

# Dear Adoptive Parents: The Burden of Adoptee Loyalty

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 [thelostdaughters.com/2015/04/dear-adoptive-parents-burden-of-adoptee.html](http://thelostdaughters.com/2015/04/dear-adoptive-parents-burden-of-adoptee.html)

Dear Adoptive Parents,

I want you to listen. I want you to read this and truly consider it. For the sake of the ones you love and call your own.

You have no understanding of the burden of Adoptee Loyalty that your adopted child bears.

You do not realize that he will sacrifice his own feelings and desires for your sake--and that he does this subconsciously, because you also have no idea how easily, how quickly the unspoken thoughts and emotions inside of you, the silent and passive cues you communicate are internalized by your adopted child.

The burden of Adoptee Loyalty will compel your adopted child to remain silent on the things closest to her heart because she can sense these dark things scare you, make you uncomfortable, threaten you.

She will say what she knows you want to hear--even if you've tried so hard to be open, because she can feel your heart shut the minute she tries to open the doors that you have forbidden. She can feel your fear and she will not pursue her own emotions for fear that she will hurt you with her emotions, for all the guilt inside of her that tells her she is wrong to feel anything but gratitude and happiness for being adopted by you.

You have no idea how openly you must speak, how persistently and consistently you must pursue her, in order for your child to truly feel that she can trust you, that she can truly be honest with you about her thoughts and feelings regarding her adoption, her original family, her original country. How profoundly hard being adopted is for her. Her sorrow. Her grief. Her fear. All this will remain locked away because the burden of Adoptee Loyalty is one that she cannot put down unless you help her.

She will smile and hug you and tell you she is so grateful, because she knows that's what you want. She will make you feel good at the expense of her own well-being. Because adoptees are terrified of being left again. Because you are all that she has. Because she instinctively assesses that this is what she must do in order to survive. That this is how she must function in order to find the love that she lost.

She can sense your inward expectation that you will allow her to "wrestle" with her adoption to a certain point but that ultimately you expect her to conclude that her adoption is a godsend and that you are a savior.

When he hears you telling your friends that he is so well-adjusted and happy and doing so great, he internalizes this and takes it as a cue that he better appear well-adjusted and happy lest he disappoint you and potentially lose the only family he knows.

When she hears you talking about how you ultimately think she will be fine and won't have many issues because adoptive parents today know so much more about adoption and birth families than did adoptive parents of yesterday, she will internalize your words and teach herself to be fine and to ignore her emotions and questions, because the burden of Adoptee Loyalty is not easily set aside. She wants to please you so that you will want to keep her. She wants you to see her as you want to see her because this will assure her position in your family.

She will be loyal to you above all else because this is what you have taught her is most important to you. By both

your spoken and unspoken cues. Because she realizes deep down, at a subconscious, instinctive level that what matters to you most is that this adoption work out the way *you* want to work out--that you are desperate to see this adoption be what you always dreamed it would be:

That happy ending of a doting, grateful, happy child eager to sing your praises, eager to thank Almighty Adoption and Almighty Adoptive Parents for giving her such a wonderful life.

And so, she knows that if she shows anything other than that, if she departs even a little from that narrative, if she comes to a different conclusion, she may cause you pain and hence, face rejection again. And that is more than she can handle.

She must cling to Adoptee Loyalty so that her fragile world does not fly apart.

Your children will never genuinely feel free to be their true, unfiltered selves as long as they carry the burden and guilt and obligation of Adoptee Loyalty. They need to understand and trust that they can have their own thoughts, emotions, ideas, perspectives, conclusions about adoption and know that you will not take it personally or feel threatened or freak out if they happen to diverge from you. If you allow them to continue to carry the burden of Adoptee Loyalty, they may never allow themselves to acknowledge and much less pursue the deeper parts of themselves.

There are profound and beautiful parts of your adopted children that you, that the world will never see as long as they feel their existence, their lives, their experience of love is contingent upon their loyalty to you.

As their parents, it is your responsibility to recognize this burden they bear. And to help them unpack and unload it. It is your responsibility to empower them to let go of the heavy load of Adoptee Loyalty. If you allow your adopted children to continue to carry such a burden, you are demonstrating that your comfort and ego are more important to you than the well-being and self-actualization that you promised to give to the children you are supposed to love above yourselves.

You have to let it go before you can help them let it go.

So...let it go.

Sincerely,

An Adult Adoptee