



## Adoption Attuned Coaching Certification



# Course Book

## Lesson 3





“

*I think  
all adoptive parents should ...  
allow their child to feel pain, discomfort,  
and sadness around adoption  
without taking it personally ...*

*It is important adoptees can express these  
feelings with their parents  
and their parents allow them  
to express those feelings without guilt.”*

Isaac Etter

”



**Growing Intentional  
Families Together®**





# Lesson 3



## Learning Outcomes of *Lesson 3*

- Embraces Adoption Attunement Principles
- Appreciates the distinctions between adoptive parenting and bio parenting and between openness and open adoption
- Accepts the need for open communication regarding adoption complexity
- Understands trauma, attachment and the seven core Issues in adoption
- Knows about the complicating factors in adoptive families

# LESSON 3 Prep Sheet



1. Print [Lesson 3 Course Book](#)



2. Complete the Pretest [on LearnDash](#)



3. Read [Course Book pages 1-13](#)



4. Watch the slide presentation [Coaching Adoptive Parents](#)



5. Listen to and/or read these blogs/articles:

[Adoption Narratives](#),

[Adoption, We've GOT to Talk](#)

[Parents Need to Handle Their Own Tough Stuff](#)

[Dear Abby, We Need to Talk About Gotcha!](#)

[Intent Versus Impact: Why It Matters](#)

[Relinquishment Trauma: The Forgotten Trauma](#)

[Adoption Trauma - Part 1: What is Adoption Trauma](#)

[Preparing for the Unexpected as an Adoptive Family](#)

[Ambiguous Loss Haunts Foster and Adopted Children](#)



6. Listen to Podcast [Joanna Ivey interview with Lori Holden](#)



7. Read [Course Book pages 14-17](#)

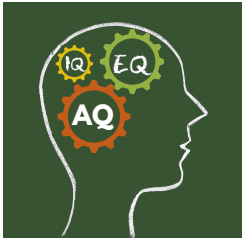


8. Journal on one or more of the Pause to Consider points from the slide presentation [Coaching Adoptive Parents](#)



9. Complete the [Lesson 3 Quiz](#) on LearnDash

# Pretest



## Test your “AQ”

Circle the number of each true statement

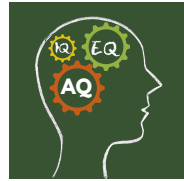
1. Expectations, beliefs, and presuppositions have little influence on how people understand adoption.
2. Parents can influence their child’s genes and the way they are expressed.
3. Truth telling is integral to parents and children sustaining a loving, trusting, life-long relationship.
4. Conversation seeds can facilitate openness and dialog between parent and child.
5. Relinquishment and separation from the birth mother and family is a trauma characterized by fracture.
6. There is no additional trauma associated with being adopted into a family.
7. When an adopted baby is overly calm and undemanding, it shows that they have adjusted well into their new family.
8. Adoptive families must help children manage their sibling dynamics so they can learn to trust the adoptive parents to care for them.
9. Parents who adopt transracially face some additional responsibilities.
10. Adoptive parents need not worry about activating their child’s fear of rejection and abandonment when disciplining their child.
11. A child adopted at an older age may remember difficult or frightening circumstances associated with holiday celebrations and this might show up in their behavior.
12. An adopted child will always delight in celebrating their birthday.



Continue to next page.



