

BOOK REVIEW

Adoption Reunion Ecstasy or Agony?

Author: Evelyn Robinson

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Evelyn Robinson is well known in Australia for her contribution to the understanding of the complexities of adoption issues in both written and presentation forms. Her comments on this matter are underpinned by both her personal and professional experience so what she has to say is always worth reading and/or listening too.

In Evelyn's third book, *Adoption Reunion: Ecstasy or Agony?* she divides the book into three sections: Adoption Loss and Grief, Personal Recovery and Interpersonal Recovery. The chapters are concise and clear and, whilst references to past studies are made, the writing does not bog the reader down with endless quotes. Plus, it is good to see that 'disenfranchised grief' gets a good, clear overview.

In the book Evelyn is very clear about the need for 'recovery' and the need to mourn the losses original parents and their child/children have suffered. Evelyn makes a clear comparison between the mourning associated with the death of a person and the lack of mourning associated with the loss which occurs through adoption. It is heartening to read in this book that whilst the difficulty and courage needed to consider a reunion is immense, these are looked at in the light of opportunity to address one's buried loss and grief whether or not there is a reunion.

In talking about the various ranges of emotional responses to a reunion, page 136 states: "... responses often occur in situations where those contacted claim not to have been aware of any emotional impact of adoption on their lives, prior to the contact. It is highly unlikely that contact from a person which is, in a sense, unknown, could, in itself, create, such dramatic response. The contact actually awakens feelings which have been buried and have therefore been, until that moment, unacknowledged."

At the end of each chapter is a question and answer section covering all three sides of the adoption triangle. It is wonderful to have such a wide range of questions and responses all in the one book – questions and statements such as: 'Am I being selfish by making contact?' 'I feel like I'm the one making all the contact', 'I'd love to meet my son but would it be fair on his adoptive parents?', 'I just want some medical information from the woman who gave birth to me', 'I'm thinking about finding my original parents; should I take the risk or let sleeping dogs lie?' etc etc. It's obvious from her comments that Evelyn's range of experience with all parties is extensive. She lays no blame nor judges anyone. She is consistent about the relationship between mother and child. She uses the terminology of original mother/father/parent and offers sensible and constructive comment.

This book will be enlightening to those who are considering or embarking on a reunion, and it is a useful review for those who have already had a reunion, especially if some of the 'recovery' steps have been either missed or glossed over. The final paragraph, perhaps, sums up the book: "*Reunion can provide a great opportunity for healing to those who have been separated by adoption, by giving them the opportunity to process their grief and move forward.*"

Diane

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