

Myth: The birth mother will regret her decision for the rest of her life.

Some people believe that adoption is so painful that most women regret the choice all their lives, or that a birth mother who chooses adoption will have serious emotional problems, or that adoption is a more traumatic experience for a woman than abortion.

Reality: For the birth parent facing an unplanned pregnancy, making an adoption plan can be a very positive resolution.

With support and counseling, most birth mothers who choose adoption based on the best interests of their children and themselves are able to grieve and proceed with the healing process in a positive manner. When the adoption experience is handled properly, most birth mothers feel good about their decision years later.

One study found that teen mothers who chose adoption for their children were as satisfied with their decision as those who chose to parent. Studies have also shown that young women who make adoption plans:

- Have higher educational aspirations, are more likely to finish school, and less likely to live in poverty and receive public assistance than those who parent.
- Delay marriage longer and are more likely to marry eventually.
- Are more likely to be employed 12 months after the birth and less likely to repeat an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.
- Are no more likely to suffer negative psychological consequences, such as depression, than those who choose single parenting.

Although there are no studies which actually compare the impact of abortion or adoption for women, recent studies have documented the devastation of abortion and the resulting years of trauma. Women who have abortions experience the death of their children; women who plan adoptions give life.

Myth: Birth mothers are uncaring and soon forget about their babies.

Some people believe that a birth mother who cares about her child would not think of adoption, or that adoption is an irresponsible solution, or that pregnant women who choose adoption take the easy way out, or that a birth mother will eventually forget about the child she placed in adoption.

Reality: Birth parents make loving parenting decisions when they plan adoptions.

Birth parents who make adoption plans are choosing an option which allows them to fulfill their parenting responsibilities. Adoption is a way to ensure their child's long-term needs are met in the best possible way. In order to do this, they must put their child's needs above their own, a sign of maturity, responsibility, and selflessness. Adoption is by no means taking the easy way out. It is a difficult decision, and young women, especially, need to be supported in this decision by those around them.

Some young women facing an unplanned pregnancy have found it helpful to learn about adoption first-hand from a birth parent who has been through the process. Children are never forgotten by their birth mothers. They always hold a special place in their birth mothers' hearts.

Myth: Adoption damages the child.

Some people believe that adoption damages the child, or that adopted children are not well-adjusted, or have mental health problems, or are damaged by the experience, or will grow up to have serious psychological problems, or feel bitter or rejected.

Reality: Adopted children do well in life.

A recent study interviewed over 700 teenagers who had been adopted as infants. The study, the largest ever of adopted teens and their families, looked at various indicators of well-being. Among other things, it found these teens:

- Received and benefitted from lots of support from family, friends, and others;
- Were involved in many positive, structured youth activities, such as sports, music, congregational youth programs, and com-munity organizations;
- Saw themselves as being as strong as their peers in personal identity and self-esteem;
- Showed high levels of caring values and behaviors, such as volunteering.

This data corrects the confusion resulting from studies of adopted teens which did not differentiate between teens adopted at infancy and teens adopted at an older age. Children adopted when older usually experience years in the foster care system. Many were abused or neglected in their biological family. They are understandably found in psychological counseling and mental health settings at a higher rate than their non-adopted peers.

Myth: Most adoptive parents are unfit.

Some people believe that adoptive parents are not as fit to raise a child as are the biological parents, or that no one can love a child as much as a birth parent, or that God is punishing childless couples or sending a message that they should not be parents, or that adoptive parents are abusive.

Reality: Adoptive parents are as fit and capable as any cross-section of biological parents.

For more than three decades, studies have repeatedly shown the above perceptions of adoptive parents to be absolutely false.

One such study compared government data on four groups: 1) children adopted into a two-parent family; 2) children born into a two-parent family; 3) children being raised by an unmarried mother; 4) children being raised by their grandparents. It found that:

- Children from Group 1 did well in school, repeating a grade at the rate of only 7 percent compared to 12 percent of children in Group 2.
- The first two groups of children share similarly high scores regarding general health.
- Group 1 enjoys a quality of home environment superior to all the other groups.
- Group 1 has access to health care that is superior to all other groups.

In addition, adoptive parents on the whole are better educated, older and more economically stable than the population at large, and are less likely to divorce.

While we must not downplay the tragedy of child abuse, there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that it occurs particularly or even frequently in adoptive families. In fact, there is evidence to the contrary. This is an unfounded notion which needlessly perpetuates a birth parent's worries, and unnecessarily deters them

from considering adoption.

There are countless examples of happy families built through adoption. The overwhelming majority of parents cannot imagine loving a child more than those God has given them through adoption.

Myth: The adoption process is secretive.

Some people believe that adoptive parents know very little information about their child's background, or that birth parents have no say in the choice of adoptive parents.

Reality: The adoption process seeks to share information on a level that will benefit all—birth parents, adoptive parents and most importantly, the child.

Virtually all agencies consult with birth parents to determine what type of family they would select. Many agencies provide the birth parents with family profiles from which they may choose. Pictures, letters and mementos can be shared for a time after placement. Today's practice also shares all available nonidentifying background information with the adoptive parents. This can include the birth parents' family and medical histories, physical descriptions, and personal information.

It is rare for a child not to be aware of his or her adoption into their family. The agonizing over "telling a child he was adopted" of days past seems to have led to the myth that adoption was a negative event in the child's life. Parents today share about adoption with their child from day one, in age-appropriate ways that stress love, permanence, and respect for the birth parents who made such a difficult and loving choice to give their child a family.

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Adoption



Five Myths and Realities

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