Teen Corner
Psychological Heavy-Lifting

Young people must do a lot of psychological heavy-lifting during their adolescence. As they experience major changes in their self-images, personal responsibilities, and relationships to the central people in their lives, they develop a more independent sense of identity. A healthy self-identity is based on many characteristics, including similarities and differences from parents and other influential adults.

Research has shown that adoption complicates the developmental steps adolescents must take as does race. While the overall adjustment of adopted youth of color is often good, their emotional journey can be more complex than youth who are not facing some of the stresses inherent to the negotiation of race and adoption. The need to give up parental dependency and become self-sufficient (one of the defining tasks of adolescence for all youth) reawakens loss issues for many adopted teens. As they restructure their self-esteem and identification there is often a temptation to idealize and fantasize about racial role models from the media (particularly for adolescents without direct contact with significant numbers of adults of their own race or ethnicity) and/or birth parents, who are sometimes unavailable for direct relationships.

We are grateful to 14-year-old writer Lilah Goldthwaite for allowing us to publish her poems, because they offer us insight into often good, their emotional journey can be more complex than youth who are not facing some of the stresses inherent to the negotiation of race and adoption. The need to give up parental an adolescent’s experience of working to put together the disparate pieces of her identity as she grows from girl to woman.

Weapons

In every war there are weapons
Guns, knives, bombs
But sometimes I feel the strongest weapons are
Peace, love and understanding
Along with...
Trust, hope and dignity
What do you think the strongest weapon is?
Dr maybe there shouldn’t be weapons at all
Nothing but...
Peace
Love
Understanding
Trust
Hope
And dignity
It's like being stolen
For real
People say it ain’t a big deal
But it is
Cause I said
I miss my family
I want my family
Sometimes I want to go home
Cause I feel so alone
Wish I could just pick up the phone
Have momma’s voice on the other line … so we can talk
I need to stop running from my feelings and walk
Missing them is like a hole in my heart
We’re so far apart
These are some of the feelings of being fostered or adopted
You sometimes feel rejection
Like you have no protection
It’s like a blanket that doesn’t warm you
Doesn’t do what it’s supposed to
Sometimes feels like no one loves you
Lonely, forgotten
You feel like a fruit that’s rotten
Left in the dark
All you can hear is a dog’s bark
The feeling of anger and frustration
Nowhere to run and hide
It’s like a bad rollercoaster ride
No one by your side
Feeling like you’re in the middle of a lie
Just want to cry
Dr sleep
Cause you’re in way too deep
This mountain of feelings is way too steep
You just want to curl up in a ball
Sleep against a brick wall
And wish all the bricks would just fall
Tears have been running down my cheeks
The last couple weeks
I want them to stop
I can’t take it anymore
Yes, I’ve had these feelings before
It’s been hard, just like an apple’s core
What should I do?
I just need a break from all this
To change my life around
I wish my life wasn’t lost and found
I have feelings I can’t explain
And can’t change
Dr even exchange
This is for real
Like an orange you can’t peel
Like diamonds you can’t steal
Sometimes I just need a kiss
Cause I can’t change all this
I need someone as sweet as a dove
To give me a hug
Dr even some love
I need the angel’s songs from above
So I can focus on the future
Learn to love myself, I ain’t no strange preacher
I’m a human being
That’s something I need to start seeing
And believing
Never stop dreaming
I want to open my mouth and start screaming
My ears feel like they’re steaming
I’m on fire
Burning like a flame
No one to blame
I don’t want to be the same
As before
I want to close that door
Be myself
Love where I am now
And where I’m gonna be
A good future is what I see