




Understanding the Needs of the Adoption Circle in a Culturally Competent Manner

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Adoption Therapist, The Cradle

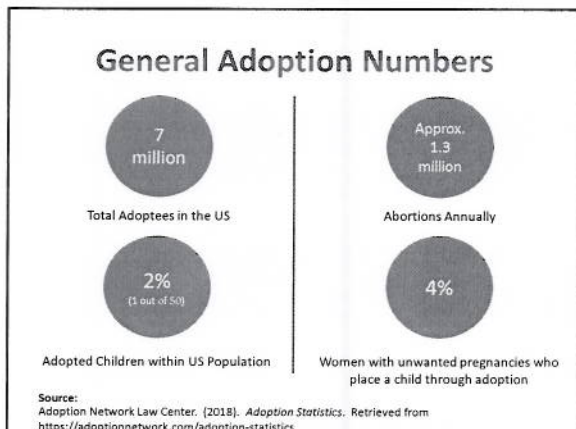
Objectives

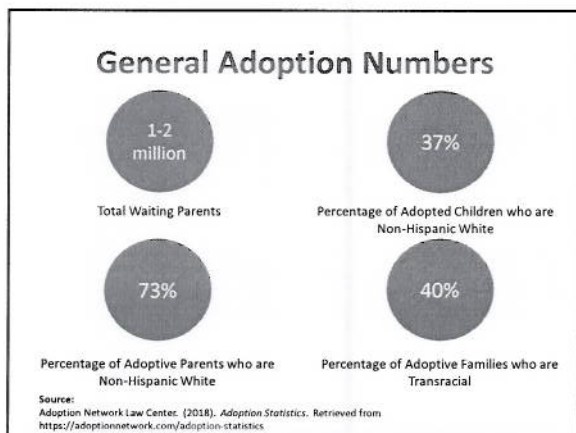
Develop a greater understanding of what adoption is, who is impacted in our society, and the ethics of working with anyone in the adoption circle	Identify the gains and losses experienced by members of the adoption circle
Identify situations that may trigger grief responses in the academic environment	Develop culturally competent strategies for helping adoptees process their stories

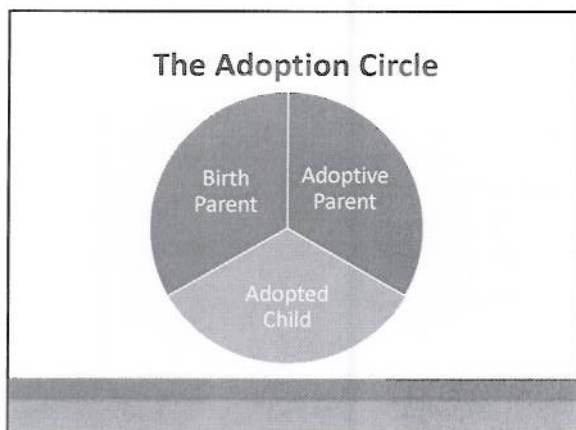
General Adoption Numbers

Americans touched by adoption (placing, adopting, adoptee)	Americans with personal experience with adoption	Families with children that have an adopted child
		

Source: Adoption Network Law Center. (2018). *Adoption Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://adoptionnetwork.com/adoption-statistics>







Birth Parent

Choose the Possible Birth Parent Gains...

- Peace of mind
- Opportunity to pursue goals
- Role in child's life
- Control
- Choice
- Preparation for child
- Opportunity to embrace a new culture
- Feeling of being wanted
- Diversity
- Loving home
- Secure environment
- Prepared family
- Sense of belonging
- Societal acceptance
- Permanence
- Opportunity to share love
- Ability to get questions answered

The Adoption Circle



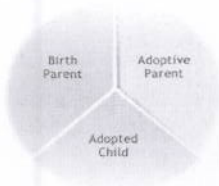
Click a word in the list of possible gains for more information.

Adoptive Parent

Choose the Possible Adoptive Parent Gains...

- Peace of mind
- Opportunity to pursue goals
- Role in child's life
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The Adoption Circle



Click a word in the list of possible gains for more information.

Adopted Child

Choose the Possible Adopted Child Gains...

- Peace of mind
- Opportunity to pursue goals
- Role in child's life
- Control
- Choice
- Preparation for child
- Opportunity to embrace a new culture
- Feeling of being wanted
- Diversity
- Loving home
- Secure environment
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- Sense of belonging
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- Permanence
- Opportunity to share love
- Ability to get questions answered

The Adoption Circle



Click a word in the list of possible gains for more information.

