

## SEVEN CORE ISSUES TABLES

### LOSS

Birth Parent	Child	Permanent Parent
Initial loss links with other life events	Fear of ultimate abandonment	Loss of imagined child
Risks future relationships	Loss of the birth family tree	Loss of family heritage
“More loss than I can bear” loss	Loss of unconditional love	Fear that own family won’t “own” the child
Loss of part of one’s self	Problems with holding on and letting go	Loss of genetic mirroring
Often kept secret, no one “in my shoes”	Loss of biological, genetic and cultural history	Fear of unknown, not in charge

### Rejection

Birth Parent	Child	Permanent Parent
Often feels a lifetime of condemnation	The “tree” didn’t want me - to be chosen, I was first rejected	Infertility leaves feelings of betrayal by body
Rejects self, feels unworthy	“It’s all my fault, I was bad and deserve nothing good”	Not part of the “club”
Comes to expect, and cause rejection	Anticipates and sets up rejection	Expects rejection
Crippled by the fear that their child will hate them	“I don’t feel valuable” so they often become people pleasers	Hypervigilant for signs of “damage”



Pathways to Permanence 2

Parenting Children WHO HAVE Experienced Trauma AND LOSS

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Parent’s Toolbox



## Guilt and Shame

Birth Parent	Child	Permanent Parent
Shame/guilt for placing child	"It's my fault...I'm defective"	Shame of infertility "bodies have failed"
Feelings of failure - "Others do it, why can't I?"	Views birth as a mistake	Not part of the main stream
Judged by others	Shame of being different	Guilt for benefitting from someone else's pain
Carries guilty secret		

## Grief

Birth Parent	Child	Permanent Parent
Anger/ denial	Grief for loss of biological, genetic, cultural history	Grief for loss of fantasy child- "I don't seem myself in my child"
Physical longing for the child	Losses resurface through each developmental stage	Unresolved grief may block attempts to attach to adopted child
Loss of a dream	Grief looks different in children than adults	Sadness for what the child has been through
Abandonment by family	Child's grief may surface as anger towards parent	May experience the child's grief as rejection

## Identity

Birth Parent	Child	Permanent Parent
Diminished sense of self and self-worth	“Who am I?” - Deficits in info may impede integration of identity”	“What is an adoptive parent?”
What is a birth mother/father, and how to incorporate that into self-image	“How do I integrate both my birth family and adoptive family?”	“Are we real parents?”
May interfere with future parental desires	“Where do I belong?”	“Do our relatives consider our child the equal of those born to the family?”
“Am I a mother/father?”		

## Intimacy

Birth Parent	Child	Permanent Parent
Multiple surface relationships	Fear of getting too close - being vulnerable to more loss	Unresolved infertility losses may lead to intimacy/marital problems
Shame and unresolved issues negatively impact relationships	Lack of accurate self-image	May avoid closeness with adoptivee to avoid feelings of loss
Intimacy may equate with loss	Attachment issues may lower capacity for for intimacy	Adoption process/ being judged can impact intimacy
May impact reciprocity with other children		Any history of mal-treatment re-kindled by being pushed away



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## Mastery and Control

Birth Parent	Child	Permanent Parent
Losing a child is the ultimate in losing control	Asked to stretch, and change a dream	Asked to stretch, and change a dream
May spend a lifetime trying to be "good enough"	"My lack of mastery increases my need to control"	Adoption experiences feel intrusive and result in feelings of helplessness
At risk for substance abuse, etc.	To avoid loss, "I will control the world around me"	
	A good relationship is "Where I can be in charge"	