

My Adoption Story

I was born in 1961 and adopted by my birthfathers parents who were in their 50s and who ignored the advice that they were too old to adopt. I was a replacement for their son, my birthfather, whose premature death at age 21 they blamed themselves for. My birthmother was only 16 and, I was told, “too young to keep me!” Later I learned that she was forced into it.

It's very hard to be a replacement and it took years to finally learn that I couldn't live up to others' expectations. In fact, when I found my birth mother, it resulted in my adopted parents (grandparents) cutting me out of their will, even though prior I insisted I still loved them the same and still remember them as mum and dad long after their passing. Unfortunately because they adopted me for the wrong reasons, they had unrealistic expectations of me, which naturally resulted in their disappointment.

In 1961 it was customary for the new born baby to be removed from their mother at birth and placed in a plastic tray, to be held by the hospital for about two weeks before the adopted parents could collect them. It was recently explained to me by an adoption counsellor that a baby needs to bond for survival reasons: preventing this from happening results in lifelong emotional scarring, trust and anxiety problems etc. Which explained a lot of where I'm at today - I have trouble with trust and I tend to be over sensitive to how I'm accepted. Because of this I over test others and, if they fail, I then distance myself quickly, which can leave me isolated and with only few friends.

I know of other adoptees of my generation who share this problem and have lost contact with children and family members because of it. This is a deep emotional scar which is little understood or recognised by the wider community that we all try to live in.

I know we can't change the past but, with knowledge of consequences, we can make better informed decisions and hopefully avoid the mistakes of the past, especially where adoption and the life a vulnerable child is involved.

Anonymous