



The Challenges of Adoption on the Marital Relationship

National Healthy Marriage Resource Center Webinar

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Promoting Healthy Marriage in Adoptive Couples

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Common Challenges: Financial Strains



- Rising cost of private adoption
- Adopting through foster care is less expensive, but there tend to be ongoing costs for therapies, medical costs, or support for children with special needs
- Debt due to fertility treatments, medical procedures, etc.

Common Challenges: Emotional Strains



- Marital challenges leading up to the adoption
 - Pregnancy loss, infertility
 - Adoption is “unfamiliar territory” for many
 - Differing opinions and expectations between spouses about adoption
 - Stress over having to make quick decisions that may have long-term consequences
 - Concerns over last-minute changes in the birthplan or failed adoptions
 - Dealing with case workers, birthfamilies, and extended family can be stressful

Emotional Strains (continued)



- Marital challenges after adoption
 - Ongoing concerns about bonding with the child
 - Adoptive couples frequently report having less opportunity for “couple time” (i.e., date nights, sex, spending time with other couples)
 - Adoption can “shine a spotlight” on already existing problems within the marital relationships
 - Concerns pertaining to transracial adoption
 - Societal misconceptions about adoption in general

The Adoptive Mother

- Adoptive mothers can typically become the target for the adopted child's anger, confusion, and ambivalence towards being in the family. The adoptive mother is the biggest threat to the child because the birthmother left and hurt the child the most. There is a whole history and past that has to be worked through.
- Adoptive mothers often experience a very different relationship with the adopted child than their husbands. This can be exacerbated if the mother is the primary caregiver

The Adoptive Father



- The father may tend to discount what problems their wives are experiencing with the children.
- It's important to remember that the stricter or primary parent may actually be experiencing a more genuine version of the child's emotional and behavioral status than the other caregiver.

Common Challenges:

Lack of Support Systems

- Adoptive couples are more prone to isolate themselves, particularly when feeling misunderstood or “abandoned” by their extended family, friends, faith community, etc.
- Couples need to be made aware of available post-adoption resources (i.e., respite, financial helps, support groups, local adoption advocates, etc.)

Issues to Address with Adoptive Couples



- How to promote safety (physical and emotional) in the marriage
- How to communicate effectively with one another
- How to preserve fun and friendship in marriage
- Clarifying expectations
- Dealing with forgiveness
- Identifying local adoption resources

Additional Considerations



- Offer marriage education and enrichment in different formats (i.e., marriage getaway weekend, Family Fun Nights, etc.)
- Curriculum or activities should be skills-based
- If possible, use male and female presenters who have experience with adoption. It will greatly enhance your credibility with the adoptive couple(s).



Thank you for participating in our poll.

The National Healthy Marriage Resource Center is dedicated to helping your marriage education program succeed.

Please email us at info@healthymarriageinfo.org if there are other areas of research you would like the resource center to address in the future.

www.healthymarriageinfo.org



Thank you and have a great afternoon!

A recording of today's Webinar will be available on the NHMRC Website in 7 to 9 days.

Please visit the website at:

www.healthymarriageinfo.org