

Open Adoption –Vs – Secret Adoption

Apprehensions against disclosure leading to secret adoption

1. This can have a negative impact in the child's mind
2. Child may encounter social discrimination from relatives , neighbors , peers
3. Child may suffer from inferiority complex

Why Open Adoption?

1. Secret Adoption result in to tension amongst the parents towards maintaining the secrecy and such tension is also inducted in to the child
2. The foundation of parent – child relationship should be on truth and not on suppression of fact where there will always be a fear of being found out and this will diminish happiness from the relationship
3. It's not possible to maintain the secrecy throughout and the child will not be able to handle the trauma when it will come to the knowledge through other sources
4. If the news come to the knowledge of the child through other than the parents wrong message will be conveyed. The child might consider that parents are shy about this.

What to disclose?

1. The fact of adoption to all in the surrounding , family , profession before and after the adoption to make it a natural incident
2. Share the information on adoption wherever necessary for the child e.g. doctors while checking up / immunization ; play schools etc
3. Share the fact with the child whenever he/she asks or raise the question of her birth details (irrespective of the age at which he / she is)

When to share the information with the child?

There are two schools of thought – 1) Early sharing and 2) Late Sharing

1. The first group believes that if the child grows up with the word adoption right from the beginning he will be familiar and comfortable with the situation of adoption and hence has no fear and doubts.
2. The second group believes that the child has to be older and only after his cognitive development has occurred can emotionally accept the fact of adoption.

The experience of Atmaja and most of the adoption agencies has shown that early sharing and openness after taking in to consideration the development level of the individual child has given positive results.

How to share?

It should be kept in mind that 'what' the parents share is not important here but the most critical is 'how' they share it. We suggest the following

- This should not be shared as a sudden news item at any stage
- The information should pass on gradually through a process of sharing fact with the child over a long period of time
- Parent should not create any artificial situation to share the information
- The best way is to start story telling from the early stage with few examples from history such as Lord Krishna
- Visit to the adoption agency along with the child is a most natural event when the information can be passed on without directly telling to the child
- Whenever any situation comes like some child birth in the family or neighborhood, the child may ask about his own birth. Parents should use such situations to convey the fact without showing any discomfort
- Discussion on adoption related matters should be done openly in front of the child
- Association with support groups etc can also create an environment where the information goes to the child in a natural way
- While sharing the fact the parents should not be judgmental about the biological parents and rather stress on love and affection that created the relation. There should be a sense of respect for the biological parents while the information is shared. Adoptive parents should clearly explain the process of adoption and convey that they have no information of the biological parents.
- The child should always feel that he / she is very much important for the parents and it is the love and affection only for which they have adopted him/her.

Concluding Words

Most of the adoptive parents feel and opines that they should not go through the process of disclosure because they are so closely bonded to the children that it will be hard to acknowledge that these children were not born to them. However , in the best interest of the child and for that matter of all concerned, sharing the fact of adoption is an integral part in adopting a child.