

accommodates those seeking to become informed about state-of-the-art prevention, risk assessment and intervention strategies.

In concluding, *Preventing Violence in Australia* is a reminder of the wide array of violence that affects present-day

society. At a time when domestic/family violence is finally attracting the political and social attention that it deserves, the release of this book will act as a warning that there are multiple other types of violence that also require a lot more attention.

Healing for Adults who Grew up in Adoption or Foster Care Positive Strategies for Overcoming Emotional Challenges

Renee Wolfs, London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015, pp. 160, ISBN 978 1 84905 555 0, eISBN 978 0 85700 988 3

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This, in essence, is a self-help book for adults who grew up in adoption or foster care. It is easy to read, respectful and hopeful while dealing with the complicated mourning processes many adoptees and foster children go through. But it is also a book full of insights for professionals and caregivers. It could be read in privacy by a person seeking more understanding into the grief they are carrying from childhood. It could be shared between a worker and their client. It could be used in group work. It could be used in training foster carers and adoptive parents. Throughout the book there are many comments from adult adoptees and foster children. I believe these will both help the reader to connect with the points the author is making and validate many of their own experiences.

After a foreword, acknowledgements and introduction there are four chapters in the book.

Chapter 1, *Coping with Loss*, explains loss and grieving as a normal process. It sets the basis for discussion in the chapters that follow about the nature of loss for adoptees and foster children. The chapter starts with the process of change, talks about what loss is and what the mourning process is, what the themes in the mourning process are, addresses postponed, accumulated and complicated grief and introduces the impact of traumatic loss. The author introduces a clear and very helpful distinction between loss-oriented and constructive-oriented responses and the role of each. It ends with two sets of questions. The first, are knowledge questions that consolidate the ideas presented. The second, encourages personal reflection.

In Chapter 2, *Mourning the Core Loss*, the author moves into the world of those who have been adopted or placed in long term foster care. She introduces a useful distinction between 'what you have lost' and 'what you have lost contact with'. In the author's words, 'If you lose someone or something, you can create an opportunity to say farewell, which gives you a chance to re-establish a new and different

connection with what you have lost. Foster and adoption children don't usually lose their parents, but they lose contact with them' p.39.

She looks firstly at how children experience core loss, then adolescents, then adults. She looks at the accumulative effect of grief on dealing with life losses and the factors that hinder the mourning process. The need for professional help with postponed, accumulated and complicated grief is explained and supported. Again the chapter ends with a set of knowledge and personal questions.

Chapter 3, *The Circle of Connecting*, moves the readers forward into thinking about accommodating their grief while moving on: a balancing of the loss-oriented and constructive-oriented moments. The Circle of Connecting, is a process developed by the author. It is informed by Mindfulness and Acceptance and Commitment Theory and her professional experience. The chapter explores the seven fundamental elements of the Circle; body, past, present, future, mind, heart and surroundings. She explains that there are many different ways of mourning and as it has no beginning and no ending you can begin with any theme as each and every one of them can be an important source of healing. The text is well supported by questions to the reader and comments from adults as they reflect on the impact of loss and what has helped them cope with it. It finishes with ideas about saying farewell, giving meaning and connecting with your own life once more. Again the chapter ends with a set of knowledge and personal questions.

Chapter 4, *Contact with Your Birth Family*, addresses many of the joys and complications that professionals in the field already know about. However, for each individual who remains connected to or initiates a connection with the family they may have lost contact with, or just wonders who their birth family is, this chapter provides useful ideas. Contact during childhood and contact as an adult is seldom straight forward. Unpredictable things happen.

Things are often beyond your control. Again the stories of others are significant and help to normalise responses. Again the chapter ends with a set of knowledge and personal questions.

This book does not talk about closure. It is about loss being a part of life and learning to cope with life is the only possible answer.

I think this book will be very therapeutic for many adults who were adopted and for those who grew up in long term foster care. I say this based on my professional experience of reviewing childhood records with adults who return, sometimes years later, to discover or rediscover their childhood. The book is a strong reminder of the importance of allowing and capturing the voice of the child in recording. It provides insights into the openness and respect with which

we should approach families and children and the support adopting families and foster carers require when assisting children who are dealing with loss.

I'm not sure that the knowledge questions at the end of each chapter work well although they will do no harm. On occasions the author referred the reader forward or backward in the text for more explanation of a theme or practice being discussed. I found that an interruption to my reading.

Every adoptee and past foster child is unique and this book respects that uniqueness while presenting possible commonalities. It translates well into the Australian context.

There is an extensive list of values in an appendix. The book is well referenced and includes further reading suggestions.