



Journey Of The Adopted Self: A Quest For Wholeness

Betty Jean Lifton

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Betty Jean Lifton, whose *Lost and Found* has become a bible to adoptees and to those who would understand the adoption experience, explores further the inner world of the adopted person. She breaks new ground as she traces the adopted child's lifelong struggle to form an authentic sense of self. And she shows how both the symbolic and the literal search for roots becomes a crucial part of the journey toward wholeness.

Journey Of The Adopted Self: A Quest For Wholeness Details

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Beth says

I realize that this book has helped many people, but it just did not speak to or for me as an adoptee.

Susan Poling says

I was advised to read this (because it was by a professor at Yale???) after being reunited with my son who I had had to give up for adoption when I was 20. (What a glorious day it was to hear his voice and meet him!) The year that followed was an emotional rollercoaster: It was so very painful (I cried for months) yet simultaneously glorious (I couldn't wipe the grin off my face.).

That being said, I found this book to be totally presumptive. I don't think anyone can take an emotional process and turn it into an equation. That's what being a human being is all about.

D. J. says

(Actually, I need a shelf called "To Re-Read" as I'm pretty sure I started this but never finished. Mentally, I've been writing a memoir about my adoption experience, and 20+ year search for my Original Family. At the beginning, in my 20's and alone in my first "real" apartment on Staten Island, with no phone nor television, I could not get my hands on enough adoption writing. I'm pretty sure this book is on a shelf somewhere, waiting.)

Sue says

An excellent book for adoptees especially but would also be useful and helpful for original and adoptive parents.

Doris Raines says

I. Love. This. Book. Yes. It. Is. Always. About. The. Journey. Betty.

Claire McAlpine says

I haven't read an adoption book in many years, but decided I should increase my awareness and familiarity with the issues, as I'm currently writing down the story of, as **Joseph Campbell** would put it, my 'hero's

journey' to find out who I was 'born to', which I believe is necessary if we as individuals wish to also learn more about who we were 'born to be', something which is neither about the family we are raised by nor the one we are biologically related to, but that in-between place, where we carry something of both influences, which then allows us to be able to detach from them somewhat to pursue a life that we can truly claim as our own.

Journey of the Adopted Self, follows that traditional quest, and for each element in the journey, the responding to the call (the decision to search), the departure (actively seeking), meeting the mentor (finding help) crossing the threshold (making contact), the challenges + the ordeal (dealing with the aftermath), the reward (unravelling the mystery), the road back (the new ordinary life) and the elixir (the transformation and the life lesson) the authors discusses a range of issues that can arise and gives examples in brief snippets from the many case studies she has had access to as an adoption counsellor.

Each person has a unique experience, so in the journey there are many different reactions likely to be encountered, but the one thing that all adoptees have in common, is that they have experienced what is referred to as the 'pre-verbal trauma' of separation from the mother. That may have been immediately after birth or soon after, some babies may never have been held by the mother who carried them for those nine months, others may have been for a few hours or days, or even a few months.

According to the Austrian psychoanalyst and contemporary of Freud Otto Rank in his book *The Trauma of Birth*, everyone experiences significant trauma at birth and that that trauma or separation from the safety of the womb is over time healed by the bond created and the physical proximity and nurturing provided by the mother, whose heartbeat, smell, voice and very being are a comfort to the baby, who has known these things without seeing them from within.

Adoption adds another layer to the trauma, as the bond with the mother who gives birth is severed and the nurturing is to be provided by another, who has not been infused with the maternal hormones of pregnancy that nature creates to ensure the mother mothers her child. The adoptive mother in her head and heart wills herself to be and provide that role and is a good substitute, but that doesn't avoid the fact that the baby will have experienced that initial double trauma of separation, first from the womb and then from the human it was connected to that birthed it.

Because this experience happens so early in the life of a baby, it is possible the trauma can lie so deep that for some it may not rise to the surface until very much later, or it may be possible to live without realising or recognising the behaviour patterns that are a common thread to those who have experienced this at birth.

How well adoptees overcome the traumas inherent in adoption and the additional ones they encounter in their specific families will be determined by their genetic susceptibility to stress - some children have more than others - and their ability to find an empathic teacher, friend or mentor to give them emotional support.

The author describes a range of different responses her clients (adult adoptees) experienced in the many aspects of the journey. Any adoptee who reads it, like me, is likely to highlight a number of passages, which relate to their own experience in navigating the triad of adoptive parents, birth parents and siblings and the adoptee themselves, in particular if they have been involved in the closed adoption system, where all ties with the biological family are severed, the child's name changed and legally becomes another person in another family.

This book then, is about the search for the adopted self. It is not the literal search in the

material world, where one sifts through records and archives for real people with real names and addresses; but rather about the internal search, in which one sifts through the pieces of the psyche in an attempt to understand who one was so that one can have a sense of who one is and who one can become. It is the quest for all the missing pieces of the self so that one can become whole

Essentially it is a healing journey, although that may not be something consciously embarked upon, and inevitably in any kind of healing journey, there are likely to be disruptive elements as we realise and confront aspects of ourselves that we haven't been aware of.

Adopted people are a special breed," according to a scholar of Kabbala. "Every soul has a purpose. Adoptees are beautiful souls. Old souls. They have a special fate - a special karma - to redesign the earth."

It suggests that adoptive parents should also familiarise themselves with the potential issues before considering adopting a child and that it is a responsible idea to also seek help while raising an adopted child. This seems so obvious and yet, in the era my siblings and I were raised, I recognise we were considered something like a 'blank slate', so old fashioned parenting would suffice, and everything is and was dealt with "as if".

There are so many passages I could share, however it is a book that will be personal to each reader, depending on their role, perspective and experience. I found it an insightful and helpful read, leaving me with much to reflect on.

Mary says

As an adoptee myself and also an adoptive parent I can say that it has been one of my favorites. It is easy to read and understand. As because the author was adopted herself she knows the feeling and things that an adoptee goes through. If a person is struggling with their own adoption; thinking about adopting; or have adopted children with questions I recommend *Journey of the Adopted Self A Quest for Wholeness*. Very well written and a great book for anyone interested in adoption.

Rhonda Rae Baker says

This helped me work through some adoption issues that related to self acceptance and what I was created for.

jamie says

I am so thankful for this book; it should be required reading for any adopted person.

Bradley Matthews says

Every adoptee should read this. Everyone close to adoption in any way should read this. Read this.

Mandisa says

Adoption

I highly recommend this book to better understand adoptees(what they go through and how best we as adoptive families can play our role in their healing & our healing as well). What an eye- opening experience for me as an adoptive parent.

Michelle Alley says

This book was so helpful to me that I would gladly swap or recommend this book to anyone who is in the adoption circle. I read this book as an adoptee, and plan to reread it again, as a mother who has adopted.
