

“Is she your first?” A normal simple question like this shouldn’t typically arise such panic inside a mom. But then again I’m not a normal simple mom. When I’m asked if my daughter is my first, if she is my only child or if she has any siblings, my brain goes into high speed. I begin asking myself questions such as “How well do I know this person?” “How well do I want to know this person.”? I am currently raising my two daughters, Cyenna and Nia ages 9 months and 5 years respectively but I am also a birthmom to a fabulous 10 year old boy. We have an open adoption and for us, this works. But most people don’t or won’t understand.

I can remember the day as though it were yesterday; a cold evening in early January 1998, a beautiful cherubic boy was born to me. His round face was pink with confusion as he was handed to me for the first time. His cries calmed after sensing my familiar smell and hearing my familiar voice. I fell in love immediately. The celebrations were minuscule, the visitors few and the gifts for a typical newborn child sparse. As I was holding my precious son, who smelled sweeter than a warm spring day and felt softer than a bed of clouds; I looked into his bright brown eyes and vowed to love him unconditionally. Then, while balancing his bottle with my chin, I proceeded to sign away my parental rights. Everything I was, changed, everything I knew, evaporated, everything I did was altered from that moment on. At the tender yet not so innocent age of 19, I changed my life and that of my newborn son forever.

Fast forward nine years down the road. So many events, both good and bad, have shaped our present relationship. I’m still deeply in love with my son. He has transformed into a tall, tender hearted, articulate, expressive young man. There’s not one aspect of his being I don’t cherish. Is it Nature or Nurture? I’m here to tell you that it is both. I see my sister’s big expressive chocolate brown eyes, I observe his biological father’s charm, I hear his adoptive mom’s sense of humour, I feel his adoptive father’s tenderness. We share a love of similar foods, sports and books. We are overly sentimental. My daughters, who are nearly 5 and 9 months, resemble my son in many ways. They share the big brown eyes that seem to dominate their face. They also have little button noses and soft curly hair.

There have been difficult times for me in this relationship. I haven’t arrived here without scars and ‘could’ve done’s’. Seeing my son at the age of 1 watch his parents separate and divorce and then remarry was agonizing, having gone through the similar fate with my parents. I questioned my decision. Worse of all, I questioned myself. I have learned that placing mere humans on pedestals can be dangerous. Adoptive parents are parents, they are human, but because they were doing something I was not capable of doing, raising my son, I thought they were celestial. I was wrong, but over time, being wrong never felt so good. I established a relationship with both his parents in unique ways and have come to cherish his step-parents as well.

My love for my son’s parents has changed over the years, but never faltered. I watched as they sat by his hospital bed at 3 months when he fell seriously ill, I watched as he ran to them with true and brilliant love, I watched as he grew to disobey and sat back as they

disciplined. I have watched a unique but wonderful family form with my son's presence; I have also become a part of this family.

Distance has played a key factor in our relationship. I am able to visit with my son very infrequently. In the beginning of our relationship, when he was a mere babe, I was visiting every other weekend, spending nights. Now we see each other once or twice a year. I have email contact with his parents often. My oldest daughter makes him pictures and sends them to him. He sends her wonderful pictures also. But I feel a strong sense of loss missing some of these pre-teen years. His sense of independence is blossoming and the time for him to question me is approaching.

After my son was born, I was filled with immense love for him. Being able to express my love to him physically, verbally and emotionally was awesome. Over the years the intensity of my love hasn't changed. I take one look at this young man and I am awestruck by his personality. Being able to have a relationship with him has helped me become the person I am today and has also helped me form the loving relationships I have in my life. He has always been and will always be my angel come too soon.