

When I First Started Thinking About It by Liza Steinberg Triggs

For the first twenty years of my life, I always thought the same thing about the impact of adoption in my life - that there was none.

Now I know that there is and there always has been. It's very easy when you're adopted to focus not on the differences but on the similarities. This approach is a way of ignoring being adopted because adoption is indeed different. But I've learned that adoption is not something that will allow itself to be ignored.

At about the age of twenty, I started paying attention to the word "adoption." Once I started paying attention to it, I realized what a common word it is. I had to wonder why I had very rarely thought it or vocalized it. This refusal was my way of not thinking about who I was or why I was who I am. Once, I heard someone say "He does that because he is adopted," and I realized I sometimes said similar things and so did my friends who were adopted. Then I started to make connections.

When I first started thinking about adoption, I was consumed by it. I thought that everything I experienced was because I was adopted. If I got a parking ticket, that was because I was adopted. If I had a fight with a friend, that was because I was adopted. What I came to realize is that everything happens for a reason. Adoption is part of the reason and must be considered but cannot be blamed.

I am taking a class in Black male/female relationships. The other day the teacher was describing a woman who was 45 years old and adopted and who had difficulty maintaining relationships because of her lack of self-worth, which she now believes comes from abandonment issues. She was just then reaching a point where she acknowledged that adoption played a role in her life and her relationships. Sitting and listening to this story about a perfect stranger, I realized that he could have been talking about me. I am, of course, glad to be learning these things at twenty and not 45.

I have found a pattern in the course of most adopted person's lives. Recognizing these patterns has given me a certain peace of mind. The key for me is seeing that choices I make and things I do come out of everything I've experienced, starting with the first thing that ever happened to me: I was separated from my birth mother. The second thing was that I became a part of my adoptive family.

Liza Steinberg Triggs is an African American woman who was adopted at birth by White parents. She is an Adoption Consultant for Pact, An Adoption Alliance.