

INSIGHT INTO ADOPTION

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barbara Taylor Blomquist was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, attended Middlebury College in Vermont, and graduated with a B.S. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin. She has conducted extensive research on teenage adoptees and currently counsels with adoptive parents. She is a past board member and Director of Volunteer Services at Epworth Children's Home in St. Louis where she created and conducted adoption groups. Currently, she serves as a board member, Vice President, Treasurer, and Adoption Consultant for Learning Consultants, Inc. in St. Louis and is their originator and coordinator of adoption groups for parents and adoptees. Barbara is married with three children, a daughter (biological), and two sons (both adopted). As is true for most writers, the author's thoughts and passions were created and developed by various experiences and events in her life. This is what has given her in-depth knowledge, understanding, compassion, and insight into the adoption world, especially regarding parenting issues.

Published and Distributed Throughout the World by

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.
2600 South First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62704

This book is protected by copyright. No part of
it may be reproduced in any manner without
written permission from the publisher.

©2001 by CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.

ISBN 0-398-07201-9 (paper)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2001025705

With THOMAS BOOKS careful attention is given to all details of manufacturing and design. It is the Publisher's desire to present books that are satisfactory as to their physical qualities and artistic possibilities and appropriate for their particular use. THOMAS BOOKS will be true to those laws of quality that assure a good name and good will.

Printed in the United States of America

R-3-TH

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Blomquist, Barbara Taylor.

Insight into adoption : what adoptive parents need to know about
the fundamental differences between a biological and an adopted
child--and its effect on parenting / by Barbara Taylor Blomquist.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-398-07201-9 (paper)

1. Adopted children--Psychology. 2. Adoption--Psychological
aspects. 3. Adoptive parents--Psychology. 4. Parent and child. 5.
Parenting. I. Title.

HV875 .B59 2001

362.73'4--dc21

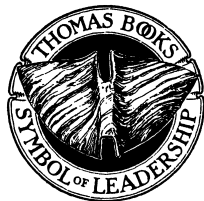
2001025705

INSIGHT INTO ADOPTION

What Adoptive Parents Need to Know About The
Fundamental Differences Between a Biological and
an Adopted Child—and Its Effect on Parenting

By

Barbara Taylor Blomquist



CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.
Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.

To my husband, Bob—for his loving support and enthusiasm. Without him, this book would not have been written.

To our children—Susan, David, and Jim—each of whom had a distinctly essential role in the creation of this book.

To all of the many adoptive families who in their own way contributed to the development and essence of Insight Into Adoption.

PROLOGUE

At the moment I am looking out my window at a beautiful scene—the day after a March ice storm. I see a sunny blue sky looking down on a rushing, brown, muddy creek. The evergreens, that yesterday were standing straight and tall, are now bent and slowly shedding their icy burden. Geese that only two days ago were noisily frolicking in a 60 degree spring day, are now gliding silently in icy water.

It is a picture of peace and beauty although there is evidence of past hardship. Yesterday I saw sleet, wind, ice, and cold. Today I see sun, melting snow, a quiet sense of relief. The physical evidence of yesterday's struggle makes today even more impressive because of the contrast. It is more moving than the average spring day we have been witnessing.

So it can be with people. Those who struggle and survive a personal storm can be strengthened by it. It is impressive to see.

The following work has been developing for years. It is only now when I am in the “day after” scene, that I can write about my struggle. My feelings and passion for my message are stronger now than when I was in the middle of my own personal storm with an adopted son. There is a calm in my daily life now, but there is still a churning in my emotions.

I feel strongly we all have a strength within us to be ourselves, to take the best within us and nurture it, letting it grow until it takes us over. We then can become what we are. It doesn't matter what our biological parents were, or were not. It doesn't matter if they gave us up for adoption. It doesn't diminish our value if they were struggling with insurmountable challenges. That fact has nothing whatever to do with the innate talents, abilities, and beauty found within each of us.

If I could transform the world, I would magically make every twelve year old see that he is special. I would cut all the negative ties to the past—someone gave me away, someone hurt me, or someone didn't love me. Those facts describe the adult taking those actions. Those facts have no bearing whatever on the value of the recipient of the acts.

Some adopted children experience an overwhelming journey in trying to establish themselves as worthy human beings. They can struggle for years with issues that are incomprehensible to the nonadopted person. My hope is the information contained within this work will apprise the nonadopted person, in particular, the adoptive parent, so he can look at the obstacles his adopted child may be facing. The parent may or may not agree with the reality of the obstacles, but I hope after reading the following pages, he will respect the fact that these issues are all too real for his child.

