



The Special Needs Of Adopted Children

In the book, "Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew," author Sherrie Eldridge outlines The Special Needs of Adopted Children. The special needs are imperative to understand the child with which you are working or you are parenting. The challenge of both parenting and therapy is to first identify the special need that has arisen and then help the child verbalize that need. Working through these issues gives the child some sense of mastery and control over something that feels out of his control. These special needs must be incorporated in therapy. The needs should also help teachers and parents better understand the inner beliefs of such children which could be motivating behavior.

Emotional Needs:

- I need help in recognizing my adoption loss and grieving it.
- I need to be assured that my birth parents' decision not to parent me had nothing to do with anything defective in me.
- I need help in learning to deal with my fears of rejection-to learn that absence does not mean abandonment, nor a closed door that I have done something wrong.
- I need permission to express all my adoption feelings and fantasies.

Educational Needs:

- I need to be taught that adoption is both wonderful and painful, presenting lifelong challenges for everyone involved.
- I need to know my adoption story first, then my birth story and birth family.
- I need to be taught healthy ways for getting my special needs met.
- I need to be prepared for hurtful things others may say about adoption and about me as an adoptee.

Validation Needs:

- I need validation of my dual heritage (biological and adoptive).
- I need to be assured often that I am welcome and worthy.
- I need to be reminded often by my adoptive parents that they delight in my biological differences and appreciate my birth family's unique contribution to our family through me.



Parental Needs:

- I need parents who are skillful at meeting their own emotional needs so that I can grow up with healthy role models and be free to focus on my development, rather than taking care of them.
- I need parents who are willing to put aside preconceived notions about adoption and be educated about the realities of adoption and the special needs adoptive families face.
- I need to hear my parents openly express feelings about infertility and adoption, thus producing a bond of intimacy between us.
- I need my adoptive and birth parents to have a non-competitive attitude. Without this, I will struggle with loyalty issues.

Relational Needs:

- I need friendships with other adoptees.
- I need to be taught that there is a time to consider searching for my birth family and a time to give up searching.
- I need to be reminded that if I am rejected by my birth family, the rejection is symptomatic of their dysfunction, not mine.

Spiritual Needs:

- I need to be taught that my life narrative began before I was born and that my life is not a mistake.
- I need to be taught that in this broken, hurting world, loving families are formed through adoption as well as birth.
- I need to be taught that I have intrinsic, immutable value as a human being.
- I need to accept the fact that some of my adoption questions will never be answered in this life.

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