

THE SEVEN CORE ISSUES

| Keep — one-page takeaway

The field's shared map (Silverstein & Kaplan, 1982; expanded by Roszia & Maxon, 2019): seven themes that recur across adoption, for everyone in the constellation, across the lifespan. This is what each one tends to look like in the room.

- **Loss** — the ground under the other six. Often unmarked and unresolved; listen for it underneath depression, anxiety, and relationship patterns.
- **Rejection** — expecting to be left. Sensitivity that seems out of proportion; avoiding, provoking, or pre-empting rejection.
- **Shame and guilt** — “something is wrong with me” (shame) and “it was my fault, or I’m disloyal for wondering” (guilt). Often looks like low self-worth or over-responsibility.
- **Grief** — disenfranchised and often delayed. A reaction far bigger than its trigger is frequently old grief surfacing.
- **Identity** — missing biological, medical, and cultural pieces. Sharpest in adolescence and at later thresholds.
- **Intimacy** — a guardedness that coexists with real love; trouble fully letting people in; leaving before being left.
- **Mastery and control** — needing to manage everything, or a sense of helplessness. Falling apart when plans change.

Two reminders:

- These recur and cycle across a life. They aren't stages to finish or a diagnosis to assign.
- Hold the map loosely. It's for recognizing what you hear, not for putting a client in a box.

Continued considerations:

- Which of the seven do you recognize fastest, and which do you tend to miss?
- Take a current adopted client: which themes are active now, and what set them off?
- The 2019 model puts these on birth and adoptive parents too. Where might that change how you see a whole family?