Then he, as a parent, can begin to understand his child's behavior. Only then can the parent's actions be motivated by enlightened understanding and resulting compassion. In this struggle, love alone is not enough. A parent must have the feeling of getting inside his child's head to feel the insecurity and fear and anger. Then, together, they can face the issues.

Many adoptive parents have been frustrated by working with counselors and psychiatrists who have had little or no personal experience with adoption issues. Some of these professionals give little credence to the deep and often camouflaged issues of their adopted clients. They may treat the symptoms and behavior without looking deeply into the root causes.

Because colleges and graduate schools of social work, counseling, and psychology offer little or no information on adoption issues, many adoptive parents have found the most valuable counsel has come from other adoptive parents or professionals with personal experience in the field of adoption. Necessity forces a parent to learn quickly, especially when the problem is hard to understand, and it's difficult to see any solution. Experience is invaluable.

Once the true source of the adopted child's pain is discovered, parents can reach the "ah, ha" moment we have all experienced. With understanding comes a new attitude and the impetus to change the whole atmosphere from negative to positive. The child and his parents will still have issues to deal with, but the source has been uncovered, and issues can be faced openly.

The goal of this book is to help parents comprehend the thinking process of their child, and to help social workers, teachers, and counselors approach their adopted clients in an enlightened way once they understand an adopted child has issues in his life unique to the adoptive process.

PURPOSE AND INTENT

In the more than 30 years I have been dealing with adoption issues, I have often been encouraged by adoptive families to put something in writing. It was felt that I had the advantage of “having been there.” I have lived through the experience within my own family, have counseled adoptive parents for many years, and also spent 12 years working at a children’s residential facility. The following pages are proof that I listened to these adoptive families and did put something in writing. This book is designed to flow as if I were talking with them.

Please understand there are millions of adoptees, but the problems addressed here apply only to a small percentage of adopted children who go through a difficult time assimilating their adoptive status into their lives. However, I feel the basic principles of adoptive parenting discussed here can and do apply to all adoptive families. Adoptive parents reading this book can gain a different insight into their child’s reasoning, and this information can be used to avert some potential problems they might otherwise face. Professionals working with adopted children and adults rarely consider the “relinquishment” issues that their clients may be wrestling. Everyone touched by adoption can benefit from understanding the additional burden relinquishment and adoptive issues present for some people.

There is no startling information here (unless you have never delved into the adopted person’s mind). Most people have not. Those of us who were raised by our biological parents have many things to learn from those people who were raised by adoptive parents. That is what this book is about.

Those of us who adopted children before the 1980s were handed a baby and told, “Make this child your own.” It’s no wonder some of us had problems. We were working on the premise of all nurture and giving no weight to nature. Many of us learned after years of frustration that nature will have its way.

The bottom line is that the more information adoptive parents have of the workings of their child’s mind, the more harmonious their lives will be.

Younger generations can learn from the experiences of those of us who established adoptive families at a time when we were all kept in the dark. There is now so much more adoptive parents can do for and with their children. This by no means guarantees there will be no issues or problems to work through. It just means you as parents will know what you are doing. In this arena you will have an advantage over previous adoptive parents.

In this book you will find neither footnotes nor a bibliography. This is not meant to be a scholarly dissertation on adoption issues. There are many of those excellent books in the marketplace that should be required reading for all involved in the adoption field.

Instead, this work presents information and concepts that are generally known and accepted by all who are deeply involved with adoption issues. Unfortunately, for the most part, this does not include adoptive parents, nor many of the counselors they seek out in stressful times.

Most adoptive parents are given their child and rarely ever hear from the source again, whether it be an agency, a doctor or a lawyer. Adoptive parents set about living their lives believing their family will be just like all the others on their block. Sometimes it is.

This book includes all the issues that adoptive families should be told about. In years past, many families nurturing a “loss sensitive” child were completely in the dark as to the source of any problems. They felt they didn’t cause them, and when their child exhibited troubled behavior, even he couldn’t articulate the cause. Everyone was struggling with phantoms and phantom issues.

In recent years, light has been shed on those phantom issues, and from enlightenment came methods and solutions. Still, there are adoptions where parents are given no insight as to the additional issues they will be expected to handle.

