The ABC's of Searching

ANYTHING can and usually does happen when you're searching. If you're not prepared to deal with the truth of your life, you're not ready to search. Your birthmother could be deceased or may not want to meet you. Chances are she is alive, living a normal life and is as anxious to meet you, as you are to meet her.

BIRTHMOTHERS never forget. Tucked away somewhere is her memory of you. It reappears on your birthday and on the day she surrendered you.

CRY a lot and laugh a lot during your search. It's healing.

DON'T expect a reunion to solve all your problems. It won't. Searching will make you stronger and may answer questions you may have about yourself, but it will also bring new complications to your life and possibly new relationships you'll have to deal with.

EXPECT to feel very emotional as your search progresses. It's common to feel a lot of grief…anger, sadness, hopelessness…as you proceed on your search.

FEELINGS mean you're doing your work. If you're not feeling anything, chances are you're running from something. Expect to feel tremendous highs when you uncover new information on your search and tremendous lows when you find yourself up against a wall.

GO to meetings. Get search help and talk about your experience. It helps to talk to people who are in the same boat as you or who have gone through their own searches.

HOLD on, you move too fast. Chances are you haven't dealt with the intensity of emotions you may experience on your search. Searching can often feel like a roller coaster ride. Sometimes by slowing down, and by not being in such a hurry to have all the information at once, overwhelming feelings may subside.

INVENTIVENESS pays off. You have to be active in your search. Those who stay on the sidelines don't find. Searching doesn't go by the numbers. The more inventive you and your search helper are, the better are your chances of having a successful reunion.

JOIN a support group. Talking with other people in search and reunion gives you a better chance of a good reunion.

KEEP good records. Don't throw away anything that might later provide an essential clue.

LISTEN to the experiences of birthmothers in the group. Chances are you've never met a birthmother…and known it. This is your opportunity to gain some valuable insights into your own birthmother. Chances are she didn't give you up because she didn't love you. She gave you up because she was told she was doing the right thing.

MEETINGS. MEETINGS. MEETINGS. They provide a safe place to explore your adoption experience and to gain support from others who are going through their own search processes.

NICE people tend to have smoother reunions. It's understandable to experience rage at what has happened to you and at your birthmother. Deal with the feelings of rage as much as you can before you approach your birthmother. Chances are you'll get off on a better foot that way.

ONLY the beginning…searching is not the end, it's only the beginning.

PEOPLE who don't understand are best left out of the search process. Expect to hear some people tell you that you have no right to search for your birth family, that you are being disloyal and ungrateful to your adoptive family and that you will destroy your birtmother's life by revealing her secret. Birthmothers don't die from being "exposed". Experience shows that many birthmothers, once they overcome the fear, want very much to meet their sons and daughters. Your adoptive parents won't die because you search either. It may be painful for them, but it is your right to search and to know the truth of your life.

QUITTING won't get you anywhere. Expect to have powerful feelings of wanting to quit your search at times, especially if it becomes lengthy or difficult. You don't have to quit, but sometimes if the emotions become too intense, you might want to slow the pace of your search and come to more meetings as a way of understanding what you're feeling.

REJECTION is every adoptee's middle name. Expect to feel a lot of fears of rejection as you search. But you will find yourself growing stronger at every step as you confront these fears. Expect to feel afraid that your birthmother or adoptive family might reject you for searching. Chances are this won't happen.

SAD as it is to accept, adoption is not all it's cracked up to be. Your experience hasn't been perfect, and a lot of things have happened to cause you pain. To believe that your adoption experience has been perfect is to be in denial. By being in denial you are running away from painful feelings about yourself and about your life. Running only makes it worse.

THERAPISTS are often useful when you're searching. They can help you deal with the confusing feelings you may experience. Seeing a therapist doesn't mean you're sick. It just means you're trying to take care of your emotional life and to learn more about yourself.

UNDERSTANDING will be a valuable asset when you meet your birthmother. As you go through your search, you are preparing yourself for your reunion. Your birthmother is not. She is probably still in "hiding" and has not a conscious idea that you are searching for her. Occasionally, birthmothers and adoptees do look for each other.

VOICE your feelings when you go to support meetings. As hard as it is to share painful feelings, sharing them will help you deal with your emotions.

WOUNDS from adoption take time to heal. Be kind to yourself.

XPECT to feel that your birthmother is deceased. It goes through everyone's mind. She's probably not deceased, but if she is you may have the opportunity to meet siblings, aunts and uncles and even your birthfather.

YOU won't die from your feelings. You may feel like you're going to die during your search experience but unless you walk in front of a runaway truck….

ZZZZZZ ZZZZZZ ZZZZZZ Sleep a lot while you're searching. It's a tiring experience, both physically and emotionally.