



# **MLCPC 211:**

***Considering the Options: Choosing Adoption***

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**Abstract**

This session will teach coaches how to present the option of adoption to those in a crisis pregnancy situation. Coaches will become informed of the history of adoption as well as how adoption has changed in recent years. Through this training, coaches will better understand the options that are present in adoption and will be better able to meet their clients' needs in the best way possible.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Participants will explore how the process and characteristics of adoption have changed in recent years.
2. Participants will be able to apply adoption knowledge to coaching sessions.
3. Participants will identify ways in which adoption knowledge will benefit each client's unique situation.

## I. Adoption

- A. According to the National Adoption Attitudes Survey conducted in 2002, 2/3 of Americans have a positive view of adoption and 2/3 have had a personal experienced with it.<sup>1</sup>
  
- B. Coaches find that clients are often 'shut down' when they try to bring adoption up to a client facing an unplanned pregnancy.
  
- C. Our focus will be on **relinquishment**, which is where our clients live.
  - 1. Relinquishment is defined as the surrendering of one's parental rights so that the child can be adopted by another set of parents.
  - 2. Relinquishment and adoption are two halves of the whole and represent entrustment of a child to another.
  - 3. Relinquishment and adoption are a legal transaction. The process is defined and controlled by law, but it is also very much a process involving the emotions.

## II. The History of Adoption

- A. Coaches must understand the past in order to know where adoption is now
  - 1. Historically, relinquishment and adoption were **shame-based**.
  - 2. Many birthmothers of the past talk of the coercion and judgment.<sup>2</sup>
  - 3. Our task is to hear and understand what our client knows and thinks of adoption.
  
- B. **Adoption is Biblical**
  - 1. New Testament References:

- *“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received **brought about your adoption** to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”—Romans 8:15*
- *“Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly **as we wait eagerly for our adoption** to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.”—Romans 8:23*
- *“The people of Israel, **theirs is the adoption** to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.”—Romans 9:4*
- *“To redeem those under the law, that **we might receive adoption** to sonship.”—Galatians 4:5*
- *“He **predestined us for adoption** to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”—Ephesians 1:5*

C. When we talk to clients about adoption, the idea of relinquishment—which needs to take place for adoption to occur—is often looming over them.

D. It’s like **shifting out thinking** from what God accomplished through Moses and his adoption to what his relinquishment must have been like for his mother.<sup>3</sup>

### III. Overcoming the Fear of Adoption

- A. For the mother of the baby, or the mother and the father of the baby, there is **fear** when considering relinquishment.
1. Fear of the pain of separation from the child.
  2. Fear of the grief and loss.
  3. Fear of regret.

4. Fear that promises won't be kept.

B. Knowing that the thought of relinquishment is full of emotion has implications for the crisis pregnancy coach.

**C. Overcoming Fear**

1. Just because a decision is difficult does not make it wrong.

2. Acknowledge with your client that there are no easy options.

3. For the mom who is unable or unready to be a parent, adoption is a decision for the **life** of her child.

4. Readiness for the responsibilities of parenting is a key question for a mom facing an unplanned pregnancy.

- Some moms who are abortion vulnerable feel that they are unable to parent.
- The life decision is first...then the mom can decide what kind of life.

D. Adoption is not the right decision for everyone.

1. Coaches must present all of the options their clients have. Coaches must assure the client that adoption may not be the option that she needs to choose.

2. The coach's role is to **educate** the client.

3. The adoption decision is lived by the expectant mom or parents—she/they must own it.

**IV. Implications for Practice**

A. Listen and hear her thoughts and fears. Don't rush—the first decision is a **life decision**. Acknowledge that the decisions she is facing are real.

**B.** The coach should hear what the client feels are her options.

**C.** The coach's role is to be the educator:

1. Inform the client about adoption today. Be open about the history of adoption.
2. Key components at this point are **relationship** and **trust**.

