



Adoption Attuned Coaching Certification



Course Book

Lesson 6





The Tri-spective coaching model and process are used by coaches who value, respect, and consider the experiences, points of view, and needs of all three members of the triad: birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents. This Tri-spective approach guides the coach so they can help triad members build a more complete picture of what it means to live as an adoptive family.



Tri-spective Coaching Model and Process

Learning Outcomes of *Lesson 6*

- Explore the foundation of the Tri-spective Coaching Model
- Learn the Tri-spective Coaching process
- Consider strategies for introducing other perspectives while coaching



LESSON 6: Prep Sheet



1. Watch [Introduction](#)



2. Print [Lesson 6 Course Book](#)



3. Read [Lesson 6 Course Book](#)



4. Watch the Slide presentation [Foundations of Adoption Attuned Coaching video](#)



5. Read [Building Your Presence & Awareness as a Coach](#)



6. Download and/or print and read
[Difficult conversations Skill Sheet](#)
[Imagining Your Dream Child Work Sheet](#)



7. Complete the [Lesson 6 Quiz on LearnDash](#)



The Tri-spective Coaching Model



The Growing Intentional Families Together coaches developed the **Tri-spective Coaching Model** that reflects our core coaching beliefs. We value, respect, and consider the experiences, points of view, and needs of birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents. This Tri-spective approach guides the coach so they can help triad members build a more complete picture of what it means to live as an adoptive family.

Presuppositions of the Tri-spective Coaching Model:

- Adoption is intended to benefit the adoptee so, we hold an adoptee-centric approach.
- We also believe that all triad members are inter-connected in a profound and permanent way that we call **Tri-relational Interconnectivity**. What happens to one person in the adoption relationship affects the others. When people understand this interconnectivity, it helps humanize them and leads to improved communication and empathy.
- Adoption Attuned Parenting® recognizes the additional responsibilities and practices required of adoptive parents that we call the Adoption Attunement Elements.

The Tri-spective Coaching Model



Before the Session*

Step 1: Center yourself.

- Deep breathing
- Acknowledge energy, experiences, and mood
- Develop strategy to put distractions aside

Step 2: Revisit Adoption Biases Checklist (found in your Coaching Toolkit Book) so the unconscious is acknowledged.

Step 3: As a coach and member of the triad, consider:

- Your position in the triad
- How your experiences impact the other members of the triad and your relationship with them
- Your own parenting approach
- How your experiences influence your communication style

Step 4: Hold the client(s) as capable and whole.

- Before you engage with the client, embrace genuine unconditional positive regard for the client

*Core Competencies: Establishing Trust and Safety and Coaching Mindset

The Tri-spective Coaching Model



During the Session*:

Step 1: Allow for ample time to listen, explore client's concerns and goals in order to establish the agreement for the session's focus.

Step 2: Acknowledge for yourself and the client that there is no rush to establish the focus of the conversation.

Step 3: Listen for clues of the client's Point of View (POV); utilize POV sheets. For your convenience, these are included as pages 11-22 in this course book.

- Lesson 1 Course Book, page 10
- Lesson 2 Course Book, page 7
- Lesson 3 Course Book, page 11
- Lesson 4 Course Book, page 8
- Lesson 5 Course Book, page 11

Step 4: to better understand client's process and point of view; utilize Language sheets.

- Lesson 1 Course Book, pages 10-11
- Lesson 2 Course Book, page 7
- Lesson 3 Course Book, page 11
- Lesson 4 Course Book, page 8
- Lesson 5 Course Book, page 11

Step 5: Allow for time and space during the sessions to explore thoughts, feelings, experiences of the client.

Step 6: Employ Active Listening Skills.

Step 7: Invite exploration of other perspectives.

Step 8: Consider Adoption Attuned Exercises, Worksheets and other resources as you co-create with the client.

*Establishing and Maintaining Agreements....



The Tri-spective Coaching Model



Ways to Introduce Another Perspective

Once the coach has maintained trust and safety and established a rapport with the client, the coach begins to listen for “openings” that may signal an invitation to explore another perspective:

Comments of wonderment, disbelief, confusion or sadness over the other person

Examples

- **Adoptive parent:** “I can’t see how my daughter has cut me off so quickly.”

Coach may invite:

- “What are some of your thoughts around why your daughter has cut you off so quickly.”
- “I wonder if it would be helpful to take some time to explore the possibilities for reasons why.”

- **Birth parent:** “I wonder what they really feel about me.”

Coach may invite:

- “What are some of the reasons you have thought about?”
- “Would you like to do some more exploration around what your child may be feeling?”
- “What would happen if we considered the options?”

- **Adoptee:** “I can’t wrap my mind around why I’m not with my birth family.”

Coach may invite:

- “What ideas have you tossed around in your head?”
- “What kind of information do you have about your birth family that might help you with this question?”

The Tri-spective Coaching Model



Ways to Introduce Another Perspective, continued

Comments that label and judge

- **Adoptive parent:** “She’s just lazy and always has been.”
Coach may invite:
 - “I notice you using the word lazy as you refer to him. (Let the client consider their word choice without offering any other ideas.)
 - “What does lazy mean to you?”
 - “I wonder if we would want to explore what else might be going on.”
 - “How might he feel about you feeling that way about him?”
- **Birth parent:** “They don’t want me involved. I just know it.”
Coach may invite:
 - “What signals are they giving you to show they don’t want you involved?”
 - “What are some ways you might be able to check your assumption?”
- **Adoptee:** “They only want me to be who they want me to be.”
Coach may invite:
 - “What are ways that they have done this?”
 - “How do you see that this might have come about for them?”

