

OPINION EXCHANGE

Adoption: Mother's Day is right again now that I've reconnected with my daughter

Mother's Day is right again now that I've reconnected with the daughter I gave up.

By Deborah Crown Kubes | MAY 10, 2014 — 10:02PM

I used to dread Mother's Day.

Nearly 21 years ago, I gave up a perfect, 6-pound, 2-ounce baby girl for adoption. My pregnancy was unplanned, and at age 23, I knew my options. Once I decided to pursue adoption, I was fiercely protective of my decision, determined to give my child the kind of life I had, with two parents who were actually ready to be parents.

Working with a counselor, I planned on a "semi-open" or "mediated" adoption. I would choose the parents and we would meet, although we would know only first names. We would informally agree to stay in touch for a couple of years with pictures and letters sent through the adoption agency.

Adoptions were just starting to become more open at that time; even a semi-open one seemed radical to me in 1993.

I connected instantly with the adoptive couple I chose to raise my daughter. I felt safe with them, and I knew my daughter would be safe as well.

Then, on a Monday night in August, in the middle of a thunderstorm, after a mercifully easy labor, my daughter came gently into the world.

And I loved her like crazy.

She had a crown of wispy brown hair and a prominent cowlick on the right side, an unruly heirloom passed from my great-great-grandfather to my great-grandmother to my grandmother, my mother and me. I remember her making sighing, cooing sounds and frowning her little brow as she stared at me. I don't remember the sound of her cry.

"I'll see you later," was the last thing I said to her. Her parents named her Kinsey.

And per our agreement, we stayed in touch for about four years.

Mother's Days since have been tough.

Then, nearly two years ago, my daughter contacted me. We got to know each other slowly, through e-mails and phone calls. We finally met in person in Minneapolis in March of this year. It was an unexpected, amazing gift.

Kinsey is off-the-charts smart, a gifted writer — independent, kind, musical, fearless. She has had a great start to her beautiful life, supported by two fantastic parents who love her dearly. And who were always open with her about where she came from.

I had wondered what it was like the day they sat her down and told her she was adopted. "How was the Big Reveal?" I asked her.

I caught a brief glimpse of that furrowed little brow again as she said simply, "There wasn't one." Her birth story was always a part of her story. There was no dark secret, no horrible, hidden past. She is grateful to her parents for that, and so am I.

Mother's Day is easier now, knowing they had kept me as a valued part of their lives all along.



(<http://stmedia.startribune.com/images/ows/vt399675686340>)
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Adoptions have become much more open since 1993 — yet most people remain completely in the dark about how open adoptions really work, gleaned what they know from (mostly) tragic stories in the media. The truth is that the majority of open adoptions are overwhelmingly positive experiences for everyone involved. The truth is that most open adoptions work out well.

According to a recent study by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, a nonprofit that advocates on behalf of all members of the adoption triad, everyone involved in open adoptions can benefit richly: Adoptees get everything from the knowledge of who they got that unruly cowlick from to better relationships with their adoptive parents. Adoptive parents report less fear of birthparents and closer relationships with their children. And birth moms like me experience less grief, regret and worry.

Indeed, every time I got a letter or photo, I was reassured that I had made the right decision for all of us.

As the Donaldson study found, the key to achieving that kind of open adoption is education, support and help from true adoption professionals — relying on real information and facts rather than myths and stereotypes — to understand the options and develop realistic arrangements that nurture everyone involved.

No adoption is without its challenges and heartaches. But in the end, we all share the same dreams for our children: that they grow into strong, kind, intelligent, independent adults.

So to the young and old moms, stepmoms, bleary-eyed-all-night-breastfeeding moms, grandmoms, foster moms, single moms, adoptive moms, and — yes — birth moms: Whoever you are, whatever your story, Happy Mother's Day.

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