

Harthman, D. (1984, June 24). Someone to Love My Baby. Social Issues Resource Series (Family), 13, Article 31.

OVERVIEW

How would you like to grow up with four parents—your adoptive parents and your birth parents? How would you like to give your child up for adoption and have no idea what the parents will be like? How would you like to prepare to adopt a child, only to find out that when the mother delivered the child, she changed her mind and decided to keep it? Many arguments arise surrounding open adoption. Is it better than the traditional methods of adoption used in the past?

To the author, "The open adoption policy allows the birth mother and father to have a voice in choosing a family for their baby; and to possibly maintain contact with the child throughout his or her life. To give a child up right after birth, never to see or hear of the child again, can cause as much psychological pain as if the child had died." In light of this, open adoption offers a possible resolution.

There are arguments, cited from the article, both for and against open adoption.

REASONS FOR OPEN ADOPTION

- It eases the anguish of the birth mother—and possibly convinces her that agency adoption is a good alternative to abortion or raising the child herself if she is unable and ill-equipped for any reason.
- For the adoptive parents, it eliminates the fear that the parents might unexpectedly appear.
- Adopted children no longer worry about finding or learning about their real parents.

REASONS AGAINST OPEN ADOPTION

- For a birth mother who has selected an adoptive couple before birth and decides at the last minute to keep her baby, open adoption creates a particularly tenuous situation
- It only creates hopeless and tragic confusion of parental roles.

The author adds that different degrees of openness in adoption prevail.

The parties may share information in an unidentifying character. This is considered the safest form of open adoption. Others actually share names and more specific details. Lastly, some open adoptions allow children to maintain relationships with the birth parents.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- 1.How open should adoption be? (Refer to the degrees of openness in the article review.)
- 2.Do you feel it is healthy or unhealthy for a child to know his or her birth parents as well as his or her adoptive parents? If it is healthy, how well should the child know his or her birth parents?
- 3.Does a mother in prison have a right to open adoption?
- 4.As an adoptive parent, how would you feel about communicating with the birth parents about the development of the adopted child?
- 5.Can open adoption work and be healthy for all involved, especially the child? If so, how? If not, why not?

IMPLICATIONS

- 1.Anyone working with youth will be in contact with kids who are either adopted or are affected by someone adopted. The healthier the adoption process, the better the relationships for affected kids and parents.
- 2.It is important that youth workers are educated and sensitive about this topic.
- 3.Youth professionals must try to understand the feelings and situations that an adoptive child experiences. It is important to be sensitive to the needs of the openly adopted child as well as his or her family, and to help discern and meet the needs of those involved.
- 4.There are countless teenage pregnancies; thus, it is important to know all the options available for ones who may seek your advice.
- 5.Open adoption may alleviate the anguish of the birth mother. Proposing open adoption as an option may save a baby's life by persuading the mother to take that route over abortion. Counsel wisely, but realize that the choice still lies with the mother-to-be. After all is decided, support the final decision.