Comments that show care or sympathy

- **Adoptee:** “My birth mom must have been agonizing over her decision.”
Coach may invite:
 - “How do you imagine her agonizing?”
 - “How does that impact how you feel about her?”
- **Birth Parent:** “It has to be hard as his adoptive parent to have your child not want to share their thoughts with you.”
Coach may invite:
 - “What part of you can relate to this feeling?”
 - “What do you imagine is going on for your birth child when they don’t share?”
- **Adoptive Parent:** “I can’t imagine what it would be like to not know your birth family.”
Coach may invite:
 - “How do you think your child experiences the not knowing?”
 - “If you were in your child’s shoes, how would not knowing your birth family be expressed in thoughts or behaviors?”



The Tri-spective Coaching Model



Closing and After the Session:

Ways to Ground the Client and Self

- **Inquire about what the greatest takeaway/nugget/learning was for the client**
- **Ask what kind of action the client might take based on their new awareness**
- **Remind the client that emotions and a heightened awareness are natural parts of growth and change**
- **Strategize with the client on what they could do to ground themselves should new learnings or strong emotions arise during the week**
- **Model deep breathing for yourself**
- **Pivot to a grounding question, such as what the client may have planned for the days ahead, what they might have for their next meal, etc.**
- **When you have completed the session with your client, take a moment for reflection and deep breathing**
- **Jot down anything that touched your own adoption experience and how you responded to that during the session. Identify ways to address this for yourself, if need be**
- **Create a ritual for yourself that helps you turn your thoughts to your own upcoming activities and plans**



Language Matters

While coaching, it is imperative to be aware of your language and to also evoke awareness in your client that their language matters. Language awareness shows respect, creates clarity and can soften any power imbalance between prospective adoptive parents and an expectant mother. It forms the basis for effective communication and helps avoid hurt feelings.

For example, when referring to a woman who is considering adoption for her unborn child, use the word **expectant mother**. She does not become a **birth mother** until after she gives birth to her child.

Other important terms used in this lesson:

- Adoption
- Adoption Attuned Parenting Model
- Adoption Attunement
- Adoption Attunement Elements
- Adoption Attunement Quotient
- Adoption constellation
- Adoption discernment
- Adoption trauma
- Adoption triad
- “AQ”
- Birth mother
- Expectant mother
- Forever Family
- High AQ family
- Seven Core Issues in Adoption
- Tri-spective Point of View

*Refer to the *Dictionary of Adoption Terms*



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*

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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*



Language Matters

Positive adoption language, which is a careful selection of words and phrases that respect the unique experiences of everyone involved in the adoption process, can promote a sense of acceptance and understanding for everyone involved in the adoption process.

When considering their adoption process, terms like **"placed"** may soften the practice of adoption rather than referencing their adoption as **"the time your mother gave you away or purchased."** Adoptees can be triggered when others refer to them in this manner; however, they can use both language styles, and coaches should be aware of and consider the adoptee's preferences because the language adoptees use can default to reflect their lived experience.

Other important terms to learn and understand are:

- Adoption Grief
- Biological Parent
- Color Blind
- Disruption
- Epigenetics
- Sealed Records
- Secrecy
- Toxic Phases
- Open Birth Certificate

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



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?



Lesson 5 pages 15-16



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!



Lesson 1 pages 10-11

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Language Styles Matter



The words your client uses when speaking about adoption can reveal their presuppositions, mindset, and feelings. Language choice can also subconsciously reinforce bias.

Since most prospective adoptive parents see adoption as the way to fulfill their dream of having or adding to their family, speaking about adoption positively dovetails with their mindset. So, when they learn about Positive Adoption Language, most are quick to embrace it. They can see the value of using phrases like "placed for adoption" instead of "given away."

When clients can feel the different emotional heft that the two language styles carry, most gladly choose phrases that would land more gently on a child's ears. And that's a good thing.

On the other hand, word selection can also limit the perception of adoption complexity.

When a client consistently looks through a rose-colored lens and uses positive languaging like "Adoption is such a blessing" or, "I hope the birth mother will do the RIGHT THING" or, "We can provide a child with a better life." This positivity bias influences what they see, think and feel about adoption and reflects an adoptive parent point of view.

PAL is more complicated than it first appears. For example, when adoption is exclusively described from a positive vantage, clients can lose sight of the losses inherent in adoption.



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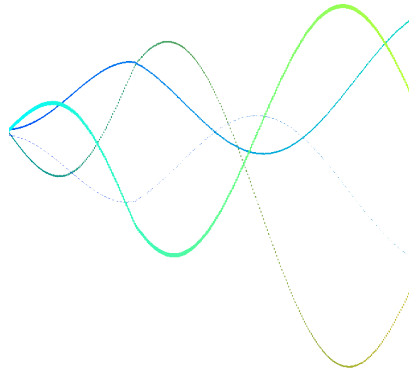
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Coaching Conversation



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.