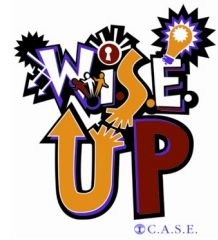




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## Developmental Differences in Understanding Adoption by Adopted vs. Non-adopted Children and Teens

### 0-4 years

#### **Adopted**

- Generally does not realize differences.
  - If notices them, likes to point them out.
- Feels OK about adoption and thinks story is special.

#### **Non-adopted**

- Generally does not realize differences.
  - If notices them, likes to point them out.
- Feels OK about adoption and thinks story is special.

### 5-6 years

#### **Adopted**

- Child begins to ask many questions about babies, birth, differences.
- Likes adoption story, but does not understand concepts. Feels some differences especially in multi-cultural families.
- Tells most people that he/she is adopted.

#### **Non-adopted**

- Child begins to ask many questions about babies, birth, differences.
- Does not understand adoption, but wonders about it when it comes up – and often asks simple questions.
- Accepts adoption as a way to form a family.

### 7-11 years

#### **Adopted**

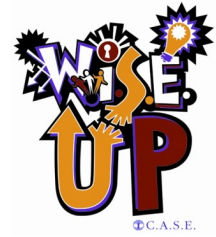
- Child understands basic concepts of adoption and begins grieving process.
- May stop asking questions/denial and realizes lost something to be adopted.
- “Not everyone is adopted like me.”
- “Why was I adopted?”
- “Why didn’t they keep me? Did I do something wrong?”
- Increasing interest in birth parents.
- Fantasies about living with different parents.

#### **Non-adopted**

- Does not understand adoption concepts, but begins to sense that it results when parents “give away” child.
- Reaction to adopted peers based on information from adults/media.
- “Not everyone is adopted like he is.”
- “Why was she adopted?”
- “Could my parents give me away? I am glad I am not adopted.”
- “Adoption is okay because I like you OR adoption is not okay because I don’t like you”
- Fantasies about living with different parents.



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## Developmental Differences in Understanding Adoption by Adopted vs. Non-adopted Children and Teens (Continued)

### 12-14 years

#### **Adopted**

- Anger stage of grieving and developmental stage.
- May resist authority and try on new identities.
- Begins separating from two sets of parents.
- May be angry over loss of control (i.e. adoption decisions) –wants more control.
- Growing sense of self – identity issues.
- More complex reasoning about adoption story and needs to look at grays.
- Rejects kids who are different.
- Generally does not talk about being an adoptee.
- What does sex have to do with adoption?

#### **Non-adopted**

- Anger stage developmentally.
- May resist authority and try on new identities.
- Begins separating from one set of parents.
- Wants more control in life.
- Growing sense of self – identity issues.
- Sees many differences about adoptive families.
- Oversimplifies how adoption occurs and does not understand emotional issues.
- Rejects kids who are different.
- May be negative about what he/she perceives what adoption means about adoptees.
- What does sex have to do with adoption?

### 15-17 years

#### **Adopted**

- Separates from two sets of parents.
- Has second layer of concerns about leaving home.

#### **Non-adopted**

- Separates from one set of parents.
- May face concerns about leaving home, but usually feels secure about its permanency.