

# A Reflection Guide for Adoptees Navigating Estrangement

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**You know the tensions and ambiguities** that can come up when spending time with family; anytime but especially during the holidays when relatives and friends get together and the events are a bit more than usual.

**So, here are some reflections to help you get to the other side with hope and cheer intact.** These aren't new insights by any means, I've simply taken time to curate a few morsels to chew on through various personal interactions you've got coming up.

**You're not on a finger-pointing quest** to rule people out of your life. **On the contrary**, it's because people are important to you that you'd engage your heart and mind to make the best use of the fleeting moments you have together; so that perhaps this season you could experience the warmth and joy of grace-filled connection both in person and in spirit.

1. What values are at stake for you these days? Or, in this season specifically? Privacy, friendship, security, comfort, freedom, health, inclusion, peace, independence, consideration for the collective, etc.
2. What matters related to adoption and being an adoptee might be active for you? Something related to birth search and reunion? Trauma, grief, inappropriate comments or attitudes, feelings of isolation, inclination toward activism, a nudge toward adoptee community and allyship, etc?
3. What, or who, at a family gathering seems to challenge or push on either something you value or a layer of your adoptee journey that feels especially tender at the moment? Is it based on a pattern, or a specific incident that has stayed with you?
4. Is there a conversation that you wish you could have with someone? A truth about yourself and your story that longs to be held by another? How would you put that into words? Also, can you feel free to pass on attending any events/gatherings this year?

5. What expectations, needs, limits, boundaries, or requests could you voice to yourself today as you imagine what it could be like for others to hold them with you? How, where, when, to whom might you clarify and communicate them, verbally or non-verbally, in the moment or in advance, both?
6. What's a priority for you, how would you know that the gathering, event, discussion, conversation, dinner, week, holiday, season, etc "went well" for you? For them? For us? What's it worth? What's the cost? What will you have to give up or sacrifice to get there?
7. Who's going through all this with you? A friend who knows your situation? A prayer partner? Another family member? Your spouse? A neighbor? Therapist? Group chat? Your journal? How can you invite someone to help you hold what's significant to you; to check in and follow up, ask how things went?
8. My family is in contact currently but we've had our share of tough times, for many reasons. For adoptees, what's a word or phrase to describe how you experienced your family over the years, whether emotionally or in terms that feel appropriate for you... what seemed or seems to be missing that you wish you had? What was abundant? What do you still count on?

**A main thrust here is to reflect on what we need from others**, especially from our family members, during this specific season of life. And what our family members might need from us (e.g., patience, humility, humanity, forgiveness, a gentle nudge, accountability, a mirror, a hug). We certainly each get to decide how much to invest in such a request, how emotionally supportive we'd seek to be, and to what extent we're willing to share with the people we've allowed into our circle.

[I've uploaded a few more ideas into a google drive folder.](#) Feel free to browse through or save it for a snowy day. Like I said before, these aren't new discussions. **It's more of a prompt to help you dig into your own strengths and creativities.** Yes to help you "get through" the next few weeks, but also to affirm what out-of-this-world personally meaningful moments could happen in and through us if we'd be open to spending even just a couple minutes thinking about who and how we'd like to be during and after this transition into the new year.

**They say we have the capacity to bring out the best in one another. I believe that.** I also think we don't always have to wait for others in order to experience truth and joy for ourselves. I'm sure the gravity of that statement goes beyond the scope of this discussion. But for the topic of family dynamics and the plans you've got over the next few weeks, please know I'm rooting for you to receive all the good things you need - individually - to partake in all the good things relationally that are possible when people get together; family, friends, and neighbors alike.