

Creating an Adoption Milestone - Building Stronger Families



Adoption Ceremonies and Covenants

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About Today:

- **Who are you and who am I?**
- **Handouts and schedule**
(www.familyfocusadoption.org)
- **Purpose of the workshop**

Some Beginning Questions:

- **What's the big deal about ceremonies?**
- **Why are rituals so important?**
- **Why have adoption rituals?**

What Adoption is not:

- ✓ **the day in court (that's the finalization!!)**
- ✓ **the paperwork (that's following the rules)**
- ✓ **a getting-together of equals, like marriage**

What is Adoption?

- ✓ **A decision made by an adult**
- ✓ **In a discrete moment in time**
- ✓ **Permanent, irrevocable, and unconditional (like all parenthood)**
- ✓ **An emotional claiming**
- ✓ **A true life-cycle event, like birth**

What does this mean for long-time foster parents?

- **Why do foster parents end up drifting into adoption?**
- **Why is this bad?**
- **What should happen instead?**

How to Construct an Adoption Ceremony

- The formal recognition of the claim, the “discrete moment in time.”
- The place to sign special individualized papers.
- The creation of an adoption “Rite of Passage.”
- Pictures, refreshments, and celebration are all part of the ceremony.

The Adoption Covenant: A Tool for Defining Responsibility

- **Covenants are “agreements” or “contracts of understanding.”**
- **These are initiated by the adoptive parent(s) and responded to by the child.**
- **They are read at the ceremony and signed by the parties involved.**
- **The Covenant can serve as a disruption inhibitor (and an “Insurance Policy”)**

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October 27, 2006

ADOPTION COVENANT

I, John Doe, have come to a decision. I want to become the father of Joey Public. Over the course of the past year, Joey has spent enough time with myself and my wife in order for me to be certain that I have learned all that I need to know about him in order to make this permanent decision.

I have come to love Joey. I love him now and I will always love him. This afternoon, with this Covenant, I am making Joey my son in my heart, in my head, and in my life. I am making him my son immediately, unconditionally, irrevocably, and forever. There is nothing that anybody can do, including Joey, that will ever make me deny or revoke this commitment.

I recognize that Joey has connections to people he cared about long before he met me. I promise to respect, to honor, and to protect those connections for Joey always.

This adoption is a Covenant I make directly with Joey, as his father. It stands forever - and therefore it stands independently of the decisions my wife makes. And it stands independently of the fears, the pain, or the confusion, that at one time or another come into the relationship of just about every father and his son. From today, my relationship with Joey becomes the same to me as though he were born to me. No more am I Joey's maybe-father, I am now his forever-father. I promise that I will, in all ways, respond to Joey, respect him, and love him - both as his father, and forever.

My signature on this Covenant, in the presence of Joey, in the presence of my wife, and in the presence of all these other witnesses, is my vow of all that I have here committed to. Finally, I want to say that I am glad that this day has finally arrived, because I am proud to become, this afternoon, Joey's forever-father.

John Doe

Date

Family Focus Witness

Date

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October 27, 2006

ADOPTION COVENANT

I, Mary Doe, have come to a decision. I want to become the mother of Joey Public. Over the course of the past year, Joey has spent enough time with myself and my husband in order for me to be certain that I have learned all that I need to know about him in order to make this permanent decision.

I have come to love Joey. I love him now and I will always love him. This afternoon, with this Covenant, I am making Joey my son in my heart, in my head, and in my life. I am making him my son immediately, unconditionally, irrevocably, and forever. There is nothing that anybody can do, including Joey, that will ever make me deny or revoke this commitment.

I recognize that Joey has connections to people he cared about long before he met me. I promise to respect, to honor, and to protect those connections for Joey always.

This adoption is a Covenant I make directly with Joey, as his mother. It stands forever - and therefore it stands independently of the decisions my husband makes. And it stands independently of the fears, the pain, or the confusion, that at one time or another come into the relationship of just about every mother and his son. From today, my relationship with Joey becomes the same to me as though he were born to me. No more am I Joey's ' maybe-mother, I am now his forever-mother. I promise that I will, in all ways, respond to Joey, respect him, and love him - both as his mother, and forever.

My signature on this Covenant, in the presence of Joey, in the presence of my husband, and in the presence of all these other witnesses, is my vow of all that I have here committed to. Finally, I want to say that I am glad that this day has finally arrived, because I am proud to become, this afternoon, Joey's forever-mother.

Mary Doe

Date

Family Focus Witness

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October 27, 2006

ADOPTION COVENANT

I, Joey Public, have made a decision to be adopted by John and Mary Doe. Over the course of the past year, I have given this decision much time and much thought. I understand that this means that John will be my father forevermore and that Mary will be my mother forevermore. I have made this decision to become their son because I believe them. I believe that John loves me, and I believe that Mary loves me. I believe their individual and separate promises to always respect me, to always love me, and to always respond to me as their son. I trust their recognition of the importance that other people have for me, and I trust their vows to honor and protect those connections for me. And, most of all, I trust each of their guarantees to be my parents forevermore.

Specifically, and perhaps hardest of all for anybody my age, I am agreeing today to trust John and Mary with the responsibility for making the decisions in regards to me that parents are obligated to make. Sometimes, I may not like those decisions; sometimes I may not agree with them; and sometimes I may even believe that they are wrong. But I trust that my parents will always make those decisions using their best knowledge and judgment. And so, I promise that I will always respect their right to make parental decisions for me, and that I will always respond to John and Mary - and to their decisions - as their son.

I am proud to have John Doe become my father. I am proud to have Mary Doe become my mother. My decision to be John and Mary's son, the same as with every other child on earth, is in response to their individual decisions first to be my parents. And so, in response to John's promises, and in response to Mary's promises, I am hereby publicly committing to my decision to become John and Mary's son. And I promise that I will always love, respect, and respond to John and Mary as my forever parents. These are decisions that I will stand by for the rest of my life. Always.

As of this moment, I will refer to John always, everywhere, and only, as my father. And I will refer to Mary always, everywhere, and only, as my mother. No longer Mary and John to me, they are now "Mom and Dad." Finally, I understand that until my adoption is finalized the system will continue to know me as Bland. But as a sign of my commitment to my new family, and as an expression of the reality that comes into existence right now, I sign this document, using for the first official time, my new and real name.

Joey Doe

Date

Family Focus Witness

Date

Workshop Wrap Up

- **Adoption Ceremonies are adoption tools.**
- **Creating an adoption ritual adds to the shared experiential fabric of the “new” family.**
- **Adoption Covenants speak directly to the responsibilities and commitment between parent and child.**