

Use of intermediaries in adoption contact

I have read many accounts of reunions which have involved the use of intermediaries to facilitate contact between family members separated by adoption. Some have expressed appreciation for the assistance of an intermediary and others have expressed regret at their interference.

In my second book *Adoption and Recovery – Solving the mystery of reunion*, I devoted a section to what I have termed *personal recovery*. As I stated in my book, I believe that if personal recovery work is undertaken prior to contact being made with a family member from whom one has been separated by adoption, then the likelihood of the reunion being satisfactory to those involved can be greatly enhanced. In an ideal situation, both parties would have undertaken a degree of personal recovery work prior to reuniting.

While personal recovery work can be undertaken alone, or with the support of family, friends, or members of a support group, it is often more successful with the additional support of an informed professional. Providing professional support, however, is a quite separate role from that of acting as mediator. The role of mediator is a complex one and I believe that it is unwise for an attempt to be made to sustain this role, in an adoption reunion situation, beyond the initial contact activity.

If the person who is seeking to make contact is adequately prepared and supported, then, in most cases, I believe that the use of a mediator is unnecessary and may, in fact, be counter-productive. If a mediator is used in the initial contact, then I believe that it is wise for the two parties, once the contact has been made, to interact directly as soon as possible, albeit hopefully with access to support and guidance. However, this support and guidance can be negotiated separately by each party to the reunion, rather than both parties using the services of the same professional, who could then be at risk of being placed in a conflict of interest situation.

I believe that reunion between family members separated by adoption is most valuable when it is experienced first-hand, not second-hand. It is my view that experiencing a reunion assists in building self-confidence and a sense of self-determination, both of which may have been lacking to some degree during the period of separation created by the adoption. The reliance on an intermediary may foster the belief that the parties to the reunion are inadequate and unable to interact in a mature and responsible manner, without their messages being filtered through a third party. Exchanging messages via an intermediary also requires a degree of interpretation, which can actually inhibit rather than facilitate communication.

There is no way to guarantee that what I have termed in my second book *interpersonal recovery*, ie the healing of the fractured relationship which comes through reunion, will necessarily occur or that the outcome will satisfy those involved. However, I believe that family members who have been separated by adoption can benefit from taking control of the process of contact and reunion and interacting authentically and directly with each other.

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Evelyn Robinson, who is a counsellor, educator and author of

Adoption and Loss – The Hidden Grief

Adoption and Recovery – Solving the mystery of reunion

Adoption Reunion – *Ecstasy or Agony?*

Adoption Separation – *Then and now*

welcomes contact from interested readers.

Postal address: Clova Publications
PO Box 328
Christies Beach
South Australia 5165

E-mail: erobinson@clovapublications.com

For further information about Evelyn and her work, please visit her web site:

Web site: www.clovapublications.com