***Adopted: The Identity Project***

A central part to growing up is figuring out for yourself who you are, and who you want to be. It is not uncommon for adopted individuals to struggle as they begin to put these pieces of the puzzle together for themselves. They may wonder:

* How much does being adopted matter to me?
* How much of my identity comes from my birth family? My adoptive family? Somewhere else?

Parents often feel disconnected as their kids sort out these questions. As a parent, you want to help, but may not know how to start the conversation, or even understand the concerns. To help, Adoption Learning Partners has created a course that guides adoptive parents through a series of stories giving a unique view into the hearts, minds and souls of the adopted person experience. Through video and written stories, adult adoptees openly and honestly reflect on their experiences as children and teens. Several themes emerge --- common trigger points and topics of interest or concern. For instance:

**Developing an interest in their roots**

***Monica was adopted from Colombia into a Caucasian family at 6 months of age.***

*I did have specific ideas or presumptions of what my birth parents looked like because I was immersing myself into the Latino culture. I really had a strong urge in my pre-teen and teen years to learn more about Latino culture, learn more about Colombia, and master the language. I started taking Spanish in 7th grade and I took the language learning to a whole new level.*

**Understanding the potential limitations of their birth family**

***James was born in the US and adopted at age 14 after a series of foster care placements.***

*I’ve always believed that one day we would get back together and we would be a happy family again.   
 I just kept dreaming that one day they’ll be back for me which was what they kept telling me.   
“One day I’ll be clean and one day I’ll be back.”  
 It wasn’t until I was about 13 years old where I finally really believed that they were never going to come back.*

**Deciding how much of their story to share, when to share it, and with whom.**

***Masha was born in Russia. She lived with her birth family and then in an orphanage. She was adopted into an American family when she was 12 years old.***

*7th grade, it was a history project about your family and a timeline of a family. And I did a timeline of my adoption and I did how I was adopted and then I actually decided to present it. And I presented it, and it felt awkward. People were just quiet…I was unsure of what the quiet was—a good quiet or a bad quiet, it was just like “oh my gosh, she’s adopted” quiet….. And I was afraid most of being treated differently because sometimes when people find out you’re adopted, they change the way they treat you.*

**Understanding that adoption plays an ongoing role in life, no matter how happy a person is with their adoptive family or how young they were when placed for adoption.**

***Amy was born in the US and adopted as an infant.***

*For me, especially as I got into the teenage years, Mother’s Day and my birthday were these places of just contemplation or wondering for me. Wondering, “Is my birth mother thinking about me today on my birthday?” And on Mother’s Day … wondering what she’s doing. On those two days… especially as I got older… I would really wonder, and just be curious, and sometimes be a little sad, and just not sure how to feel.*

Hearing how these adoptees felt at the time, and why some experiences were pivotal for them can offer parents invaluable insights into what their child may be feeling. These stories, and many more like it, are supported with clinical insights from our expert, offering practical tips and suggestions for parents to use with their own family.

Find out more about Adopted: The Identity Project: www.AdoptionLearningPartners.org