**D. Introducing Adoption**

1. Listen more than you talk.
2. Adoption may only be mentioned.
3. Once a relationship exists, the subject may be re-introduced for information with the goal of well-informed decisions.
4. Never try to talk to anyone into adoption or pressure them towards adoption—the coach should always want the client to have information.
5. Acknowledge the client's difficult emotions, fears, and that this is not an easy decision.
  - Your role is to support a well-informed decision, not to make the client's decision.
  - Assure the client that you will support her through her decision.
6. Considering adoption often does not occur until around **6 months** of pregnancy.
7. A final adoption decision is often not made until **after the child is born**. Not deciding until birth is normal and is the mother's right.

## **V. Types of Adoption**

### **A. Openness**

1. Secrecy is no longer a characteristic of adoption.
2. Adoption history may be shared and talked about.

### **B. Adoption Relationships**

1. There is a continuum to open adoptions:
  - Amounts of contact vary
  - Contact amounts often change over time
  
2. **Fully Open Adoptions** (or Fully Disclosed)
  - The expectant mom (or parents) select and meet prospective adoptive parents
  - Parties exchange full identifying information
  - Parties plan ongoing, direct contact
  
3. **Semi-Open Adoptions** (or Mediated)
  - The expectant mom (or parents) select and meet prospective adoptive parents
  - Parties exchange information, but not fully identifying information (i.e. just first names, email addresses, etc.)
  - Ongoing contact is managed by a third party, usually the agency
  
4. **Closed or Confidential Adoptions**
  - This is the least popular adoption
  - The expectant mom (or parents) may select the adoptive parents, but do not meet them

- Social medical history is shared
  - There are no plans for ongoing communication
- C. The relationships between the birth parents and the adoptive parents have the dynamics and ups and downs of other human relationships.
1. They take time to develop.
  2. Trust must develop.
  3. The final decision comes after the birth of the child.

## **VI. Responding as a Coach**

- A. Establish a relationship from the start with the mother. Make sure that she knows that regardless of her choice you will support, love, and care for her through it.
- B. Acknowledge that this can be overwhelming.
- C. Normalize her fears.
- D. Acknowledge that it may not be the right decision for her.
- E. Find out what she knows and what she has experienced.
- F. Reassure her that considering adoption does not commit her to a decision.
- G. Invite her to learn a little more about adoption. Educate her gently.
- H. She does not need to make a decision now. Acknowledge that she has time.

- I. We want to make sure she has all the information she needs to make an informed decision.
- J. Encourage the client to write a letter to her child.
- K. Coaches may want to talk with the client about the losses she's experienced and her faith.
- L. "If I can't raise the baby, I'll just abort."
  - 1. Though it is difficult, when you hear this from clients acknowledge that abortion may seem easier.
  - 2. However, the woman will never know her child if she does get an abortion.
  - 3. Whether a client chooses to parent or proceed with adoption, she is giving her child a life to become who he or she was intended to be.
- M. You want to have a coaching relationship and in the end:
  - 1. The decision is hers or theirs—she or they will have to live with it.
  - 2. You want to make sure she has the information and knows that she has options.
  - 3. Relinquishment and adoption may not be the right choice.
  - 4. But, it may be...
- N. Know your local resources.
  - 1. Help bridge the appointment.
  - 2. Make sure that they can provide the services that your client needs.
- O. Maintain a relationship with the client.
  - 1. Continue to minister to her.
  - 2. Communicate that it is not just about her decision, but it's her and her child that matter most to you.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. (2006). *Safeguarding the Rights and Well-Being of Birthparents in the Adoption Process*. New York: Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute.  
[http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/publications/2006\\_11\\_Birthparent\\_Study\\_All.pdf](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/publications/2006_11_Birthparent_Study_All.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>A. Fessler (2006). *The Girls Who Went Away*. London: Penguin Books.

<sup>3</sup>D. Head (1976). *A Precious Bit of Forever*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, Corp.