

# Jigsaw Bits & Pieces

September 2011



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Check out the regular live  
news updates on our web  
site

[www.jigsawqueensland.com](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com)

- N.B. Support group  
meeting time changes -  
p 10
- Top Ten Tips re search  
and reunion using social  
network sites – pp 2-4

Save trees! Get the newsletter  
as a colour pdf file. Email  
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## **You're invited!!**

Come celebrate with us

### **Jigsaw Queensland's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

Bring family and friends to our garden party fundraiser

**5 November 2011, 2.30-5.30pm**

**SANDS House, 505 Bowen Terrace New Farm**

Suggested Donation: Adults \$10 Children free

RSVP 26 October

07 3358 6666

[jigsawqueensland@bigpond.com](mailto:jigsawqueensland@bigpond.com)

Don't forget your hat & sunscreen!!!

Donate to Jigsaw @ [www.jigsawqueensland.com](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com)

## Top Ten Tips :

### Thinking about making contact with birth relatives on social networking sites.

### From British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) web site

1. **Be safe** – Follow the tips below on Keeping Safe On Social Networking Sites. You can use your privacy settings on Facebook and similar sites to prevent unwanted contact and to make sure you share information only with trusted people.
2. **Stop and think** – It can be very exciting when you think you have found the person you have been looking for and you may want to make contact with them as soon as possible. However, it is really important to stop and think about what impact the contact will have for you and also for the person you are contacting.
3. **Prepare yourself for potential outcomes** – Prepare yourself for the range of responses you could receive by making contact this way. Consider how you would feel if you receive a negative response or do not hear back from the person you have sent a message to, or if the relative you have approached is delighted to hear from you and wants to take things much further and faster than you do.
4. **Understand your rights** – Knowing about adoption legislation will help you to be aware of your rights to access information about family background and the circumstances of your adoption. It also explains how you can access professional support when thinking about or making contact with birth family members, for example using an intermediary service.
5. **Make informed decisions** – Gather as much information as possible about the circumstances of your adoption and your origins. This may help you decide whether or not to make contact using social media networks or use the help and support of an intermediary.
6. **Think about your expectations** – Think about the expectations you have as well as the possible expectations of others too. Sometimes these will not match so you need to think of how you will manage this. Be prepared to adjust your expectations along the way.
7. **Understand the range of emotions you might experience** – You may feel upset, be scared, be overwhelmed with happiness or experience guilt. Sharing your thoughts and feelings and thinking about how other people might be feeling can help you.
8. **Get support** – Make sure you have people around that you can talk to such as adoption counsellors, partners or friends, or join a support group to talk about your hopes, fears and expectations.
9. **Consider other family members** – Remember your approach may come as a shock and your relative may not be as ready as you are for contact. If you can, do try and let your adoptive family know about your search - they may be a good support for you even though they may need reassurance that they will always be your family.
10. **Think ahead** – Consider the impact will this have on your future and what you would do if you change your mind. Try and give some thought to your hopes and expectations for the future and what you will do if the relationship does not develop how you expect it to.

<http://www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk/contact/socialnetworking/>



## 'Who is this stranger who wants to 'friend me?': Search & reunion on Facebook?

By Trevor Jordan

Facebook is a good way staying in touch with birth relatives; however, it must be used with caution for a number of reasons. Firstly, in our experience some people who are advised by friends to use Facebook to search have never used it before. They do not realise that Facebook is a public space with layers of privacy, which need to be managed by the users themselves.

Secondly, the seeming ease of Facebook ought not to override basic, sound search principles. For example, currently when my personal Facebook page opens Facebook tells me there are at least another eight (8) Trevor Jordans (that's me!) on Facebook. It is easy to jump to the wrong conclusion, as it was in the days of the phone book and the drive-by. It is important at this stage to know how Facebook works.

Facebook is a social network and everything communicated through your status post is sent to everyone in your and that person's network who could be bothered to read it. The same applies when you join a Facebook page or group. It is more than a person-to-person mode of sharing, other people are in on the conversation. If you want to communicate person-to-person you must use the messaging facility in Facebook.

Getting regular updates from another party means that you first have to 'friend' the person, and this will raise questions such as, 'Who is this stranger who wants to friend me?' Which takes us back to basics about how to search for birth relatives.

