When Abandonment Becomes Identity
Adoption Trauma
Creates Self-Sabotage
By
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I had no concept of "being a winner."

Adoption—even when it is loving and deeply well-intentioned—can leave a profound wound. When it occurs before a child can reason, at the level of core identity, adoption can be remembered as abandonment that "is my fault."

My early beginnings taught me that I did not have a say in the outcome of my life.

- Abandonment said, other children are winners.
- Adoption said, you are not other children.
- Abuse said, "you cannot win."

I was born with a nearly photographic memory. I naturally understood abstract ideas in mathematics, philosophy, physics, and art. In the emerging world of computer science, these talents allowed me to choice in the job market. I understood influence instinctively, which meant sales could have made me millions. I also knew, almost naturally, how to speak persuasively to an audience.

These were only a few of the capabilities I was born with. Yet throughout my life, periods of high achievement in career and finances were often followed by self-induced failure, forcing me to begin again.

Without a core identity rooted in the right to exist—and without the inner assurance that success was available to me—I kept recreating my idea of normal around messages like these:

- You have no rights.
- You will never be successful.
- You will always need to please others in order to have anything.

No child can rebuild a fractured core identity alone. And a child who has learned abandonment as truth will not know how to ask who can help them return to themselves.

That is why children carrying adoption trauma need more than love and good intentions. They need an outside system of support—one that includes professionals trained to recognize adoption trauma before self-sabotage becomes a way of surviving.

Through trauma education, I have learned that winning is not domination, wealth, or proving I was never broken. Winning is reclaiming the right to exist, to belong, and to turn pain into protection for others.

May I become at all times, both now and forever
A protector of those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
A ship for those with oceans to cross
A bridge for those with rivers to cross
A sanctuary for those in danger
A lamp for those without light
A place of refuge for those who lack shelter
And a servant to all in need
For as long as space endures,
And for as long as living beings remain,
Until then may I, too, abide
To dispel the misery of the world.
- Shantideva