

LA FAMILIA, INC.

ADOPTION SERVICES

Stages of Grief After Placement

Anyone dealing with any sort of loss may go through different and distinct stages in the process of coming to terms with their situation. Each individual may not go through each stage and the stages may not occur in this order. However, in order to own your feelings and know that grief and grieving is a normal and expected result of loss.

1. Numbness and Denial

You may forget certain details of the baby's birth, such as time and date. Do not feel guilty about this; it is a normal reaction to the circumstances. Your worker will prepare a fact sheet for you to keep that will list this information.

2. Eruption of Feelings

Periodic floods of intense feelings may surface when you least expect them to. The feelings may appear to come from out of the blue. Emotions may be overwhelming and range widely: sadness, fear, panic, anger, despair, guilt, and shame. Difficulty sleeping, change in appetite, irritability, fatigue, inability to concentrate, or jumpiness are common. It is important to express these feelings. Sometimes a person's body may express the emotional pain being trapped inside. Headaches, allergies, muscle tension, digestive disturbances, back pain, and abdominal pain can be signals of emotional pain.

3. Accepting and Owning the Decision

Because the decision is a very serious one, it leads to a lot of rethinking. It is normal to reevaluate the decision later in life. If you are clear in your decision and can defend it to others, you will find it easier to take responsibility for it. This includes intellectually accepting that the decision was the best option at that time. Owning the decision is realizing that regardless of pressures from friends and family at the time of the child's birth, the birthmother is the one who signed the adoption papers. Realize that anger and blame can prevent you from truly accepting the decision can prolong this process.

4. Accommodation and Living with Uncertainty

Once birthparents recognize that the loss is real, they find ways to release intense emotions gradually. Thoughts and feelings may begin to be under reasonable control. This is an indication that birthparents are learning to live with their decision and circumstances. You will continue to experience a range of feelings, but they will surface at appropriate times. For instance, it is normal to expect an emotional reaction on the child's birthday, Christmas, or on other special occasions. It is normal to think about your child and dream about your child.

5. Reevaluating and Rebuilding

Birthparents continually reevaluate their feelings. Many feel so much shame and guilt that they begin to undervalue themselves as people. Often birthparents will feel that they made a selfish decision. However, all decisions must be made with one's self in mind. If the decision is made without considering the impact on your own life it is not a good decision. To make an adoption plan does not mean that a person is un-motherly or uncaring. In fact, it usually means that the decision was based on the mother's love for the child. It is important to take time to allow yourself to feel the emotions that surface. It is equally important to rebuild your self-confidence. Try to look back over this time in your life and see the areas where you experienced personal growth and change. You have grown from this pain. Try to recognize the strengths in you that helped you cope. Build on these things.

Routing:
Client's Files