



## Adoption Attuned Coaching Certification



# Course Book

## Lesson 2





“  
One of  
the most loving things  
an adoptive parent can do is to  
*embrace curiosity*  
about adoption complexity  
and  
*release certainty*  
about what they know  
and believe about adoption.  
”

—Gayle H. Swift



Growing Intentional  
Families Together®





# Lesson Two

## The Adopting Process



### Learning Outcomes of *Section 2*

- Understands the hidden dangers of adoption myths
- Embraces the Adoption Attuned Parenting® Principles
- Appreciates the legalities involved in adoption
- Holds a Tri-spective awareness

# LESSON 2 Prep Sheet



1. Print [Lesson 2 Course Book](#)



2. Download and/or print and read  
[G.I.F.T.'s Adoption Philosophy](#)  
[Adoptee Bill of Rights](#)  
[Birth Parents Bill of Rights](#)



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



4. Read [Course Book](#) pages 1-12



5. Watch the slide presentation [Coaching Clients through the Adoption Process](#)



6. Read these blogs  
[Growing Adoption Success](#)  
[Recipe for a Happy Family](#)  
[Adoption Legalities and Ethics Have Life-long Repercussions](#)  
[Insights on Open Adoptions](#)  
[Talking about Adoption Matters](#)



7. Read [Course Book](#) pages 12-24.



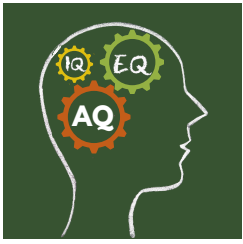
8. Journal on one or more of the Pause to Consider points from the slide presentation [Coaching Clients through the Adoption Process](#).



9. Complete the [Lesson 2 Quiz](#) on LearnDash



# Pretest



## Test your “AQ”

Circle the number of each true statement

1. Only infants experience adopted related trauma
2. The Ghost Kingdom refers to all of the people who are simultaneously absent and present in the hearts, minds, and lives of the adoption triad.
3. All members of the adoption triad experience the seven core issue in adoption.
4. Coexisting joy and grief are one example of the Both/Ands seen in adoption.
5. Adoptive parents need to understand the attachment process and to be intentional in their efforts to build attachment.
6. Ethics are important in adoption only to prevent an adoption from being overturned.
7. The prenatal environment affects an adopted child.
8. Openness in adoption is the same as contact.
9. Prospective adoptive parents' expectations have little influence on one's parenting.
10. Prospective adoptive parents' fears can complicate the relationship with a birth mother.
11. A coach does not need to explore their client's financial decisions regarding the adoption.



Continue to next page.

# Pretest



## Test your “AQ”

Circle the number of each true statement

12. Full disclosure and honesty are essential when moving through the adoption process.
13. Clients do not need to worry about unlearning any misinformation about adoption.
14. The home study's sole purpose is to assess the safety of the home.
15. The social worker's sole purpose is to uncover the prospective adoptive parents' flaws.
16. The lived experiences and world view of a child adopted from foster care can color their responses to the adoptive parents.
17. Parenting a sibling group differs only slightly from parenting a single child.
18. Names can have an influence on identity.
19. Parents need to be intentional about gathering, securing and sharing their child's information.
20. A client's words can reveal if they are holding onto any adoption myths or misinformation.
21. It can be helpful to explore some of the “what ifs” that worry your client when they are adopting.
22. Parents should plan a big celebration on the day they welcome their child into the family.
23. Parents can raise an adopted child by following the parenting blueprint their own parents used.

# Language Matters



As we mentioned in Section 1, language plays a pivotal role in establishing respectful, accurate, and effective communication.

For example, ambiguous loss is experienced by the adoptee, the birth parents and the adoptive parents.

Terms to learn and understand for Section 2 are:

- *Adoption disruption*
- *Adoption dissolution*
- *Adoption finalization*
- *Adoption narratives*
- *Adoption probationary period*
- *Ambiguous Loss (parents and child)*
- *Attachment process*
- *Entrance Narrative*
- *Home study*
- *Open adoption*
- *Primal Wound*
- *Relinquishment*
- *Termination of parental rights*
- *Toxic words and phrases*

\*Refer to the [Dictionary of Adoption Terms](#)

# The Tri-spective Coaching Model



This course uses a Tri-spective Coaching Model that includes three points of view: the adoptee, birth parents, and adoptive parents. Three presuppositions are central to this Tri-spective model:

- An adoptee centric focus anchors the model.
- The belief that the adoptee, birth parents, and adoptive parents are interconnected. We call this Tri-relational Interconnectivity
- The Elements of Adoption Attunement underpin this Tri-spective Coaching Model. We will explore these in detail in Lesson Two.