Once you have a name, searching for birth relatives is a matter of probabilities. It's about increasing the probability that, e.g., the Trevor Jordan you are looking for, is the one you are related to. Going from one in 100, to one in eight, to the best shot. Note, your best shot is not always simply the only one remaining. You may not have started with all the possibilities.

At Jigsaw, we believe secrecy in adoption has reached its use by date, but that respect for privacy remains an important ethical issue. All initial communication with other parties should be tentative and general in nature until a person's identity has been confirmed.

.../contd

**Jigsaw Queensland has a Facebook page – Jigsaw Post-Adoption Centre Queensland. To stay in touch, please 'like' us.**

When one party actively searches and the other does not, there are always power issues involved. Searching is an important and often empowering step for birthmothers and adoptees alike. However, the party not searching can also feel profound disempowerment, which may also resonate negatively with their past experiences. Sound relationships are always built on trust and mutual affirmation.

If you are feeling frustrated with the pace of things, take time to take stock. What are my expectations? Where was I emotionally a year ago, five years ago, twenty years ago? What has changed in my life? Try not to double guess what the other party is feeling, but develop and tune your empathy by talking to or reading about the experiences of other adoptees and birthmothers. And some Facebook groups may help with this. Take what you need and leave the rest.

Internet discussions and Facebook groups can be helpful, but you have to become aware of your emotional triggers. It can be pretty rough and raw out there.

Written by Trevor Jordan, President, Jigsaw Queensland

From BAAF web site

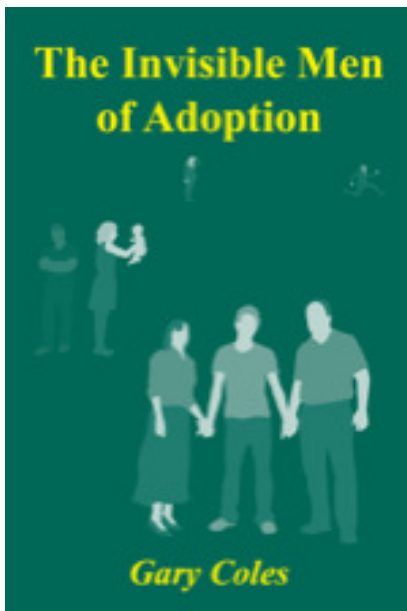
<http://www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk/contact/socialnetworking/>

### Keeping Safe On Social Networking Sites:

1. **Control your default privacy** – Make sure only your friends can view your profile.
2. **Restrict access to your profile** – Ensure not everyone can look up your profile by name or contact info.
3. **Think carefully about who you accept as a friend** – Make sure you know and trust them in real life.
4. **Look at who can send you messages** – It is safer to only receive them from your friends.
5. **Have a look at who can post on your wall** – It may be best to limit this to people you trust.
6. **Review who can see wall posts by others on your profile** – Some identifying info may be posted.
7. **Make sure your contact details are not on your profile page** – Your friends will already know these anyway.
8. **Check out your profile visibility** – Decide who sees posts you're tagged in on your profile after you approve them.
9. **Check if your location is visible if using your mobile phone** – Be wary of checking into places on Facebook from your mobile phone. Remember that others may be able to see where you are.
10. **Control who can check you into places** – Be aware of whether friends can check you into places. Others may be able to see where you are on someone else's profile.

On Facebook you can review all of these settings by clicking 'Account' in the top right corner, then selecting 'Account Settings' or 'Privacy Settings'.

**“Internet discussions and Facebook groups can be helpful, but you have to become aware of your emotional triggers. It can be pretty rough and raw out there.”**



***The Invisible Men of Adoption* by Gary Coles,  
Mesmerus Books, 2010, 216pp**

This is Gary Coles's third book on the birth father experience. He has already published the excellent *Ever After: Fathers and the Impact of Adoption* and *Transparent: Seeing Through the Legacy of Adoption*. His latest offering maintains the high standard of informed reflection based on his own experiences as a birth father.

As in his other books, Coles focuses on the unique losses experienced by birth fathers, who are so often excluded from the adoption 'triangle'. As he puts it, 'There is an implicit assumption that it is the birth mother alone who experiences the loss of her child, sometimes as the result of a decision that has been forced upon her by a lack of support from the birth father.'

