

# 6 Themes for the Adopted Adolescent

Although not all teens dwell on each of the subjects described below, it is common for teens to grapple with each area as they try to gain understanding of their personal adoption experiences.



THEME & PRIMARY QUESTION	WHAT MAY BE AT THE ROOT	WHAT TEENS NEED
<b>1 Reason for adoption</b> “Why was I adopted?”	Was something wrong with me?; recognizing losses inherent in adoption.	More details about their stories; opportunities to grieve their losses; understanding that others feel this way.
<b>2 Missing or Difficult Information</b> “Do my parents know something I don’t?”	Trouble accepting that some information may never be obtainable; anger at having information hidden from them; coming to terms with difficult information.	Full details, even if disturbing, about their birth families and early history; support, as they process new, difficult information.
<b>3 Difference</b> “How do I fit in?”	Feeling different from peers and from family; feeling that family is “weird” or “different”; may be exaggerated in transracial adoptions.	Acknowledgement and open talk about racism; support as they find a group where they “belong.”
<b>4 Permanence</b> “I’ve lost one set of parents; could I lose another?”	Worrying about the security of the parent-child relationship or friendships; may be exaggerated around the college transition.	Reassurance that you will always be there for them; practical talk about how you’ll stay connected after they leave the house; confronting past losses.
<b>5 Identity</b> “Who am I?”	Grappling with how they’re like and unlike adoptive and (possibly unknown) birth parents; transracial adoption may add extra layer.	Learning as much as possible about their birth parents; support from parents if they decide to search; discussion about similarities to adoptive parents and maintaining family traditions.
<b>6 Loyalty</b> “Will my parents get upset if I ask about my birth parents?”	Feeling guilty about thinking about birth parents.	To be able to air feelings and questions about birth parents; reassurance from parents that it’s OK to be curious; acknowledgement that parents think about child’s birth parents, too.

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