



Groups: The Top Five Benefits and F.A.Q.

The IAC Center loves groups. Our groups have shown us the best side of human nature as we see the group members support each other, share tips, make each other laugh and form lifelong friendships. All of our groups are professionally led and cover both practical and emotional aspects of infertility and adoption life cycle issues. The groups make a journey easier and often more meaningful as well.

Research has documented a group's counseling power in helping people with many types of issues. The top 5 benefits of groups include helping you to:

- **Overcome isolation** - Groups provide emotional connections when people feel isolated from friends and family in relation to their issues. Participants enjoy communicating with like-minded people.
- **Build resilience**, which is defined as the capacity to adapt to difficulties; and to try new opportunities for personal growth and change. According to the American Psychological Association "Nothing helps more with adversity and stress than to feel the support and understanding of other people. Creating connections is the number one way to build resilience."
- **Learn something new**, perhaps a new resource or a coping tip.
- **Feel validated which enhances self-esteem** - Discussing issues and being understood and supported provides group members with a greater sense of perspective and control.
- **Feel better** - These benefits usually result in mood improvement and the decrease of emotional distress.



The most important time to join a group is in the first few months of a new situation, when the reality begins to set in. This is a time when you may be keeping everything confidential and/or feeling more sensitive to other people's reactions or comments, or especially anxious about your situation. Find a group that is right for you, where you feel comfortable.

Anytime is the right time. You will know the right time for you. If you are uncertain, an IAC Center Counselor can help you decide whether a group, private counseling, a psycho-educational workshop or something else would be most helpful.



IAC Center's Infertility and Adoption Groups

Benefits of Infertility Groups:

"For me, group is the only place I can share a laugh about our difficulties." **K.A., infertility patient**

- While we find that many infertility patients are inconsistent group members or prefer the privacy of individual counseling, those that do attend groups enjoy the connections with others going through similar experiences.
- Provides freedom to express negative emotions and prevents feelings of overburdening loved ones
- Develop or regain effective coping skills
- Couples having difficulty communicating about their infertility problems may benefit by talking to other couples
- Enhanced self-esteem - discussing issues with others provides the members with a greater sense of perspective
- One study suggested increased rates of conception for women who participated in support groups vs. those who did not (54% vs. 22%). IAC Center's position is that this *may* be because group support helps people to stay the course in face of how difficult treatment is.

Benefits of Pre-Adoptive Parent Groups:

"We were stuck and unable to complete the paperwork for our adoption until one night at group when we realized it was our grief about our losses that was holding us back." **J.S., adoptive parent and Former Pre-Adopt Group Member**

"When I began to attend IAC Center's pre-adopt group I was still feeling very alone and depressed. It was relieving immediately to be with like-minded people. Once we made the decision to adopt it made it real for me. The group made a difficult journey hopeful, healing. During the 9 months it took to complete the adoption, I was pregnant intellectually and emotionally. Now I wake up in the morning and look at my son. It feels like we were meant

for each other. I am elated by motherhood, closer to being whole." **S.G., adoptive parent and Former Pre-Adopt Group Member**

- Many who are waiting to adopt come to the groups looking for education as a supplement to their home studies. In addition, they report feeling more open about their emotions and able to relax in the neutral setting of a Counseling Center.
- Members can voice their experiences about the positives (excitement, family growth) and the negatives (frustrating delays, fears of a complicated transitions or relationships, concerns about their referrals or matches).
- Groups give pre-adoptive parents a place to be expectant parents and to focus on preparation for parenting.
- Learn skills to help in the transition to parenthood; to communicate effectively with birth parents; and/or to transition children home from orphanages or foster care.
- Many of our pre-adopt group members form their own Parent/Baby groups after they have adopted.

Benefits of Groups for Adoptive Parents:

"I don't usually think a lot about adoption so I really appreciate that my adoptive parents group gives me a time and place to do that." **K.M. adoptive parent**

"Other parents think they understand but they have no idea of some of the issues my child has or how I feel." **P.B. adoptive parent**

- Camaraderie is the most often-cited benefit of adoptive parent groups - parents can share their experiences of raising children whose ethnicities, special needs or personal histories are adoption related.
- An opportunity to distinguish adoption-related behaviors from general developmental behaviors and personality factors in understanding and planning for their children's needs.
- Education and support on adoption life cycle tasks and dealing with schools and social issues; and often on general parenting concerns as well.
- A chance to learn parenting strategies uniquely designed for children who have had foster and/or orphanage care where applicable
- A chance to discuss open adoption issues where applicable
- Sharing of information and resources

