

Personality Profile of Adoptees.

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This is a study conducted over a period of ten years working with 116 Adult Adoptees, identifying belief's that are commonly held. This paper identifies these beliefs and discusses the importance of them in understanding how Adoptees adapt to their role in the family and in society.

Since early childhood, I have always known that I was "specially picked", whereas other parents had to accept what God sent them. This is because I was adopted. In 1990 I traced my birth mother after eleven years of searching, and was reunited with her. Soon after this I heard an interview on a radio programme which stated that if Adoptees searched for birth mothers, the birth mothers would become suicidal. I disagreed with this sentiment, and so rang the radio station, and stated that I had traced my birth mother that she was still very much alive and had no intentions of committing suicide. During a subsequent radio interview I invited listeners who were Adoptees, to contact me with the view to setting up a support group for people who were adopted. I received hundreds of letters from Adoptees all over Ireland, and the U.K. The group was set up in March 1991 and agreed to meet once a month. This gave me an opportunity to train as an adoption councillor and also to work with hundreds of Adoptees over the years. During these meetings we had discussions on all aspects of adoption. We often broke into smaller discussion groups and then reported back to the main group. We discovered very early in the meeting that we all shared similar beliefs, which included:

- Feeling the need for a sense of identity;
- being people pleasers;
- being protective of Adoptive parents;
- feeling overprotected by adoptive parents;
- feeling different;
- feeling abandoned;
- using adoption as a crutch, i.e. blaming life's problems on being adopted;
- Not trusting in relationships.

In 1997 I took a class in Defusing Negative Personality Traits with Dr. Wayne Topping, and began to see the correlation between beliefs and illness. Having access to many Adoptees, I was able to check out their beliefs using muscle testing to verify the findings.

Method

The methods used for this study included:

- Group discussions and reporting back to a main group.
Each group comprised of four people, who were given approximately one hour to discuss what it meant to them to be adopted and what was the common links those Adoptees had.

- The second method was to conduct one-to-one interviews with the Adopted person. These interviews took place over several months, with each individual and approximate interview time of four hours each.
- I used muscle testing to identify belief statement using bilateral muscle testing and making a correction with E.S.R. emotional hand modes and eye rotations. I also used Dr. Wayne Topping's Personality Trait method, which uses bilateral muscle testing to establish the belief, and then finds the corresponding organ reflexes to identify which organ meridian or LAN (loving affirmation nerve plexus) is affected and becomes unbalanced when we go against the belief. We then used four statements to reprogram the negative beliefs, and substitute a more positive outlook. For example in the case of the statement "I must please people"

"I no longer believe I must Please people"

"I no longer feel (negative emotion) when I no longer believe I must please people"

"I feel (positive emotion) when I please myself"

" I feel (plexus emotion) towards myself, (others, or others feel towards me)"

The major beliefs I found common to all 116 adoptees were:

- "I must please people"
- "I must protect my adoptive parents"
- "I am different "
- "I feel abandoned"
- "I feel unwanted"
- "If I'm not good, I'll be given away"
- "I don't belong".

Common symptoms found amongst these adoptees were:

- Eating disorders
- Being over possessive or clingy and needy
- Not trusting in relationships
- Being overly accommodating

- Using adoption as a crutch, when things go wrong, i.e. blaming the problem, on being adopted
- Feeling that there was a missing piece, like in a jigsaw puzzle that you can't finish
- Feeling a loss of a sense of identity
- Feeling that they had no roots, especially following the birth of a child, which seemed to emphasise their lack of belonging to their bloodline
- Finding it difficult to talk about being adopted
- Feeling over protected or controlled by their adoptive parents

Discussion

Children are programmed in the womb to respond to their parent's voice, and have a natural bonding with their mother, prior to birth. After nine months in the womb Adoptees are born to discover that this person is not there for them. They get placed in a temporary foster home where they may bond with a foster mother. This period can be anywhere from six weeks to three years, depending on how long it takes birth mothers to sign the papers, allowing the child to be adopted. In Ireland there is no statutory regulated time on this, and some adoptive parents have waited up to nine years, not knowing whether they will be able to formally adopt their child or not. Children who get moved around to more than two or three homes in the first year of life tend to develop eating disorders. Stress plays a major role here, and upsets the young digestive system especially the stomach lining, laying down a foundation for eating disorders later on.

