

# The Carter-Jenkins Center

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# On Adoption: Problems, Successes and Psychiatric Consequences.

# On Adoption

- **A.-Why do people adopt?**
- **B.-Complications of adoption.**
- **C.-What age to adopt?**
- **D.-Where to adopt?**
- **E.-When and how to tell the child?**
- **F.-Inter-racial adoptions.**
- **G.-Developmental issues.**
- **H.-Possible solutions.**

# A.- Why do people adopt?

- **1.- Kindness.**
- **2.- Can not conceive.**
- **3.- Save the marriage.**
- **4.- Companion for another child  
(biological or not).**

# B.- Complications Come From Four Quarters.

- **1.- Coming from the parents.**
- **2.- Coming from the child.**
- **3.- Coming from the interaction.**
- **4.- Coming from development.**

# Coming from the parents.:

- **1.- The adopted child is a permanent monument to kindness or to the failure to conceive of one of the parents. They may be trying to save their marriage.**
- **2.- Adopted child or not marriages go bad frequently. In this country 60%. What then?**

# Coming from the parents (cont)

- **3.- Do both parents want to adopt?**
- **4.- It is easy to think (consciously or unconsciously) this woman can not give me a child or this man can not make me pregnant. Example of woman that dissociated.**

# Coming from the parents (cont)

- **5.- This child is not my blood and that is why this is happening. Difficulties in bonding that the above creates.**
- **6.- With a biological child there is no excuse.**

# Coming from the child.:

- **1.- Adopted children are highly represented in outpatient clinics and outpatients departments.**
- **2.- The above is frequently due to poor genetics as well as the increased developmental difficulties and conflicts that they and their adoptive parents face.**

# Coming from the child (cont)

- **3.- Many adopted children come from troubled biological parents, genetically or otherwise. Low intelligence, impulsive, young, drugs, poor psychiatric histories (genetically speaking).**
- **4.- Nothing is more difficult in life than being abandoned by one's parents.**

# Coming from the child (cont)

- **5.- That is why sometimes they develop fantasies where they were not really abandoned but the adoptive parents stole or kidnapped them.**
- **6.- Or they prefer to think that there was something very bad about them which made it impossible for the mother to keep them.**

# Coming from the child (cont)

- **7.- Such fantasies, aimed at negating the abandonment, lead at the same time to an enormous sense of guilt.**
- **8.- As adults they still keep searching for their parents (Roaming streets).**
- **9.- Fear of incest, i.e., anyone could be a sibling.**

# Coming from the interaction.:

- **1.- Frequently they turn against the adoptive parents, saying cruel things such as you are not my real mother. I do not have to listen to you, etc.**
- **2.- This is naturally very painful for people who tried their best as adoptive parents.**

# Coming from the interaction (cont)

- **3.- Much of this rage is displaced from the non-available biological parents to the adoptive parents.**
- **4.- Adopted girls are prone to repeat their biological mother's behaviors as understood in their phantasies. Thus they can become promiscuous early on, become pregnant and conceive illegitimate children.**

# Coming from the interaction (cont)

- **5.- It is a way of saying to the biological mother: I love you mother and I am exactly as you are.**
- **6.- Boys can become vandals and asocial, abuse drugs, and can be quite destructive of adoptive parents property i.e., father's tools, mother's sewing machine, etc.**

# Coming from development.:

- **1.- Adopted children have two sets of parents, biological and adoptive.**
- **2.- They can denigrate and idealize them at will.**
- **3.- Because of this, the mechanism of splitting is highly facilitated in them with bad consequences for development. Biological children can not split this way.**

# Coming from development (cont)

- **4.- Similarly, their oedipus complex is very complicated for similar reasons.**
- **5.- Biological children had only one set of parents and though at times they develop a romance fantasy, they know it is a fantasy.**

# Coming from development (cont)

- **6.- Adopted children have two sets of parents (biological and adopted) but thanks to the facilitation of splitting they turn the two sets of parents into four sets.:**
  - a) a denigrated bad set of biological parents.**
  - b) an idealized set of of biological parents.**
  - c) a good idealized set of adoptive parents.**
  - d) a bad denigrated set of adoptive parents.**

# Coming from development (cont)

- **7.- Against the bad denigrated parents they can raise the idealized good set of the biological parents that are not there to frustrate them in any way, and that in their fantasies will do anything they want.**

# General considerations: What Age to Adopt?

- **1.- Early is better generally speaking.:**
  - **But there are some dangers, i.e., some forms of retardation, brain damage, etc can not be detected during the first year of life.**
  - **Think in terms of development of object relations.**

# What age to adopt?(cont)

- **2. Older age poses many problems.:**
  - a) History of too many fosterings is a problem because of the need of consistency of objects to develop good object relationships.**
  - b) One need to ask what was the reason for the many fosterings, i.e., difficult child, abuse or traumatic exposure to other children's behavior,etc.**

# What age to adopt (cont)

- c) Remember too that many of these children are damaged (brain damaged or otherwise) and can not help being severe behavior problems in spite of excellent foster parents.**
- d) It is difficult to cope with some of the above mentioned behaviors, hence multiple fosterings, i.e., they can be a warning signal.**

# General Considerations

- 3.- What children understand about adoption and at what age.**
- 4.- When do they understand the real meaning of being adopted vs being chosen.**
  - Example of kittens being adopted.**
  - Example of party at 5 years.**

# General considerations (cont)

- **5.- Attention is concentrated in biological mother generally.**
- **6.- Many feel need to identify with biological parents imitating their real or imagined behaviors.**
- **7.- Imagine how much more difficult it is to develop a sense of self and a personal identity with so many options open.**

# General considerations (cont)

- **8.- To tell or not to tell.**
- **9.- When to tell?**
- **10.- Uncertainties of the types described and of your origin, lead to fears in selecting partners since they could be a brother or a sister.**

# General considerations (cont)

- **11.- Similar fantasies are not uncommon in the children of parents that were adopted.**

# General considerations (cont)

- **13.- In treatment they are highly defended...I don't care...It does not bother me, etc.**
- **14.- Value of individual and group psycho-therapy. Use of videos.**
- **15.- We protect the rights of the parents but not of the child.**

# Solutions.:

- 1.- Monitor development with experts on the subject (not many unfortunately). Periodical check ups, at least once or twice a year for as long as necessary.**
- 2.- Use remedial techniques i.e., psycho-therapy, counseling, groups, parental guidance, etc., as soon as something is not going well.**

# Solutions (cont)

- 3.- Do not wait for years. The problems may become untreatable.**
- 4.- Some adopted children need medications because of genetic problems in parents such as ADHD, bipolar disorder, depression, etc**
- 5.- Change laws to make access to certain types of information possible (medical, genetic, etc)**

# Solutions (cont)

- 6.- Have government provide for guidance for parents, checkups and treatment when adoptive parents can not afford it.**
- 7.- Provide on-going supportive and preventive services such as parent groups, marriage counseling,etc**

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