

## Module #10 Openness in Adoption

### Handout #10.4 Clinical Implications of Closed/Confidential and Mediated Adoptions

#### Closed/Confidential Adoptions

##### Parents

1. Can experience fear of the unknown birth parent; what is going on in the birth family that might impact the adoptive family?
2. Do not know if they have all the information to be the best parent to their child
3. Are not equipped to answer the questions their child will ask
4. Are concerned that if another child is born that is a sibling to their child, they won't be notified
5. May have unresolved infertility issues that could impede attachment
6. May have entitlement issues
7. May avoid certain topics
8. Will have no knowledge of medical, mental health, genetic information that might come to light in years following placement, which could impact the child's behavior, health, etc.

##### Child

1. May have fear and shame surrounding the adoption and this could impact self-esteem
2. May feel disconnected from their prior life experience, which can leave them with identity confusion
3. May have a sense that something awful about their life does not allow their adoptive parents to accept that part of them
4. Surmises that the people who were a part of their lives previously, foster parents, therapists, peers, were not worth staying connected to, which has implications for diminished attachment to the current family and community; people can become interchangeable cogs in a wheel
5. Does not have important information, and children with a curious temperament can be distracted from everyday life by wondering or by creating fantasy, which may impede their educational and social development

##### Birth Parents

1. May fear that their children will hate them for "giving them up"
2. Worry that their child will die and they won't know about it
3. Worry that their child will grow up in the foster care system because nobody wanted them
4. Wonder about the child's wellbeing
5. Live with guilt and shame
6. May have overwhelming, unresolved, unacknowledged grief
7. May carry secrecy which infuses into their lives in many arenas
8. May be at risk of suicide
9. May be drawn to risky behaviors such as addictions to numb their pain
10. May create replacement pregnancies

## Module #10 Openness in Adoption

11. May have impaired future relationships
12. Pregnancy and loss of a child may impact relationships with subsequent children

### Mediated Adoption

#### Adoptive Parent

1. Experience no growth of trust, so the fear remains
2. Talk about the paradox of sharing pictures and letters with essential strangers, especially without the child's knowledge or permission
3. A concerned that the demands of the child might force the relationship to another level, or force closure of the relationship due to the pressure
4. Share that they are neither fish nor foul; feel like they have to move in one direction or another
5. Share that the initial relationship was based on an agreement to do something, and if the adoptive parents renege on that promise, they feel guilt and often turn it into anger at and blame of the birth parents; this can impact the relationship with their child.
6. Worry that they might stop receiving information; they question if they should stop sending information as promised
7. They question what do if their receive negative information that is coming from the birth parent, and does that information get shared with the child. How and When?

#### Child

1. Could trigger the cessation of information exchange just by asking questions.
2. May experience an invasion of privacy issues; loss of control, since the adopted child is not a party to the original agreement
3. Could be comforted in knowing that the birth family cares enough to receive and/or give information if the exchange continues and is openly discussed
4. The child might not know that communication has stopped until later in life

#### Birth Family

1. May experience betrayal if agreement not kept
2. May walk on eggs; careful to not anger or antagonize the adoptive parents for fear of having contact cut off
3. May not articulate that they don't have to the means to keep their part of the bargain, and can be misinterpreted as not caring
4. May feel like you are constantly being judged on their character and whether they are good enough to receive pictures and information
5. May be surprised at the reigniting of grief as communications arrive
6. Maybe frightened when communication stops and don't know why; are the adoptive parents ill, angry, divorced, deceased, etc.