Benefits of Groups for Adopted Kids

- IAC Center Children's Groups are designed to encourage the exploration and sharing of the adoption experience within a fun and structured environment.
- Adopted children find that peer groups provide a comfortable place to identify, and that increases self esteem.
- They have a chance to articulate their own concerns and to get feedback from peers which they really appreciate.
- They can explore adoption without the fear of hurting anyone's feelings, saying something inappropriate, being considered different, or feeling disloyal to their parents.
- Children learn that it's ok to talk about adoption, that their feelings and thoughts are normal and that it's ok to bring up adoption issues with their parents.

Benefits of Groups for Adopted Teens:

"Sometimes we don't even talk about adoption but it makes me feel really good to know other kids who were adopted. I know I can talk to them about adoption if I want to." L.N., age 16

- As teens face many big life changes in these years, the possibility of adoption-related issues surfacing increases dramatically and group support is an effective way to deal with these issues.
- Adopted teens find that peer groups provide a comfortable place to identify and that increases self esteem.
- Teens appreciate the opportunity for validation, sharing and exploring their experiences and feelings with other like-minded teens.
- Teens can also address other self-esteem, identity and social issues related to adolescence.

The IAC Center has coordinated Support Groups for: [Infertility](#), [Pre-Adoptive Parents](#), [Adoptive Parents](#), [Adopted Children and Teens](#), and [Professional Support](#). To learn more or to join any of our groups, please contact info@iaccenter.com



www.iaccenter.com
(609) 737-8750

Frequently Asked Questions about IAC Center Groups

What Is The Purpose of A Group? People within a group, discuss their issues with each other and provide supportive communication and resources for dealing with their infertility and/or adoption related concerns. See: **The top 5 benefits of groups.**

How is an IAC Center Group unique? All IAC Center groups are professionally guided by counselors with specialized expertise in infertility and adoption. Since the Center is not affiliated with any infertility clinic, adoption agency or attorney, or school, we are able to offer you a safe and neutral setting in which to discuss or explore your feelings or concerns related to infertility and/or adoption at multiple points in the life cycle. The counselors are able to monitor group interaction so that everyone is comfortable.

How Often Do IAC Center Groups Meet? While we are flexible and respond to the needs of each group, this is our usual format:

- Infertility groups meet for 6 sessions, although some groups decide to continue longer.
- Pre-adopt and adoptive parent groups are held once a month.
- Adopted children's and teen groups generally meet 6 to 8 times and sometimes continue on a once a month basis after that.
-

Where Do IAC Center Groups Meet? In all IAC Center [Locations](#) which currently include Pennington (next to Princeton), Summit, Red Bank & Montclair, NJ; and NYC.

How would I Benefit From A Group? A group can lift your spirits if you are down, or feeling isolated; teach you something new about coping or strategizing to deal with an issue; or simply be a good source camaraderie and comfort. See **the top 5 benefits of groups.**

What Occurs at A Group Meeting? Each group is different, but generally group members discuss their feelings, experiences and opinions; and give support, encouragement or advice to each other. The counselor offers insights and education about the topics at hand or presents topics requested by the group members, and monitors group interaction so that everyone is comfortable. Participants can benefit from both the members' and the counselor's input.

Child groups are more likely to include an activity that brings the issues out in a fun and child-friendly way. Through crafts and group activities, youth are encouraged to normalize and celebrate their experience as an adoptee.

What if I am uncomfortable in groups, is there any reason to try one? Start by attending some group meetings and just listening in. At first, you may feel uncomfortable. Don't worry, many people feel uncomfortable at first. Give yourself a chance to settle in. Slowly, your comfort level will probably increase and you will begin connect with some of the people in the group. If not, it is absolutely fine to continue participating as a listener. And if your spouse wants to join and you are uncomfortable in groups, it is perfectly fine to be there just to support him or her. Later, the two of you can discuss your reactions in private.

How do I handle it if my child or teen is anxious about joining a group, but I feel it would be helpful to them? If you think this would be a great idea but are worried you child or teen won't want to participate, please feel free to call for ideas on how to introduce this group to your child or teen. An IAC Center Counselor will discuss this with you personally as each child is an individual and there is no set answer to this question.
