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## An Essay on Adoptees and Therapy

All of us, at one time or another, have felt unsure of ourselves, feared rejection, and have felt disconnected from everything, including ourselves. However, adopted persons are faced with an even tougher problem that sets them apart from everyone else - they were raised by an adopted family. can cause feelings of rejection, despair, and extreme loneliness, no matter how much they are loved by their adopted family. It is these feelings that help burden adoptees throughout most of their lives.

We are all used to being, or feeling rejected at one time or another. Most people are confronted by this fear during adolescence, but for adoptees, the fear begins the moment that they are taken from their birthmother. "Adoptees seldom are able to view their placement into adoption by the birthparents as anything other than total rejection. Adoptees, even at young ages grasp the concept that to be 'chosen' means first that one was 'un-chosen,' reinforcing adoptees' lowered self-concept."(2) The internalization of these feelings of rejection, can be very difficult for anyone to overcome, especially an adopted child.

Individual identity is usually derived from our natural parents. They give us a sense of who we are to be. For adoptees, this source of information is unavailable for them to draw information from. Instead, the role of their parents is now played by

Yet another problem facing adoptees is the issue of intimacy. It has been thought that perhaps this is one way for the adoptee to avoid possible reenactment of previous losses. Most of the time this quality is readily observed as non-affectionate behavior. Parents report that their adopted children are "less cuddly" than their biological children. Adopted children also seem to hold something back from any relationship they have formed, and many have stated that they have never felt close to anyone. This behavior becomes greatly exaggerated when the child being adopted is older. Bonding and attachment are prevailing issues in older adoptees.

While these and other issues are easily recognized, dealing with them is another issue each adoptee must deal with to get the most from their relationship with their adopted family. Many adoptees seek counseling and support groups to find help in dealing with these issues. Both can greatly decrease the pain associated with any of the previous issues. "According to Detroit-area adoption therapist Linda Yellin, MSW, who is herself an adoptee, 'Therapy can assist adoptees in a number of different ways. It can help them with their interpersonal relationships; the integration of their adoption experiences; their struggles around adoption issues; and with their healing process.'"(5)

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It is these and other issues that can greatly effect the quality of life of an adoptee. Feelings of rejection, loneliness, and abandonment are all too familiar to adopted children. Thankfully, counseling and support groups are available to adoptees to help integrate them into society as a fully functioning individual. As the population increases, so will the number of adoptees. With some help, the negative effects can continue to be reduced.

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