

What is Genetic Attraction?

This is about feelings of attraction that may be experienced by adults when they reconnect with birth family members from whom they've been separated by adoption. It can be an attraction by either party that is so strong and so intense, that it becomes an infatuation and includes the need to touch, stroke, caress and feel connected.

Equally the attraction gives rise to a sense of underlying shame and guilt, together with a feeling of rejection that may prevent effective communication because the emotions are too threatening to share with anyone.

Why Does Genetic Attraction Occur?

Suggested reasons for the attraction include:

- **Similar Characteristics:** Similar genetic makeup can produce similarities in temperament, physical appearance, and other areas that are common in all birth families to a certain extent. This similarity can lead to feelings of attraction as we are often drawn to people who are like us.
- **Self Love:** While we may not want to admit it, we generally tend to feel more comfortable with those whose characteristics are similar to our own. It may be the first time you have seen someone that looks like you which leads to a strong desire to watch/touch/stroke the other person. Potentially the boundaries become blurred and confusing.
- **Aromatic Identification:** It has been suggested that a subconscious memory of the smell of one's own family may be recognised and, if so, would cause an actual physical reaction. When the desire to consummate the relationship enters the equation, genetic attraction becomes Genetic Sexual Attraction. Almost invariably, the outcome of sexual relations between reunited relatives is that any subsequent lasting relationship, platonic or otherwise, is doomed.

Genetic Attraction is a recognised 'syndrome' as it can be rationally explained and understood. As with any issue, this needs to be met head-on despite its sensitive nature. It is a natural human desire to be with our own, and it's not at all unusual to react with excessive emotion when experiencing reunion. If you find yourself "falling in love" or sexually attracted to a newfound birth family member, here's what the experts say:

- Strong feelings of attraction are not 'abnormal'.
- There's nothing wrong with you.
- Recognise the initial excitement for what it is: the first rush and thrill of reunion, and the birth of love for family.
- Remember that relationships take time to develop and that goes for long-separated birth family members as well. Time will serve to settle the relationship in its proper context. Meanwhile put boundaries in place such as only seeing your relative in the presence of another person and at planned intervals.
- Talk to others who have experienced reunion.
- Find a support group whose leader is comfortable talking about the subject.
- Seek counselling and support.