

This re-birthday journal is designed for individuals who are adopted, donor-conceived, have experienced a Non-Paternal Event (NPE), are misattributed, or had a DNA surprise. You are invited to fill this in as you navigate your journey or afterwards, to bear witness to what you've experienced. We all use different words to talk about our experiences. The language we choose is deeply personal, and here, every word you select to describe your journey is valid and honored. You might refer to the family you grew up with as your adoptive, social, or raising family, and you may or may not have been genetically related to them. Similarly, 'genetic family' could mean DNA, biological, birth, or first family to you.

If you do not have a picture for a specific moment, there is a writing prompt available as an alternative. Above each photo space, there's an area to write a description. At the end of each section, additional pages are provided for writing or adding mementos and photos of your choice. At the end, we have listed some resources to aid in your journey.

May this journal serve as a compassionate companion, guiding you through your unique story and experiences. In documenting this profound and life-changing aspect of your life, it offers a place to reflect, understand, and celebrate the complexities of your identity and family.

#### **The Re-Birthday Journal is divided into four seasons:**

**Autumn:** Reflect on your life before your discovery or search for your genetic family. This is a space to contemplate your childhood, and recount memories, experiences, and perceptions of your early identity and family history.

**Winter:** This section is dedicated to documenting the emotional roller coaster that accompanies a DNA surprise and the endeavor to identify your genetic family. Here, you can explore how your emotions, perceptions, and relationships have been impacted.

**Spring:** Detail the process of potentially connecting with genetic relatives, documenting your challenges, successes, and new relationships formed. This is a place for sharing stories and histories.

**Summer:** Focus on how this journey has affected your sense of self and identity, and how your understanding has changed or developed. It's time to integrate or reconcile your new knowledge with your previous life.

May each season within these pages bring you closer to understanding your own story, as you navigate the ever-changing landscape of identity and kinship with courage, resilience, and hope.

My name today is:

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**MANY SEASONS AGO,  
A BEAUTIFUL BABY  
WAS BORN INTO THE WORLD**

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My name at birth or the name I could've had at birth

# *Autumn*

People who grow up in a household being told they are related to their family when they are not, often feel a sense of being different. This can stem from a lack of genetic mirroring, where individuals do not see their own physical and personality traits reflected in their family members. The absence of genetic mirroring can lead to genetic bewilderment.

Genetic bewilderment often arises in individuals who have uncertainties about their genetic heritage, leading to emotional challenges, identity confusion, and questioning of their place in their family. This not only affects self-perception but can also significantly impact relationships and dynamics within the family one grew up in, sometimes leading to a sense of disconnection or altering your feelings of belonging.

Take a moment to reflect on your childhood, your family traditions, and your perceived fit within your family. Think about how these early experiences shaped your understanding of who you are. Consider the roles you played, the expectations placed upon you, and how they aligned, or perhaps misaligned, with your inner sense of self. Acknowledging these nuances can be a vital step in reconciling your past with your present understanding of your identity.

We may mourn not growing up with our genetic relatives. This grief, often disenfranchised, occurs when such emotional turmoil is not openly recognized or validated by society, as these types of losses do not align with conventional expectations or ideals. This grief, often disenfranchised and unseen by many, is an ambiguous loss without clear resolution or closure.

Few people navigate their childhood and younger years without some form of hardship. Life happens bringing various trials, tribulations, and traumas that may resurface when we have a DNA surprise or decide to search for genetic family. It is crucial you have a support system during this time and seek professional help when needed.

After experiencing a DNA surprise or when seeking our genetic family, we often reflect on and reinterpret our childhood experiences. The family we grew up with may no longer seem the same. This is why we begin here—in the family you grew up in, amidst the nostalgic yet introspective ambiance of autumn. It's a season of beauty, but it also carries a bittersweet sense of change.



*Autumn*

**THE family I  
Grew up in**

**Autumn teaches us the beauty of  
letting go. Growth requires release  
—it's what the trees do.**

**Ka'ala**

## *Autumn is a time to reflect on the...*

- importance of reflecting on childhood roles, family traditions, and one's inner sense of self.
- feeling of being different from growing up in a family without genetic ties.
- experience of disenfranchised grief and ambiguous loss from not growing up with genetic relatives.
- emotional challenges and identity confusion that impact self-perception and family relationships.
- need for a strong support system while dealing with a DNA surprise or during the search for genetic family.

## MY family

photo →  
description

Place a 4 x 6 photo or write about who was part of the family you grew up in. \_\_\_\_\_

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