

SEVEN CORE ISSUES IN ADOPTION (1986 Silverstein & Kaplan)

	ADOPTEE	BIRTHPARENT	ADOPTIVE PARENT
LOSS	Fear ultimate abandonment. Loss biological genetic cultural history. Issues of holding on and letting go.	Ruminate about lost child. Initial loss merges with other life events. Leads to social isolation. Changes in body and self image. Relationship losses.	Infertility equated with loss of self and immortality. Issues of entitlement lead to fear of loss of child and over protection.
REJECTION	Personalise placement for adoption as rejection. Issues of self-esteem. Can only be “chosen” if first rejected. Anticipate rejection. Misperceive situations.	Reject selves as irresponsible, unworthy because permit adoption. Turn these feelings against self as deserving rejection. Come to expect and cause rejection.	Ostracised because of procreation difficulties. May scapegoat partner. Expect rejection. May expel adoptee to avoid anticipate rejection.
GUILT/SHAME	Deserve misfortune. Shame of being different. May take defensive stance/anger.	Party to guilty secret. Shame/guilt for placing child. Judged by others double bind. Not ok to keep child and not ok to place.	Shame of infertility. May believe childlessness is curse or punishment. Religious crisis.
GRIEF	Grief may be overlooked in childhood. Blocked by adult. Leading to depression/acting out. May grieve lack of “fit” in adoptive family.	Grief acceptable only short period but may be delayed 10-15 years. Lack rituals for mourning. Sense of shame blocks grief work.	Must grieve loss of “fantasy” child. Unresolved grief may block attachment to adoptee. May experience adoptee’s grief as rejection.
IDENTITY	Deficits in information may impede integration of identity. May see search for identity in early pregnancies. Extreme behaviours in order to create sense of belonging.	Child as part of identity goes on without knowledge. Diminished sense of self and self-worth. May interfere with future parental desires.	Experience diminished sense of continuity of self. Are and are not parents [<i>Kirk’s role “Role Handicap”</i>].
INTIMACY	Fear getting close and risk re-enacting earlier losses. Concerns over possible incest. Bonding issues may lower capacity for intimacy.	Difficulty resolving issues with other birthparent may interfere with future relationships. Intimacy may equate with loss.	Unresolved grief over losses may lead to intimacy/marital problems. May avoid closeness with adoptee to avoid loss.
CONTROL	Adoption alters life course. Not party to initial decisions. Haphazard nature of adoption removes cause and effect continuum.	Relinquishment seen as out of control disjunctive event. Interrupts drive for self-actualisation.	Adoption experiences lead to “learned helplessness”. Sense mastery linked to procreation. Lack generativity.

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Also see: www.adopting.org/silveroze/html/lifelong_issues_in_adoption.html