



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES

Adoption: Letting Go with Love

Choosing an adoption plan is one of the most difficult decisions you will ever have to make. The mother who releases her baby is not usually recognized as a grieving mother. Because you made this decision, people often assume that you do not feel sad or have a sense of loss. This handout has been written to help you prepare for the separation of your child, and to support you during the grief that you may experience.

In the past few months you have had many emotions. You have discovered whom you could count on for support and whom you could not. There are a few things now that you must consider. Do you want to see or hold your baby? Would you like to name your baby? Do you want any mementos such as the baby's hospital bracelet, footprints, or birth certificate? Before you say "no", give yourself some time to think about what you really want to do and then make your decisions.

Saying Hello

As painful as it may seem to see or hold your baby, this may be the only time you have together before you leave the hospital. This time with your baby will be a precious memory for you in years to come. You may want to write your baby a letter, or keep a diary during this time.

Mementos

Keepsakes and mementos from your baby are available if you choose to have them. The nurses will help you collect your mementos in a keepsake box if this is something you choose to do. These mementos may include a baby ring, bracelet, footprints, tape measure, crib card with weight, length, date and time of birth.

Naming Your Baby

The name chosen by the adoptive parents may or may not be the same as the one that you choose. That doesn't matter. It is very important to name your baby as you say hello or goodbye. This name will reflect a special bond between you and your child. As you think back, or talk about your baby given in love, you will have a name to go with those memories.

Saying Goodbye

Some birthmothers choose to actually say "goodbye" while they hold their baby the last time. Others choose to write a letter. If you choose to write a letter, it is important to express your reasons and circumstances for letting go, as well as expressing your love for your child. This will assure your child that they were given out of love. This will also assure them that it was not because they were unwanted.

Grief

You may find you have a strange feeling of grief mixed with relief. The feeling of grief comes from the loss of your baby, and the feeling of relief comes because your decision has been made, the pregnancy is completed, and your life can now get back on line. It is important that you understand that these feelings are normal.

This information has been reviewed and recommended for use by the UAMS/CPED/Patient Education Advisory Committee.

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Physical Grief

Just as you grieve emotionally, your body grieves too. You may:

- Cry often and at unexpected times
- Experience tightness in your throat
- Have a heavy sensation in your chest
- Have no appetite, or want to eat all the time
- Have difficulty sleeping, or want to sleep all the time
- Dream of your baby, or have nightmares

Eating healthy foods and drinking lots of fluids will help. Limit caffeine and alcohol. Exercise is a good way to handle grief and get your body back in shape as well. About six weeks after your baby is born you need to see your doctor if not before. If you have any pain, heavy bleeding, burning pain, or a fever, you need to call the doctor. These are NOT signs of grief.

Psychological Grief

This is the emotional pull that grief has on us. Guilt, anger, and sadness are three of the most common emotions of grief. You may:

- Be forgetful and act irritable
- Feel lonely, numb, or confused
- Have some unexplained anxiety
- Have trouble concentrating
- Feel detached - like the whole thing never happened
- Constantly think about the baby
- Feel guilty - for anything and everything

Understand that these feelings are normal. Time will help, but that doesn't mean that in time grief will go away. You will have times that the grief is very strong and others that it is almost nonexistent.

The other people in your life...

You may have discovered that there are people that don't know how to treat you. They may have become cautious or distant with you. It may also seem like they are pretending that nothing happened. When you need to talk to someone, find someone who will listen. Tell your family and friends exactly what you need. They can't help if you don't tell them how. Many adoption agencies sponsor support groups. Contact the agency that you are working with and see if this is a service they provide.

The birthfather may or may not be involved. The adopting family may need medical information from him. You may need to ask the father for this information. If you are not sure what to do in this situation, talk to your social worker or counselor.

Adapted from: *"Given in Love" - By Maureen Connelly*
Available through Centering Corporation, Omaha NE

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