Pretest



## Test your “AQ”

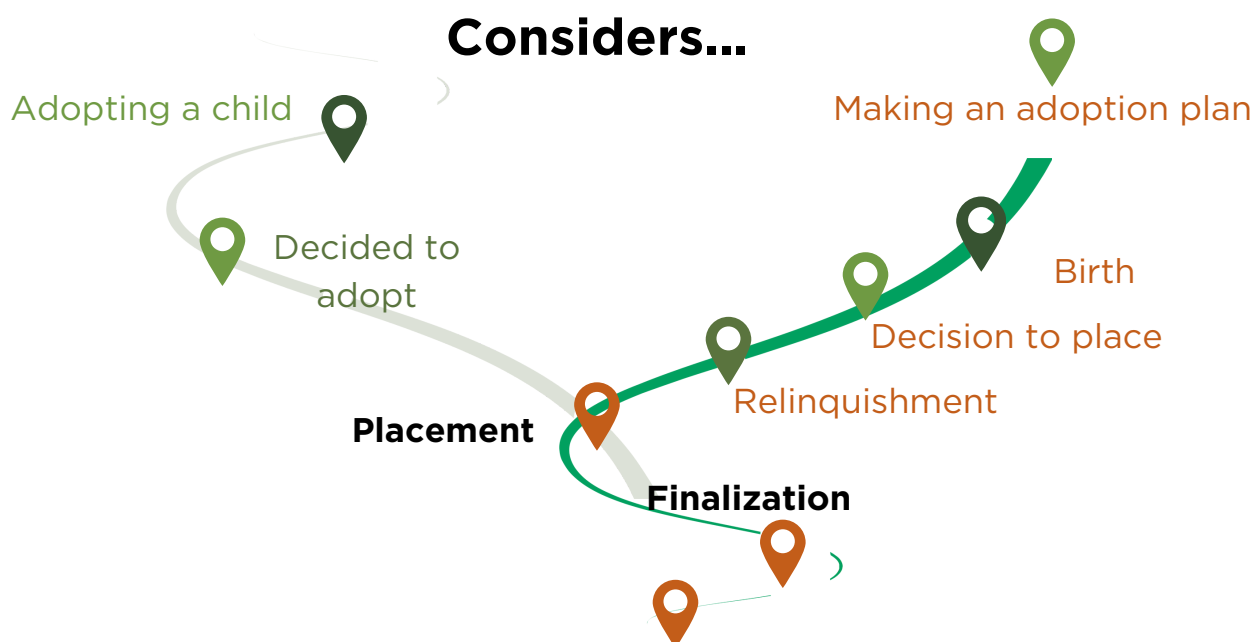
Circle the number of each true statement

13. Celebrations of a child’s Arrival Day evolve as they grow and develop a deeper comprehension of how adoption changed their lives.
14. Adoptive parents should avoid talking about difficult issues so they avoid upsetting their child.
15. It is appropriate for adoptive parents to expect their child to be 100% loyal to them.
16. The distinction between privacy and secrecy does not matter.
17. There are some particular phrases and language that adoptive parents must commit to never speaking to their child.
18. All parents must follow ethical obligations. Adoptive parents face some additional ethical requirements.
19. An adopted child’s efforts to create distance from others and protect themselves stem from their need for felt safety.
20. Adopted children and their parents benefit when they engage with other adoptive parents and children.
21. Feeling the need to prove that their adoptive family is real can lead parents to ignore the complexities that need to be addressed in adoptive families.
22. Adoptive parents must compile a Continuity of Care Plan that addresses adoption-related responsibilities.

True: two, three, four, five, eight, nine, ten, eleven, thirteen, seventeen, nineteen  
False: one, six, seven, ten, twelve, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two



# Living the Tri-spective POV



## Living as an Adoption Attuned Family

Help your clients to see that even as they are facing their own set of circumstances and challenges, the birth mother, birth family, and adoptee are simultaneously facing their own set of challenges as well. The way each of them sees, feels about, and experiences adoption is filtered through their respective points of view. By attuning to one another's situation with respect and empathy, they create an atmosphere of openness and Tri-relational connectivity.

Focus on strengthening your client's Tri-spective point of view

- Discuss Adoption Attuned Parenting® Principles
- Refute adoption myths
- Update their adoption paradigm
- Explore the points of view of each triad member

# INTERNATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION CORE COMPETENCIES



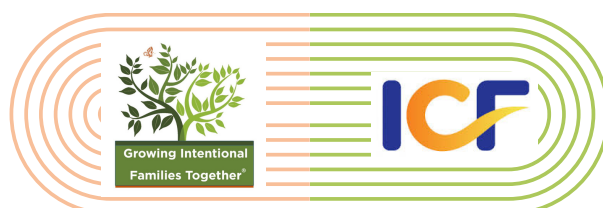
While all of the ICF Core Competencies are foundational, the checkmarks indicate which competencies are pivotal when coaching clients after adoption.





