

Tips for dealing with grief after Adoption

Birth Mother:

Critical that you understand and identify the birth mother as a mother

A mother who has placed her child for adoption is still a mother; she has been separated from her child, but she has not surrendered her motherhood.

Expected to get over their losses, replace their firstborns with other children, and accept that they are better off without their babies. It is important to understand the birth mother's role in the adoption process, and treat her with respect for her decision to give her child a better life than she felt she was able to provide at that point in her life.

The birthmother can expect to feel grief over the loss of her child. It is also normal that she will feel ashamed of her decision to put her baby up for adoption or guilt for not raising her baby herself. It is important for the birthmother to acknowledge that she will need a grieving period after placement. Birthmothers are highly recommended to seek counseling when planning, and after placing, a child for adoption. She should also seek support from understanding family and friends.

Birth Father:

Though birth mothers have been studied with greater frequency than birth fathers, we have every reason to believe that birth fathers suffer lifelong effects as well, especially if they were not allowed to take part in the adoption decision.

Birth fathers should not be afraid to seek counseling and support. You can support a grieving birth father as you would a grieving birth mother, by acknowledging his parenthood and respecting the fact that he has experienced the loss of his child, too.

Birth parents should allow themselves enough time to grieve. Birth parents may look to family and close friends to help them through their grieving process, but it is often hard for others to understand what a birth parent is going through if they haven't experienced it in their own life.

It is important for family and friends to be supportive, but also that birth parents realize that others may not really know how to help them cope. Birth parents should determine realistic expectations of others. If the support they need isn't available through friends and family, they should search for a counselor or support group for help.

After the placement of the child, the birth parent may feel detached from friends and not enjoy activities they used to love quite as much. As the birth parents work towards recovery, they will regain a more positive outlook on life. In open adoptions, establishing a relationship with the child may be very difficult for the birth parents at first. The birth parents should keep a realistic view about the

relationship they hope to establish, and that it may be hard to see pictures of their child with another set of parents for a while.

May Feel Angry:

Anger is a common emotion for birth mothers who have placed a child for adoption.

It may be constantly present, or it may surface around the child's birthday, when the birth mother has another child, or during other significant life events.

Anger, itself, is not a bad thing. Anger can be an incredible motivator when used properly. Many birth mothers report that using this powerful emotion has helped them to become advocates for other birth parents and for themselves. In doing so, they have been able to help other women in making the decision to parent their child, or place the child for adoption. Helping other birth mothers gives them a sense of purpose and healing.

Dealing with grief after Abortion

Only through allowing yourself to mourn will you heal the grief you feel.

Honoring the grieving process allows you to explore meaning in the pregnancy and to incorporate your abortion experience into your life journey.

“You have no reason to feel guilty or ashamed for having an abortion and you should not feel like you have done anything wrong. You are the expert in your own life, and you tried to make the best possible decision at the time. If you are feeling guilty, it might be helpful to look back at your reasons for choosing to terminate the pregnancy and the circumstances at the time.”

Post Abortion Stress Syndrome-