# Adoption Attuned Parenting®



**Adoption Attuned coaches teach their parent clients to following pillars of the AAP approach:**

- The Tri-spective viewpoint
  - Hold an adoptee-centric view
  - Adoption complexity awareness
  - Adoptive parenting distinctions
- The Adoption Attunement Elements
- The importance of a curiosity mindset about adoption complexity
- Language matters

# Adoption Attunement Elements

- Operate with an adoptee centric focus.
- Recognize the Seven Core Issues in Adoption.
- Understand the Attachment process
- Use respectful adoption language.
- Talk about all aspects of adoption.
- Acknowledge the grief and loss issues of all adoption constellation members.
- Parents address their own issues.
- Respect birth parents and first families.
- Follow ethical practices.
- Recognize adoption is a family experience.
- Honor a child's need to know and connect with their birth family.
- Integrate a child's birth heritage.
- Remember a child's story belongs to them.
- Model, teach, and hold healthy boundaries.
- Use Adoption Attuned discipline methods.
- Educate family, friends, teachers, and faith communities about adoption.
- Nurture and value a child's innate talents and encourage them to be themselves.
- Encourage playfulness and good humor as a family value.
- Adoptive parenting differs from bio parenting and includes unique responsibilities and challenges.





# Deepening the Tri-spective POV



As a coach trained in the Adoption Attunement Coaching Competency Program, you will be deepening a Tri-spective point of view in your client.

In the previous lesson, you asked your client to consider adoption from a more global perspective. Now, help them feel it from a more specific viewpoint.

Ask your client to:

- Describe their current experience in the midst of the adoption process
- Imagine what the expectant/biological mother is experiencing
- Imagine what the unborn or older “waiting” child is experiencing



# Seven Core Issues of Adoption

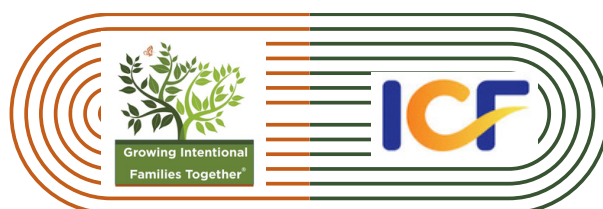
As an Adoption Attuned Coach it is important to understand that the seven core issues affect all members of the adoption triad. Feelings of loss, rejection, shame, guilt, and grief, questions of identity, pressures on intimacy, and the yearning for mastery and self control show up differently in adoptees than in their adoptive and birth parents.

	<b>Prospective Parents</b>	<b>Birth Parents</b>	<b>Adoptees</b>
<b>Loss</b>	Genetic connection	Genetic continuity	Genetic continuity/connection
<b>Rejection</b>	Fear they won't be chosen to parent	Fear their child's hate and rejection	Will my adoptive parents reject me like my birth parents did?
<b>Shame &amp; Guilt</b>	May feel ashamed of their Infertility	Ashamed of their inability/unwillingness to parent	Feel shame because they believe the adoption was their fault
<b>Grief</b>	Grieve their inability to conceive a child	Grieve not being able to parent their child themselves	Grieve the loss of their original family and identity
<b>Identity</b>	Questioning if they are a <i>real</i> man or woman since they can't conceive and birth a baby	Wonder if they are still a parent	How do nature and nurture influence who I am?
<b>Intimacy</b>	Physical intimacy "by the clock" vs spontaneously	Shame/guilt/grief may block openness & trust	Wary of intimacy because people who love me will give me away.
<b>Mastery &amp; Control</b>	Loss of reproductive autonomy may cause need for increased control in other aspects of life	Loss of autonomy may cause need for increased control in other aspects of life	Loss of autonomy may cause need for increased control in other aspects of life



# 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



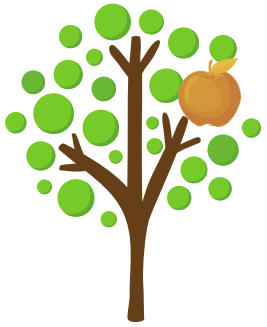


# Adoption Attuned Coaching Competencies



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

# During the Adoption Process



## Coaching your client during the adoption process might include...

- **Several foundational tasks exploring adoption**

- Understanding the adoption process
- Observing legalities
- Keeping the long-view in mind

