



Adoption Attuned Coaching Certification



Course Book

Lesson 5





Lesson Five

Coaching/Understanding First/Birth Mothers





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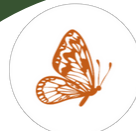
"Adoption isn't a birth mother's rejection but an unconditional love that inspires her to put herself last and do all she can for her baby."

-Mary Hines, birthmother

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Growing Intentional
Families Together®





Coaching/Understanding First/Birth Mothers



Review the

Learning Outcomes of *Lesson 5*

- Comprehends the profound and complex emotional impact of grief and loss.
- Understands the unique emotional dynamics involved in coaching a birth mom in an open adoption vs. a closed adoption.
- Grasps the importance of fostering a healthy relationship between a birth mother, her child, and the adoptive family.
- Considers the spectrum of emotions a reunion can bring.
- Appreciates the value of providing resources and support.

LESSON 5: Prep Sheet



1. Print [Lesson 5 Course Book](#)



2. Complete the Pretest on LearnDash



3. Watch [Coaching/Understanding First/Birth Parents](#)



4. Read the Blogs [Adoption Stigmas, Prejudices and Hope for REFORM](#)
[Bringing Adoption Out Of the Dark Ages and Into the Light](#)



5. Watch [Language Matters](#)
[Adoption Includes Grief](#)
[Open and Closed Adoption](#)
[Value of an Adoptee-Centric Relationship](#)
[Reunion](#)



6. Listen to Podcast Slide 32: [This is What I Hoped You'd Be Like](#)



7. Watch the slide presentation [Power of Support,](#)



8. Read/Review [Birth Parent Concerns, Coaching Framework & Script, Pages 9 – 19 in Lesson 5 Course Book](#)



9 Respond to the [Journal Post Prompt on Page 17 in the Course Book](#)



10. Watch [Coach Kim's Adoption Story](#)



11. Complete the [Lesson 5 Quiz on LearnDash](#)

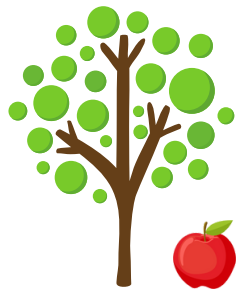
Adoption Attuned Coaching Competencies



While all Competencies are Necessary, Competencies 4-9 are First/Birth Mother Centric

1. Holds a basic knowledge of domestic and international adoption
2. Acknowledges the prime purpose of adoption
3. Aligns with Growing Intentional Families Together's Adoption Philosophy
- 4. Holds a growth mindset and an open mind regarding shifting adoption paradigms**
- 5. Acknowledges the impact of the Seven Core Issues of Adoption**
- 6. Understands every adoption originates in trauma and impacts all involved**
- 7. Utilizes the Tri-spective Coaching Process**
- 8. Facilitates conversations about adoption complexity**
- 9. Integrates Adoption Attuned Coaching Competencies with ICF Core Competencies**





Birth Parent Concerns



Here are a few common concerns to consider:

Personal Grief and Healing

- How will I cope with the grief and loss of placing my child for adoption?
- Will I ever fully heal?

Perception by Others

- How will others perceive me?
- Will I face judgment or stigma?

Emotional Well-being of the Child

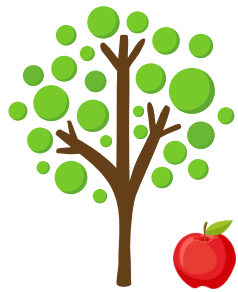
- How is my child adjusting to their new family?
- Are they happy and well cared for?

Maintaining a Relationship with the Child

- Will I be able to maintain a relationship with my child?
- How much contact will I have?

Long-term Impact on the Child

- How will the adoption affect my child in the long run?
- Will they understand my decision?



The Coaching Relationship



Here is a sample framework for what coaching a birth mother through her adoption experience might include.

1. Understand Her Story

- Actively listen to her experiences and feelings about the adoption.
- Assessment: Evaluate her emotional state, coping mechanisms, and support systems.

2. Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

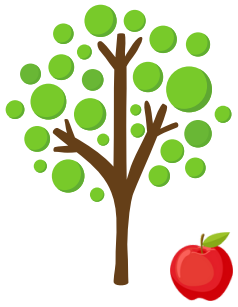
- Confidentiality: Assure the confidentiality and safety of the coaching space.
- Non-Judgmental Space: Encourage open and honest communication without judgment.