Adoptees become people pleasers, because they do not want to be abandoned or "given away" again. They become the perfect child; not putting a foot out of line so that their adopted parents will love them and want to keep them. This trend carries on into adult relationships. Adoptees have a tendency to be insecure in relationships, and need lots of reassurance that they are loved. They can tend to be promiscuous as teenagers, giving their boyfriend/girlfriend their all, in order that they will be accepted and loved, and most importantly not abandoned.

Adoptees often feel like strangers in their own families. This becomes obvious when they realise that they don't look like their parent or siblings. Perhaps their eyes or hair colour is different to the rest of the family; perhaps they are taller or shorter than other family members. This can lead to feelings of not fitting in.

Adoptees are "specially picked "; this is often how the subject of adoption is explained to them as young children. What they often hear is "I wasn't born" therefore they feel different to other children who were born. Many Adoptees talk about the missing piece of the jigsaw, they know who they are, often they have a chosen career, and sometimes husbands, wives or children, and yet there is this piece of the puzzle missing and that is "Who am I, and who gave birth to me?" This often triggers the need to trace the birth family, to find a sense of identity and belonging and to finish the jigsaw puzzle.

Sharon Kaplan and Deborah Silverstein; Speakers at the 14th annual conference of the North American Council on Adoptable Children, held in August 1989 identified seven Core Issues of Adoption as ways that adoptive parents, Adoptees and birthparents may be affected by their adoption experiences. While many people realise that loss and grief are part of the adoption experience, they may not be aware of the impact these issues have had on their lives. People involved in this study explored each of the Seven Core issues in adoption to see how they have affected them, They were named as:

- Loss
- Rejection
- Guilt and Shame
- Grief

- Identity
- Intimacy
- Control

Adoption is created through loss; without loss there is no adoption. Birth parents, Adoptees and Adoptive parents have experienced at least one major loss before becoming involved in adoption. Birthparents lose the child born to them, Adoptees lose their birthparents, and adoptive parents lose the child that would have been born to them or the child they imagined they would adopt. Society expects adoptive parents to be happy, and Adoptees to be grateful that they were adopted. Birthparents are made to feel that they have to forget the event and the child they have given for adoption. They are expected to get on with their lives. They are not given permission to grieve their loss.

This leads to Adoptees frequently engaging in behaviour that is designed to retrieve their loss. Adoptees frequently imagine people they meet are members of their birth family, especially if they look somewhat like them, or if someone suggests that they look like someone else.

Adoptees often feel they were placed for adoption because they were worthless or defective. They regard their placement for adoption as a rejection. To be "chosen," or "specially picked" they must first be rejected. Some may take responsibility for being rejected, believing they did something to cause it. Children adopted from other countries may feel rejected not only by their birthparents, but also by their race, religion or culture. Not only can feelings of rejection lead to impaired self-esteem; Adoptees may anticipate rejection and either set themselves up for it in their relationships or try to please others so they are not rejected.

When people personalise a loss to the extent that they feel there is something intrinsically wrong with them that caused the loss, they often feel guilt that they did something wrong, or shame because others may recognise it. Adoptees will never be the perfect child they imagine they needed to be to avoid rejection by their birthparents, nor will they ever be the perfect children they imagine that their adoptive parents wanted. Adoptees may feel shame at being different, or feel that they deserve misfortune.

Because adoption is seen as a problem-solving event in which everyone gains, rather than an event in which loss is integral, it is difficult for Adoptees to grieve. While everyone deals with grief in individual ways there are five predictable stages of grief.

- Denial, in which the individual feels shock or detachment;
- Anger, in which the individual confronts the loss as unfair;
- Bargaining, in which the person thinks the loss can be recovered if he or she acts in a certain way;
- Depression, in which the person feels helpless and hopeless;
- Acceptance, in which the loss is temporarily resolved so that the person can function.