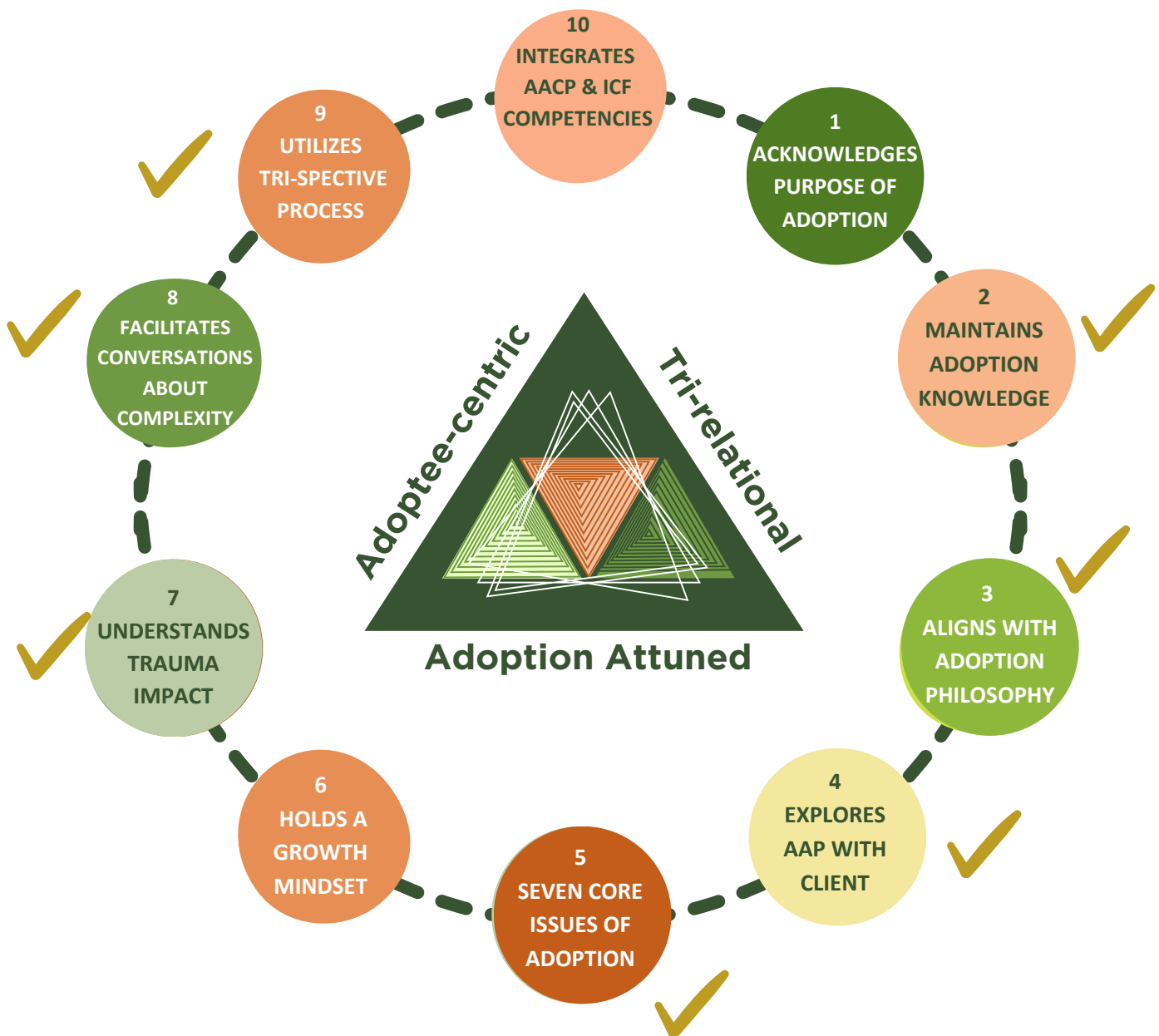
# Adoption Attuned Coaching Competencies

