain behind, and there will be times in our life that we are revisited by our grief, triggers in our life.

Is forgiveness factored into this for you? Do you have anger and unforgiveness toward others and yourself regarding this situation?

How can Catholic Charities help as you grieve?

Hospital time/doubts of decision:

It doesn't feel good to make an adoption plan, and often times we equate feeling good with making the right decision. Regardless of it being a 'right' decision it is going to hurt like no other hurt you've felt in your life. Feels like your heart is beating out of your chest.

Some birth mothers cannot even describe how they got through those first few days, they just survive. At this time you are swallowed up in your own grief, and it really hits you hard.

Focus on why you thought adoption was a good decision in the first place. Have any of those reasons changed? If it was made out of guilt or shame, then probably shouldn't go forward with adoption, but if made in the best interest of the child, then you just need to push through these next intensely difficult days.

When you are experiencing pain, that's all you can think about i.e. the pain of childbirth, moms who say I am never going through that again, but with time, that pain lessens and they are able to think more clearly about their decisions.

All birth moms come to the point that you are at when at the hospital and after, you feel guilt, shame, hopelessness, lonely, need to bring these feelings out in order to begin to heal.

Any decision made will involve a loss, and you are not being selfish, just the opposite, need to try and separate your emotions from current circumstances.

What would be your plan if you decide to parent? Need to have that ready, because a baby can't wait until you get back on your feet and figure things out, it needs you right away.

Your reasons are valid, and you are being responsible.

Is there anything different about the adoption that could take the place that would make you feel differently?

Grief is:

Normal

No orderly phases

Define your loss

Acceptance of that loss

Reach out

Take time

Stage of grief hand out.

Denial/shock: sometimes avoiding pain by staying busy

Sadness/depression: guilt, forgiveness, right or wrong decision??

Anger

Fear/bargaining with God: the if only fantasy thinking, good to a certain extent as long as you do not begin to blur the boundaries of fantasy and reality

Resistance: the let go stage and not being able to because of feelings of guilt and staying with grief gives you a sense of connectedness.

Acceptance: feeling stable with the adoptive couple you have chosen, and feeling stable in your role as a birth mother. To let go of the parental role and define what it means to be a birth mother.

Open adoption is not the cure all. You will still have grief and loss of the parent role. You cannot be in denial of your grief because it's an open adoption.

ROLE AS A BIRTH PARENT:

You do have a right to be called mother whether you are raising the child or not, and you have much to offer that child. Sometimes in the midst of your grief, you don't feel you have things to provide for the child.

Visits will be painful at first until you've established a relationship with your child.

You are the source of the family information, keeper of your child's genetic heritage. You can help your child find it's origins and your history is part of their history. You can tell your child about pregnancy and birth stories and why you choose adoption, those are things that can only come from you.

On-going contact with your child will give them a sense of reassurance, you can answer their questions and they know of your love for them.

Your greatest challenge will be finding your place in your child's life.

Responsibilities:

- Be available to adoptive family and child

- Provide truthful information to the child

- Be consistent in contact

- Be Available to others in need

- Cooperate with other birth families involved with adoptive family

- Update medical information and answer child's questions

To nurture your relationship with your child and with the adoptive family. By having a positive relationship with the adoptive couple gives your child a sense of security.

Building an Open Relationship:

(can be compared to an in-law relationship)

Let go

Be positive, courteous, affirmative, and respectful

Express yourself

Find common interests and act on them

Honor the children

Review arrangements annually

AVOID:

Secrets, claiming titles, negative feelings about adoption, inconsistent contact, over-focus on child, undermining parental authority.

Having a good relationship is important because it gives the child a sense of security and role models.

1. Don't make promises you can't keep
2. Support adoptive parents and their decisions
3. Respect adoptive families customs
4. Remember holidays, birthdays, and other special days
5. Be there when it is important to be there
6. Accept each other for what you are
7. Be flexible

“ The child I carried and cared for nine months would never call me mom, would never run to me for comfort, or come to me for advice. I gave this privilege to another woman, and even though I was able to see him, I would never be his “mom”.

This is an important realization, acknowledging the adoptive parent's right to parent enables us to fully grieve our loss.