

Post adoption depression



Run by and for LGBT+ parents/carers, their children and those considering parenthood living in Greater Manchester.





INTRODUCTION

At Proud 2 b Parents, we want to ensure that prospective adopters are aware of the signs and symptoms of Post Adoption Depression (PAD), especially as our community can have higher statistics of negative mental health. Adopters can suffer symptoms of depression in the early placement period and at significant other times after an adoption. PAD symptoms can typically appear about a month after placement, and research indicates that it shares characteristics with post-natal depression and minor to moderate depression, whilst also having some unique characteristics. In the past its symptoms have been discounted as being similar to those of post-natal depression, because there is no hormonal aspect as a result of birth. However, a recent study has reported that there is no significant difference in the incidence of depression between adoptive and birth mothers (Seneky et al, 2009).



WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Either a consistently low mood or marked reduction in the feeling of pleasure must be felt, accompanied by some of the following symptoms:

- Feelings of anxiety, panic, inadequacy, being overwhelmed by responsibility, being slowed
- down, inability to get any enjoyment out of life, worthlessness, guilt, low self-esteem, loss of identity, loneliness
- Physical symptoms: aches and pains, stomach problems, back problems, sleep problems,
- tension headaches, lack of energy, fatigue, lack of concentration, forgetfulness, loss of or gain in appetite
- Mood: irritable, angry, despairing, pessimistic
- Recent research suggests that someone who experiences PAD is likely to have suffered a bout of depression earlier in life and that the catalyst for PAD is stress, rather than the adoption itself.



MORE ABOUT POST ADOPTION DEPRESSION

Recent research suggests that someone who experiences PAD is likely to have suffered a bout of depression earlier in life and that the catalyst for PAD is stress, rather than the adoption itself. The following are some examples of particular stresses that the process places on prospective adopters and these may result in PAD.

The list is not exhaustive but, according to research, the following stresses are commonly felt:

- Expectations can be the cause of major dissatisfaction. Expectations of the process itself, of oneself as a parent, of what the child will be like and what they will bring to the family, of family and friends and of society in general can all be contributing factors.
- The emotional high of being matched and placed with a child. Once the dream of having, or completing, a family has been realised, adopters can feel disappointed and guilty at feelings of deflation.
- The very unique stresses of the adoption process itself.
- Reliving fertility issues. Adopting a child can trigger unresolved thoughts, feelings and emotions about personal fertility issues.
- Identifying with the birth mother's feelings of loss. There can be a sense of 'stealing' another woman's child, which can create a bitter-sweet mix of feelings ranging from satisfaction and attainment (at adopting a child) to trauma and loss (at 'taking' them from someone else).
- The challenges of parenting a child who is traumatised and has life experiences that are not shared by the adoptive parents.
- The normal new parenting issues, such as financial responsibility, lack of sleep, increased family responsibility, major lifestyle changes, and relationship issues.

If at all you feel like this could be affecting you or your partner, please seek support from your GP and/or adoption social worker. It is important to get the right support early on.