

“Children are not cuddly toys that you buy in a store or pick up from an animal shelter”

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Yesterday I spoke with Petra Welkers, 57. She is the author of the book [„Geburtsgeheimnis. Adoption im Spiegel von Geschichte und Therapie“](#), a mixture of autobiography, non-fiction and fairy tales. If her book is as good as my conversation with her, you should read it! I just ordered it.

Petra has been adopted twice. She calls her first adoptive mother “foster grandma”: she was 54 years old when Petra, under a year old, came to her. 13 years later Petra was adopted by her. “I turned her down,” she told me. “There was no warmth”.

Another 28 years later, when she was 42, she was adopted a second time – by the “parents of my heart”, as Petra called them to me. And who were the parents of her heart? Her stepsister and her husband. Her voice warms up when she talks about them.

She never met her first parents. She looked for them and found them. Or should we say: She found documents and names. Because they had died years earlier.

The longing for the second child

But let's rewind a few years: She got married and had a child. She wanted a second one, but it didn't come.

Petra considered adoption, but her husband opposed it.

What to do? Reproductive medicine was out of the question for her.

She let go of her desire to have children.

And two years later ... the second child came. A blockage was resolved. A not atypical phenomenon, so much "not atypical" that youth welfare offices sometimes recommend childless couples who adopt a child to use contraception for the sake of the adopted child.

Petra had also received a recommendation from her doctor: "Just do something else! Think of new goals!" Which Petra did. She started a new job with more responsibility.

And she got another recommendation from her doctor: "Get a pet!" Her husband and she decided to take a dog, a cairn terrier.



"That was the right decision! Because an adopted child is not a projection screen for unresolved grief for the biological child that was not born," Petra told me.

"Children aren't cuddly toys that you buy in a store or pick up from an animal shelter." She herself was shocked by her own words. But it sounds sharper than she meant.

The pain of the unfulfilled desire to have children

First, she has acted in this way herself and knows both perspectives, that of the child and that of the mother. "The unfulfilled desire to have children can be a disaster for women and couples. I am able to feel that pain," she told me.

And secondly, Petra is not cut out of the wood to give others top-down advice. From where I know this? Petra has told me a few things in confidence that she doesn't want to see published. She erased quite a few things from my text. Out

of respect for the feelings of her loved ones.

But I think it's more than respect. Petra is a woman with heart, that's how I experienced her in our conversation. She can empathize well with others, including her foster grandma.

At least she protected her in our conversation. Letz me put it this way: What she feels for her foster mother is, like her book, a mixture. A mixture of rejection, respect - and love.