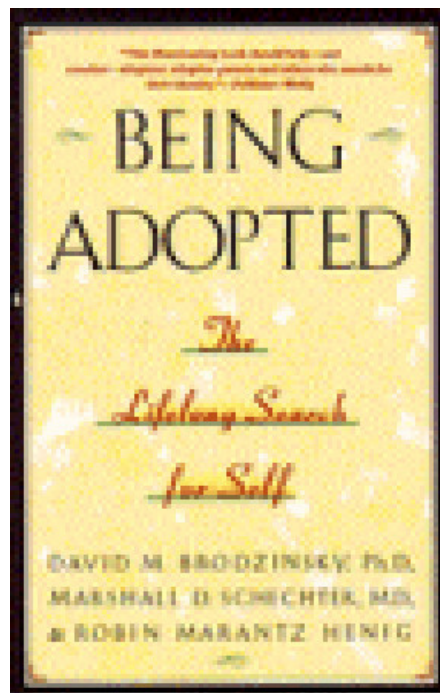




Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self

David M. Brodzinsky , Robin Marantz Henig , Marshall D. Schechter

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Like *Passages*, this groundbreaking book uses the poignant, powerful voices of adoptees and adoptive parents to explore the experience of adoption and its lifelong effects. A major work, filled with astute analysis and moving truths.

Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self Details

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Krista says

This book while interesting was not one of my favorites by any means. It began to sound rather repetitive and honestly not very helpful, at least for me.

May others find it useful to their lives though.

Rhonda Rae Baker says

Very important writing about what it is to be adopted, the stages one goes through, internal dynamics, and one that I will refer to often.

Brodzinsky explains with examples and logic the processes of growth an adoptee transcends. I had to take it in bites so the information could be assimilated within.

Now that I'm at the 50 year mark, I am looking for the resolutions he speaks of and how to incorporate all of myself...find myself and peace.

Everyone that is touched by adoption should read this...wish that I had it many years ago!

Sarah M says

This book gave a very specific view of adoption: from the adoptees perspective as seen through the developmental stages of life. Having been a psychology major myself at one point, this built some new structures on what is a very familiar framework. I liked it, but unlike some of the other books I've read recently, I probably won't see a need to revisit it in the future.

Laura says

The most mild research type book I've read. It held my interest and is based on Erik Erikson's model of stages of life and how adoptee's fit into these stages as they move through their lives. It's a take on adoption that I wouldn't have considered in my lifetime and a lot of it makes sense. That being said this book was written in the 90's and a lot has changed since then and I think that even though a lot of this research has now expanded since the writing of this book it is still informative and gives a different perspective on how adoptee's move through life stages.

Sam says

Very useful discussion of how adoptees go through the stages of development. However, it does assume that people are told as children and are able to integrate their adoptee status into their lives as they grow.

As someone who found out in her 30's she was adopted it didn't help me process my situation---only a realization of what I missed.

From a parental perspective I think it will be very useful to review if/when we adopt children ourselves. Adoption adds layers to the typical developmental steps and I think its very useful for parents to be aware of this so they can be supportive of these added elements.

It was published in 1992 and so is somewhat dated, especially in regards to some small point about attachment issues.

Yichen says

Interesting. I'd never thought about being adopted as starting out with a sense of loss and need to grieve. The imagery of big issues like being adopted as things people usually keep in a box in the back of their minds, only to be taken down occasionally and dealt with, then put back in the back corner again, repeat as necessary, is very helpful.

This book brings out a lot of deficit thinking, and even with all the disclaimers of "this only happens rarely," I can see myself walking away with the idea that adoption is a very, very fraught thing and that biological children are probably better. I don't think that was the authors' intention, but it's what comes across to me as I'm reading the book.

Stephanie Peterson says

as someone who was adopted, this book has in my opinion one vital flaw--the authors themselves were not adopted. though this creates an unbiased and strictly research based book (and there is no lack in research), there is an emotion in every adoptee that fails to be captured within these pages. perhaps for those looking to adopt this is grand, but for those trying to see how other adoptees feel in relation to the reader's emotions, this book doesn't quite do the trick.

Jamie says

The authors apply established psychological thinking to the adoption world, examining the internal struggles faced by adoptees at different points in the life cycle. This book was published in the early 90s so the discussion of adoption is not very current -- eg, open adoption, which is now fairly mainstream, was very new at the time. Nonetheless, the authors make some interesting points. Worth reading for those with an interest in adoption.

Ryan Murdock says

An interesting book based on clinical research and studies of adopted people of all ages, and the developmental challenges they face. I liked that the exploration of development over a lifetime was based on Erikson's seven stage model of the lifecycle. An interesting read that was absent of the usual fluff. I got a few new insights from this.

