

# **7 Common Challenges Adoptive Families Face**

All families have their struggles.

But families formed through adoption or guardianship often face some unique challenges of their own.

# 1 or More

Studies have shown that all members of adopted families, from a birth parent to an adopted parent, to the child, will experience struggles with one or more of these core issues throughout their lives.

Recognizing these issues is one of the most important interventions families and professionals can do to support those experiencing these challenges.



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It's normal for **adopted children** to feel loss when they think of their birth parents, even if they are happy with their adoptive family situation.





For **adopted parents**, the feeling of loss derives from the struggles and tribulations they faced in the journey toward adoption. Adopted parents can feel they've missed out on big moments.

Birth parents can also feel a sense of loss after choosing adoption for their child as they decide to transfer their parenting role.



## Rejection





Adopted children may feel rejected by their birth parents. This, in turn, leads them to avoid situations or relationships in which they think they might face rejection.

Sometimes, adoptive parents feel rejected because of behaviors, actions, or attitudes of the adopted child attempting to push them away.





With the **birth parent**, rejection can stem from feeling inadequate as a parent. When they see their biological child being cared for by another family, they may feel like their role has been taken.

## Guilt or Shame

Sadly, many adopted children feel guilt and shame and that there is something intrinsically wrong with them, which is why their birth parents did not want to parent them. This simply is not true.



Societal expectations can make adoptive parents feel guilt or shame when they hear criticisms and comments from others outside of the adoption process.

Birth parents can feel shame and guilt as well for not being able to provide the level of care and love necessary for a child to thrive.



## Grief



Adopted children can often feel grief over their birth parents and their life before their adoptive home.

For many adoptive families, feeling grief over unborn children is a common occurrence. They can also feel grief if/when their adopted child wants to learn more about their biological parents.





When it comes to **birth parents**, the grief is focused on the loss they feel when they choose adoption for their child.

# Identity

Adopted children may feel incomplete and lost due to their genetic and family history gaps and have a hard time pinpointing their identity.

> We commonly see **adoptive parents** may not feel like the child's real parent or may feel as though they are not entitled to act as the real parent.

Birth parents struggle with their identity in their biological child's life. When they chose adoption, they handed over their parenting responsibilities, but what kind of involvement can they have?

## Intimacy

Many **adopted children**, especially those who have lived with multiple families or histories of abuse, have difficulty creating intimate and meaningful relationships with family members.

Adoptive parents can struggle with intimacy by feeling sad or angry their child is not as affectionate as they would like.

> For **birth parents**, the struggles with intimacy center around not understanding the level of love and care they can provide to their biological child in their adoptive home.

## Mastery and Control

Some adopted children engage in a power struggle when entering a new household, stemming from the feeling of losing control during the adoption process.

> Adoptive parents struggle with control since they no longer were in charge of when and how they became parents.

Commonly, **birth parents** emerging from the adoption process feel powerless. Once the parental rights are transferred, birth parents can feel as though they are not in control.

#### With support you can navigate these feelings.

While these feelings can be overwhelming















at times, it's important to know that every single one of these feelings - and their extensions - are valid and make complete sense to feel during and after adoption. You are not alone, with the proper support you and your family can navigate these challenging emotions and become stronger than before.



#### If your family was formed through adoption or guardianship and is struggling, Families Forever is here to help.

Families Forever, a program of NCHS, helps families deepen their relationships by connecting them to various services, including:



One-on-one parenting and family support



Connections to mental health services



Community referrals to other services needed for identified by the family in their community



Mentoring



Helping connect you with respite options



Training and classes

Support groups

# You're not alone.

#### **Get started with Families Forever** today at nchs.org/families-forever.





#### Sources:

https://nacac.org/resource/seven-core-issues-in-adoption-and-permanency/ https://info.nchs.org/families-forever-support-families-formed-adoption#ap-5