

OPEN ADOPTION, *Open Heart*



AN ADOPTIVE FATHER'S INSPIRING JOURNEY

RUSSELL ELKINS

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“Open adoption? What’s that?” There were a lot of things Russell and his wife, Jammie, misunderstood about modern adoption when they first stepped into an agency. Years of longing for parenthood and failed infertility treatments had left them heartbroken and discouraged. The idea of adopting brought them a lot of needed encouragement, but they soon realized that they were just one couple waiting on a list of 921 other couples with the same agency.

The day finally came when they received that long-awaited letter from a young expecting mother-to-be, but there was a big problem. Her teenage boyfriend didn’t want to parent, but he also refused to sign any adoption papers. Would she be forced to drop out of school at age fifteen to raise this child, or could she find a way to solve this dilemma? Would this hurdle even be the toughest problem to solve during the journey?

Bringing the child home for the first time is actually just the beginning of their story. Open adoption means so much more than that. It means that their relationship together would go on and on. It means that Russell and Jammie’s family tree now includes the birth parents and their extended family. This true and inspiring story is such a roller coaster ride of emotions that you would think it was fiction.

Open Adoption, Open Heart: An Adoptive Father's Inspiring Journey Details

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Author : Russell Elkins

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Caylee says

This is a great book for anyone wanting to know the truths about open adoption.

Sheila says

This book took me down memory lane. I went through much of the same process as the author when we adopted our first child. Our adoption was open to a certain extent, but not quite as open as the author's experience. We also had fewer problems with the birth parents. But we did experience many of the same emotions that you go through as you wait for that long-awaited child. I agree with the author when he told of how people think adopting is the "easy" way to get children. Having had the opportunity to be blessed with children through adoption and giving birth, I have to say that they were both hard in their own ways.

Russell tells a wonderful story of how they persevered to finally be blessed with a child. As a reader you get very involved in their story and anxiously await to see how things will turn out. Even though this is a non-fiction story about real people, it reads like a novel where you are glued to the pages. Any reader will love reading about Russell and his wife's journey to become parents. Those considering adoption or those who have adopted will also truly enjoy and benefit from reading Open Adoption, Open Heart.

<http://whynotbecauseisaids.blogspot....>

Lynelle Clark says

An Honest and Informative Biography of a couple's open adoptive process giving you a clear picture of what to expect when deciding to go this road. Their willingness to share in great detail such an important time in their lives was wonderful to read and I could experience with them their turmoils, questions, excitement when they finally got the baby in their arms.

The rest of my review will be available on my blog on the 12/15

Megan Cina-Bernard says

It was a nice read. Very insightful and I learned so much about open adoption.

As nice as this read was, it felt like there was something missing... I felt a little bit of an emotional disconnect with the author. It felt too much like he was reporting or giving a sort of play-by-play. I wanted more of an insight into the minds of the people he was writing about.

Still a good read and definitely not a waste of time.

Lynelle Clark says

An Honest and Informative Biography of a couple's open adoptive process giving you a clear picture of what to expect when deciding to go this road. Their willingness to share in great detail such an important time in their lives was wonderful to read and I could experience with them their turmoils, questions, excitement when they finally got the baby in their arms.

The rest of my review will be available on my blog on the 12/15

claire smith says

Great true life

I love true life books, and adoption is a great thing to read about. recommend to anyone to read this great story

Shari Guess says

I loved this candid book by author Russ Elkins! He is not afraid to show his heart. He is very forthcoming as he shares that all is not always rosy along the adoptive road. He shares his hopes, dreams and fears in such a way that no one who is currently walking this road would feel alone. He shares the sadness, not just the joy along the way. Of course there is a happy ending and a knowing that things will continue on. They may not be perfect, but they will be just as they should. Open adoption relationships are 'a work in progress' and Russ isn't afraid to let you know it!

Jinky says

Old school adoption meant that there were no interactions between the birthmother and the adoptive parents. All information and relationships were confidential and closed. Nowadays, many have turned to the open adoption process, where the biological and adoptive families can share in varying forms of contact (eg. mail, photo exchange, face-to-face visits). Obviously, this book accounts a journey in open adoption.

