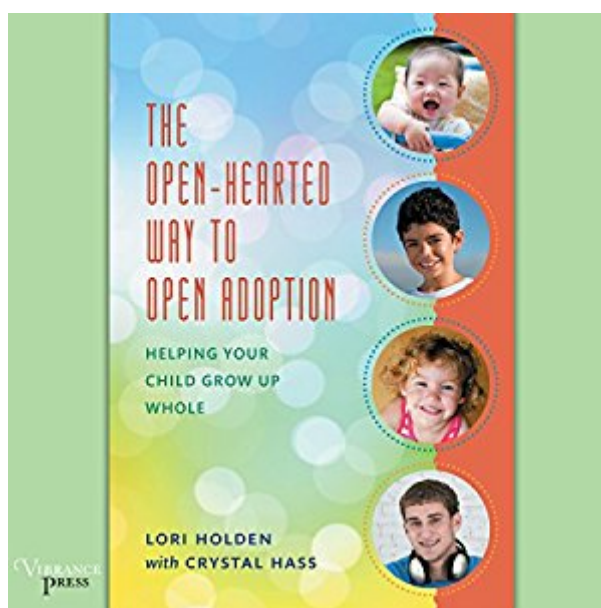


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# The Open-Hearted Way To Open Adoption: Helping Your Child Grow Up Whole



## Synopsis

Prior to 1990, fewer than five percent of domestic infant adoptions were open. In 2012, 90 percent or more of adoption agencies are recommending open adoption. Yet these agencies do not often or adequately prepare either adopting parents or birth parents for the road ahead of them! The adult parties in open adoptions are left floundering. There are many resources on why to do open adoption, but what about how? Open adoption isn't just something parents do when they exchange photos, send emails, share a visit. It's a lifestyle that may feel intrusive at times, be difficult or inconvenient at other times. Tensions can arise even in the best of circumstances. But knowing how to handle these situations and how to continue to make arrangements work for the child involved is paramount. This book offers listeners the tools and the insight to do just that. It covers common open-adoption situations and how real families have navigated typical issues successfully. Like all useful parenting books, it provides parents with the tools to come to answers on their own, and answers questions that might not yet have come up. Through their own stories and those of other families of open adoption, Lori and Crystal review the secrets to success, the pitfalls and challenges, the joys and triumphs. By putting the adopted child at the center, families can come to enjoy the benefits of open adoption and mitigate the challenges that may arise. More than a how-to, this book shares a mindset, a heartset that can be learned and internalized, so parents can choose to act out of love and honesty throughout their child's growing up years, helping that child to grow up whole.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

My trouble with having star-studded so many previous Reviews is that when I REALLY want to give five stars to a work, there's no room for me to move up: no sixth star and no option to add exclamation points, unless it's to the Review title, which I did. I don't know how any author could offer more on this topic without reaching out too far and losing focus. There's something in Lori's book for every point of light in the open adoption constellation. A grandmother on the birthfamily side? She talks about your role. A resistant birthfather who comes around (or doesn't)? She swings the telescope your way. All possible contributions to the center of this universe -- the child -- are charted. Yet, she knows how dynamic all networks can be and she offers plenty of practical and even spiritual tips to make your own way. While Lori is super-positive and optimistic, she doesn't gloss over the bumpy currents all navigators of open adoption are bound to experience. Like all big families, interactions with all members are uneven across the lifespan; but clearly, Lori knows that. She even gives letter-writing ideas to open up an adoption that has been closed by either the birthfamily or the adoptive family. Having spoken in glowing terms about this book, please know I don't agree with everything Lori seems to embrace (to me, prospective adoptive parents do not belong in any room of the hospital). But I have the feeling I could have a cup of tea with Lori and she would hear my concerns with the same open mind she has greeted and discussed other conflicts of opinion in her book. My advice for Lori's next edition of this book is to include more about the role birthmothers played in the history of open adoption, to mention the first and longest lasting support and advocacy organization for birthparents ([...]), and to offer an option for a reader to send certain chapters to people who need to consider what she has to say. Yes, I know a couple people I'd like to send a chapter to. And my bet is, so will you!

