

Confusing the Children

Open-Adoption Practice Is an Unnecessary Complication Of Kids' Lives

By Fred Silberberg

Trends are not something limited to fashion. They occur in all aspects of our lives, including the legal aspects. As time goes on, it appears that a new trend is gaining momentum in the field of adoption to promote "open," as opposed to traditional or "closed," adoptions. However, open adoption, in the sense of promoting ongoing contact by the birth parents, is an unnecessary complication in the child's life.

An open adoption is one where the birth mother (or father) remains, in varying degrees, part of the life of the adopted child. Open adoptions run the gamut from adoptive parents sending cards and photographs to biological mothers (and fathers) visiting the child on a regular basis.

Those that promote this concept contend that an open adoption is necessary to the "adoption triad," which consists of all the parties: the biological parents, the child and the adoptive parents. In reality, however, open adoption unnecessarily complicates matters under the guise of promoting mental health and assisting the healing process.

The biological parents who are attempting to maintain some control over the child they have relinquished and trying to assuage their guilt are the only ones who benefit from an open adoption. The point of an adoption, however, is to protect the child, not the biological parents. Why should we sacrifice the child's interests to alleviate the biological parents' guilt?

Open adoption is merely another example of society putting the rights of adults ahead of the rights of children, a concept that is alive and well in our society. More than that, it is also another hurdle that adoptive parents are required to jump (as though there aren't enough hurdles already). In the end, it serves no purpose other than to confuse the child who is intended to be the real beneficiary of the adoption in the first place.

Traditionally, adoptions always were closed, and a review of studies of adoptive children clearly shows that this did not harm them or cause them problems later in life. This result is logical, as adoptive parents generally are committed and stable individuals who desperately want children and will work to provide them the best environment possible.

Finding a child to adopt is not easy, and it can take months or even years to adopt a newborn. It is certainly not unheard of for adop-



tive parents to spend significant amounts of money supporting a birth mother, only to be told in the end that she had a change of heart or that they are not the right couple. Only the most dedicated would-

ers cannot understand that one person gave birth to them but another set of people are raising them. In the mind of a young child, this could result in anxiety, as the child doesn't know whether at

we really need to complicate children's lives even further?

Certainly there are reasons to allow access to information about biological parents. Such information can be crucial in the event of a medical problem that may not manifest itself until the adoptive child is well into adulthood. And adoptive children should be told at an appropriate age that they were adopted. But there is no reason to have an outsider involved in the child's life as he or she is growing up.

People place children up for adoption for many reasons. Undoubtedly, it is hard to part with a human being to whom you have given birth. However, if the point of the adoption is to provide something that the birth parent cannot or does not want to provide for the child, then he or she should allow the adoptive parents, who are willing to make that commitment, to provide what the child needs. The birth parents should let the child live a peaceful life without ongoing interference only intended to relieve the birth parent's guilt.

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parents follow through with it.

To the adoptive parents, an open adoption can mean even more strife. Isn't it enough that these people are willing to go to the ends of the earth (literally, in some cases) to find a child to raise as their own? Why should they allow the birth parents continued access once they have made a lifelong commitment for which they are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week? It's time to let the adoptive parents do what they have always longed for — to raise the child in their own family setting, free from an outsider's interference.

More significantly, how does one explain to a child who this person is and why they are involved? Tod-

some point the birth parent may come along and take him or her away. If the adoptive parents tell the child that this individual is a friend or that he or she is an uncle or aunt, how would the child feel years later when told of the adoption? How might the child feel about having been lied to about the aunt or uncle's identity?

What if the birth parent has trouble dealing with the fact that he or she gave the child up and feels the need to say things that only confuses the child? In today's world, children have enough adversity to handle even in the most nondysfunctional households (to the extent they exist). Do



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