

The importance of family history

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Genealogy, the study of family origins and history (Encyclopedia Britannica). Nearly eight million Americans are doing genealogy searches each year (Genealogy In Time Magazine). Leading universities offer online research courses (Boston University) making it easy to learn about the methods for tracing family history and creating family trees. The exploration of family history is one of the world's fastest growing pastimes.

Those who were adopted have very little information on who they are and where they come. Knowing one's genealogy is beneficial for understanding origins, medical information, and ancestors. Genealogy searches can be extremely important to people who cannot easily access family history. Genealogy searches can produce medical history, birth parent information (Genetics Home Reference), the existence of siblings and ancestral lineage. Searches can uncover family members that otherwise would not have known about each other.

Genealogy searches can also uncover health risks that addressed early can help produce a longer life. Lastly, genealogy and ancestry searches can help the searcher incorporate newly found information which might change the direction of the person's life. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, family health histories are important for avoiding certain types of disease (National Center for Biotechnology Information). Diseases like lupus, autoimmune thyroid disease, type I diabetes, and primary Sjogren syndrome all cluster in family groups are uncovered through genetic testing (Criswell, Pfeiffer and Lum). Understanding lineage allows you to assess your disease risk, make lifestyle changes to accommodate family

health traits and access screening tests that will help avoid diseases (National Center for Biotechnology Information).

Documenting health risks through the genealogy process may provide a road map for future generations when it comes to certain types of hereditary diseases. One of the most prevalent reasons people are studying genealogy is to find a long-lost relative (Genealogy In Time Magazine). In some cases, these are birth family members who have lost contact. DNA is often the best way of doing this genealogy search. DNA helps supports family history and diseases that a person may carry. It also provides a historical background for where ancestors were born and/or migration.

(Davidson) Several DNA testing labs are available to the general public giving access to people who would not have had it just twenty years ago. 23 and Me offers DNA testing along with genetic mapping for health risks at a very reasonable cost (23 and Me). Fee's as low as \$79 make DNA testing affordable for most people. Ancestry. com offers DNA testing to help with genealogy searches, as well (Ancestry. com). In either case, DNA assists in linking people together. When DNA is used to assist in the tracing of genealogy, unwanted outcome can be the result. Families may not wish to be found. Finding information for one individual is a challenge.

It can lead to many new accomplishments or lead to several disasters. The person may be angry that their privacy was invaded. Some family members may want to meet each other, others may not. Choosing to approach family members who are found through genetic and geology tracing should be

considered very carefully. One case of someone who do not wish to be found includes the birth mother of Sheri Frost.

From an interview with Mrs. Frost, it was learned that she was abandoned in 1963 but her birth mothers name appeared on her original birth certificate making it difficult her, but not impossible. After 20 years of searching, Mrs. Frost located her birth mother only to find she wanted nothing to do with Mrs. Frost. Genealogy can provide you with insight as to who you are and where you came from (Encyclopedia Britannica).

Genealogy is divided into three stages; oral, written, and modern genealogy. In the 1500's, before written records, genealogy was passed down from family member through memory. Next, genealogy was handed down from generation to generation by writing names in the family bible (Encyclopedia Britannica). In about 1945, amateur genealogists became more plentiful (Encyclopedia Britannica). As a result, many countries now have Genealogical Societies (Encyclopedia Britannica) who help and teach about tracing family roots through genealogy practices. In the United States, the Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) have taken on a leadership role in recording and documenting family genealogy.

They maintain several websites and provide information to other websites for those seeking information. People may be traced through birth records, tax records, ownership of land, death records, military records, and bank records (Encyclopedia Britannica). Reviewing those records can help a searcher locate additional family members. An example might be an obituary. When seeking a deceased family member, reviewing the obituary may list spouses,

children, parents, and siblings opening up more information to help trace even further back in family tree. Another example may be an adoptee's original birth certificate.

Birth certificates include date of birth, mother and fathers names, where the parents were born and how old the parents were when the child was born. Examining that person's home for vital records (birth certificates), school records, family bibles, diaries and letters, old photographs, can be helpful. Use the person's initial research for the first searches and then analyze the results to achieve a personal success strategy. Some people have particular reason for tracing their family tree. Others jump into family history research without giving it much thought. Without good reasons for wanting family history, the search can lead to many discomforts, like weak material or lack of information.

Once the researcher has located enough information to gain a better understand of where he/she is originally from, he/she may wish to evaluate certain aspects of their own life. For example, in the case of children who are adopted, they may suffer with loss, grief, anger and possible fear even though they never met their birth parents (Child Welfare Information Gateway). Adopted children may struggle with identity issues, self-esteem problems and a constant wondering who they look like and where they come from (Child Welfare Information Gateway). Adopted children may feel abandoned and unloved. Locating birth family members and being able to ask questions about why they were given away may help the adopted child move forward (Child Welfare Information Gateway) and help them find a

sense of peace. In some cases, creating a family tree can help bring family together.

In others, it can create a family rift. During an interview with Rita Odom, Rita stated she found out she had two sisters from a second family no one had told her about. Rita remembered her father and mother as loving people who worked hard and took good care of she and her sister, Lazelle. She loved to see her father drive the tractor, to work on the farm and especially, the time they spent together at Christmas. When Rita's father died, Rita and Lazelle found a box in their father's closet full of paperwork about his two other children that had been put up for adoption when they were very young.

He had kept pictures, hospital bracelets and the original hospital paperwork. At first, Rita was angry with her father. But over time she realized she did not know the whole story and finding her adopted sisters was the most important thing. She and Lazelle searched for their two sisters for years hitting dead ends multiple times. After nearly 30 years went by, Rita's surviving sister found her. Rita wished she had been able to meet the other sister, who had died the year before.

Rita mentioned feeling great loss for the decision her father made without including her. Rita learned the truth in her mid-forties, and she did not meet her sister until she was in her mid-seventies. However, she was very glad to have found her remaining sister and was thankful for Ancestry.com and the DNA process. As for the many books were read, there was not very much information that explains genealogy. Luckily there was one book that was useful and it it called " Shaking Your Family Tree.

“ This book explained the basic finding on how to find a family tree and where to look. It even explained how to find online as well. It gives you step by step instruction on how to search, to read the paper work, and to show you where to look.” When I started researching family history, I had to correspond via snail mail letters and get them translated,” Smolenyak says.

“ But now...you can find people who are from the region where you think your ancestors came from.