1. Acknowledges the prime purpose of adoption
2. Maintains a basic knowledge of domestic and international adoption
3. Aligns with Growing Intentional Families Together's Adoption Philosophy
4. Explores how Adoption Attuned Parenting® Principles supports client's goals
5. Acknowledges the impact of the seven core Issues of adoption
6. Holds a growth mindset regarding shifting adoption paradigms
7. Understands every adoption originates in trauma and impacts all involved
8. Facilitates conversations about adoption complexity
9. Utilizes the Tri-spective Coaching Model
10. Integrates ICF Core Competencies with Adoption Attuned Coaching Competencies





# Adoption Attuned Coaching Competencies



While all of the AACC Core Competencies are foundational, the checkmarks indicate which competencies are pivotal when coaching clients after adoption.



# Language Matters

As we mentioned in previous lessons, language plays a pivotal role in establishing respectful, accurate, and effective communication. Terms to learn and understand for Section 3 are:

- Adoption Disruption
- Adoption Dissolution
- Entrance Narrative
- Gotcha Day
- Life Book
- Open Adoption
- “Rehoming”

Some significant distinctions to clarify:

- Contact versus openness
- Legal versus moral obligation
- “Seeking” versus “tolerating” contact
- “Unsafe now” versus “unsafe permanently”

\*Refer to the *Dictionary of Adoption Terms*



# Talking about Adoption

Once your client begins parenting an adopted child, they will have more opportunities to talk about their adoption journey. Some conversations will be welcome. Others will not. Some will be planned. Others will be unexpected.

Once again, intentionality, clarity and the Tri-spective point of view are pivotal. It may be helpful for you to discuss with them:

- Setting, holding and honoring boundaries
- Recognizing that the child's story belongs to them
- Distinguishing between privacy versus secrecy
- Resisting oversharing
- Responding to questions from friends and family
- Replying to questions from strangers
- Exploring guidelines about posting online
- Telling a child they are adopted—when, what, why and how
- Creating an Entrance Narrative
- Composing a Life Book
- Building the family adoption library



# Composing Adoption Entrance Narratives

Listen to the [podcast](#) interview between Joanna Ivey and Lori Holden. (This is item 6 on the Lesson 3 Prep Sheet.)

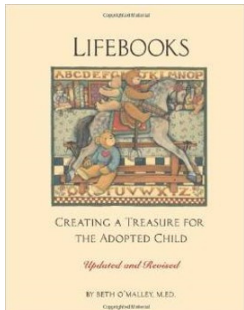
Read the blog post, [Adoption Narratives](#) on the “The Adopted Ones” blog. With these two resources in mind, imagine you are introducing the concept of Entrance Narratives to one of the profile clients.

How would you develop their understanding that *how* they talk about their child’s story is as important as *what* details they include in the telling.

Explore the following points with your client to guide them in creating their child’s Entrance Narrative.

- Purpose of the Entrance Narrative
  - To capture a coherent and complete story of how they joined the client’s family
  - To hold the child as the focus of the story
- Factual Accuracy
- Time line—where does the story begin
- Tone
  - Avoid glorifying themselves
  - Avoid casting themselves as heroes
  - Avoid vilifying the birth parents
  - Avoid casting the child as needing to be rescued
- Consider that phrases like *God-ordained* or *It was meant to be* can land hurtfully with adoptees

# Life Books



Children delight in hearing about themselves and how they came into their families. And, parents are just as pleased to tell them how they came to be adopted. Yet their adoption story is not their complete story. There's more to tell because adoptees had a life that predated the time when they joined their adoptive family.

This includes their pre-natal experience and any time spent time with their birth families or other folks who cared for them prior to joining their adoptive families. All of the people, places and events that occurred in that pre-adoption period are a part of the child's history. The smallest detail might become important later in life. Accurate information will help them assemble the complex pieces of their life into a coherent whole as they mature. Some facts may be difficult, painful even tragic. Yet it is an authentic part of their reality. Parents often wonder how to compile all of this information. What should they include? Where should they begin? How can they make it age appropriate?

