

About the Book

If you're a teen with adoption in your story, there are probably a lot of things your friends and family just don't understand—no matter how much they love you. Do you ever wish you had someone to talk to about the good, the bad, and the completely confusing parts of being adopted—someone who would totally get it?

You aren't alone. In this book, over thirty adopted teens and young adults talk about their feelings, thoughts, experiences, and unanswered questions. *We've Been There* not only shares what they learned but also what they wish someone had told them.

"We've Been There" Discussion Guide for Teens and Young Adults

Did you enjoy this book? Why? Why not?

Did the storytellers pull you in or did you feel you had to really work hard to connect?

Which storyteller would you like to meet most and why?

Several storytellers in the book lost track of their self-worth for a time. They had to battle their way back to the truth. What can you take away from these stories to secure your self-worth?

Do you feel heard and understood when you express your feelings, or misheard and misunderstood? If you feel misunderstood, does this cause you to not express your feelings? Explain.

Several storytellers search for biological family members with and without success. What fears or fantasies do you hold about meeting your birth mother?

What is the biggest "Aha" moment these stories have brought to you?

Explore and share what it means to be a transracial adoptee.

In this book, the storytellers live the ups and downs of being regular teens plus processing what happened to them prior to their adoption. They are smart, creative, athletic, caring, loving, and loving life like typical teens do. Figuring out who you are and what's next is a part of life. But for some, the extra layer of being adopted and experiencing loss surfaces and needs a voice, needs processing, and needs peace. Is it important to give voice to feelings? Explain.

Isolating seems to be a common theme in many stories: keeping feelings and thoughts to oneself in an effort to protect one's heart. The storytellers warn readers away from isolating. It can lead to unwanted depression and false lies about who you really are. Do you isolate? Why? Why not?

Story Specific Questions

We've Been There, True Stories, Surprising Insights, and Aha Moments for Adopted Teens

In "Brave," Matt faced social anxiety on a daily basis in the halls at school. He snagged a volunteer position on the audio-visual team and a new world of friends opened up for him. What can you learn from Matt's story?

In "A True Friend," Paul at 15, experienced a sense of feeling abandoned and so much more. It messed with him and he became depressed. Music, running, and a solid friend helped him release his hurt, fears and insecurity, and with God's help, over time, Paul reset his heart. How do you reset your heart?

In "Who Am I?" Derek wasn't afraid to confront God with his heated anger and confusion. He struggled with feeling he didn't belong. When he'd finally had it, he duked it out with God. Have you considered confronting God with your questions? What might that look like?

In "Making Progress" Sophia said "yes" to healthy things over and over even when she didn't feel like it. But as she experienced, every yes adds up to healthy growth. Do you say "yes" to healthy options? Why? Why not?

Annie in "Bake It til You Make It" needed an outlet. Maybe you do too. Are you stuck inside your emotional life, banging around in there, feeling drained? Brainstorm a list of interests you'd like to try that are outside of your head. Maybe you have the gift of helping others, teaching, encouraging, building, inventing? Getting outside of your head can and does lead to life in real time. Share your list with someone who cares about you.

In "Resolve to Forgive" Amelia carried the burden of trauma plus several diagnoses as a result of her birth mother using drugs and alcohol. However, after being placed in a foster family that taught "forgiveness in, forgiveness out," over time, receiving forgiveness taught her she could forgive others too. When she forgave, she placed the perpetrators in God's hands, and she no longer had to bear the burden. Who has modeled forgiveness in your life? Could forgiveness be something worth exploring? Why? Why not?

In "Insecure to Self-Assured, Cosette felt defective, hurt, and lonely as a teen, at times. When she did, she leaned into God's truth and believed it, which made all the difference. Who or what are you leaning into? Gut check: Are you trying to win the emotional tug-of-war by yourself?

Ben, in "Perfect Match," encourages readers, "Nobody else gets to be you but you!" What does this mean to you?

Several storytellers talk about their birth family reunion. Curiosity and feelings for and about your birth mother are okay. Losing an important connection like this lingers close to the heart for many. Do you feel that it is okay to talk to your parents about your birth history and what happened to you? If not, why?

Rayne, "On Being Heard" found comfort knowing and connecting with others who share her experience as a Chinese adoptee. "I'm not alone," she said. Rayne found CCI (Chinese Children International) online

and a bunch of kindred spirits who shared their feelings and thoughts without judgment. Does this interest you? Why?

In Kira's and Zuri's stories, "Permission to Grieve" and "The Best of Him" they confronted and grieved the loss of their birth fathers, men they never met. It was a heartbreaking process that led to acceptance and healing. What can you take away from their experiences?

God's truth says you belong, you are worthy, you are a child of God, and he has sealed you as his own, accepted you as is, and will never forsake you. Have you ever considered the bigger picture of belonging?

Dylan in "Onward" had to relearn how to use his emotions well. Anger was his instant go-to. He was stuck and needed help to learn how to use his full range of emotions. Dylan is a regular guy and proof that anyone who tries can learn how to use their full range of emotions well, with intentional practice. Are you stuck in one emotion and missing out on using your emotions well?

In "Putting it into Words", at 19 Ana realized that she had attachment issues, which turned out to be the reason she couldn't connect well with her adoptive mom most of her life. Revisit Ana's story. Can you relate? Why? Why not?

Have you ever thought through how you would have felt and acted in your birth mother's shoes? Why? Why not?

Ben "Perfect Match" loved both families. What do you think about loving both families?

Choose a word such as these examples, "worthy," "loved," or "strong," and for a year let that word be your anthem to help elevate your self-worth. What results can you expect when you assist your heart to believe the truth rather than lies?

In "The Other Side of Hurt" Haley felt like she had made so many bad choices that she was unlovable. She felt alone and messed up. According to her, she had a pattern of running away and self-sabotaging. She admitted she has huge trust issues. But the wall she built around her heart is slowly coming down and she is learning to trust again. How do you relate to Haley's story? Why? Why not?

Mental health issues need attention. In "Learning How to Live Again," Elise desperately needed help. She couldn't heal the pain she felt inside with unhealthy distractions. When she finally got help, she began to see life differently. Talk about Elise's experience.

In "The Music Returns," Marisa knew that what happened to her as a child of a mentally unhealthy mother messed with her own mental health. With help, she learned it wasn't about her, but what happened to her. She learned to separate the two. While healing doesn't happen in a Jimmy John's minute, healing does happen over time and with help. How do you feel about you?

Dreams take hard work. In "The Draft," Zach set his mind on his dream of being a baseball pitcher in college. He briefs us on his routine to achieve his dream. School, working part-time, and baseball practice require time and commitment. What's your dream? What's holding you back?

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