

ADOPTION TRANSFERENCE - THE PERFECTION OF BLAMING

Adoption transference is a variation on a popular concept created by a school of psychologists. It has been modified in an attempt to understand a phenomenon we witnessed repeatedly among adopted children when they became adolescents. Those youngsters seemed to blame their adoptive parents for things that had occurred to them prior to the adoptive parents even meeting the children. It made no sense, yet the kids seemed adamant in their certainty.

How, we wondered, could the children possibly blame people for things that had happened prior to even meeting the people? From one perspective, it made some sense: children blame their parents for lots of things. We remained stuck for a while. Until one day one of our workers said, "What if there was no such thing as time? Then there would be no before, no after; no cause, no effect?"

And that freed us to understand this very strong phenomenon: from the viewpoint of the children, the job of their parents is to protect them. Yet, their (adoptive) parents did not protect them from all their abandonment experiences prior to their adoptions. Eliminating time made this make sense. The parents did not do their job - that they weren't the parents at that point is irrelevant.

What it meant - we realized - is that adoption transference - blaming the parents for all the bad things in a child's life even prior to his adoption - meant that the adoption was a success. The adoptees, after all, were accepting their adoptive parents as their PARENTS. It didn't feel very successful - but the adoption was a success.

The problem was that the children are not ignorant. They know that time does exist. They know that their parents are not to blame for experiences that happened pre-adoption. Yet the feeling inside - the transference - is very real also. The combination reinforces and feeds the child's constant sense that he is crazy.

Why do kids do this? We don't know. There seems to be some human need to blame other people for bad things that happen to us, and we assume that it is related to that. What we do know is that it is real and the adoptive parents must accept it as real in order for their child or children to transcend it.

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