

Resources

While attending various adoption support groups I learned about all of the different resources and literature on adoption. I also learned that many of these resources are available for free through NJ ARCH. There are workshops and conferences that take place nationally and internationally that I had no idea existed. I never once thought about looking at adoption research until now. As a person who has done all kinds of research papers, why did I never think to check if there was any research out there about adoptees? In hindsight, maybe I didn't because I was blocking out that aspect of my life, thinking that it had no impact. I am so glad of the passing of The Adoptee's Birthright Bill (P.L. 2014, C.9) which has intrigued me enough to ask adoption-friendly counselors and therapist to share articles they've read, because now I am armed with information. There was CONFIRMATION for me in reading the information. It was not out of the ordinary for me to feel out of place, it wasn't weird for me to feel different. I'm not crazy for having these feelings that people won't stick around. I could never explain why I felt that in any relationship that once we had no contact you wouldn't remember me. ALL of it makes sense now... these are adoption issues and natural outgrowths of my situation. Now, I can put these feeling into perspective. I can be open to love, open to connection, and be more certain in understanding my value in another person's life. I believe I am meant to tell my story because there is someone else in the world who needs to know that these are normal adoption issues. CONFIRMATION!! Below you will find highlights from some of the books and/or articles that I've read:

Eggleston, Sarah. *FORMING A SENSE OF SELF: Multiple Choices for Adoptees. Center for Adoption Support and Education, 2001.*

“The most obvious complexity is that adoptees have not one, but two families to consider as they consider what kind of person they would like to be.”

“... self-esteem of some young children can be diminished by the conclusions they draw about their adoption.”

“It is often assumed that a domestic or same race adoption removes many of the challenges of identity for adoptees. However, unless they have been adopted by relatives, adoptees do not share the same heritage as their adoptive families. Therefore, they are still likely to consider biological make-up, lifestyle, ethnicity, and educational background, as well as other differences they know about when they wonder which parents they resemble.”

“As adoptee’s self-perception will usually be based on the family and environment in which she has grown up.”

“It is preferable that children know the details of their history by the time they enter adolescence. Children need this knowledge to manage the heightened task of identity formation during adolescence.”

Freedman, Joel. *Notes for Practice An Adoptee in Search of Identity. National Association of Social Workers. 2001.*

“It was his desire to know his origins, not out of rejection of his adoptive parents, but as a way of establishing his own identity.”

Lieberman, E. James. *Adoption and Identity, Adoptions Quarterly, 2:2, 1-5, DOI: 10.1300/J145v02n02 01. 1998*

“The popular media still use the dichotomy “Adoptive” vs. “real” parents and adopted
“Adoption, never an accident, ought to be a source of pride and joy like birthing, a celebration of uniquely human parenthood.”

“Unfortunately, adoption still reminds most people of biological limitations rather than of human creativity.”

“Why even tell a child the truth about his or her adoptions when it is not obvious? I can think of three reasons: (1)so the child won’t hear it from someone else; (2) so the parents can deal with questions like “Where was I born?” (3) to get genetic information germane to health.”

“... children will have to educate their peers and teachers about what family really means...”

Colaner, Colleen Warner; Halliwell, Danielle; Guignon, Phillip. What Do You Stay to Your Mother When Your Mother’s Standing Beside You? Birth and Adoptive Family Contributions to Adoptive Identity via Relational Identity and Relational-Relational Identity Gaps. National Communication Association. 2014.

“Grounded in the communication theory of identity, the present study explores how adoptive identity - an individual’s understanding of what it means to be an adopted person - is influenced by the relational layer of his or her adoptive and birth family relationships.”

“... a person’s sense of self is part of his or her social behavior, and the sense of self emerges and is defined and redefined in social behavior.” (Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Kreiger, 2005, p260).

Gowan, Barbara Ann. *Blending In Crisscrossing the Lines of Race, Religion, Family, and Adoption*. iUniverse. 2007.

Engel, Beverly. *The Emotionally Abused Woman Overcoming Destructive Patterns and Reclaiming Yourself*. Random House Publishing Group. 1990

Engel, Beverly. *The Emotionally Abused Woman: Overcoming Destructive Patterns and Reclaiming Yourself*. Fawcett Columbine, 1992.

“Emotional abuse is like brainwashing in that it systematically wears away at the victim’s self-confidence, sense of self-worth, trust in her perceptions, and self-concept.” p. 10

“... No matter how successful, how intelligent, or how attractive she is, she still feels “less than” other people.” p. 7

“Effects of emotional abuse - depression, lack of motivation, confusion, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, low self-esteem, feelings of failure, worthlessness, and hopelessness, self-blame, and self-destructiveness but do not understand what is causing these symptoms. Many women who seek help for their symptoms do so without any awareness of why they are suffering.”

