

## ABANDONMENT - THE COMMON EXPERIENCE

What all of our children have in common - all of those available for adoption - is the experience of abandonment. Abandonment is a subjective experience - that is, I can think I have been abandoned when I really haven't been. There are good reasons for some parents to give up their children. Jews who gave their children to Christians to be raised during World War II certainly loved their children. Still, those children may well have experienced themselves as having been abandoned.

If we live long enough, all of us will be abandoned. By one hundred years old, even our own children may be dead. But by that age, we have the experiences, wisdom, strength, and memories to help us cope with the abandonment experience. Our children have been abandoned before having any of that; our kids are often abandoned at an age so young that they don't even have words yet.

But it wouldn't necessarily matter if they did, because there are no words in the English language to adequately describe the experience of abandonment. The closest experience that we have been able to figure out is the experience of war veterans or Holocaust survivors. And those people are notorious for not speaking of their experience or for speaking of it only with others who share the experience.

So what do our youngsters do with this experience of abandonment? Until and unless they are adopted, they can't do anything with it. Adoption ends the experience of being abandoned, but the effects of the abandonment still remain.

And what are those effects? What does an abandoned person feel? They feel alone, they feel angry, they feel frustrated, they feel scared. But most of all, they feel crazy. They have experienced something that no one else seems to have experienced; they hear no words to describe what they have experienced. Here is the most intense experience they have ever undergone with these incredibly powerful effects inside them; and everyone acts as though nothing much has happened. That contradiction between what they experience inside and what is reflected back to them from the outside must be resolved. Adoption, and adoption alone for a child, offers them that opportunity to resolve this critical and core issue.

Taken from *The Invisible Realities of Successful Adoption*  
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