

I was coerced into adopting my baby by my parents, who worried about the social stigma of having an unmarried pregnant daughter, and I had no means of supporting myself and child.

My baby was born in Perth, WA in September 1968 at St Anne's Hospital. The nuns were informed that my baby was to be adopted and so she was removed immediately from the delivery room, without allowing me to see her or hold her. I was told a few days later that she had already gone to her new family, which I was to discover many years later to be a lie. The nuns chose to name her [REDACTED], which I found very distressing. I had no rights at all, was not asked what I would like to call her, did not know if she was a healthy normal baby, and had no idea what she looked like. I felt totally powerless. I was taken by my mother to sign the adoption papers a few weeks later. I had no choice but to sign, as I believed she was with a family who were able to give her a better life than I could. I had no financial support and was still totally dependent on my parents for everything.

The lawyer told me I was never to try to contact her, I had no rights to do so. I should go away and pretend that I had never had a child, tell no one, never speak of it ever. This was an impossible task, but I managed to keep my silence until my daughter contacted me nearly 20 years ago.

I never forgot her birthday, I imagined what she would look like, what her interests would be, how she had achieved at school, or had she even survived childhood.

My self confidence was completely destroyed. I carried a shameful secret that no one else could know about. I worked hard to make up to my parents for the shame I had brought on them.

I eventually married, but had difficulty conceiving a child. I thought this was my punishment for the previous pregnancy. After 8 years of marriage I gave birth to a son. The past trauma came back, I sunk into deep depression, I felt I was not fit to care for this child, I still said nothing to my husband, he knew nothing of my past. I said to my mother "you know what this is about", her reply was to say nothing.

I got no professional help at this time, apart from some antidepressant tablets, which I took for a year.

I continued to carry my secret until a while after my parent's deaths, my daughter had employed a private investigator to send me a letter, stating she wished to contact me. I was shocked, unsure how to feel about this, but knew I needed to answer the letter. I no longer had any reason to not to, as this was at last my decision to make. I first had to tell my husband and children, which was very difficult, I feared rejection and the shame I carried was still as raw. I was surprised that they were so supportive and upset that I had said nothing in the past.

I eventually arranged to meet my daughter, but nothing prepared me for what was to come. After the initial, comparison of physical features, genetic traits etc, she unloaded her anger, that she had been given away, and to a family that she didn't fit into. She has always felt she didn't belong with her adoptive parents even though they did their best to love and care for her and give her every opportunity in life.

She didn't understand why I hadn't kept her, even though I tried to explain how things were at the time of her birth and how different it was now. The relationship has been difficult. I feel so guilty that I was unable to care for her. I became depressed and suicidal at this time, and sort help from Jigsaw, who did help a little, but I still feel ashamed of what happened to me, that I am unworthy of forgiveness.

It has impacted on every aspect of my life, my relationships and my self esteem, in a way which can never be undone.