When it comes to widening the picture, however, men have not been as forthcoming with their stories as have birthmothers. 'The typical male reticence to express feelings and vulnerabilities means that a man is less likely to admit to a loss caused by adoption.'

For Coles, *The Invisible Men of Adoption* is 'a call to those birth fathers who have not admitted that losing a child to adoption has had an impact on their lives to own up to their pain and to acknowledge the consequences their action is have had on others, notably the birth mother and their child. For some birth fathers, these may be undertakings that had not contemplated previously. There are other birth fathers who know the grief of separation, by they are unable to make progress beyond this basic recognition.'

Coles begins by discussing the impact of adoption on birth fathers, then moves on to consider the factors—including secrecy, denial, guilt and control—that impede birth fathers and adopted persons from seeking one another.

The last section of the book deals with the healing process required to address wounds caused by separation and loss and finishes with some wise and positive suggestions those help those affected by adoption to live a rich and fulfilling life.

Reviewed by Trevor  
Jordan

**'The typical male reticence to express feelings and vulnerabilities means that a man is less likely to admit to a loss caused by adoption.'**

A guide to assist those people with an adoption experience to live a rich and fulfilling life.

Excerpted from *The Invisible Men of Adoption*, by Gary Coles

### **Be Open, be honest**

Disown secrecy and denial and install the growth generators of honesty, openness and generosity

### **Share and assimilate**

Sharing your adoption experience with others can be therapeutic. Support groups can be a starting point.

### **Explore the background**

A healing benefit can come from a retrospective analysis of the circumstances that resulted in an adoption, both the personal circumstances and the social and cultural values that prevailed at the time.

### **Be Self-responsible**

Personal healing should be undertaken before interpersonal healing. With the inner work done reunion can better address the effects of adoption on the relationships between birth family members.

### **Use technology wisely**

It is important to proceed at the pace of the slower person. While Facebook is a helpful tool when used to search for a person, it is unwise to use it for initiating communication with a view to forging a lasting reunion.

### **Don't neglect the birth father**

Overlooked in the past, birth fathers need to be acknowledged and granted some tolerance, as their attitudes and feelings may have changed with time.

### **Honour the initiative taken by the other party**

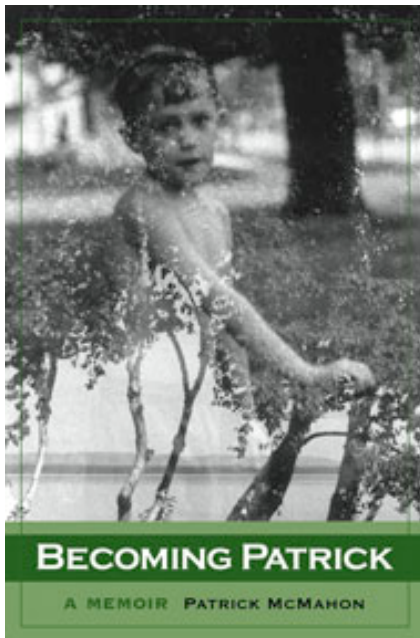
The overwhelming majority of those who initiate outreach do so with the purest of intentions, i.e. to seek reunion with family members. By initiating a search, birth parents make it clear that they love and want to know their adult children.

### **Stay positive in the face of setbacks**

If you receive a rebuff, try not to take it personally. It is likely that the other party has not rejected you; it is more likely that they have not faced their adoption issues. But do not try to guess the reasons why your offer has been declined.

### **Recover your self and live**

Grieving the loss caused by adoption is healthy and productive. To address the grief displays awareness, personal responsibility and commitments to openness, honesty and growth.



***Becoming Patrick: A Memoir* by Patrick McMahon, Deep Root Press, San Diego, 2011, 322pp.**

I first met Patrick McMahon in the Male Adoptees Workshop at the American Adoption Congress (AAC) many years ago now. Patrick is an artist and photographer and makes excellent postcards and calendars with adoption-related themes. Patrick is also author of the well-titled article 'Coming Out Twice' about his experiences of reunion as a gay adopted person.

'The idea of starting a new relationship in the closet seems ridiculous, but actually telling her I'm gay still feels risky. It took 21 years to come out to myself and another seven to come out to the mother who might have judged, shamed, or rejected, but did not. But surely this will be easier than I'm thinking'.