Birth Parent

Choose the Possible Birth Parent Losses...

- Opportunity to nurture child
- Role as parent
- Control
- Ability to pass on family name
- Social status
- Privacy
- Genetic connection to child
- Ability to nurture child in first few hours, days, months, years
- Information about the child
- Previous role with child
- Opportunity to know child after placement
- Hope that birth parent will succeed
- Time before placement
- Connection with cultural heritage
- Relationship with child
- Relationship with birth family
- Relationship with previous caregiver
- Relationship with birth siblings
- Familiar people and places
- People who resemble each other

The Adoption Circle

Click a word in the list of possible losses for more information.

Adoptive Parent

Choose the Possible Adoptive Parent Losses...

- Opportunity to nurture child
- Role as parent
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The Adoption Circle

Click a word in the list of possible losses for more information.

Birth Parent



Birth Parent Gains & Losses

Your Selected Gains...

Your Selected Losses...

Some Possible Gains...

- Opportunity to pursue goals
- Role in child's life
- Control
- Choice
- Peace of mind
- Societal acceptance

Some Possible Losses...

- Opportunity to nurture child
- Role as parent
- Privacy
- Control
- Relationship with child

Adoptive Parent



Adoptive Parent Gains & Losses

Your Selected Gains...

Your Selected Losses...

Some Possible Gains...

- Role in child's life
- Control
- Choice
- Opportunity to embrace a new culture
- Preparation for child
- Opportunity to share love

Some Possible Losses...

- Privacy
- Control
- Genetic connection to the child
- Ability to nurture child in first few hours, days, months, or years
- Information about the child

Adopted Child



Adopted Child Gains & Losses

Your Selected Gains...


Your Selected Losses...

Some Possible Gains...

- Diversity
- Loving home
- Ability to get questions answered
- Secure environment
- Permanence
- Feeling of being wanted

Some Possible Losses...

- Privacy
- Control
- Time before placement
- Connection with cultural heritage
- Familiar people and places



Openness in Adoption

Openness



Mitigate pain and loss Takes many forms
Not legally enforceable in Illinois Motivated by adoptees

Openness

Empowering for expectant/birth parents

Best practice

Struggles of Openness

Circumstances change and lives move forward

Adoptive parents are the stewards of the relationship with birth family



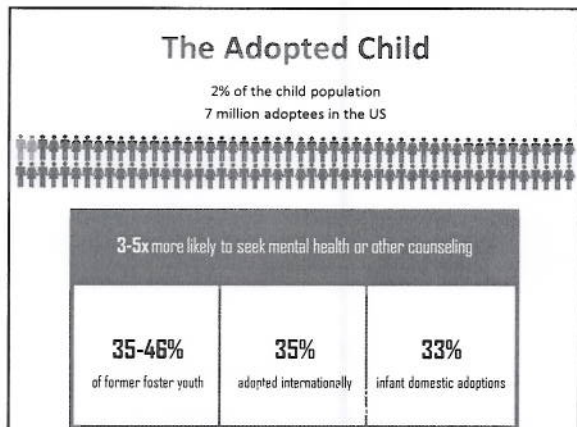
Adoptive Parents

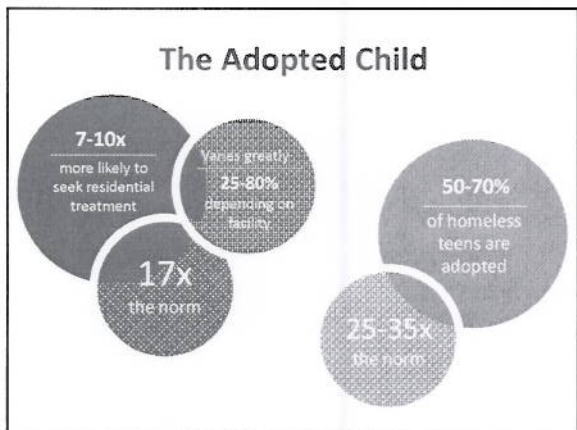
- + Infertility
- + Miscarriages
- + Other Medical Concerns
- + Diversity
- + Same-Sex Parents
- + Single Parents
- + "Save" a child
- + Religious calling
- + Age
- + Family history of adoption
- + Family need (kinship)
- + Lived internationally

