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**An Abandoned Jewel...  
Allow children to share their feelings of loss.**

No matter how loving the adoptive parents are, children who have been adopted experience feelings of abandonment. These feelings can affect self-esteem, among other things.

These feelings of abandonment associated with adoption are rarely discussed. But as with any loss, grief is a natural response. If left unresolved, grief can and often does sabotage the strongest of families and the deepest potential within the adopted child.

How can you help your adopted child deal with his feelings of loss? There are three helpful rules to follow:

**(1) Validate the reality of abandonment.** You must recognize that your child has feelings of loss. How do you know this? A baby does not remember, right? Wrong. From the first year of life, children store emotional feelings about the world around them. They have an outlook based upon their experiences of it. This outlook is primarily one of trust in those around them and that their needs will be met. Or the outlook is one of distrust that his caretakers are unpredictable and his needs may not be met.

As an adopted child grows older, he may think that his birth parents did not love him, that he was a bad baby, or that he should be ashamed of the circumstances in which he was born. Further, the child may fear that you will abandon him someday.

From day one, adoptive parents can help their child deal with feelings of abandonment. You can say, "I know you must feel abandoned, but I am your mommy (or daddy) and I will never leave you." Give your child room to talk about these feelings with you.

**(2) Acknowledge each child's special gifts and abilities.** Each child is unique and should be affirmed in his strengths and validated as a creation of God.

At one time parents were encouraged to hold back the facts about their child being adopted to the point that some lied about things such as common appearance. For some children, this is hurtful. Children need to know that they are loved, despite the fact that you are not their biological parents.

Other children may need more privacy about which you announce the news that they are adopted. Do not ever refer to your child as your "adopted child."

**(3) Assure each child of God's love and acceptance.** I was adopted and experienced feelings of abandonment. I found healing from God's Word when I learned His opinion of me in Ezekiel 16:4-7 (Living Bible): *"On the day you were born....no one looked on you with pity or had compassion....you were thrown out into an open field. And I (God) came by and saw you lying there...and I said, 'Live, thrive, like a plant in the field! And you did! You became a jewel among jewels."*

When I read those words, God's peace fell upon me like new-fallen snow.

Parents can use God's model to help their children build self-worth based upon His opinion of them.