Open adoption has moved beyond the experimental stage and become the norm for most contemporary domestic adoptions. It has also created awareness that even with international adoptions, every effort should be made to gather as much birth family information, to preserve and respect these ties and to foster ongoing communication. We now recognize that connection to and respect for an adopted child's biological roots is integral to successfully unify their dual heritage. Still, the concept remains shrouded in apprehension, confusion and curiosity. How is it possible for a child to have two sets of parents involved in their lives? Questions abound in the minds of prospective adopters as well as expectant parents contemplating adoption for their unborn child. (Do we need a contract? Is it enforceable? Desirable? Isn't open adoption confusing for the child?) These and many more issues are addressed in *The Open-hearted Way to Open Adoption* by Lori Holden and Crystal Hass. They are the adoptive mother and birthmother who have

an open adoption relationship. There are many reasons to recommend this excellent book. It overflows with practical suggestions for how to navigate the constantly changing seas that permeate open adoption. Not just for adoptive parents, it offers ideas for all members of the triad because the three are inextricably connected. Each will be a permanent part of the child. Only the degree and level of involvement will vary. The influences of DNA are forever, just as the influence of the adoptive family's nurturing will permanently shape the child. (Lori refers to these factors as biology and biography.) Lori and Crystal Hass (the birthmother of one of Lori's children,) share strategies, ideas and personal anecdotes that are valuable, sensible and practical. They offer options not a specific blueprint for every adoptive family to follow. This makes sense since each adoption is unique. Their honesty and shared experience provide a window into living an open adoption journey. They reveal that open adoption is not without challenges and suggest talking about it and bringing your emotions up to a conscious level allows a healing release to occur and prevents misunderstandings from cropping up. But the greatest value of *The Open-hearted Way to Open Adoption* is the philosophical assumption that underpins the book: open adoption is fundamentally an attitude that must infuse the relationship and all of the parenting decisions. The child's best interest is the foundational premise. This may sound like an obvious fact, but all too often especially in the past "adoption considers the comfort level, fears and of the adults over the needs of the child. Yes, each of these is an important factor, but the foremost criteria must to be child-focused. Many fear that children will be confused or distressed by having an ongoing relationship with a birth parent/s. Lori responds, "Openness is not the cause of any eruptions but instead can actually be part of the solution to them. If you've established an open relationship with your child, he is more likely to allow you into his innermost thoughts and fears. He then doesn't have to face them without you. But if you are closed, he is more alone." [emphasis added] *The Open-hearted Way to Open Adoption* is a positive and inspiring book that will touch your heart as well as provide you with persuasive, practical and useful ideas. I am an adoption coach and a mom of now-adult children who came to us in the 1980s through closed adoptions. My children have reconnected with their birth mothers and I have seen first-hand the beneficial impact this reunion has brought all of us but most especially my children and their birth mothers. Lori points out that she takes her children to various professional who can provide services that she cannot: physician, dentist, therapist, etc. She writes, "I can't fill a certain emotional need that Tessa has, but I can take her to the well." (Tessa's birth mother, Crystal) That is love and that is parenting with a child's best interest at heart. I would assert that no adoptive parent want to leave their children unsupported as

they process difficult parts of the adoption experience. Open adoption is not easy nor is it perfect, but it is far better than the old secrecy-based closed adoptions. The greatest ingredient to success is a heart-connected attitude. This book offers a welcome, worthwhile resource for parents who are embarking on the adventure of open adoption parenting. As Lori writes, "Open adoption is a journey rather than a destination." --Gayle H. Swift, "ABC, Adoption & Me: A Multicultural Picture Book"

There are so few books on open adoption. Most domestic adoptions have an open component now. It is critical for prospective parents to read this and really think through the issues. I had a wonderful agency that provided seminars but this is even better in some ways. I wish I had read it sooner but it's very helpful now as my two year old is ready to be told more and learn more. This helps provide guidance for having healthy open relationships. An easy read and good mix of info and case stories.

Since the birth of our son through open adoption, I have been looking for a book with information and tips on how to raise him in this special family situation. We have a wonderful relationship with our birth parents and even birth grandparents, but weren't sure how to help guide our son as he grows and learns about his family dynamic. I only wish I had found this book sooner as it would have been helpful throughout the entire adoption process. Since completing the book only a few days ago, I have already recommended to other friends in the adoption process as well as people in our extended open adoption family.

I read this book just to see what open adoption is all about. I am an adoptee from a closed adoption, and it was wonderful to see what was possible when parents adopt a child and are brave enough to actually have a relationship with the birth mother. This is a must read for everyone, as the more people who understand what people are dealing with when it comes to adoption, the better. The prose itself is a pleasure to read; the author comes off the page as someone you wish were your friend.

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