

Module #10 Openness in Adoption

Handout #10.16 Top Ten Lists

Source: <https://www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk/contact/socialnetworking/>

Ten Top Tips: 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.

Ten Top Tips: Thinking About Making Contact with Birth Relatives:

1. **Be safe** – Follow the tips above 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.

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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.

Ten Top Tips: What to do if Contact is Made:

1. **Be safe** – Make sure that all safety precautions about access are in place; consider taking down or changing social media profiles if you do not want contact.
2. **Consider the options** – What can be done if you/they want to ignore contact or if you /they want to respond.
3. **Get support** – Talk to family members or a trusted friend. If you are adopted, try speaking to your adoptive parents or a birth relative, or talk to the adoption services in your area.
4. **Stop and think** – Before having further contact, consider whether this is the right time or what the implications could be.
5. **Understand the range of emotions that may be experienced** – Joy, upset, fear, excitement, happiness, anger, guilt?

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6. **Be prepared** – If you want to take that next step do you have enough information about search and reunion.
7. **Make informed decisions** – If you are an adopted person, are the full details about the adoption known and has the information held on the adoption records been accessed?
8. **Consider other family members** – Think about the potential implications for other family members - talk about how it might affect them and what their views are.
9. **Think ahead** – Consider all the possible outcomes in the short and long term, and consider that one of the parties may change their mind.
10. **Understand the legislation** – What rights do all parties have?