
Adoption Reunification

The decision to reunify with a child placed for adoption or with birth parents can have lifelong impact. Approaching reunification with respect and care can foster positive outcomes, facilitate healing, and connection. Awareness of the following concepts can aid in this process:

- **Preparation and support:** Preparation is crucial for managing the emotional complexities of reunification. Some individuals have benefitted from counseling and support services to better understand their feelings and expectations.
- **Expectations:** Assumptions about the other party may be based on personal hopes and fears. Idealized expectations can lead to blind spots. For example, individuals may make assumptions about the other person's desire for reunification that do not match how the person actually feels.
- **Emotional readiness:** Ensure that all parties are emotionally ready for reunification. Some individuals might require additional time or support before they are ready to consider reunification, if at all.
- **Clear communication:** Establish clear, open, and honest communication channels. This includes setting clear expectations and discussing the goals of the reunification process.
- **Boundaries:** It's important to respect the boundaries and privacy of all parties. Some individuals might need more space or time than others, and their comfort levels should be respected.
- **Gradual approach:** Start with less direct forms of contact, such as letters, emails, or phone calls, before moving to in-person meetings. This allows everyone to adjust gradually and build trust over time.
- **Milestones:** Acknowledge and celebrate milestones to build positive momentum and reinforces commitment to the reunification process.

REUNIFICATION RESOURCES

There are many paths to reunification. Positive outcomes are more likely when reunification occurs through mutual consent. This enables both parties to be informed and to anticipate the reunification.

The following resources may help facilitate reunification:

- **Voluntary adoption registry:** In the United States, most states offer a mutual consent registry for members of the adoption triad—the adoptee, the birth parents, and the adoptive parents. Individuals may find state-specific information online or may contact the office of vital statistics in the state where the child was born.
- **Adoption intermediary:** Some U.S. states offer an intermediary to assist mutual parties with the reunification process. For more details, contact the vital records department in the state where the child was born.
- **International Soundex Reunion Registry:** This is a mutual consent registry intended for those who are separated from biological family members for any reason, including adoption. For more information, visit isrr.org.
- **Adoption agency:** Many adoption agencies offer correspondence services for adoptions they have facilitated. Please consult with the relevant agency regarding their guidelines.

- **DNA ancestry services:** Individuals may choose to take a DNA test through a company that matches users with potential biological relatives. DNA-matched relatives may not have previous knowledge of the adoption. There is a need to be cautious and sensitive to this possibility.

REUNIFICATION IS A JOURNEY

Reunification is life changing. While most people experience positive outcomes, many individuals experience some emotional, psychological, physical, and mental discomfort. It may be beneficial to meet with an adoption professional or counselor to assist with this process.