Beth O'Malley, M.Ed., an adoptee, adoptive parent, counselor, and social worker has written an excellent guide to writing a Life Book. It is aptly called, *Life Books: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child*. O'Malley an adoptee, therapist and adoptive parent asserts that creating a Life Book is a labor of love. Artistic or writing talent is not essential. The value and beauty exist in the gift of the child's complete history—their truth.



# After an Adoption Occurs

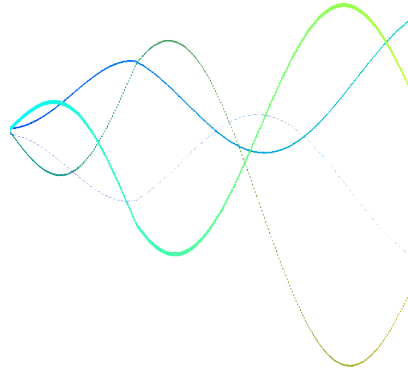


## Coaching your client after the adoption process might include

- **Several foundational tasks exploring adoption**
  - Parenting adopted children requires extra knowledge and preparation
  - Integrating adoption conversations as a welcome, safe and regular topic
  - Adopting is a family experience that impacts all family members
  - Distinguishing between openness and contact in open adoption
  - Understanding the impact of adoption trauma
  - Understanding the Attachment Process
  - Recognizing the Both/And's of adoption
- **Recognizing that adoption is a lifelong experience**
  - Being curious about their child's needs, interests, thoughts, and feelings
  - Realizing the gains and losses in adoption evolve with the child's maturity
  - Valuing differences as much as similarities to the adoptive family (attributes/talents/interests)
  - Juggling "extra" relationships connected with open adoption
  - Sustaining the *spirit* of openness in adoption
  - Maintaining a child's privacy including any online presence
  - Appreciating that people and circumstances do change
- **Learning about adoption realities**
  - Knowing adoption is often a causal factor in a child's behavior, yet not always
  - Focusing on success in open adoption
  - Understanding the concept of the Primal Wound and the Ghost Kingdom
  - Appreciating the influence of cultural presuppositions and expectations
  - Dealing with the impact of the seven core issues in adoption
  - Recognizing the complexity of identity formation for the adopted child
  - Acknowledging that both adoptive and birth families are part of the child forever
  - Accepting that behavior is how children express their needs and struggles



# Coaching Conversations



Call to mind the profile clients introduced in The Discernment Process slide presentation. Imagine having a coaching conversation with Sheila and Henry.

After learning that she couldn't conceive, Sheila immediately locked onto the idea of adoption without doing any research about raising an adopted child. Henry was not fully committed to the idea. He was basically agreeing only because he knows his wife was so desperate to become a mom. Also, Henry was reluctant to consider an open adoption.

Now that they have adopted, consider some of the issues and topics you might discuss with them:



- Embracing the Tri-spective point of view
- Exploring their respective mindsets, world views, and current knowledge base as they parent their child
- Developing a knowledge of the Attachment Process
- Applying Adoption Attuned Parenting® Principles
- Working for the success of the open adoption arrangement (if there is one)
- Recognizing that they (Sheila and Henry) probably have different attachment styles





# References

@Ghost Kingdom, a play and a film by Brian Stanton

Beyond Consequences Resources, Heather Forbes, LCSW

Ethics and Adoption, Adoption Quarterly

Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief, Pauline Boss. Ph.D.

Life Books: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child, Beth O'Malley, M.Ed.

The Hidden Dangers in Your Chosen Entrance Narrative

The Primal Wound, Nancy Verrier, LMFT



# Resources

## Blogs

[Adoptee's Birthdays Blend Laughter and Tears, Joy and Sadness](#)

[Difficult Adoption Topics: Rape, Suicide, Drug Abuse, Prostitution, Incarceration, etc.](#)

[When the Truth is Ugly, Painful and/or Sad](#)

## Books

[Adoption Unfiltered: Revelations from Adoptees, Birth Parents, Adoptive Parents, and Allies](#)

[Telling the Truth to Your Adopted or Foster Child](#), Betsy Keefer and Jayne Schooler