

# Adult Adoptees

A conversation with my therapist

Dear **Clinician,**

My name is Dr. Amy Geller, DSW, LCSW. I'm a fellow therapist who specializes in working with adoptees. An adoptee myself, I went through a personal & professional awareness about my adoption later in life. This opened my eyes to an experience I now know is a normative part of adulthood for some adoptees. Many in the adoptee community refer to this evolving awareness about the impact of adoption on our lives as "coming out of the fog". (Note: some adoptees prefer not to use this term and may call it something else like "adoptee consciousness").

Research has demonstrated that:

- Most therapists have not received any formal training on clinical work with adoptees
- Adoptees are over-represented in all mental health settings
- Therapists have a high likelihood of encountering an adoptee in their practice
- Adoptees often don't come "out of the fog" until at least age 30, sometimes much later
- Adoptees may experience relational & developmental trauma related to relinquishment regardless of their age at adoption

Therapists often tell me that their clients who identify as adoptees are reluctant to explore their adoption status as relevant in therapy. This is not uncommon. Until an event, such as the birth of a child, death of an adoptive parent, DNA test results, or a book/movie/ podcast catapults the adoptee into feelings of grief, questioning, or a desire to search and reunite with biological relatives. This can look like clinical depression but should be treated as an expected lifecycle process for the adoptee rather than pathology.

Adoptees who suddenly find themselves in this emotionally disorienting experience may wonder if they need to find a new therapist who specializes in adoption. This can feel like another potential loss to the adoptee. I want to empower adoptees & their therapists, who have already built a successful relationship, to work through this often painful yet expansive process together.

As clinicians, we can never know everything about what our clients go through. The greatest gift we can give the people who trust us with their mental health is to take the time to individualize our learning & treatment plan to their needs. I have created a website for therapists who want to learn more about working with adult adoptees. Here you will find a guide & resources to assist you in supporting clients through a process our psychotherapy community is just beginning to learn about.

With appreciation & respect,

Amy Geller, DSW, LCSW

For more information visit:

**Therapy with Adult Adoptees:  
A Guide for Clinicians**

[www.adult-adoptees.com](http://www.adult-adoptees.com)