

## **ADOPTION AND ADOLESCENCE**

### **G.Rangone CTA Milan- Iris Milan**

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- Some severe problems are more likely to occur when the adopted child is in his/her teens. This is a moment in which the child starts seeing his/her past and origins from another perspective and starts to see for himself/herself what makes him similar to his/her parents or set him/her apart from them;
- This process is more complicated for an adopted child: his/her past has been disrupted and he/she has four parents to relate to;
- It is significantly more likely that, due to the stress related to physiological teenage change, old scripts and dysfunctional behaviours developed from a insecure or disorganised attachment take over;
- Parents may struggle to deal with their adopted adolescent son.

### **Planning a therapy**

- Sometimes there are severe behavioural problems like self destructive behaviour, verbal and physical abuse towards other people, especially family members, inappropriate sexual behaviour and so on
- A therapy must be planned to help the whole family
- The therapy's aim is to restore the effectiveness of adoption
- In order to this goal, a family therapy must be arranged
- Different kind of sessions can be planned: whole family, only parents, group sessions with siblings, individual sessions with adolescent
- Parents frequently need treatment themselves in order to be able to have a "therapeutic" function towards adopted children. They need to be able to move from playing the patient role to the role of a co-therapist and vice versa;
- This can be rather difficult in the case of traumatised parents, who are unable to cooperate and are affected by dysfunctional relationship disorders;
- In order to reach this goal, it is very useful to integrate the systemic model with some attachment theory tools.

### **Family therapy and group sessions**

- If any severe problems arise in adoption, it is important to arrange a family treatment. Individual therapies and therapies that involve just the parents are discouraged.
- According to our experience, during or after the family treatment, group sessions ("empowerment sessions") to enable adoptive parents and adopted teens or pre-teens to discuss and act on their past, their relationship with adoptive parents and biological parents may be useful.