3. Setting Goals and Expectations

- Define Objectives: Collaborate on clear, realistic goals for her healing journey.
- Expectations: Discuss the coaching process, time commitment, and potential challenges.



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The Coaching Relationship



4. Addressing Grief and Loss

- Acknowledge Emotions: Validate her feelings of grief and loss.
- Emotional Expression: Encourage expressing emotions through talking, journaling, or creative outlets.

5. Developing Coping Strategies

- Mindfulness and Meditation: Introduce mindfulness techniques to manage emotions.
- Healthy Coping Mechanisms: Implement strategies like physical activity and connecting with supportive friends.

6. Building a Support Network

- Support Groups: Suggest joining support groups for birth moms.
- Professional Resources: Refer to additional resources like therapists specializing in adoption-related grief if necessary.

7. Navigating Triggers and Setbacks

- Identify Triggers: Help identify potential grief triggers.
- Developing Responses: Develop strategies for coping with these triggers.



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The Coaching Relationship



8. Reframing and Positive Thinking

- Cognitive Reframing: Teach techniques to challenge negative thoughts about herself and the adoption.
- Focus on Strengths: Encourage focusing on her strengths and the positive aspects of her decision.

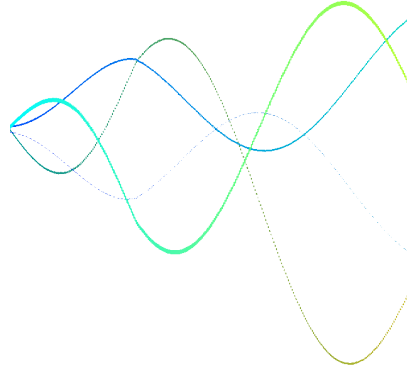
9. Encouraging Self-Compassion

- Self-Care Routine: Develop a self-care routine nurturing her well-being.
- Self-Compassion Exercises: Promote kindness and understanding towards herself.

10. Empowerment and Moving Forward

- Empowerment: Focus on reclaiming her identity and purpose beyond the adoption experience.
- Future Planning: Assist in setting new life goals and envisioning a fulfilling future.

Coaching Conversation



As you read over the following coaching scenario, consider how you would guide the conversation.

Christine placed her daughter, Anna, for adoption 23 years ago. Christine and her daughter, Anna recently reunited and met for the first time.

Christine feels like she is walking on eggshells with Anna because she will hear from her and then receive no communication at all for several days or weeks.

Christine is not sure how to connect with Anna. She is uncomfortable when she plans a family vacation without Anna but her kids don't always want to include Anna. Anna is resentful because her birth siblings are not interested in getting to know her. Christine feels her life has been disrupted. She wants a relationship with her daughter but doesn't know how to navigate that.

COACHING SCRIPT



COACH:

CHRISTINE, THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE. I CAN SENSE HOW MUCH YOU WANT A MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH ANNA, AND IT SOUNDS LIKE THIS PROCESS HAS BEEN BOTH JOYFUL AND COMPLEX. LET'S TALK ABOUT WHERE YOU'D LIKE TO FOCUS TODAY.

CHRISTINE:

THANK YOU. I'M JUST FEELING OVERWHELMED. I'M THRILLED TO HAVE ANNA IN MY LIFE AGAIN, BUT I FEEL LIKE I'M CONSTANTLY WALKING ON EGGSHELLS. I'LL HEAR FROM HER, AND WE'LL HAVE A WONDERFUL CONVERSATION OR TWO, AND THEN SHE JUST GOES SILENT FOR DAYS,

SOMETIMES WEEKS.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO REACH HER. PLUS, I FEEL SO GUILTY AND CONFLICTED WHEN I PLAN THINGS WITHOUT HER, BUT MY OTHER KIDS ARE RELUCTANT IN GETTING TO KNOW HER. SHE'S CLEARLY HURT BY IT, AND I FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF IT.



COACH:

THAT SOUNDS SO PAINFUL AND ALSO VERY UNDERSTANDABLE GIVEN THE COMPLEXITY OF THE REUNION EXPERIENCE. WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL MORE GROUNDED AND CONNECTED TO ANNA, REGARDLESS OF HOW FREQUENTLY SHE REACHES OUT?

