

Contact is not a right, it's a privilege.

My mother and father were honest about our family and my brother and I have known for as long as we can remember that we were adopted. I never felt any anger or resentment towards my birth parents because I was always told that I was given up so that I could have a better home.

I never had any interest in looking for my birth parents. My parents were and are the people who brought me up to be the adult I became. All I felt was a vague curiosity about whether or not there were any medical issues I should know about.

Many years after my conception, my birth parents married each other and when the laws changed they decided to make contact with me. My initial reaction was naively to agree that they could ring me immediately and that we could meet a few days later.

The differing expectations of the situation were apparent immediately, as my birth father ran into an acquaintance during our meeting, and introduced me as his daughter. My partner and I were horrified - how could he call himself my father 18 years later when I had had a father all of that time. The following week he called me every day until I eventually said please stop calling so often. He asked how often he was allowed to call. I didn't know, I just knew I didn't want this much involvement.

In the early years of our knowing each other we went through ups and downs, the downs based on my birth parents wanting to treat me as a daughter, and me having virtually no feelings for them at all. They expected to be included in important events in my life and invited me to important events in theirs. They showered me with presents at every special occasion, and my birth mother's parents began to buy me presents too. I was uncomfortable receiving them and resented that I then had to initiate further contact by calling to say thanks. We eventually went through a period of not talking to each other because I no longer wanted the stress. My half brother and sisters continued to have contact as you would with distant friends. We talked and still do on the phone occasionally, send emails, and cards for special occasions.

My birth father eventually rang because wanting to resolve the situation and we again started talking to each other. Now, 13 years after meeting, we are back in the same place. He has recently explained to a mutual acquaintance that he knows my husband because he is his son-in-law. He has begun to telephone regularly and it's as though everything I have said about not wanting close contact hasn't been said. It continues to amaze me that after all this time, one or both of my birth parents think that their need to have a parent/daughter relationship are the priority in the situation. I'm not asking them to change their feelings. I'm asking them to keep them to themselves. When I tried to talk to them about it, I was yelled and sworn at, and told that I push everyone away, offend people, walk all over them and try to control them.

They still don't understand that my response to them is not about dislike or control. It's about wanting to carry on with life without the stress and upheaval. It's about a lack of interest in having a closer relationship with people who I don't think of as friends or family, but as birth parents, nothing more, nothing less. We are biologically linked, not

morally or legally. And I'm not alone.....the adoptees I know personally feel the same, as do many adoptees on websites like these.

I think both the birth parents and the adoptee need to take things slowly and hope that the relationship will one day move forward. Birth parents need to understand that they chose to end any rights to involvement in the adoptees life and it is unrealistic to expect the adult adoptee to have feelings for them. Birth parents need to know that an adoptee who allows them to enter their life has given them something which they are not obliged to give. It is a privilege to be involved and the relationship will not work if there is not a strong enough bond to withstand unrealistic expectations.

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