Ten Things Adoptees Should Keep in Mind By Damsel Plum

1. There are many, many different ways to search. The first step is registering with the free International Soundex Reunion Registry (ISRR). Next find out all you can about your adoption and searching, join a support group and go about your search methodically.

2. Searching has nothing to do with gratitude or lack of it. Adoptees search for a variety of reasons, from wanting medical history to wanting to know their biological and ethnic heritage because they themselves are starting a family. Many adoptees begin to search in earnest when they start a family. On the other hand, some adoptees choose not to search for a variety of reasons, from simple lack of curiosity to a fear that they will somehow "disrupt" their birthparents' lives. Fact is, many birthparents welcome reunion and even when they don't there is usually some birth relative who does.

3. Even if you are not interested in searching, you may want to find out as much about your adoption as possible should you ever need to search for medical, family or other reasons. You can ask your parents for information and get non-identifying information about your birthparents from the agency through which you were adopted.

4. Once adoptive parents understand that searching has nothing to do with wanting another set of parents and is not a rejection, they will usually be supportive of your search. They are an invaluable resource in helping you and you will feel better with their support. A good idea might be suggesting that they read some books that include stories of adoptive parents who have helped their kids search.

5. If you want to search, read as much as possible about search: how to, why, other's experiences, reunion. Join an adoptee support group. Get educated. This will help you to execute the most effective search possible and to be prepared emotionally for what it entails.

6. When adoptees search, some find themselves dealing with abandonment issues they never knew were there. There are plenty of books and adoptee support groups to help you through the sometimes confusing feeling which can arise during the search.

7. Many places have open birth records for adult adoptees, among them: Great Britain, Australia, Norway, New Zealand, the states of Alaska and Kansas and many other places. If you want equal rights as an adoptee, you can join other adoptees, birthparents and adoptive parents who are fighting for them.

8. Sealed records laws were originally purported to protect the adoptee from the "embarrassment" of his "illegitimate" birth. The records are still sealed because there are people who stand to benefit from closed records, especially certain

adoption lawyers and agencies. There is a bill called the Uniform Adoption Act (UAA) making the rounds of the states which seeks to seal adoptee records for 99 years and to make it a FELONY to search. If you want to learn more about how to fight the UAA, join a tactical activism group dedicated to open records for adoptees such as Bastard Nation.

9. There are as many different kinds of reunion as there are kinds of adoption. There is no telling whether you and you birthparents will get along, whether they are still alive, whether they will want a relationship. In almost all reunions, however, the adoptee finds some relative to relate to, be it the birthmother, an uncle, sibling or cousin. Most adoptees who have unsuccessful reunions are glad they searched and finally have the information they sought.

10. Once you have completed your search and are settled in your reunion, don't forget your adopted sisters and brothers who may not be as lucky as you. Support the open records movement so that other adoptees can have access to their heritage and medical history, a right non-adopted people take for granted.

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