



Adoption From a Birth Mother's Perspective

As I type this letter, my birth daughter is nearly three. We saw her and her family last weekend. She has a little brother now. They adopted him about nine months ago. We see them a few times each year actually. And we email sometimes every week but at least every month.

What we have is an open adoption. An open adoption often includes visits, pictures, and letters. Open adoptions may also include knowing the names and address of the adoptive parents and they often then have your name and address.

The agency doesn't give this information out unless you want them to, but in my case we exchanged names, email, phone numbers, and addresses when we first met.

Making an Adoption Plan

When I was pregnant with the daughter I placed for adoption, my older daughter was just starting kindergarten. I had always told myself that when she started kindergarten, I was going to go back to college. I had her in high school and postponed my education and my dreams to be a mom. Being her mom is great, but fulfilling my dreams is important too.

The pregnancy scared me and I thought I'd have to go through everything all over again; day care costs, formula costs, not sleeping through the night for who knows how long, and diapers.

Adoption has changed things about me. I am more motivated to accomplish my dreams... I am a better parent to the daughter I already have.

There are, of course, good things about parenting but at that time, the cost of parenting would mean I would continue to work as a fast food manager at all hours of the day on salary.

It would mean that I would continue to be working at night when my first daughter was home. It would mean that

my older daughter would continue to not have a mom around because I would be working. I didn't think it was fair for my older daughter. And most importantly, I didn't think that was fair to me or the child I was about to have.

So I called a pregnancy test center to see if they had an agency they would recommend. I did. I saw the agency they recommended within a week from when I first called and brought home three profiles.

The couple I chose stood out right away for me, and the next time I went to the agency, I

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said I'd like them to parent my child. The staff called them the day before Thanksgiving in 2004. I wanted them to be called right away so on Thanksgiving they could share the news with their family, too. I had already told my family.

We met shortly after that. I had a few requests at that first meeting. I wanted them to come to the prenatal appointments if they were able. I wanted to go to Lamaze with the adoptive mom, and I wanted them in the delivery room when I had her.

For the future, my requests were a minimal in-person visit every other year. They looked at me like I was nuts and said that we could meet more often than that. And we have.

The rest of my pregnancy was uneventful. Then there was the birth. It definitely wasn't fun... labor pains are never exactly easy. But it was not a long delivery, and after a few hours Kara was born.

Her adoptive mom held her first as I had requested. The hospital stay was also uneventful. We spent lots of time together and Kara's parents spent time out of the hospital as well so that we had time together before they brought her home.

Finding Support

The first few weeks after delivery were hard to fill. I had off from work for three weeks. I tried to keep busy and thought of Kara and her family



every day. I spent tons of time on adoption support forums on the internet and chatted with other people who had placed a child for adoption in the past.

I think the support made those weeks easier for me than if I had not had somewhere to go to talk when I started to think about Kara. I also had the support of my family and the birthfather.

Open Adoption Through the Years

Since then, as I said in the beginning, almost three years has past. Our first few emails after her birth were sometimes awkward and I didn't always know what to say. Now we're friends. I don't feel uncomfortable with them or emailing them.

We have completely different views on religion and politics and enjoy debating our different views. We don't set visits up; rather when one of us wants to see the other, we just ask what weekends the other has free.

I've asked them a few times to meet and they've asked me a few times to get together. Sometimes my parents or my sister and her kids go along, too. Visits are comfortable for all of us.

Often we go to their house or they come to my house. It's sort of neat seeing Kara in my living room with my daughter, too.

We don't have a schedule for sending pictures either. When they

do something, they just send pictures. They went to the fair and sent pictures after that. It was a nice surprise in my mailbox! If it's been a while since we saw each other, they'll send pictures. I've never had to ask for pictures but I would feel comfortable asking for some.

We agreed to a minimum of three months between emails, letters or phone calls and six months between pictures. We've never been even close to meeting three months before talking to each other. And I definitely get pictures more often than every six months. Our visits have only once made it to six months, and that was because of my college schedule. I did go back to school after having her.

No Regret (but some "What ifs")

I have never had issues with depression after placing or feelings of regret. There are the days when I think "what if..." I will always have a day here or there where I have that thought. When I do, I find someone to talk to or write in a journal.

Most times even when I have those "what if" thoughts, I realize that if I had parented I would be in the same rut I was before I placed. I realize that I want the *idea* of another child and not the *reality* of another child. I realize that had I parented' I'd be a not so great mom to two kids rather than a wonderful mom to one.

Placing my second child for adoption was mostly something I did for myself. I knew that if I

decided instead to parent, Kara would not have had a bad life. Our income level would have been lower but low income doesn't mean that I'd be a poor parent.

What would have made me a poor parent would be that I would know that I was again postponing my dreams. Postponing what I wanted for my first child did affect how I parented whether I really want to admit it or not.

Adoption has Changed Me

Adoption has changed things about me. I am more motivated to accomplish my dreams. I am doing great in college and will graduate in May of 2007. I will be going back for a second degree. I am on the waiting list for Sonography.

I am a better parent to the daughter I already have. She's had a half-present mom for years, and placing my second daughter made me take a look at my own parenting. I realized I was not there for the daughter I already had as much as I should be.

We do so much more together now. I make a point of spending time with her each day even if it's just reading together on the couch.

Michelle

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