CHRISTINE:

I GUESS I'D LIKE TO BE ABLE TO FEEL CONNECTED WITHOUT NEEDING CONSTANT COMMUNICATION. I'D LOVE TO KNOW THAT SHE FEELS CARED FOR, EVEN IF SHE'S NOT TALKING TO ME. IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHAT TO SAY OR DO BECAUSE SHE SEEMS SO FRUSTRATED WITH HER SIBLINGS, AND I DON'T WANT TO OVERSTEP.



COACH:

IT'S COMMON TO FEEL UNCERTAIN ABOUT BOUNDARIES, ESPECIALLY WHEN NAVIGATING A NEW RELATIONSHIP DYNAMIC. IF YOU COULD SEND ANNA A MESSAGE FROM YOUR HEART, WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT HER RESPONSE OR THE OUTCOME, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

CHRISTINE:

I THINK I'D WANT HER TO KNOW THAT I'M HERE FOR HER, THAT I LOVE HER AND I WANT HER TO TAKE HER TIME WITH THIS RELATIONSHIP. I WOULD WANT HER TO KNOW THAT I AM NOT TRYING TO REPLACE ANYONE IN HER LIFE, JUST TO HAVE MY OWN SPECIAL PLACE WITH HER. BUT I ALSO WANT HER TO UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE A FAMILY DYNAMIC TO MANAGE AND IT'S A BIT COMPLICATED FOR ME, TOO.



COACH:

THOSE ARE DEEPLY COMPASSIONATE WORDS, CHRISTINE. HOW MIGHT SHARING A MESSAGE LIKE THIS WITH ANNA FEEL FOR YOU? COULD THIS HELP WITH CREATING A FOUNDATION WHERE YOU FEEL SECURE REGARDLESS OF THE TIMING OF HER RESPONSES?

CHRISTINE:

IT WOULD. I GUESS IF I COULD FOCUS ON CREATING A FOUNDATION OF OPENNESS, SHE MIGHT FEEL MORE AT EASE. I JUST WORRY SHE'LL FEEL ABANDONED IF I GO ON WITH MY LIFE WITHOUT INCLUDING HER IN EVERYTHING.

COACH:

THAT MAKES SENSE. WHAT IF WE EXPLORED A WAY FOR YOU TO COMMUNICATE THAT YOU'RE THINKING OF HER, EVEN WHEN SHE'S NOT PHYSICALLY PRESENT? FOR EXAMPLE, MAYBE A SHARED RITUAL OR SMALL CHECK-IN THAT DOESN'T PRESSURE EITHER OF YOU BUT BUILDS A SENSE OF TRUST OVER TIME?



CHRISTINE:

I LIKE THAT IDEA. SOMETHING SMALL BUT MEANINGFUL. MAYBE A REGULAR CARD OR TEXT JUST LETTING HER KNOW I'M THINKING OF HER. I THINK THAT COULD HELP US BOTH FEEL CONNECTED WITHOUT SO MUCH PRESSURE.

COACH:

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A BEAUTIFUL STEP. AS WE CONTINUE THIS JOURNEY, WOULD YOU BE OPEN TO EXPLORING WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED WITH ANNA IN A WAY THAT ALSO HONORS YOUR FAMILY AND THEIR COMFORT LEVEL?

CHRISTINE:

YES, I WOULD. I THINK IT WOULD HELP ME FEEL MORE BALANCED AND LESS PULLED IN EVERY DIRECTION. THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME SEE A PATH FORWARD!

Journal Prompts



Reflect on a session where active listening significantly impacted the outcome.

How can that assist me as I practice active Adoption Attuned listening when my client shares her relinquishment/placement story?

What tools or techniques have I found most effective in providing emotional support for past clients?

How might I include Adoption Attuned principles with these techniques to assist me as I support birth moms/my client in navigating their emotions, particularly grief and loss?



Optional Supplementary Material

Birth Mother Stories:

Mandi's Story-

Cassie's Story

Roanne's Story

Birth Parent Experiences

Reading Material:

The Girls Who Went Away, Ann Fessler: A collection of stories from birth mothers about their experiences and emotional journeys.

