

BIRTH BOND: A Book Review

Birth Bond is a compilation by Gediman and Brown of interviews with 36 birthmothers compiled into an in-depth text containing almost any possibility one could expect from a relationship which results from finding or being found by a once-surrendered son or daughter, teen to adult, with the accompanying myriad of emotions. Few areas of ongoing reunited life are left unexamined in this thorough and comprehensive book. Even genetic sexual attraction, a delicate and difficult subject to deal with is handled very well.

While they do not lessen the overall usefulness of the book as a guide to post-reunion, there are areas I felt uncomfortable with, such as:

The birthmothers are all interviewed anonymously and given pseudonyms which helps — in that it presumably allows them to say things they might not otherwise — but also hinders in that it adds a sense of depersonalization, reinforces the myth that the birthmothers are once again requesting anonymity, and allows their tremendous contribution to go unacknowledged and unthanked. The book also swayed back and forth from being strictly the birthmothers' perspective to attempting to represent the adoptees' feelings as well.

I felt an over-emphasis was placed on the idea that a birthmother's feelings toward the birthfather are paramount in her feelings toward her child. I would have preferred more emphasis being placed on the fact that a great many of the stresses expressed by the reunited birthmothers were true of most mothers and their adult children, and just true of many of life's relationships in general.

I was uncomfortable with a feeling of voyeurism the introduction presented and would have preferred more direct input from birthmother co-author Brown, from whom I

felt I would have read more of the intensity I know exists in her loving relationship with her beautiful daughter.

But the major lacking for me was in the book's basis thesis, the authors' definition of post-reunion as being the point when both parties "agree that they will have some sort of future together." It is also defined (on page 61) as a "functioning relationship." This definition, and those chosen to be interviewed, thus limited the book's scope in a way which is not correctly defined by its subtitle. This is not a book about reunited birthparents and their children, it is a book which explores one possible outcome of reunion: ongoing reciprocal relationships. It does not recognize a rejection as a possible outcome of reunion which can, with patience and non-demanding love, be turned into a relationship even years after the original offer is refused. It also negates the many birthparents, and adoptees, who have been reunited and who have a relationship of many, many years duration, albeit an unrequited and one-sided relationship. It ignores those of us for whom the reunion is not the "ultimate resolution (page 44)." Finally, the conclusions are far from innovative and it was rather disappointing to hear intermediaries suggested.

These exceptions notwithstanding, Birth Bond is highly recommended as an addition to every support group's library and should be required reading by all adoptees, birthparents and adoption professionals, especially those dealing with or anticipating ongoing reunions. It is the first full length look at reunions of long term duration (six months to ten years) with all of the highs and all of the lows. It is insightful, particularly for those birthmothers fortunate enough to have a relationship of any kind with their found offspring, and it is a helpful tool for group leaders dealing with the varying degrees and types of reunited relationships — from live-ins to occasional visits.

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Birth Bond is available at \$20 through CUB's headquarters, 2000 Walker Street, Des Moines, IA 50317.