Amy says

finally made it all the way through, start to finish. The 4 star rating was after I first got it based on reading the section appropriate to my age. I identified with a lot of what the authors propose adoptees feel. Maybe that's the way it's meant to be read; reading from beginning to end was a chore. Overall a good reference to understanding yourself and the various emotional cycles that accompany being an adopted person.

Beau says

A very basic volume on developmental psychology; woven amongst a thin smattering of adoption considerations. As a middle-aged, adoptee working in the mental health field who has experienced nearly all of these stages; there was really very little here that I wasn't already familiar with.

This would make an excellent introduction to those interested in the subject, however.

Liz Latty says

someday someone will write a book about adoption that reads true and unsentimental and scathing and loving and critical and grateful and real to those of us who have experienced it...someday...

Tirsa says

This is a great book for someone just getting started in the adoption world. I felt that much of the material was a review for me since I have already studied much about adoption and worked in the field as a social worker. In addition, I wished that the book was more current as it focused on what I like to call "old school adoption" (they call it traditional adoption) where the adoptions were mostly closed and often secretive. Adoptions have come along way since the early 90s when this book was written. But, there is still a lot to gain from reading this book. Some things that stuck out to me are the following:

- Adoption means something different to each person. There is no right or wrong way to feel about your adoption and each adoptee will experience being adopted in their own personal way, although there are many similar experiences that each adoptee will share.

- Adoptees tend to seek professional help more. This can be explained, not because they have more emotional

problems, but possibly because adoptive parents tend to be middle to upper class and tend to be more resourceful in seeking help for their children.

-A biological connection to other people that look like them is often important to adoptees. Those who have no information or contact with any biological relatives, often feel lost and yearn for the ability to know who they look like. Often when they become parents, seeing a resemblance to their children becomes very important since it is their first biological relative that they know. This is one of the reasons I am so happy that I have an open adoption with at least one birthparent for each of my children. I want them to be able to see people they are biologically related to and be able to know who they look like.

-One adoptee wrote about how she felt after having her own biological child and wondering if her adoptive mother could have possibly loved her the way she loves this "blood" child. Being a mother to two children who came to me through adoption and one who came to me through birth, I can say honestly that there is no difference. I can't even imagine how people could love one child more than another. Sure, it is fun for me to look for physical resemblances between myself and my biological child but that doesn't mean I feel more love for her. I think it must be similar to an adoptee wanting to know who they look like biologically. I enjoy seeing what my husband and I have created biologically but all of my children are my children just the same.

-One adoptee shared her experience of hating how people constantly pointed out how much she looked like her adopted parents. She felt like people overemphasized these coincidences and it bothered her because she felt like it was under false pretenses. This was an interesting point for me to consider since both of my children are constantly told by strangers and friends how much they look like their dad. I always thought this was a really neat thing and evidence that God knew exactly where they were meant to go. It will be interesting to see how my children respond to this as they get older. Right now they are too young to care or truly understand.

-People who search for birth relatives are generally satisfied with any additional information they receive, even if they don't find or meet their actual birthparents. Just knowing more about who they are and where they came from seems to help them find resolution to questions or concerns. For example, a child adopted internationally may have an extremely difficult time finding birth relatives since they were often abandoned on a door step with little or no information. But, this child can have a successful search in that she can go to the town she was born, visit the orphanage, and get a feel for what life must have been like for her birthmother and for herself in the months or years before her adoption and find a connection with her first culture.

-Much literature is from the perspective of unhappy adoptees since many happy and satisfied adoptees don't feel the need to answer ads for interviews or research. They are just happily living out their lives while those who struggle more with their adoptions, seem more likely to answer interviewers ads.

-I also liked an exercise that the authors often do with their clients who are struggling with the unknowns of their adoptions. The adoptee writes a letter to their birthparents addressing their struggles and concerns and then the same adoptee writes the imagined response from their birthparents (this is especially relevant if there is no way to communicate with the birthparents). This exercise gives a lot of information as to what the adoptee is thinking and feeling and with additional letters, gives a good way to gauge how the adoptee is working through these struggles.

In summary, it was worth the read and gave me a few things to ponder and think about as a mother to children who were adopted. I also would have liked it to have been more current with more information on open adoptions.

Nicole says

It's comforting to know that I'm not the only one who has struggles with rejection, abandonment, and a sense of never fitting in.

The only issue I have is that it was written in the early 90's and needs a major updating, especially on the topic of open adoptions.

deena kirk says

Having been adopted and having found my birth mother, I was intrigued by this book. It covers various seasons in an adoptees life and examines questions or actions of the adopted child. I found it to mirror many of the perspectives I have. I would highly recommend it to parents who have decided to adopt - it will help to understand the adoptee's perspective. By the way, I am extremely grateful for the parents who have raised me. I consider my birth mother to be a woman who made a terrifically difficult decision. I admire her courage. I am grateful to her. Yet, she is a stranger to me.