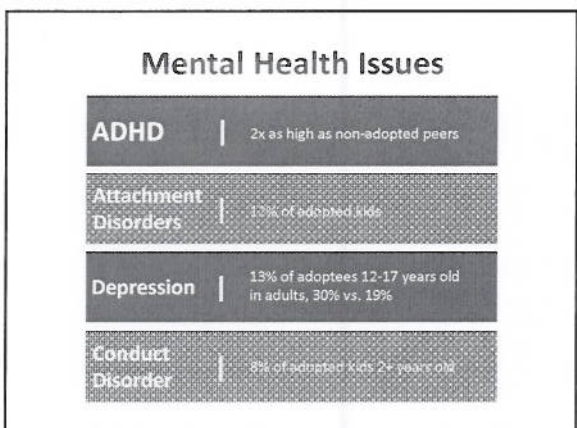
Adoptive Parents

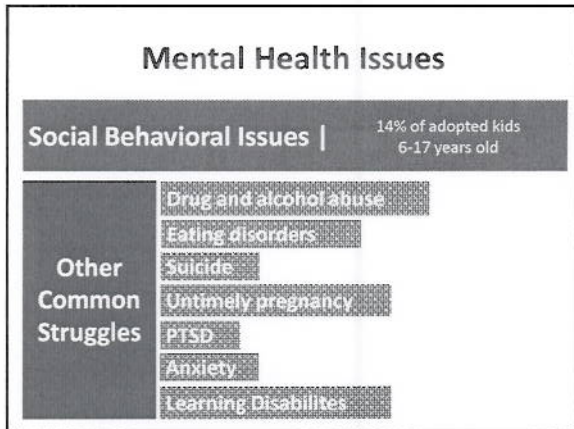
- + Infertility/Miscarriages
- + Adult Attachment
- + Lack of training
 - + Not fully understanding adoption parenting
- + Financial/Educational Contributors
- + Lack of resources











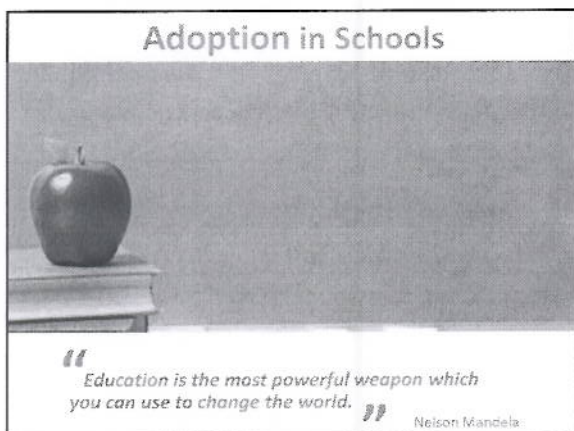
ADOPTION-COMPETENT:
trained to address complex trauma, loss, attachment, identity, and other adoption-related issues


THE PROBLEM | Many, if not most, MHPs are not adoption-competent

WHY? | Lack of training in school
2/3 of licensed psychologists had no coursework related to adoption
8 minutes or less per semester talking about adoption

RESULT | Most adoptive families report seeing 8-10 therapists before finding one who truly understands adoption
APs report feeling blamed by professionals for their children's behaviors

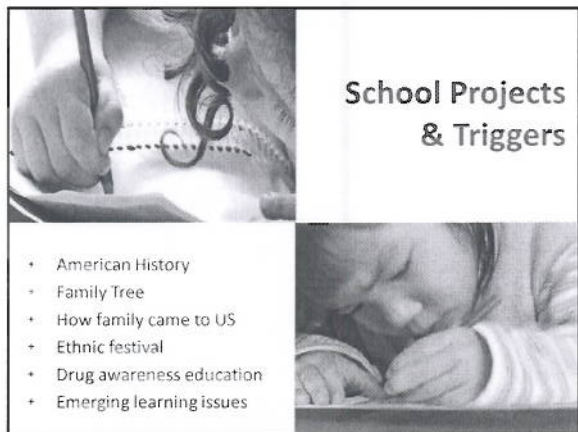
Source:
Smith, S.L. (2014). *Keeping the promise: The case for adoption support and preservation*. Retrieved from <https://www.adoptioninstitute.org/publications/keeping-the-promise-the-case-for-adoption-support-and-preservation/>





Modify Environment

- + Celebrate diversity?
- + Respond to playground teasing?
- + Resolve conflicts (school policy)?
- + Consider student's input?



