

The Adopted Child's Changing View

A Timeline of Childhood Development



Each child develops at his own pace. This timeline is a simplified guide for understanding how and why a child's feelings about being adopted change as he grows through the normal stages of development. Select each age to move through the timeline.


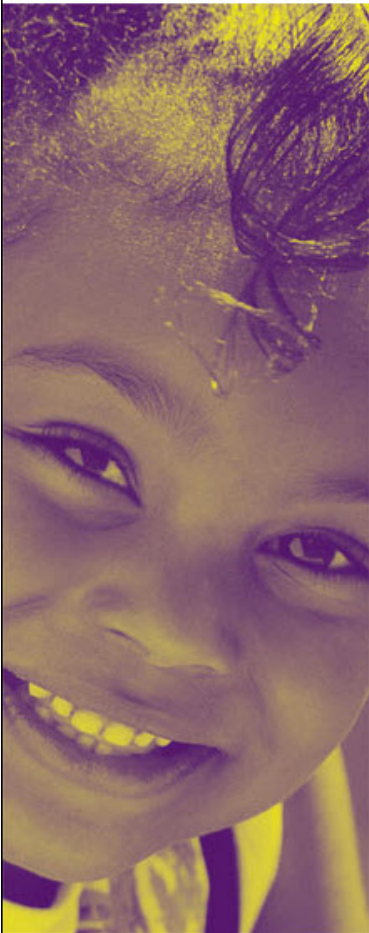


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Infant

 C.A.S.E. The Center for Adoption Support and Education, Inc.		The Adopted Child's Changing View					
		INFANT	AGE 1-5	AGE 6-12	AGE 13-15	AGE 16-19	RESOURCES
		COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	ADOPTION AWARENESS		
		sensory input dominates	developing a sense of trust	able to form a healthy attachment to a primary caregiver	none		
			begins to reveal a temperament				
		sense of self as separate from others					

Age 1-5

		<h2>The Adopted Child's Changing View</h2>			
		INFANT AGE 1-5 AGE 6-12 AGE 13-18 AGE 16-19 RESOURCES			
	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	ADOPTION AWARENESS	
	<p>language acquisition and symbolic thinking</p> <p>can make literal cause and effect connections</p> <p>learns simple self care skills</p>	<p>sense of self expressed through talk: "no" and "mine"</p> <p>establishing independence: taking control of self</p>	<p>egocentric view of the world</p> <p>family defined as the people who live in his house</p> <p>begins to explore and experiment</p> <p>imaginary play</p> <p>racial awareness emerges</p>	<p>able to notice if he looks different from his adoptive family</p> <p>unable to grasp fully the implications of being adopted</p> <p>asks simple questions about physical differences</p> <p>ready to learn and re-tell his personal adoption story</p>	



Age 6-12

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INFANT AGE 1-5 AGE 6-12 AGE 13-15 AGE 16-19 RESOURCES								
	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	ADOPTION AWARENESS				
	capable of concrete, logical thought	skills support stronger sense of self: "I can do it!"	begins to form meaningful relationships outside the family	understands implications: to be adopted means one was first given away				
mastery of higher skills: arts, math, athletics	strong feelings about issues and events they do not fully understand	peer relations important; need for conformity, belonging	early positive feelings turn to uncertainty					
	sexual awareness further defines sense of self	begins to understand the concept of a biological family	sense of loss; grieving for birth parents					
			may romanticize his birth parents					
			discomfort with being "different"					
			asks more difficult questions: Why am I adopted? Where are my birth parents?					

Age 13-15

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					INFANT AGE 1-5 AGE 6-12 AGE 13-15 AGE 16-19 RESOURCES			
	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	ADOPTION AWARENESS				
	"know it all" attitude ability to manipulate ideas will consider others' point of view	seeking to establish a more "distinct" identity preparing to separate "emotionally" from family increased interest and understanding of sexual relations envy and jealousy predominate emotions	peer relations paramount; need for conformity and belonging trying out alternative identities and roles — i.e. dress, music, mannerisms "socially" move away from family	understands the meaning and implications of being adopted acknowledges two sets of parents; ambivalence towards both resurfacing grief related to loss of birth parents may romanticize birth parents discomfort with being "different" re-ask question "Why am I adopted" seeking depth in answers emotional search for birth parents self-esteem challenged reconcept of early abandonment integrate adoption into one's sense of self				

Age 16-19

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					INFANT AGE 1-5 AGE 6-12 AGE 13-15 AGE 16-19 RESOURCES			
		COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL	ADOPTION AWARENESS			
	capable of abstract thinking		seeking independence	peer relationships intensify, social life dominates	yearn for connection to genetic past			
	can make more moral judgements		separation, individuation, and autonomy	relations become more intimate	idealizing birth parents			
	sense of omnipotence "nothing is impossible"		focus on body image and physical identity	need to "conform" sexual experimentation may begin	loss of birth parents extends to loss of a part of one's self			
	introspective and philosophical		integration of race and ethnicity identity formation: "Who am I?" and "Who am I in relationship to other people?"	rebellious against authority figures	may try on traits of birth parents in process of self-definition seek to "rework" adoption story awareness of not fitting in physically with family identity formation: challenge "Who am I?" — must figure out who they are in relation to adoption differentiation is complicated by one set of parents being unknown new curiosity about origins consider possibility of searching for birth parents			