

## PROLOGUE

Grief is a profoundly personal journey. And while many losses are acknowledged by society, others cannot be spoken of—may not even be considered legitimate. Women who placed their children in closed adoptions between the 1950s and the 1980s know both the severity of grief and the confusion of the silence that was imposed on them. They were told not to feel; they were told not to remember. They were left to grieve on their own. Even today, the disenfranchised grief of the birth mothers of closed adoption continues to be misunderstood and largely ignored.

Theresa’s book bravely opens the conversation that needs to begin. With transparency and insight gained through her own struggles, she offers one of the stories that must be heard if birth mothers are to be honored as mothers in our culture.

It has been my privilege to work with birth mothers for almost two decades. Their grief is profound. A privileged few have received the support they needed and deserved and have become advocates for adoption as they see the positive results of their self-sacrifice. They mourn, move on, and grow. Pain for them becomes a teacher, as they can see the good that has come from their choices.

Theresa has shown us what it is like for the others—those who were offered no real choice and were only conditionally supported. Grief for them has no resolution, no “new normal.” It is that chronic ache that bleeds into other parts of their lives and the lives of those they love.

Theresa offers her readers knowledge and hope: the knowledge that they, the mothers of closed adoption, are not alone, and the hope for resolution and healing. She is a guide on this journey: I trust that those who walk with her will not only come to a new understanding of the sadness of the parenting loss but of the courage it took to make this decision. Perhaps it will help us do better for all of those involved in adoption in the future.

**Jutta Wittmeier**, Author

*Affirming the Birth Mother’s Journey: A Peer Counselor’s Guide to Adoption Counseling*

The processes and insights Theresa offers will help people who are challenged with unresolved grief. However, those who know the decisions they made were absolutely right for them, their children, and their loved ones will benefit as well. By reflecting on the questions Theresa poses, each person can find her own “aha” moment, her own truth, and her own understanding of where she is stuck. Readers will realize the new choices they have in the now, and can claim a sense of peace within. Many birth mothers with questions from the past will have the opportunity to claim peace both in the present and in the future, thanks to Theresa’s open and honest story. Her journey will facilitate much healing for many.

**Dianne Federation, M.S.W., R.S.W.**

Former Director of Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program  
Calgary, Alberta

What a privilege it was to read Theresa’s book. What a gift it was to me—a gift of trust, and therefore, a gift of love. As I read, the thought of a beautiful, colored butterfly landing in my cupped hands and resting there came to me. I was in such awe that I could scarcely breathe lest I scare the butterfly away, but she stayed with me, gently moving her wings now and then.

Upon completion of reading, I spoke to her softly, thanking her for trusting me with her very life. I assured her that it was all right, perfectly all right, to fly again. She was newly healed and truly freed to be all that the Lord God had created her to be. She would be free to share the truths she had learned in her healing journey. She would be a source of blessing to those silent ones who could now find their voice through her.

The butterfly then rose, fluttered her wings, and, as if caught in a gentle breeze or breath, flew into the sun. What a delight it had been to be blessed by her presence.

**Marilyn K. Smelski, Ph.D., R.S.W.**

Registered Social Worker in Clinical Private Practice

The one thing I learned from reading Theresa’s book is that I had absolutely no idea how much giving up her child affected her so much through the years. I am so proud of Theresa for writing the information she obtained. I know it will help not only the silent moms but especially the mothers of the silent moms.

**Josephine Benedek** (Theresa’s mother)