Relationship Stages After Reunion

Not every individual goes through every stage: they may not be sequential, they may be repeated. The stages are common to post-reunion period and are normal consequences of reunion.

1. <u>Honeymoon Stage</u>
a. Characterized by euphoria, joy, and sense of being on top of the world.
b. Effort made by parties to find similarity and common interests.
c. Much time spent together in an effort to catch up on each other's life with exchanges of photos, letters, and gifts.
d. Preoccupation with other party.
e. Minor negotiations about relationship, i.e., what to call birth-parent.
f. Some uncertainty about place or role in other's life. Frequency of contact, how to introduce each other to friends and family members.

2. <u>Time-out Stage</u>
a. One party may pull back to evaluate and process events. The honeymoon is over.
b. Other party may feel confused when (a) occurs. Birth-parent may feel hurt, angry, frustrated and frightened if adoptee pulls back and adoptee may feel rejected by birth-parent if she/he pulls back.
c. Problems in relationship may develop here due to lack of understanding of the process; society has few role models for this experience.
d. Parties may need professional help to resolve situation.

3. <u>Showdown Stage</u>
a. Confrontation of parties to address status of relationship and its future development.
b. If birth-parent initiates confrontation, she/he may fear loss of child again – different confronting adopted adult because biological tie is not enough to assure success – in parenting, the element of permanency exists and the bond is not so fragile.
c. If adopted adult confronts birth-parents, she/he may fear being rejected by birth-parents.

4. <u>Disengagement Stage</u>
a. Characterized by adopted adult or birth-parents really moving away from the other – not just pulling back.
b. Can be extremely painful for either party with feelings of anger, loss, and rejection.
c. Can occur if expectations are too rigid and differences between parties are too great.

5. <u>Solidifying Stage</u>
a. Characterized by earnest negotiations between parties – roles, differences, issues continue to be worked on, but the relationship is more solid and settled with few ups and downs because agreement has been reached in many areas.
b. Re-negotiations occur as life changes and growth takes place and new relationship roles emerge.

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