Seeing myself in an old school of thought, I would be uncomfortable and perhaps even skeptical that such openness can truly work. I can imagine all sorts of unsettling emotions that this free passage might bring. Well, I don't have to imagine them. Mr. Elkins laid it all out. All the frustrations, anxiety, fears, heartaches, and joys of this kind of adoptive process was related. He was able to communicate candidly that it was not an easy road but certainly had its rewards as well. More importantly, Mr. Elkins didn't claim that all open adoptions have the same outcome. He merely told his true story and thereby provide information and also might invoke an inspiration of hope to someone contemplating open adoption.

I caught something else important from the author's telling of the story. I like that he involved the biological family's responses (and even friends and acquaintance for that matter) thus-so giving me a sense of a more well rounded account. This then got me as a reader invested in the story to seeing it through. I wouldn't say

the writing was of high quality literary form, but it certainly was sincere and captivating.

A definite recommendation to those seeking information or perception of open adoption. Noting that it is best explained from someone who has gone through it.

Jinky is Reading

Ashley says

I actually finished reading this book a few days ago but found myself having such an emotional reaction to it that I wanted to wait a few days before I shared any review. Russell Elkins shares such a deeply personal and inspiring story in Open Adoption, Open Heart that it is difficult not to feel emotionally overwhelmed by his story. There were certainly more than a few instances in which I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes as I read through their journey from infertility to parenthood.

The story begins so hopeful and so promising. Russell and Jammie were young and he was finishing college. They were newlyweds who were unsure about when they wanted to start a family. After about six months of marriage they stopped using contraceptives and decided to simply allow a pregnancy to occur if it was meant to occur. They were not actively trying, but they were not actively preventing either. They were simply allowing the natural course of conception to take place, only it didn't happen. After six months of a carefree attitude they started trying a little more actively yet there was still no baby on the way. A few years later and they were starting to lose hope. Ultimately they found themselves on the path to an open adoption.

Reading their story really caused me to stop and spend a little time on some self reflection. My husband and I are currently in that stage of not actively trying and yet not actively preventing either. I found myself wondering, "If we don't conceive within a few years, could we do what Russell and Jammie have done?" If I'm being honest, I don't know if I could. I read about their struggle with hope and loss. I read about their hope that every month would be the month that they conceived and every month they faced heartbreak when Jammie's crimson reminder arrived. I read about their prayers and their dreams and their hope and the heartache they suffered through when their dreams were shattered over and over again.

When they decided to consider and pursue adoption to start their family I felt myself feeling happy and excited for them but their journey was so difficult. It was time-consuming and stressful and worrisome. Russell appeared to have been riddled with anxiety while they waited to hear if a birth mother had chosen them and if they would be able to adopt a baby and start their family. It was such a difficult journey to work out the legal details with Brianna (Ira's birth mother) and as the months turned to weeks and ultimately to days their hope increased but so did their worry and their fear and their anxiety. Their struggle with finding the perfect balance between respecting their open adoption agreement with Brianna and her role as Ira's birth mother as well as finding their own new identities as Ira's parents, it was an emotional journey.

I have a whole new respect for birth parents and adoptive parents who choose to share this journey to provide for a child. It was a beautiful and inspiring story. It was heartbreakingly to follow their loss and see their struggle but it was so heartwarming to read about their hope and their love and their compassion. It was a quick read at just over 100 pages and it is definitely worth the time.

Teressa Morris says

Open Adoption, Open Heart is an inspirational story of hope, faith and love. The story is told, much like a series of blog posts, in a straightforward, conversational tone.

I almost bit off one of my thumbnails reading through the chapters where Russell and Jammie were waiting to find a birth mother that would work with them and the chapters towards the end when they are unsure if they will be able to keep their adopted son.

Russell and Jammie discovered when they opened their hearts and home to their new son that they were opening up to his birth family as well and the story of how they all come together to work for the baby's best interests is amazing and overwhelming.

This book is not just for those who are interested in adoption. Open Adoption, Open Heart is for anyone who enjoys an uplifting read.

