

Finding Your "New Normal"

by Brie M

Giving birth is an amazing thing. I think that all mothers can attest to that. There are many people who have no idea the magnitude to which giving birth can change one's entire life. A lot of these people are our close friends and peers. Most teenagers have not even seriously thought about having a baby. There are way too many parties, tests, and boyfriends to worry about to be thinking about babies. We are not most teenagers though. Many of us did give birth when we were quite young and because of this we find it hard to relate to those around us. On top of that, most young women who have a child do not chose adoption for that baby. Again, no matter our age, that sets us even further apart from those around us. All of this can be very isolating and lonely. How can a birthmom transition back into the "real world" and back to interacting with those around us?

I had my daughter, Annika, the week before my second year of college. I was determined to get back into the college life and back to being a "normal" college student. I had it in my mind that if I just did not talk about Annika or my experience that I could pick my life up where I left off before I got pregnant. As one can imagine, this did not quite work out. I would be with friends and could not get her off of my mind. I would try to have fun and end up feeling miserable. I did not get very close to any one because I would not allow myself to share that big part of my life with them.

Frustrated that my life was not instantly back to normal, I sought the advice of another birthmom. "When will my life go back to normal?!" I asked. Her advice has helped me thus far and continues to help me in my day-to-day life. She explained to me that this was my new normal. I had a little girl in my life now that I loved more than life itself. She told me that the world would never be the same because it had a special new addition to it, so how were things supposed to be the same in my life? Yes, I was still a college student, but I wasn't just a college student anymore. I was a college student who had placed her child with an adoptive family. I did not like that answer at the time. I wanted my old normal back.

Gradually this advice began to make more sense. The more I tried to fit back in to what I considered my "old normal" to be, the more isolated and lonely I felt. I realized that it was impossible to return to my old life. That left me with two options: continue trying to fit a circle into a square which was what I was essentially doing, or accept my "new normal" and allow myself to be comfortable with who I had become.

I was miserable with how things were going, so I decided to give this concept of a "new normal" a try. If I was thinking about Annika, I told people that. I brought pictures places and showed them off to my friends. Slowly, I came to see that this is how my life will be. This new normal was not something to be afraid of, it just was. Once I was able to embrace my new normal, I was able to feel more like those around me. Everyone has their unique stories and experiences; this was mine.

Transitioning to this "new normal" is not an easy thing to do, but doing it has been very rewarding. Here are some things to keep in mind while trying to find your new normal:

1. Let yourself think about your child. All moms think about their children. I've found when I try not to let myself think about my daughter I only think about her more.
2. Share a little bit about your child with those whom you feel comfortable doing so. Your child is a big part of your life it is ok to let other people know that.
3. Do not feel bad when you are having a good time and not thinking about your child. Especially in the beginning it can make you feel like a bad mom if you are not thinking about your child. It does not make you a bad mom; it means that you are adjusting to your new normal!
4. Do not worry about those who do not understand your choice or your feelings. You do not need their approval. This is who you are others can take it or leave it. If people cannot accept the journey that you have been on, chances are you do not need them in your life.
5. For those in open adoptions, decide how often you would like to have visits. It is hard not to want to visit every day possible, but you need to remember that part of your new normal will be integrating your child into your life. You cannot spend your life trying to integrate yourself into your child's life. Open adoption creates the opportunity for you to be in your child's life and still have your own life. Do not feel bad if, as time goes on, you feel as though you do not want as many visits. This is normal!

Many of us placed our children in an era that has moved past the "place your child and forget this ever happened" philosophy. Understanding this; each birth mom must decide what her new normal will be. This new normal can really be much better than the old normal. We approach this new normal as women who have seen an angel in our child's face and have survived one of the toughest moments in our lives. We owe it to ourselves to establish this new normal and enjoy it to its fullest potential!