

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 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. She also served as a board member, Vice President, Treasurer, and Adoption Consultant for Learning Consultants, Inc. in St. Louis and was their originator and coordinator of adoption groups for parents and adoptees. Recently, Barbara was involved in a research project which included extensive interviews with adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents.

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 a deep-rooted knowledge, understanding, compassion, and insight into the adoption world, including an in-depth understanding of parenting.

Second Edition

INSIGHT INTO ADOPTION

Uncovering and Understanding
the Heart of Adoption

By

BARBARA TAYLOR BLOMQUIST



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*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*.*

Excerpts from Testimonials and Reviews

“This book does an outstanding job of expressing the real feelings of adopted children – feelings that adoptive parents need to know – and nobody tells them.”

Regina M., adult adoptee, St. Louis, Missouri

“I have over 50 books in my adoption library and *Insight Into Adoption* is one of the top 3.”

Louise K., adult adoptee, St. Louis, Missouri

“I wish I’d had this information years ago.”

Robert B., adoptive parent, Denver, Colorado

“I see myself on every page! All this time I thought I was the only one who had these thoughts.”

Thomas S., adult adoptee, Chicago, Illinois

“I work with foster families every day, and this book needs to be read by every one of them.”

Susan T., social worker, St. Louis, Missouri

“You can feel the love on every page. Even though serious issues are discussed, the warmth shines through.”

Eleanor P., adoptive parent, Jacksonville, Florida

“This book is wonderful, truly unique – it is emotionally informative without preaching.”

Donald P., psychology professor, Chicago, Illinois

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 non-adopted person. My hope is the information contained within this work will apprise the non-adopted 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 can be 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.

B.T.B.

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 adoptive 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. . . .

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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, almost without exception, have come through to a positive resolution, and their families are lovingly intact.

That is not to say all adoption related issues have disappeared. There are times when childhood issues still impact our thinking and our behavior. This is true with every human being. The difference with an adoptee is that his reverting back to childhood issues may take him back to adoption issues. I've talked with many adoptive parents who express surprise at their adult child's thinking and/or behavior. The answer is usually provided in the thought, "Oh, that's right. I forgot he's adopted."

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