This is but one, albeit important, part of Patrick's highly readable account of not only his search and reunion experience, but of his search for himself. It is this search for an authentic self that goes to the heart of the adopted person's experience.

Reflecting on a pile of post-reunion photos, he observes: 'I realize now how convenient it was to be able to pretend I came from anywhere I liked. I used that a lot. Maybe even relied on it. But you know when you are adopted one of those fantasies has to be true. Something *has* to be true.'

Acclaim for *Becoming Patrick*:

"I liked this book so much that I read it twice" – Nancy Verrier, author of *The Primal Wound* and *Coming Home to Self*.

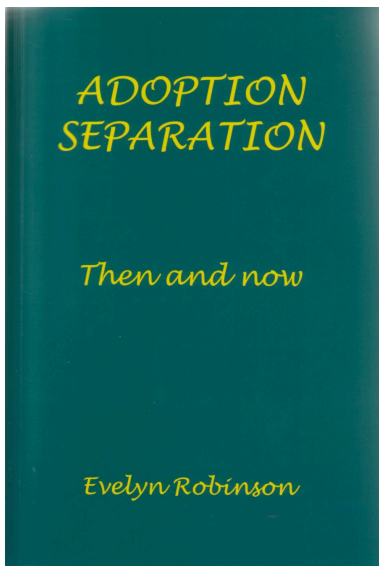
"I have heard Patrick read excerpts from this book over the years and there were times when I feared that I may not live long enough to see it completed. I'm delighted to find that I have. I thoroughly enjoyed Patrick's use of language, which at times is stunningly beautiful. This delicately and poignantly expressed tale of how his life has been irrevocably enriched by acknowledging the contributions of both nature and nurture to the man he has become makes compelling reading."

--Evelyn Robinson, author, counsellor & educator

"Patrick's tour of his life as an adopted person is so well written and so beautifully told that my gift to him must be making sure that others know about *Becoming Patrick*, and encouraging them to listen attentively as he takes them through his journey. I can't recommend this book any more vehemently. There is so much you will feel and see and learn about the ingredients and the quest that went into *Becoming Patrick*!"

--Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao, CEO and Founder, Centre For Family Connections, Lecturer in Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Reviewed by Trevor Jordan



**Adoption Separation: Then & Now by Evelyn Robinson, Clova Publications, 250pp.**

Dr Sigmund Freud would tell us that there is no such thing as a mistake and that behind many of our everyday errors and slips of the tongue is some mild psychic disturbance. I can, e.g., report that on completion of two university degrees and the near completion of my PhD throughout the more than half a million words I had written, I could not spell the word 'separate' correctly, and more often than not I would type the word 'religion' again and again without an 'l' in it. In fact, I just did it again while drafting this review. How could this adoptee have done such a thing! This, of course, is why Dr Freud was such a brilliant man! He understood the disturbing effects that the unconscious and subconscious could have on everyday behaviour. Separation and loss can affect us, even though we are not aware of it at a conscious level.

Well, there is no psychoanalysis in Evelyn Robinson's latest offering *Adoption Separation: Then And Now*, despite the fact that several contributors go 'on the couch' to relate their experiences of adoption past and present. The stories span a period from 1958 to 1989 and include reflections from Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland and the United States.

Just opening the book and ploughing in may not be helpful to the reader who has not prepared himself or herself first. These very personal stories should be approached with an open mind and open heart. One should read these stories as an attentive listener, taking from them what one needs and 'leaving the rest' as they say in 12 Step programs.

In the final section, Evelyn 'picks up the pieces' of the story in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and offers reflections on the future of adoption, including intercountry adoption and the issues of apologies from governmental and the professions for past adoption practices.

In the end, both heart and mind are well served by Evelyn Robinson's latest book, which should be of particular interest and value to those who cannot access a face-to-face support group but still want the therapeutic benefit of hearing other mothers' stories.

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**Donate to Jigsaw Queensland and receive a free book.**

Jigsaw Queensland needs your continuing support. Donate \$15 or more via Paypal on our website or by cheque to our office & receive a free copy of Collette Glazebrook's educative memoir *Facing the Fears*.

## Senate inquiry into forced adoptions

Submissions to the Senate inquiry into the Commonwealth's contribution to passed forced adoptions are available to be viewed online.