- **Recognizing that adoption is a lifelong experience**

- Learning about open adoption
- Expanding their knowledge about adoptive parenting
- Building their family safety net
- Educating family and friends

- **Learning about adoption realities**

- Home study process
- Managing stress and anxiety
- Staying engaged in life while waiting
- Spending the waiting time preparing to be an Adoption Attuned parent
- Engaging in the Matching Process
- Second thoughts—the client's and the expectant mother's



# Talking about... Adopting

Once your client begins the adoption process, they will likely be talking about it a lot. Raise their awareness of their emotions and their knowledge—or lack of knowledge—about adoption that might be reflected in their words.

Refer to the eBook (*The Hidden Dangers of Adoption Myths*) that you downloaded from the Lesson 1 Prep Sheet. Help your clients identify which myths they mistakenly accept as fact.

Your client will begin to develop their personal story around their journey. Their narrative will mention the events and people involved. How they describe them matters.

Some important points to discuss are:

- Staying mindful of others involved
- Avoiding oversharing
- Thinking about the Entrance Narrative they will create





# Entrance Narratives

People will be interested in your client's adoption story from their first thoughts about adopting, to working with an agency/attorney/state social services agency and being matched with a child. The way your client describes their journey matters. The words and the details that your client uses reflect a mindset and a tone. What they include—or exclude—is important.

This story is called an Entrance Narrative. Your clients will want to prepare two versions—one for adults and people outside the family, the other for their child. Both versions need to respect the child's privacy and should avoid painting the parents as rescuers or saviors.

The Entrance Narrative provides the child with a cohesive story that explains why they were separated from their family and adopted. It should include age-appropriate information that parents can expand as their child matures.

A common mistake adoptive parents make is to say that, *Your birth mother loved you so much, she chose to place you for adoption.* On the surface, this may sound appealing, however, it plants an unsettling seed in the child's mind: *People who love me will abandon me.* Instead, explain that the reason driving the adoption was an adult's desire to keep the child safe and provide security because the adult was unable to do so.

An Entrance Narrative:

- Focuses on the adoptee's point of view
- Relates their child's unique story
- Includes accurate, age-appropriate information
- Considers
  - Avoids glorifying the adoptive parents
  - Avoids vilifying the birth/first parents
  - Avoid phrases like "God-ordained" or "It was meant to be."

# Lifebooks



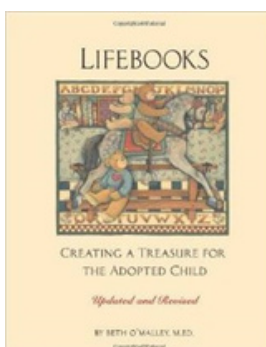
A Life Book is a wonderful way adoptive parents honor their child’s life story—from the beginning even before they were adopted. It is a labor of love. Artistic or writing talent is not important. The value and beauty exist in the gift of the child’s complete history—their truth.

A life book records these details framed in age- appropriate ways that can be expanded as the child matures. Each and every part is integral to their history.

Like all children, they were conceived, born, and entered the world. Some experienced intermediate stops prior to joining their adoptive families. The people, places and events that occurred are part of the child’s history.

Some facts may be difficult, painful even tragic. Yet it is an authentic part of their reality. The smallest detail might become important later in life. Accurate information is the key as they mature and work to assemble the complex pieces of their life.

Beth O’Malley, an adoptee, adoptive parent, and social worker has written an excellent guide to help adoptive parents create their child’s special book.



[Lifebooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child](#)

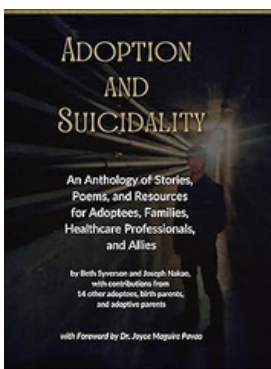
# Adoption and Suicidality



Adoption sets adoptees and birthparents on an entirely new trajectory that divides their lives into two segments: before the adoption occurred and after the adoption occurred. With adoption, their life “before” ends and their life “after” begins. This permanent redesign of their lives has a profound, life-long impact that adoptees and birth mothers must handle for the rest of their lives.

It is not surprising that many adoptees and first parents struggle to reconcile this fracture. Frequently their grief is dismissed, invalidated, denied, or disenfranchised. Society tells them that they should be grateful, not heartbroken. Sadly, many turn to suicide as a solution.