Alyson LaBarge says

Adoption is *not* for the faint of heart. I have found that often, people get scared off from it because of half-truths or outright lies that have been propagated over time. It is rare that you get a first-hand look at everything a family goes through to add children to their arms and hearts. Open Adoption, Open Heart: An Adoptive Father's Inspiring Journey does just exactly that. Russell Elkins brings you along on the journey he and his wife Jammie went through in trying to go from a loving couple of two to an energetic and happy family of four...plus all of the thoughts and emotions that go right along with that.

If you have yet to read the book, you may not know what an open adoption is. An open adoption is where both sides of the adoption continue to interact with one another even after the child has been permanently placed in their Forever Family home. While this is currently a common practice in the United States, this is not how it has always been done nor is it always the case. For example, in our 2nd adoption, we adopted Internationally from China thus making it impossible to know who the birth parents of our daughter are. In our first adoption (domestic), we had a semi-open adoption, where we had contact from the birth family monthly for the first year of our daughter's life and on her birthday there after. Unfortunately, we have since lost contact. As you can see, there are about as many ways for an adoption to be arranged as there are children in need of being adopted.

By choosing to write about their experience, Russ could have skipped a lot of the painfully emotional parts of things they went through but he chose to tackle them head on and I totally applaud him for doing so. In sharing the roller-coaster of infertility and all that comes with that territory, the author has helped *many* people better understand what infertile couples often go through in their quest for a family. Reading along brought *so many* of the highs and lows we went through right back up to the surface. Russ shows that sorting through your heart and mind is a process and that it requires time and knowledge to be able to arrive at the point where you are eager to adopt.

In Open Adoption, Open Heart: An Adoptive Father's Inspiring Journey, I thought you could really see that an open heart is exactly what is required to make this type of relationship work. In the book he points out just

how high the emotions run on both sides, especially as it gets closer and closer for the date for the child to join their new family. Russ really does an excellent job pointing out that it is indeed through *intense love* of their child that a birth mom is able to place that baby or child into the hands of another and walk away. I was so glad. I think that is often overlooked and *oh how grateful* we adoptive families are for that bond of love. Of course, open adoptions don't stop there. The author shares what it takes when you try and keep all parties involved and able to show the love and support the child essentially needs.

Intensely personal and profoundly candid, Open Adoption, Open Heart: An Adoptive Father's Inspiring Journey is incredibly well done. If you or anyone you know are considering domestic adoption, I encourage you to read this book. You will gain insight that you could miss otherwise. The Elkins family have done us all a great service, both to the adoption community and to the population at large in sharing their moving experience. 5 stars without a doubt!

*I received a complimentary copy of this book for a book tour. This does not affect my review in any way.

Elizabeth A Hussey says

Great page turner

It kept you wanting more it was a good book. I hardly ever finish a book in one sitting this one I did

Vicky Lowe says

a very good short story

Anita says

Fantastic Book

Well done to you all, it's so good to hear that you have a beautiful son, who you will love for the rest of your lives and beyond. Thank you for bringing open adoption to our notice, I've never heard of it before but I think what a wonderful way to help more people in difficult situations. Good luck to you all, xx

Gil Michelini says

"Open Adoption, Open Heart: An Adoptive Father's Inspiring Journey" is a adoptive dad's perspective of an open (adoptive and birth parents knew each other) domestic adoption experience. Author Russell Elkins is—to make a pun—an open book about his feelings during this process. He does an excellent job painting word pictures to draw in the reader allowing us to live the various scenes with him and his wife. One point Elkins shows rather than tells of problems when putting photographs on social media. He also shows how an open adoption affects not only the adoptive and birth parents but all of their friends.

As a fellow adoptive dad, I recommend this book to any man considering, or being asked to consider adoption. There are MANY adoption books written by women for women. A man experiences adoption completely different than women. I am grateful that Elkins has given us this book to help men know that their various feelings about the adoption—good and bad—are okay and you are not the only one who is feeling this way.

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Gil Michelini, author of "Daddy, Come & Get Me: a dad's adventure through a Guatemalan adoption"
