



# Adoption Competency Threads of Wisdom

## December 1, 2023 - Core Issue# 2: Rejection: Why me?

### Definitions of Rejection:

- 1) To discard or throw out as worthless, useless, or substandard; to rebuff or fling back
- 2) A perceived loss of social acceptance, group inclusion, or a sense of belonging

\*Remembering to use a trauma lens and shifting the mindset of “What is wrong with you?” but “What happened to you.”

- “Sometimes only one of a sibling group is ‘rejected’ and placed in the system...leading to additional emotional concerns.”
- “An adult was trying to find their birth certificate who was born in one state and adopted in another because different states have different laws around adoption and birth certificates; it was a bureaucratic nightmare. He just wanted a passport, and it was so difficult to obtain. It made me think about what not everyone goes through, and he was experiencing a part of rejection and feelings of not being good enough and why me.”
- “Kids can reject others before they are rejected again.”
- “The idea of I don’t want to hurt my mom’s feelings if I get adopted, or you don’t get it because you weren’t adopted.”
- “I have an adopted son; he will often say, “There’s no use in trying; it won’t matter anyway.” Especially when talking to a teacher about an issue that’s being had.”
- “For the new family, I’d prepare them for the reality of the child and ask that they take time to be with them, get to know them, etc., be sensitive and understanding, and then approach the adoption topic if things work out. Then, when that gets tough, they’ll have the foundation to go through it and hopefully not disrupt the placement.”
- “I’d agree to help the child build a relationship and assure her they will work with her. Help the family to understand her behaviors and work with them on training and understanding behaviors.”
- “It’s really important to take things slowly; it’s okay to explore adoption at a later stage.”
- “These kids have had multiple disrupted placements, sometimes due to the adults’ needs and not the kids.”



- “It so complicates the situation with the system and the goals when sometimes placements are made that this will be the permanent family, which can be done on an emergency placement, and so that is when we are seeing a lot of behaviors and challenges because the foster families haven’t had the time to build the relationships and understand the behaviors and then once there are significant struggles the proadaptive families struggle and feel rejected. The child is often not able to attach because they are trying to work through their unresolved grief and losses. This is one of the examples of why emergency permanency placements can cause issues.”
- “Timelines are difficult, but I believe there are ways to work through that successfully on both ends. I think the longer kiddos are in the system, the harder it is to exit them.”

Rejection Adoptive Family:

- Rejection of adoptive parents even when adoptive families use a trauma-informed and adoption-competent lens\* Response: This is why I always speak to my resource families about a trauma-informed lens and to try and remember that these children do not always do these things to “hurt” or with “malicious intent.”
- I have found that it can be very difficult to help an adoptive parent who comes with a difficult history. What happened to you?
- It’s a good reminder for us as professionals working with families to check our judgment of parents when they are struggling.
- I have an adoptive family who has adopted and taken in children at the request of their children.
- Recognizing and talking about that there is still loss involved in that. And it is powerful to acknowledge and put that lens on when working with them.
- The lifeline tool you illustrated could provide an opportunity to look back over history. You don’t even need to call it rejection, but life events open the door to frame it as a rejection.
- As a worker, you need to show that you can sit in the feelings of rejection with the child, acknowledge it with them, honor it, not run from it, and not try to ‘fix’ it.
- The more you sit with this, the more you can come to some piece and don't have to keep carrying around the weight.



- When I think of this, we work with potential expected parents, and with our adoptive parents, we provide upfront education, which includes talking about the primal wound, and a lot of parents get worried and anticipate rejection. So, a lot of our families almost set themselves up to be rejected because they have read about primal wounds, and they are ready to be rejected by the baby before the baby is even born.
- Primal Wound Definition: Babies start bonding with their mom in the womb, and even when adopted at birth, there is a break of attachment, which can cause confusion and struggles regarding attachment for the child being adopted.
- The history of the child's life can be intimidating for others to comprehend. The child may use this history as a safety net to prevent others from getting close to them for fear of more rejection or that they are not good enough to be loved fully.
- Well, we have a family whereby the youth broke the father's golden rule to leave the family. The mother disagreed but chose her husband of the youth. Heavy sigh.
- It all comes to education and preparing the parents for these behaviors.
- The dads needed education prior to taking on this child...totally normal behaviors, expected, help the parents understand.
- I worry about some of our families who, especially around disciplinary issues, are going to change their parenting because now they are not licensed foster parents and don't have to follow those regulations.
- Me too. It comes down to a fundamental understanding of the impact of trauma on children and changing your parenting accordingly. If it isn't internalized, it is easy to revert to what we know and how we were raised.
- Family would benefit from continued family therapy post-adoption.
- It is essential to have the facts of the kids' travels in foster care that led them to this place if you can get it. Not to beat them up with it.... just that you know where they have been and what they have experienced.
- It comes with trust. That is huge as some people are more open to others and would generally be like their therapists. So, I think there are trust issues that you can balance once you earn it.



### Applications of Knowledge is Wisdom

- Why is it essential to identify and sit with rejection before grieving and letting go?
- I always feel that the more you can identify, label, and acknowledge, the more you can own it. And you can't move through the first part until you own and work through it.
- There is trauma associated with it, and it can last for a long time into adulthood if not addressed, recognized, and understood. It is knowing when it started because it has lasting effects. Once you can identify it and understand what it is, it allows you to grieve and let go. That may take a long process.
- It is essential to validate those feelings to honor your core beliefs and learn greater self-awareness for healing. It enhances your new experiences and gives you confidence in following steps.
- Rejection seems like the opposite of that connection. I feel like grief is internal, but rejection is very much about relationship and connection piece. We need to work through that rejection of relationships if we will do the opposite of connect. And help youth and adults have those healthy relationships. They have to work through those feelings of previous relationships.
- When we experience that type of negative feeling or our needs are not being met, we want to move through it quickly without fully understanding it. I think it's important to remember that whatever you do to get out of that, don't do it. Give it a week, and don't do it. Sit in, find out the negative core belief, push through to process, and then work to move forward.
- Recently, I had an experience involving rejection, and it took me about three months to fully get through it. Once I could, the outcome has been peace, tranquility, and a higher level of understanding. Offer to sit with the person in their grief. Show empathy, compassion, and validation. This could be heavy. I like to offer small moments as they are ready to address different elements as they appear.

### Books to Discuss Adoption with a child adopted at birth:

The Open-Hearted Way to Open Adoption  
Open Eyed Adoption  
Toddler Adoption