

# PARENTING ADOPTED ADOLESCENTS DISCUSSION GUIDE

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# PARENTING ADOPTED ADOLESCENTS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### SESSION 1

#### *Introduction*

1. What prompted you to come to this discussion group? Tell us something about your adolescent and your journey with him/her.
2. While reading the Introduction, did things come to mind that reminded you of your adolescent and your responses to him/her?
3. What was your adolescence like? Did it parallel that of your adolescent's?

### SESSION 2

#### *Chapter 1: Adolescence—What's It All About?*

1. What are some of the things that fuel the adolescent's energy and drive?
2. How has your adolescent exhibited his/her experiences with:
  - Separation and Individuation?
  - Dependence versus Independence?
  - Autonomy Seeking?
  - Experimentation and Uniqueness?

#### *Chapter 2: Identity Formation—Creating One Self from Many Pieces*

1. On page 37, there is a short story about Jillian. How did her many moves impact the development of her identity?

2. How has your adolescent tried to establish an identity? Has he/she done anything dramatic or risky?
3. Let's talk a bit about how your adolescent has dealt with issues of attachment and separation.
4. Has anyone had any experiences with searching for birth family members? Does anyone's child spend a lot of time thinking and/or talking about birth family members?

## SESSION 3

### *Chapter 3: Loss of the Birth Family—Exploring Issues of Abandonment and Removal*

We're going to spend this session discussing chapter 3. The seven core issues—first discussed by Sharon Roszia, MS, and Deborah Silverstein, MSW—are so important that we want to devote a lot of time to talking about them.

1. How has each of the following impacted the entire family—not just the adopted adolescent?

Loss

Rejection

Guilt and Shame

Grief

Identity

Intimacy and Relationships

Control Issues

## SESSION 4

### *Chapter 4: Facing Frustration—Dealing with Your Child's Challenges*

1. What are your thoughts about:  
     Todd and his sitting for hours?  
     Kenyon and his nonstop texting?  
     Marcus and his explosiveness?
2. How have you dealt with your angry feelings? Hurt feelings?
3. Has your adolescent activated feelings in you that you never knew you had?
4. What have been your experiences trying to control things that you really have no control over?

### *Chapter 5: Adopting an Adolescent—Why It's a Viable Option*

1. Who has adopted an adolescent? What were some of the things that went smoothly?
2. What were some of the more severe challenges?
3. Were you able to have fun with your child? How often?

## SESSION 5

### *Chapter 6: Just When You Thought It Couldn't Get Any Worse—Physical and Sexual Development, Sexuality, and Sexual Behavior*

1. How many of you are parenting an adolescent who has had sexualized experiences?
2. How have these experiences impacted your child? You and the rest of your family?
3. Has anyone had problems related to your child's interest in pornography? Has your child met strangers online?

4. What is your understanding of sexual development, sexuality, and sexual behavior?

### *Chapter 7: Transracial and Transcultural Adoptions—Where Does Your Child Fit In?*

1. How important do you think issues of race and culture are?
2. How many people have friends who are of the same race as your adolescent?
3. On page 119, a somewhat lengthy story about Bobby/Robert begins. Did this story help you to better understand the importance of race in a child's life? Has anyone had a similar experience?
4. How are race and culture different?
5. Take a look at the poems beginning on page 128. What are your thoughts about what these transracially adopted individuals have to say?

## SESSION 6

### *Chapter 8: Turning Eighteen—What Does It Mean?*

### *Chapter 11: Stories of Hope—Parents and Adolescents Share Their Stories*

We're going to discuss these two chapters together since they both have perspectives shared by adoptive parents and adoptees.

1. How many of you have adolescents who have either turned eighteen or will be in the next year or so?
2. Is there anything that you'd like to share that might be helpful to others who will be facing this experience in the future?
3. Does anyone really think that eighteen-year-olds are prepared to be completely independent? How will you help them get established?
4. *Stories of Hope* (chapter 11) consists of many stories from adoptees and parents. What were some of the common threads that ran through many of these stories?

5. What things and which stories gave you hope for your own child's future? Share some of the most encouraging parts of the stories that allow you to have this hope.
6. Do you understand why people often say, "Adoption is a lifelong process"? Does this seem to be a positive or a negative?
7. Do any of you have a story of hope that you'd like to share?

## SESSION 7

### *Chapter 9: The Clinician's Role—Helping to Correct the Disequilibrium*

1. How many of you have had experience with therapists who have worked with you and your adolescent?
2. Have you found therapy to be helpful?
3. If it was not helpful, what was the problem? How could it have been more productive for you?
4. Did anyone feel like he/she had to educate the therapist about adoption or attachment-related issues?
5. What do you think people who have not seen a therapist should look for if they decide they want one? What should they be cautious about?
6. Why should therapy be family-inclusive, particularly if there are attachment issues? What should the boundaries of confidentiality be as they relate to the adolescent and his/her parents?

## SESSION 8

### *Chapter 10: Developing Empathy—How Animals Can Help*

1. How important do think it is for an adolescent to have or to develop empathy? Can you think of how a person without empathy might live in the world?

2. Does anyone have a positive story to share about your adolescent's relationship with a pet? How has that relationship helped your adolescent?
3. Were you surprised to read about the human-animal-violence link?
4. If you have had a pet that died, how did your child deal with that?
5. If you have had a pet that had babies, did that have any special meaning to your child?
6. How did your child/adolescent react when it came time to sell or give the babies away?

### *Chapter 12: Random Reflections—Musings About Adolescents*

Chapter 12 is a chapter of random issues. We can either discuss some of the issues in the chapter or generate our own random reflections that may have come up in this discussion group.

1. Does anyone have something to mention that we haven't touched on?
2. What's been most helpful in our meetings?
3. Do you think we should use this format for another series of meetings?
4. In session 1, we asked: What was your adolescence like? Did it parallel that of your adolescent's? Now that we've finished reading and discussing this book, think again about you and your adolescence. Are there parallels to that of your child's?