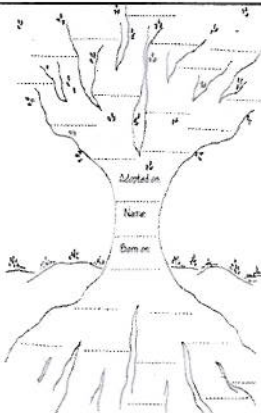
School Projects & Triggers

- + American History
- + Family Tree
- + How family came to US
- + Ethnic festival
- + Drug awareness education
- + Emerging learning issues

Activity

The school is hosting an ethnic festival. Each child is to make flags representing his ethnic heritage—one flag for his mom and one for his dad. The student is ethnically Guatemalan; the parents are German and Irish.

Adoption issue triggered?
Adoption-friendly alternative?



Modified Projects

- + Concept being taught?
- + Inclusive approach?
- + Modifications?
- + Pre-notified parents?

Activity


Student is adopted from Peru. The class does a project on child labor, using an article from *Time* magazine. He learns that Peru has the third highest use of child labor. He becomes upset and acts out.

Adoption issue triggered?
Modified to be adoption-friendly?

Activity

A student was placed in a closed, infant, domestic adoption. A birth mother comes to talk at her health and parenting class. (The birth mother is not the student's birth mother.) The student leaves the room in tears.

Adoption issue triggered?
Adoption-friendly alternative?



“ We spend the first year of a child’s life teaching it to **walk and talk** and the rest of its life to **shut up and sit down**. There’s something wrong there. ”

Neil deGrasse Tyson

What is culture?

“Culture refers to ‘integrated patterns of human behavior that includes language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of race, ethnic, religious, or social groups.’”

- Office of Women and Minority Health in Bureau of Primary Health Care

“Traditional ideas and related values are transferred from generation to generation providing people with ways to live and cope with life’s problems.”

- Jerry Diller

How does culture impact us?

- + Threaded both **consciously** and **subconsciously** throughout the workings of everyday life
 - + Can impact decision-making
- + Illustrates an individual’s personal identification

race	ethnicity	religion	gender	class	nationality
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and has influence on thoughts, actions, and interactions with others.

Cultural Responsiveness

the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other groups.

Cultural Responsiveness

- + Requires mental health professionals to treat every client as an individual first and *understand that he/she will not automatically respond in a manner that is consistent with his/her culture's norms and values.*
- + The actions or responses of a client from a represented cultural group will not provide a template of responses for all members of that same culture.

Barriers to Cultural Responsiveness

- + Cross-cultural misunderstanding may be evident when it is consciously or unconsciously assumed that one's own cultural norms are standards everyone else follows.
- + Misunderstanding and incorrect assessments can occur when practioners assume clients "fit" into cultural stereotypes or into practioners' prior experiences of clients with similar cultural identities.

How do we become Culturally Responsive?

- + Be open to feeling vulnerable
- + Become more grounded in learning about one's own cultural background and heritage
- + Be aware of the effect of one's own culture in viewing the world
- + Learn more about other groups' cultural values and beliefs



How Diverse Is Your Universe?

Continuous Self-Assessment

- + Practitioners need to continually check and recheck their perceptions and interpretations of behaviors.
- + Asking clients to be 'cultural guides' can be a strengths-based technique to use in practice; however, they should not be placed in a representative role for their entire cultural group.

Engagement (Building an US)

- + Mental health practitioners' perceptions about different cultures may impact engagement with clients as well as the types of options that are offered.
- + Diversity: *Everyone* who is not you...

Establishing Optimal Engagement

Establish trust by being respectful, warm and sincere

Explain what will happen during the interaction and important concepts such as confidentiality

Acknowledge cultural differences between the practitioner and client; invite client to share personal cultural perspectives

Assessment: Power Differential

- + Due to the history and current existence of racism and discrimination, practitioners must be aware that there could be perceived power differentials that exist between them and their clients
- + Culturally responsive practitioners can engage a mistrusting client by attempting to shift the perceived power; identify what each can do for the other
- + Acknowledge for parents that they are the experts in their children
- + Help families see that your role is not to be the "judge" or "enforcer" of rules

**Cultural Competency:
A Lifelong Process**

- + Humans struggle with the pitfalls of stereotyping, cross-cultural misunderstanding and language barriers
- + When health care professionals make a conscious commitment to provide culturally responsive services, clients can receive high quality health care services that are non-judgmental and facilitate informed decision-making

Resources



CAFFA

www.caffa.org

Adoption Learning Partners

www.adoptionlearningpartners.org

The Cradle's YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/thecradlerocks>
