

## Finding the Missing Pieces: Helping Adopted Children Cope with Grief and Loss

### *A Discussion Guide*

#### **1. Gains and Losses in The Adoption Circle**

- a. Which of the gains/losses in this exercise surprised you or made you think more deeply about the consequences of adoption on the members of the adoption circle?
- b. How might this exercise influence how you talk to your child about adoption?
- c. For open adoptions: Now that you've thought about the gains/losses a birth parent may experience, how might that influence your relationship with your child's birth mother?

#### **2. Loss and the Adopted Child**

- a. Adoption loss is different because it is not recognized by society.
  - i. How does this make adoption loss easier or more difficult to deal with?
- b. Adoption loss is different from loss due to death because it may not be permanent; there may be a possibility, however remote, of reconnection.
  - i. How do you think this may affect your child?

#### **3. Loss and Grief as the Child Grows Up**

- a. What concerns might you have about your child searching to find her birth parents?
- b. For open adoptions: How do you think frequent contact with the birth mother and/or father will affect how your child grieves?

#### **4. Adopted with a Capital "A"**

- a. What will you be looking for in your child as possible signs of grieving the losses associated with being adopted?
- b. Now that you understand more about possible triggers, how do you think you will do things differently with your child? (e.g. read different books, celebrate holidays differently)

#### **5. Helping Children Cope**

- a. Are you likely to create a Lifebook for your child?
  - i. Why or why not?
- b. What are some situations where you would seek professional help for yourself or your child?

