



What Adopted Young Adults Think About Their Reunion Experiences



Are you an adopted adult over 18?

Were you adopted after being taken into care, perhaps due to concerns about your safety and possible abuse?

Are you thinking about trying to make contact with your birth family and are you a bit nervous about what it might be like?

What has it been like for other young adults?

Back in 2010 Support After Adoption asked Nottingham University to help us find out from some young adopted adults what it was like to meet their birth families. We had previously helped these adoptees to find out information from their files about why they were adopted and we had helped them to set up reunion meetings, but after a while we weren't involved any more and we wondered how things had worked out. We wondered if they had any words of advice to other young adults thinking about doing it.

How did things work out in the long term?

The adoptees had a range of different experiences. This is what they said:

'I instantly felt like the sister but was a bit unsure if I felt like the daughter. I now feel like my birth mum's daughter. I email my birth mum and sisters and brothers.'

Female aged 23, reunion with birth mother and siblings

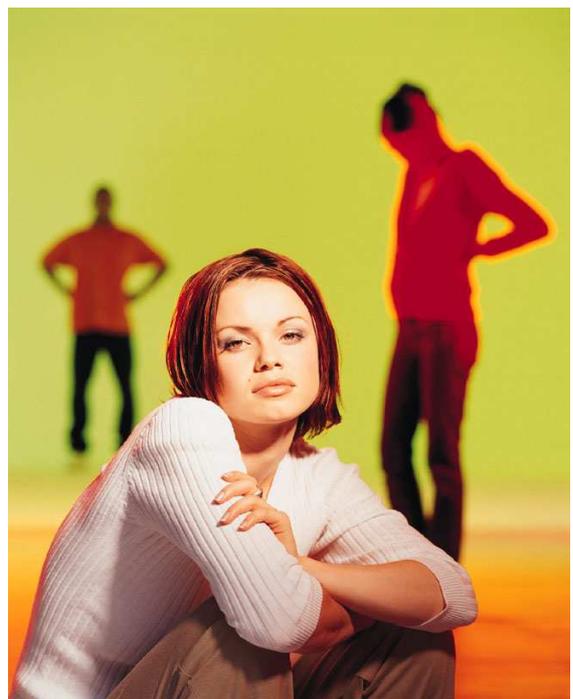
'My birth mum is too pushy for contact and very needy, like a child. And my birth father is in prison now – I won't be seeing him again either. (To begin with) I felt like a long lost friend...but then (I became) someone to help them with their life.' *Female aged 24, reunion with birth parents.*

'Confusing. My birth mother talks about how good life was despite the fact that we were removed from her due to abuse....Her lack of guilt makes me more inclined to believe the opinions of my adoptive parents that she was actively involved in the abuse of myself and my sister. ...The records state that my birth mum was difficult to work with as she was vague about what was happening....I had a similar experience of her.'

Female.

'I couldn't believe some of the things that I heard. I was shocked but could understand why I got put into care.'

Female.



'It was nice to hear what they had to say about the one and a bit year I was with them but to be honest, they only really spoke properly about my birth and how they used to take me to the pub and dip my dummy in whisky etc.

My dad never spoke about the physical abuse or possible sexual abuse but he did apologise "for what he had done" but I don't know which bit he was apologising for.'

Young person who had a reunion but then discontinued contact.

'I felt they were complete strangers to me and I felt the same after 4 or 5 meetings.

I've wrote letters first for about a year. I'm better off without my birth dad.'

Male, reunion with birth father and siblings.

'They are just people I met...due to problems and difficulties contact is not possible.'

Female aged 26.

'I don't feel my birth mother is truthful with herself or me, which puts me off seeing her more.'

Female, sees birth mother approximately twice a year now

'I felt like an outsider who was not really welcome and this hurt.'

'I always imagined after meeting my birth parents that I would have a good relationship with them and would be around to theirs every week or something. I didn't realise that I would be the one stopping contact because I wanted to and I didn't realise how child-like they were and how messy and dirty they were.'

Female aged 24, reunion with birth parents.



What helped?

We asked the adoptees if it had helped to know as much information as possible from their files before making contact and to have someone talk to about what they hoped for from meeting their relatives. We also asked if it helped to have a worker involved as an intermediary in the reunion.

This is what they said:

'When you're adopted, get advice off a worker because you can get questions answered what you don't know and you can find new information out. It helped me a lot.'

'I found the lengthy preparation very important. I was fully prepared and able to use the meeting successfully.'

I felt better on way to (the) meeting knowing that a professional was there to support me'

What about using social networking sites, like Facebook, to find your birth family?

This can be a very risky way to find and make contact with your birth family as you can end up revealing a lot of personal information about yourself to someone you don't really know. Also you won't be able to control who else gets to see it. It's safer if one of our social workers acts as an intermediary to make contact on your behalf.

If you would like some support and advice to help you think about having a reunion, or if you would just like to have more information from your adoption files to start with, please contact us:

Support After Adoption Team
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Weighbridge Road
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NG18 1AH

Telephone help line: 01623 437988 at the following times:
Mondays 9.30 – 1.00 pm
Alternate Tuesdays 4.00 – 7.30pm
Thursdays 1.00 – 4.00pm
Email us: support.afteradoption@nottsc.gov.uk