Older statistics indicated that adoptees attempt suicide at four times the rate of non-adopted persons. The latest research indicates much higher numbers. Data from Dr. Lynn Roche Zubov’s eye-opening new survey is still undergoing analysis. Preliminary results can be accessed at [Preliminary Exploration into Adoption Reunions](#).



Syverson’s book [Adoption and Suicidality](#) says “Adoptees are 36.7 times more likely to attempt suicide than the national average. Over 900 adopted people were asked, and 22% said they had attempted suicide. Sadly the numbers of first mothers attempting suicide reveal slightly higher numbers.

By contrast, the national average for attempted suicide among the general public is 0.6%.

Adopted persons or a first parents can complete Dr. Zubov’s survey. She will keep updating it each year with the new data gathered. Here’s the [survey](#) itself.



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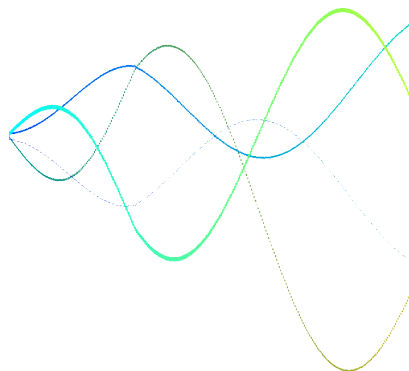
# INTERNATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION CORE COMPETENCIES



While all of the ICF Core competencies are foundational, the checkmarks indicate which competencies are pivotal in a discernment process conversation.



# Coaching Conversations...



Remember the profile clients introduced in *The Discernment Process* slide presentation. Imagine having a coaching conversation with Sarah and Jim. They were older when they started to discuss the possibility of adopting a child. Jim is concerned about the lack of a genetic connection and is not as excited about adopting as Sarah.



Consider the following:

- Exploring client's mindset, world view, and current knowledge base about the adoption process
- Discussing the pros and cons of an open adoption
- Managing the adoption process
- Strengthening the Tri-spective point of view



# References

Adoption Medicine Clinic

The Attachment Project

Beyond Consequences, Heather Forbes, LCSW

Center on the Developing Child (Harvard University) videos on the Serve and Return Process

Ethics in Adoption

Ethics in Adoption: Public Matching Announcements

Ghost Kingdom, Betty Jean Lifton, Ph.D

Lifebooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child, Beth O'Malley

The Open-hearted Way to Open Adoption: Helping Your Child Grow Up Whole, Lori Holden

Raising Securely Attached Kids: Using Connection-Focused Parenting to Create Confidence, Empathy and Resilience, Eli Harwood, MA, LPC

Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency, Sharon Kaplan Roszia, MS; Allison Davis Maxon, MS, LMFT

Thoughts on Changing an Adopted Child's Name, Isaac Etter

Trauma-Informed Parenting: Your Complete Guide, Massachusetts Adoption Resource

# Resources



## Adoption Medicine

[Adoption Medicine Clinic](#)

## Attachment

[The Attachment Project](#)

[Center on the Developing Child](#), Harvard University (videos on the Serve and Return

[Raising Securely Attached Kids](#), Eli Harwood, MA, LP

## Children's Books

[ABC, Adoption & Me](#), Gayle H. Swift, Casey Swift

[We're Adopted. So What?](#), Gayle H. Swift, Casey Swift

## Ethics

[Ethics in Adoption](#)

[Ethics in Adoption: Public Matching Announcements](#)

## Open Adoption

[The Open Hearted Way to Open Adoption](#), Lori Holden

## Parenting

[Adoption Is A Family Affair: What Relatives and Friends Must Know](#), Patricia Irwin Johnston. MSJ

[Beyond Consequences](#), Heather Forbes, LCSW

[The Family of Adoption](#), Joyce Maguire Pavao, Ed. D., LCSW, LMFT

[Lifebooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child](#), Beth O'Malley M.Ed.

[Our Belief in the Myth of Adoption-As-Fairy-Tale Had Long Ago Exploded](#) (blog)

[Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency](#), Sharon Kaplan Roszia, MS; Allison Davis Maxon, MS, LMFT

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

[Thoughts on Changing an Adopted Child's Name](#), Isaac Etter (video clip)

[Trauma-Informed Parenting: Your Complete Guide](#), Massachusetts Adoption Resource

## Search and Reunion

[It's Not About You: Understanding Adoptee Search, Reunion & Open Adoption](#), Brooke Randolph, editor