



Making contact with found birth family

Information for adopted persons who have searched and located their birth parent/family and are considering the next step of making contact.

Once you have gone through the process of searching for birth family, you may then decide that you want to make contact. This information sheet will give you some things to think about before making contact, and some guidelines as to how to proceed.

Before deciding to make contact with your birth parent/relatives, please carefully consider these questions:

- What are your reasons for wanting contact? (medical / family information only, or possible relationship)
- Who will support you in this process?
- What are your fears and fantasies?
- What do you think may be the other person's experience of the adoption process?
- What are the possible implications for your family?
- Who would you tell about your decision to make contact?
- What are your expectations of having contact? Have you considered that these may change after contact has been made?
- Have you considered the possibility that the person you are searching for may not want contact? How will you deal with this?
- Are you able to be sensitive to the other person's feelings, and to try to understand and respect their wishes?
- Are you willing to give the other person as much time as they need to decide about contact with you?
- How do you feel about proceeding with a rate that they are comfortable with?
- How do you feel about ongoing contact?

Sometimes this part of the searching journey can be quite daunting and challenging. When considering the above questions, you may want to talk about these things with family or trusted friends. Or you can make an appointment to speak with someone at Post Adoption Support Services (PASS).

Taking the next step

Some useful advice when thinking about making contact.

It is important to consider that for some birth mothers, they might have spent years trying to manage the emotional impact of relinquishing a child, and the associated feelings of grief and loss that this can bring.

Do not just turn up at someone's door. For many people involved in adoption this is one of their greatest concerns. It is possible that an approach made like this could destroy any future chances for a relationship to develop.

As the person who is doing the searching, you may have been thinking about making contact for quite some time, where as the person you are searching for has not had this time to prepare themselves. After the initial contact, further correspondence should go at their pace.

We suggest that initial contact is made via a letter, and often it is better if this letter is sent through an agency such as ours. The staff at PASS are able to help you with this, and can send correspondence on your behalf.

We will send a letter which is very basic and non threatening and does not mention adoption. This letter will ask the person concerned to contact us. When they do, we will ask them some questions to confirm their identity, and to ensure we have the right person. We will then let them know who is searching for them and why.

Making contact with them in this way allows time for the 'found' person to digest this information and to receive some support.

Depending on the outcome of this, you may then want to exchange letters for a while, and then think about meeting. (see 'Preparing for Reunion' information sheet).

PASS run regular support groups for people who have been adopted, as well as various other seminars and workshops. For further information on these and any other enquiries about PASS services, please contact Nikki Hartmann or Sandi Petersen on PH: (08) 8245 8100, or email on passinfo@rasa.org.au

PASS is a program of Relationships Australia (SA) and is located at:
49a Orsmond St, Hindmarsh 5007

Relationships Australia (SA) has a library and bookshop which has a wide variety of adoption related books and resources, as well as other many other topics. The library and bookshop can be contacted on PH: (08) 8245 8100

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