“... the insults, the insinuations, the criticism, and the accusations slowly eat away the victim’s self-esteem until she is incapable of situation realistically.” p. 10

“Emotional-abuse victims become so convinced they are worthless that they believe no one else could possibly want them.” p. 11

“... they stay in abusive situations because they believe there is nowhere else to go. Their ultimate fear is that of being all alone.” p. 11

Domination “When you allow yourself to be dominated by someone else, you begin to lose respect for yourself, and you become silently enraged.” p. 14

Verbal Assaults “This set of behavior involves berating, belittling, criticizing, name-calling, screaming, threatening, blaming, and using sarcasm and humiliation. This kind of abuse is extremely damaging to the victim’s self-esteem and self-image.” “...verbal abuse assaults the mind and spirit, causing wounds that are extremely difficult to heal.”

Emotional Blackmail “An emotional blackmailer either consciously or unconsciously coerces another person into doing what he wants by playing on that person’s fear, guilt, or compassion.” p. 16

Unpredictable Responses “An alcoholic or drug abuser is likely to be extremely unpredictable, exhibiting one personality when sober and a totally different one when intoxicated or high. Living with someone who is like this is tremendously demanding and anxiety provoking, causing the abused person to feel constantly frightened, unsettled, and off balance” p. 17

Character Assassination “Character assassination occurs when someone constantly blows your mistakes out of proportion; gossips about your past failures and mistakes and tells lies about you; humiliates, criticizes, or makes fun of you in front of others; and discounts your accomplishments.” p. 17

“Gaslighting.... One character uses a variety of insidious techniques to make another character doubt her perceptions, her memory, and her very sanity. An abuser who does this may continually deny that certain events occurred or that he said something you both know was said, or by insinuating that you are exaggerating or lying. In this way, the abuser may be trying to gain control over you or to avoid responsibility for his own actions.”

Eldridge, Sherrie. *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parent Knew*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Dell Publishing. 1999

“... if she doesn’t grieve the adoption loss, her ability to receive love or attach emotionally to you and others in meaningful relationships may be seriously hindered.”

“Expose your child to other adoptees. Adoptees need to hear one another’s stories, for this is another wonderful source of validation. There is a silent bond between us that makes us strong.”

“Drs. Brodzinsky and Schechter in *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self*: “In our experience, all adoptees engage in a search process. It may not be a literal search, but it is a meaningful search nonetheless. It begins when the child first asks, “Why did it happen? Who are they? Where are they now?”

“It is vital to keep in mind that there is no “we and they” mentality in the adopted child’s world. Birth parents have always been and will always be a part of her world, whether acknowledge or not. It is we, the adults, who sometimes erect walls of competitiveness and possessiveness in relating to our child.” “.... this is difficult information for some parents of closed and semiclosed adoptions. You may find it threatening to open conversations about the birth family. However, it is essential if you are to be in tune with your child’s secret world.”

Eldridge, Sherrie. *20 Life Transforming Choices Adoptees Need to Make - Second Edition*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 2015

“This was my first lesson about searching for birth information. Never mention the word “adoptee,” for it almost always closes the door for further information. “Genealogical research” is the socially correct term, I later learned.”

“And well-meaning religious people remarked, “Why do that? You already know your identity as a child of God.”

RESOURCES

Book for parents to explain their child's adoption story using birds as a character.

Brodzinsky, Anne Braff, Ph.D. *The Mulberry Bird An Adoption Story*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 2013

This book gives you three ways to answer strange or odd questions. They give you a quick fix option, an option that raises the hearer's awareness, and food for thought on the take-home message.

Bick, Carol and Baker, M.C. *What Do I say Now*. 2B Publications. 2015.

WEBSITES

“New Jersey Adoption Resource Clearing House.” *New Jersey Adoption Resource Clearing House*, njarch.org/.

“New Jersey Coalition for Adoption Reform & Education.” *NJCARE*, www.nj-care.org/.

Original Birth Certificate Process for New Jersey-born adoptees born between 1940 - 2015

<http://nj-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/reg-41-newjersey-original-birth-certificate-application.pdf>

Download and complete the application form. Mail it to:

Office of Vital Statistics and Registry
Adoption Request Unit
PO Box 370
Trenton, NJ 08625-0370
(call 609-292-4087 ext. 529 for a hard copy)

You need to include two additional things:

1. Proof of Identity (acceptable forms of identity listed in in the instructions section of the application form)
2. \$25.00 check made out to the *State Treasurer of New Jersey*