The purpose of this book is to help fill that void. The information within is based primarily upon real life experiences relating equally to both sexes. However, in order to simplify the writing, I have used only the masculine pronoun throughout the book.

CRITICAL INFORMATION

The intent of this book is to provide realistic and factual insight into the world of adoption. It is possible, after reading this book, some people might come away with various negative thoughts and feelings regarding adoption.

It is not my intent in writing about adoption issues to project that image. Adoption is intended to be, and should be, a fulfilling, beautiful, rewarding, and enriching aspect in anyone’s life. The following pages deal with some pitfalls not obvious to the unenlightened adoptive parent who was basically handed a child and told to “Make him your own.” My goal is to help adop-

tive parents understand some potentially challenging factors so they can deal with them positively. This will enable them to appreciate the depth and breath of the “fullness of life” inherent within an adoptive family. There is an innate sense of loving abundance when you are touched by adoption and its uniquely wonderful children. All parties involved with adoption have the right to such an experience.

So, let’s start our discussion, one-sided as it will be. . . .

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Prologue</i> .....	.vii
<i>Purpose and Intent</i> .....	.ix
 <i>Chapter</i>	
PART 1: ADOPTION BASICS	
1. Advice from an Adoptee’s Parent .....	.5
2. Insight .....	.8
3. Common Feelings of Adopted Children .....	.10
4. Common Feelings of Adoptive Parents .....	.13
5. Logic .....	.18
6. Factual Differences Between Adopted and Biological Children .....	.19
7. Why is my Job So Different? .....	.26
8. Task of Developing a Sense of Self .....	.30
9. The Impact of Loss .....	.34
10. Troubled Behavior Patterns .....	.39
 PART 2: WORKABLE SOLUTIONS	
11. Lack of Adoption Conversation? .....	.47
12. Inclusive/Exclusive .....	.49
13. Not One and the Same .....	.52
14. Positive Terms and Descriptions .....	.54
15. Parents are Mirrors .....	.57
16. Hopes and Dreams—Real or Fanciful .....	.59
17. The Cruellest Words of All .....	.62
18. “I’ll Prove to You I’m Bad” .....	.65
19. What and Where Am I? .....	.68

20. What Would Your Child Say? .....	.71
21. Breaking Away .....	.73
22. The Search .....	.76
23. Perfect Parent???	.79
24. The Trust Factor .....	.82
25. Great—or Not So Great—Expectations .....	.85
26. Solid Advice from an Adoptee to Parents .....	.87
27. Conclusion .....	.89

PART 3: COUNSELING HANDOUTS

Basics of Discussion .....	.95
Factual Differences .....	.98
Essential Keys to Problem Solving .....	.101
Handling Your Angry Child .....	.102
Parenting Tools .....	.104
Parenting Goals .....	.106
Key Points in Adoptive Parenting .....	.107
Do's, Don'ts, Why's, and Why Not's .....	.111
<i>Index</i> .....	.121

INSIGHT INTO ADOPTION

Part 1
ADOPTION BASICS

Chapter 1

ADVICE FROM AN ADOPTEE'S PARENT

MY HUSBAND AND I have known many adoptive parents over the past 35 years. The majority had a beautiful experience in creating their adoptive family, while others had an extremely difficult time. I have great admiration for the adoptive parents we have known personally who were battered by the complicated aspects of adoption. They have gone through difficult years, but without exception, all have come through to a positive resolution, and their families are lovingly intact.

It would have been easier for us as adoptive parents had we known what was ahead of us. However, we were the generation which didn't anticipate problems. We didn't realize what our children were going through. Undoubtedly, we could have been of more help had we realized they were fighting "ghosts and demons" we couldn't see. We were told from the start not to anticipate problems, and we believed this with all our hearts.

Those of us who experienced problems loved our children blindly and could not see that their issues and resulting negative behavior came from a valid basis. We were, indeed, caught short. At the time, the only way we knew to help them was to keep loving them. Unfortunately, for the most part, they had to find their own way through the labyrinth of issues stemming out of separation from their birth parents (relinquishment). We had no problems with the adoption concept, and unfortunately, didn't understand the source of our children's problems. We could only stand by and catch them when they fell. We were frustrated because we didn't know how to help.

My fervent hope is that adoptive parents who read this work will be more enlightened than my generation of adoptive parents. This does not mean there will not be problems. Your child still may go through difficult times, but you will have the advantage of being able to understand their thought