The Body Keeps the Score, Bessel van der Kolk

It's Not About You: Understanding Adoptee Search, Reunion and Open Adoption, Brooke Randolph



Optional Supplementary Material

Birthparent Issues of Grief and Loss:

[Navigating Grief and Ambiguous Loss as a Birth Mom](#)

[Birthparent Issues of Grief and Loss](#)

[Understanding Ambiguous Loss](#)

[Birth Parents](#)

Birth mom Grants and Support:

[On Your Feet Foundation -Support for Birth Moms](#)

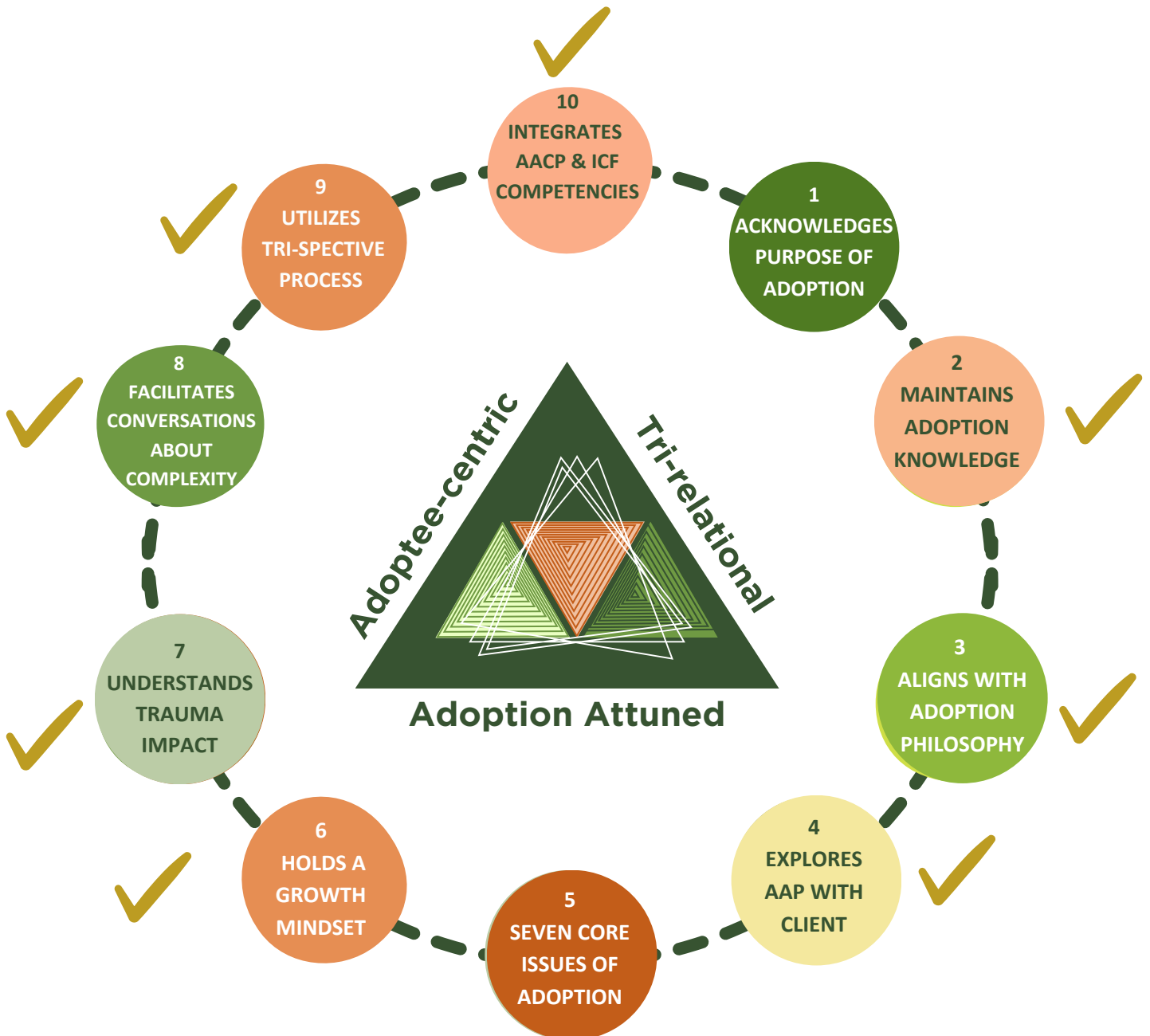
[Birth Moms Today](#)

Art Project for Working with Boundaries:

[Art Therapy Activity for Setting Boundaries](#)



Adoption Attunement Coaching Competencies





INTERNATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION COMPETENCIES

