

THE GRATITUDE BIND

| Keep — one-page takeaway

What it is: adoption grief gets reframed as ingratitude. The script says adoptees should feel lucky, so grief feels forbidden (disenfranchised grief, in an active form).

How it shows up: the client polices their own grief (“I shouldn’t complain”); grief hides inside other concerns; adoption surfaces at the edges, a birthday, a DNA result, then a subject change (that’s them testing whether it belongs in the room).

Watch your own reflex: the urge to reassure feels caring but repeats the bind. Notice the pull. Don’t follow it.

Instead: hold both (let the client set the proportions); witness, don’t fix; name the bind when they pull back; repair fast if you slip.

Sample language:

- Catching the “should”: “You said you should be glad. Can we slow down on the should?”
- Widening the door: “I’m curious what the sad part knows.”
- Naming the pattern: “We get close to this and then move along, and that’s allowed. There’s room here for the part that isn’t fine.”
- Repairing a slip: “Let me take that back, I just hurried you toward the bright side. What were you feeling before I did that?”

Remember: when you want to reassure an adoptee about their adoption, slow down. That urge is the thing to watch.

Continued considerations:

- Which pull do you feel most strongly when a client grieves their adoption: gratitude, reassurance, or the bright side?
- Think of a client who changed the subject right after mentioning adoption. What might they have been testing?
- Where in your own life do you rush someone toward the positive, and what happens to what they were about to say?