Google 'Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices' for further information and terms of reference.

The report is due to be tabled on early November.

**Link-up (Qld)** helps re-unite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 18 who have experienced enforced separation from their families and/or institutionalisation. Ph 1800 200 855

**International Social Service (ISS)** no longer has a worker in Queensland, but will continue to handle Queensland inquiries from its Sydney office.

ISS provides a professional casework and advocacy service to individuals and families who are experiencing problems as a result of being separated across two or more countries. They can offer help with international adoption search and reunion (fees apply).

ISS Australia  
02 9267 0300 Fax (+61) 2 92673886  
issnsw@iss.org.au

## Know someone thinking about Intercountry Adoption?

Please tell them about ISS's excellent booklet 'Intercountry Adoption and Its Risks: A Guide for Prospective Adopters'. This important booklet outlines *danger signals* to watch out for and *questions for ask (yourself)* to avoid the many of the potential risks associated with intercountry adoption today (see above contacts for ISS)

## Salvation Army Family Tracing Unit Post-Adoption Case Worker

For those who cannot do their own search, or need further assistance to search.  
Tues-Fri 9.30-2.00  
07 3222 6663

## Find us on Facebook!

**Jigsaw Post-Adoption Centre Queensland** is our Facebook page.

Search for us and please 'like' us.

You will receive event information and adoption related news.

# Newsy Bits & pieces

## News from Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ)

PASQ offers face-to-face counselling, telephone counselling, therapeutic groups and themed workshops.

For info on Adoption Connections meetings in your region, contact

**Email: [pasq@bensoc.org.au](mailto:pasq@bensoc.org.au)  
Phone 07 3170 4600 or 1300 914 819**

## Adoption Services Queensland (ASQ)

Contact ASQ to get your adoption-related information and an authority to get a copy of an original birth certificate and to do birth, death and marriage searches.

07 3224 7415

1800 647 983 (Qld only)

## Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)

Electoral rolls can be searched electronically at your local AEC office. To find out where it is, call 13 23 26

## Do you tweet?

On Twitter follow @ethicsnow – Ideas and inspirations about ethics and adoption by adoptee and applied ethicist Trevor Jordan



All meetings at

505 Bowen Tce, New Farm

**N.B Important Meeting time changes 🗨️**

**Be prepared!**

**Get support before you need it!**

**Things can happen quickly in search and reunion**

If you live close enough, or visit Brisbane occasionally,

do your best to make it one of our support groups.

Consistent feedback

**Support Jigsaw Queensland:**

**Become a member**

Join Jigsaw Queensland and receive our booklet 'The Guide: Putting the Pieces Together " Get ideas about search and reunion from our website [www.jigsawqueensland.com](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com)

**Jigsaw Queensland, Inc.**

PO Box 912  
New Farm QLD 4005

**OPEN SUPPORT GROUP  
New Time !!!**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month  
1.30-3.30pm**

*"So many different points of view, so much confusion ... but definitely more clarity for me, slowly but surely, as a result of attending."*

**BIRTH MOTHER SUPPORT GROUP**

**Third Saturday monthly - 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm – afternoon tea break.**

*"I've found I feel more „normal" now that I've met and participated in the mothers' group and the rest of my family is benefiting too."*

**ADOPTEE SUPPORT GROUP**

**Combined with Open meeting from October (no September meeting)**

*"Sometimes I just need to be say something about my adoption that I've not felt able to say to others in my life."*  
Contact the office for more information – 07 3358 6666 or email:

[jigsawqueensland@bigpond.com](mailto:jigsawqueensland@bigpond.com)

or check our web site

[www.jigsawqueensland.com](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com)

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Jigsaw Queensland needs your continuing support. Donate \$15 or more via Paypal on our website or by cheque to our office & receive a free copy of Collette Glazebrook's educative memoir *Facing the Fears*.

## **Can't always get through? We'll call you back!**

Our trained volunteers are happy to take your call **between 10-2 on Wednesdays & Thursdays, but you can now also leave a message and we will contact you back within two working days.**

**Call 07 3358 6666**

**\*\*\*Note new**

**meeting times for  
Open Meeting and  
Adoptee meeting**

**Open support  
groups will begin  
with information  
topics of interest  
and also have time  
for sharing the  
journey.**

**First topic in  
October – "Search  
basics"**