

BY FINDING HER I HAVE FOUND ME

I was 5 years old when mum told me that I was different to my younger sister; that I had a different mummy and daddy. It was nearly Christmas 1979 (I believe) when mum told me that I was adopted. I remember being in the kitchen when she told me. How does a five year old react? I told her I didn't want any Christmas presents.

Life went on and like a lot of kids I felt normal. At school I was teased like a lot of other kids for one reason or another. The kids at primary school as we grew older knew that I was adopted, but it wasn't an issue to them, I was never picked on about it. My first year of high school, mum and dad separated. I was totally gutted; devastated in fact, that my perfect family, the mum and dad that chose me, chose to go their own separate ways. Life was very difficult and unsettling in those formidable years.

In my early teens I don't recall having the urge to find my natural mother, although the thought of it surfaced each time that I wanted to hurt mum or dad. I feel as though I had a reasonably normal life, I concentrated on the sports and academic things that I was good at. By the time I left school, I didn't have any interest in locating my birth mother. As I grew into my early twenties, and formed relationships, I realise now that something deep down inside me made me very insecure. I can honestly say now that my insecurity stemmed from the 'unknown'.

In my early twenties, I had a professional occupation and was in a sound relationship, which ultimately broke down because of my insecurity. I hit rock bottom and a number of times had suicidal thoughts. I was also fighting with my mother, and one reason for wanting to hurt myself was to hurt her in the best way that I knew how. I had professional counselling for months. My therapist figured out that I needed to locate my natural mother, or at least, find out more about my adoption. I was 22.

I made some tentative inquiries, but for one reason or another things got put aside. In 1999, I met my now wife and told her about my adoption, the coming to terms that I needed to know about my past and the anguish I put myself through in coming to that realisation and eventual acceptance of it, which was extremely painful.

In the following years, I sought the relevant information packs, but out of fear of the unknown, I again put things away. Then one day, before my 30th birthday, I felt this sudden urge to find out more. I eventually obtained my original birth certificate. I was at home when I received it; I remember reading and breaking down. I phoned my wife and she was crying too. This for me was a real turning point.

It took another two years before I sought some professional help once again. In that time I had found out more about my natural mother through the usual channels. Prior to my 32nd birthday, I located an address for her. That was it. The end of the search was near. I had been doing some research on the PARC website and saw a meeting in my area. I booked it and there was no turning back.

Hearing the stories of others gave me a warm and wonderful feeling. The support given amongst the group was sensational to say the least.

The following month, I got in touch with one of the counsellors at PARC, who acted as a mediator for me. She got in contact with my natural mother, who agreed to receive a letter and photo. She in turn replied. We exchanged a couple of letters and photos, before I plucked up the courage to call her. We spoke for four hours at the first call. Two days later we spoke again for another. It was wonderful.

We now keep in touch a couple of times per week, but the best part is we just met for the first time. My wife and two kids came with me to meet my natural mother, her husband and their two daughters (my half sisters) and it was the best weekend I have had in my entire life. Words cannot describe how wonderfully warm they all made my family and I feel. It actually feels like I have known them for years. We're seeing each other again soon. It was like love at first sight for us all I think (I hope).

My wife has been a tremendous support throughout the entire process. She has encouraged me, and at times defended me about my decision to look for my natural mother, while I coped with having to tell my adoptive parents. I will always cherish her for her love and support.

There was always a huge piece of me missing. Robbie Williams, in his song titled 'Feel', best sums up a large part of my life:

*"I just wanna feel real love, fill the home that I live in
Coz I got too much love running through my veins going to waste.
And I need to feel real love and the love everafter,
There's a hole in my soul
You can see it in my face
It's a real big place"*

The hole in my soul is now gone. To me, my life is now complete. I have discovered a side of me I knew existed somewhere deep inside, but couldn't find a way out. Even if I had wanted it to, I don't believe it was ever coming out. By finding her, I have found me.

I regard myself as very lucky to have found her, and be welcomed into her life and that of her family. They mean so very much to me.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to PARC for providing the service you do. I have only been to one meeting, I would dearly love to come to more. If not for your service I think I would still be a lost soul.

To Janet who helped me in my quest to contact my natural mother, I am eternally grateful. Thankyou.