



New! Published in 2008

Labor of the Heart

A Parent's Guide to the Decisions and Emotions in Adoption

By Kathleen L. Whitten, Ph.D.

"The emotions unique to bringing a child into the family through adoption aren't obvious at first, but they can create significant stress. Adoptive parents often experience the double trial of emotional responses to infertility and to the process of adoption itself—which one adoptive mother called "excruciating labor with no end in sight." ~ Whitten

The cover of *Labor of the Heart* bullets the content of the book as if it were an adoptive parent's self-help manual crossed with an adventure-trek vacation guide. Which it is!

- Make crucial decisions with confidence
- Embrace the wait—and build a better foundation for your family
- Separate the myths from realities about adopted children
- Explore the latest scientific research on adoption
- Discover the keys to healthy attachment with your child
- Read about other adoptive parent's experiences

Adoption is a major, life-changing adventure, and this manageable guidebook does an excellent job of exploring a prospective adoptive parent's readiness for the journey.

Whitten's book acknowledges what many "how to adopt" books don't: the need to understand--and give equal consideration to--what the **brain** needs to know, what the **heart** feels, and the **practical** considerations of the potential issues. Several of the book's eight chapters (which include *The Agony and the Art of Becoming an Adoptive Parent*; *The Life-Changing Decisions in Adoption*; *Where is Your Child and Who Will Help You Find Her?*) are divided into these three helpful brain-heart-practical sections, and most chapters are accompanied by an Adoptive Parent's Workbook page for personalizing the reading, and for clarifying individual direction at the beginning of the adoption process.

The author addresses the four 'negative' emotions often experienced by prospective adoptive parents, and offers four coping mechanisms. When practiced regularly and concretely, Hope and Optimism, Social Support, Faith, and Happiness will allow a person to move solidly toward adoption commitment and preparation.

Whitten, a developmental psychologist and international adoptive mom, is at her best discussing *"the transition to adoptive parenthood and the challenges of making decisions*



during the adoption process.” Her direct, empathic writing and extensive resources provide the right hit of connection and information, and the short chapters are focused and digestible. *Labor of the Heart* helps readers spin their anger, fear and frustration into mental and emotional strength during the wait for their adopted child. The book’s weakest point is in Chapter Eight’s “Spiritual Opportunities”, which leans a little heavily on Christian teachings. More universal examples would have included more readers, with the same positive message and results.

Collectively, the reading, exercises and resources in *Labor of the Heart* shine a light down a sometimes dark and scary path for first-time adopters. Katherine L. Whitten’s professional and personal insights will help readers work through their mental and emotional roadblocks, getting them ready to make a decision on parenting an adopted child. Where the self-help manual and the adventure trek vacation guide converge, Whitten’s book stands above other pre-parenting tomes by providing a structure to effectively address a parent’s supremely important internal journey...the labor of heart and mind, while looking toward and waiting for a future as a family.

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