These stages may overlap and may be experienced over and over again though generally with less intensity, as loss becomes more distant. Some Adoptees may have difficulty dealing with

grief because they are not encouraged to mourn their loss. Indeed the adoptive parents may block the Adoptee's grief process because it feels like rejection to them. However failure to grieve can lead to depression or acting out in the child or adolescent. Adoptees also have difficulty grieving because they can't fully understand their loss during childhood. Adoptees can't grieve fully until late adolescence, and sometime more so after the birth of their first child. This necessity to grieve repeatedly as their understanding grows can lead Adoptees to fear that their grief will never end.

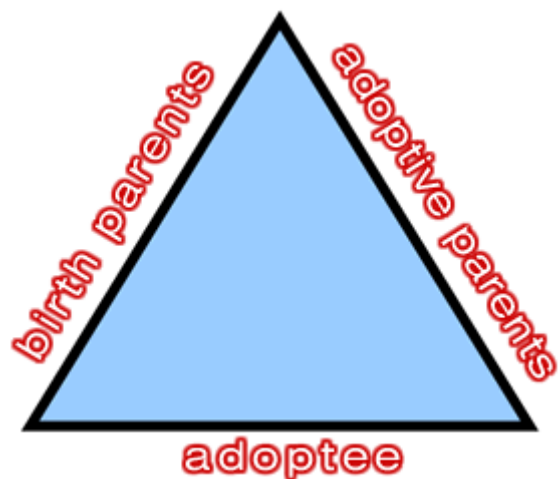
A person's identity is partly derived from knowing what they are and what they are not. Adoption threatens a person's knowing who he is, where he came from, and where he's going. Adoptees lose their family identity through adoption and "borrow" the identity of their adoptive families, but often feel they are playing a role. Lack of information about their birth families may impede development of a sense of self for some, and negative information about their birth families can lead to negative self-image. Some Adoptees who do not have a sense of "belonging" to their families may behave in extreme ways to "belong", such as becoming "people pleasers" or by joining cults.

Some people who are confused about their identity may have difficulty getting close to anyone because they fear experiencing loss again. Some Adoptees may fear intimate relationships because they may unknowingly be involved with a birth relative, or because they are unsure what they might pass on genetically to their offspring. Some may also have difficulty getting close to others as a result of their early experiences with bonding and attachment.

The Adoption Triangle

All those involved in the adoption triangle have been forced to "give up control"; Usually by adoption societies, families or circumstances. Adoption is a second choice. There has been a crisis whose resolution is adoption.

Birthparents may emerge from the adoption process feeling victimised and powerless.



Adoptive parents have learned to be helpless. They will have learned that no matter what they do they will still remain childless unless they

adopt. When they do receive a child, they may not be able to connect the event to anything they did. Adoptive parents who do not feel entitled to be their child's parents because their actions did not lead to their child's arrival can be lax in parenting. Those who try to re-exert control over their lives may overprotect their children or try to control them.

Adoptees are either too young to be consulted or are offered no alternative. The haphazard nature of how they joined their families can result in Adoptees having difficulty

understanding cause and effect. Consequently, they may act without a sense of cause and effect, leading to inability to take responsibility for their actions.

Conclusion

This study was compiled using various methods:- Discussion groups, one-to-one interviews and muscle testing belief statements to verify them. While the majority of the Adoptees in this study thought that they held all of the above beliefs, we found using muscle testing as a way of verifying the beliefs a valuable tool. In the case of the above-mentioned beliefs, 100% of our adoptees had locked indicator muscles on all of the above statements.

Identifying the behaviour patterns and beliefs, and using statements to reprogram the negative beliefs, has resulted in several benefits. It has brought about changes in attitude; has been significant in breaking behaviour patterns, bringing about feelings of more confidence, increased self-esteem, empowerment and a better understanding of why we do what we do.

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References:

Kaplan, Sharon & Silverstein, Deborah, "Seven Core Issues of Adoption" published Adopted Child Newsletter, Vol. 8. No. 12, October 1989