

My name is Jaemi, I'm 24 years old, and was adopted through Eastern when I was seven months old. A few years ago, I was fortunate enough to locate and correspond with my birthmother. Before coming to Korea, I wrote to tell her when I was visiting and that I would love to meet her if she were willing. Although Eastern was kind enough to try to arrange a meeting, I was told upon arriving in Korea that my birthmother was not ready to meet me because it was still "too hard" for her. Standing in the middle of the Incheon airport, I could feel my dream of meeting her quickly slip out of reach.

Of all the amazing experiences I had in Korea, the evening with the women of Sharon's Home was by far one of the most memorable and life changing. It was a night of healing that gave me a sense of peace I've longed for my entire life. While I can't recall every question or comment exchanged, I distinctly remember my feelings of compassion and admiration for these young women who were kind enough to share their personal stories, dreams, tears and laughter with us.

To be honest, the whole experience was a bit surreal. There I was with these women in the same room, seated at the same table, and yet two vastly different cultures separated us. We were approximately the same age and yet an entire generation separated us. I spoke to them as though they were my birthmother and they spoke to me as though I was their child.

Prior to this meeting, I was still very much conflicted over the failed opportunity to meet my birthmother. While the rational, intellectual part of me clearly understood the reasons that prevented my birthmother from meeting me, the emotional part of me was still plagued by conflicted feelings of disappointment, understanding, frustration and compassion. The more experiences these women shared, however, the more I came to understand my own birthmother's experience and difficult position. I am eternally grateful to Eastern and Dillon for coordinating this meeting, which helped begin to fill a lifelong void in my heart that I have reserved especially for my birthmother. If I had just one more minute with these women, I would tell them that "in the same way you will always love us regardless of where our respective lives take us, we too will always love you."

Strangely enough, although my birthmother and I never met while I was in Korea, I feel closer to her than I ever thought possible and remain hopeful that we will see each other when the time is right.

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