

Lost and Now Found

Lori Charlish writes notes in her worn-down journal listening to patients struggling with being adopted. Spending time in her calming office in Portland, Oregon, filled with therapeutic artwork, feeling at home. Charlish, a clinical social worker specializing in trauma and attachment, primarily works with adoptees. As an adoptee herself, she relates to her clients more.

Charlish adopted at the age of one in 1967. A year later, her adoptive mother died, causing the trauma of not liking change and not being in control. Back then, adoption agencies differed from today by sealing adoption cases until the adoptee was 18. Charlish felt she didn't belong due to the lack of information about her biological parents.

At 21 years old, she returned to the adoption agency and was handed a sticky note with her biological parents' names and phone numbers. Feeling shocked, she laughed and thought, "I waited 21 years for a sticky note?" Immediately felt every emotion, but what was shocking was the conversation with her biological father. The moment they spoke, she felt "a connection she didn't know was missing felt complete."

The long-awaited reunion of her biological family strengthened Charlish's mindset to help other adoptees find peace with their adoption stories. She returned to her studies of social work at the University of Portland. During her practicum for her master's degree, she became a CASA (Court-appointed special advocate for foster children). This was her first time working with adopted and foster children, and she fell in love with advocating for others, as she didn't have these resources growing up.

Led to her private practice to guide adoptees to process feelings of unwantedness due to being put up for adoption. Charlish offers neurofeedback to her clients to monitor their

brainwave activity, allowing to see feelings clients aren't aware of, so she can evaluate the best care for them.

Charlish also helps her clients find their biological parents by doing intensive research on their files. She meets with the adoptee's families to comfort them during this challenging process, as it's emotional to see their child's biological family. Charlish plans to keep going beyond for her clients.