

Let me first start with apologies for any misspellings or maybe strangely constructed sentences.

Even though I started as a native English speaker I immigrated to the Netherlands when I was 5 years old. I was adopted by Dutch immigrants, from here on revered to as my parents.

Forced adoption within itself is of course a wrong practice just because for the fact that it has the word 'forced' in it.

Having said that, I have to say finding the natural mother has been a disappointing journey and made me renewed grateful for the parents I have had, even though there were some difficult issues within our family.

My father had an alcohol problem due to war traumas of the second world war and my mother had health issues and depression because of that situation. This was not an actual problem when they adopted me in Australia but started when they re-immigrated back and became Dutch Citizens again. But they at least were mature grownups with flaws, what I really could not say for my birthmother (who was forced to give me up at 15) and I really put a lot of effort into developing some means of communicating with her. I had tried to get someone to mediate between us but could not find anyone. Just recently VANISH found me Catholic Care who might be able to mediate. But waiting over several years for mediation between me and the natural birth mother, and me thinking it would never happen, I decided to disclose my existence to other family members. Which led to a complete communication breakdown.

My parents have always been open about the adoption. My mother would say, you maybe did not come out of my belly, but you certainly grew out of my heart. So, my brother (who also is adopted, from a different nest) and I never had that sit down moment, people always tend to ask about; "So when was the moment they told you?"

Our home situation in the Netherlands created a co-dependent atmosphere with me trying to manage and steer the situation.

I think every child does that, trying to mediate, but when in the first few months of your life you are not nurtured and therefore feel unsafe, either survival mode kicks in or the baby does not survive.

I think this was my drive to work extra hard to always try and fix things which also led to unhealthy relationships trying to fix and heal this void.

So, what to do with practices that are set in the past?

There will always be situations where kids will be given up for adoption. What is important, I think, is a better disclosure of information.

The not knowing makes the grief worse. Also, the difficulties in one's search to obtain information and the, not always happy, reunion.

To prevent more scaring, I think for one, the system should allow all info to be available to the child and means of mental health support.

For me being based in the Netherlands it is extra harder to find the institutions and info especially with the time difference and to not be able to commence the search myself. So, there should be a support and network easily accessible for Adoptees who live out of state or overseas. I have noticed from own experiences that we tend to be forgotten and sometimes are waiting months at end for answers or replies.

I found the natural birthmother by myself in 1990-1991, when I was attending the Victorian School of Arts in Melbourne. I obtained the records through Catholic Family Welfare Bureau. That went quick and easy.

But after that I had to figure it out all by myself. My parents were rooting for me in the Netherlands and supporting me, but I had no one in Melbourne. The whole process was difficult heavy and emotional, and I slide into a depression. My mother was so worried, she got my father to pay for her ticket (they were divorced by that time) to fly over to support me but once in Australia she suffered a stroke. I was in my early 20's and it was quite an ordeal. Attending Art school, a not very pleasant reunion with natural birth mother, for several reasons too much to write down, and my mum recovering from a stroke in the hospital.

So, what I miss is a system to give structural support and information. Also, more consideration for adoptees who end up overseas. In the Netherlands there are structures in place for Korean, Chinese, South American adoptees but no structures for adoptees from the western countries. That just not seems to be on the radar.

Also, I feel that my parents had to figure it out all by themselves. I feel for them! They did not have any support and information what to expect, which they could have used, rather than just check-ups if I were doing well and if they were good providers. I mean, it was good that that was implemented but there was no support for them either.

So, I think in the case of the forced adoptees; all info should be free and easily accessible. In the case of future adoptees, I think, if someone wants to give up a child from their own free will, after solid options for help and support have been presented, they should provide all available info of the birthparents when giving the child up for adoption.

I am still trying to find more information about my birth father and have no solid leads.

I had some great counselling by [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for the first time in my life (at 54, 30 years after my first step of requesting my records) through Vanish. The appointed counsellor would speak to me on Skype, and it was the first time that someone could explain the dynamics and make me feel understood with very few words. Unfortunately, that had to be stopped due to budget cuts. So, this is the root of the problem; first it took me 30 years to find solid support and then there are budget cuts.

Hope my testimony was helpful. I could actually probably write a book 😊

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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