



## Adoption Attuned Coaching Certification



# Course Book

## Lesson 1





“

*The primary purpose of adoption is not to find children for adoptive parents.*

*It is to find families for children who need them.*

”





# Adoption Competency



## *The Discernment Process*

### **Learning Outcomes of** *Lesson 1*

- Comprehends the importance of the discernment process
- Understands the Adoption Attunement Elements
- Acknowledges the role of language in adoption
- Grasps Adoption Attuned Coaching Competencies
- Appreciates the impact of the Tri-spective view



# LESSON 1 Prep Sheet



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



2. Download and/or print [The Dictionary of Adoption Terms](#)



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



4. Read [Course Book](#) pages 1-11



5. Watch the slide presentation [The Discernment Process](#)



6. Read [Course Book](#) pages 12-21



7. Foundational Readings

[Exploring the Pathways to Adoption](#) (article)

[The Hidden Dangers of Adoption Myths](#) (e-book)

[Coaching: Hands Together for the Climb](#) (blog)

[Why Do I Want to be an Adoptive Parent?](#) (blog)



8. Listen to podcast [Lori Holden's Child-free Lifestyle](#)



9. Journal [on one or more of the Pause to Consider points from the slide presentation The Discernment Process](#)

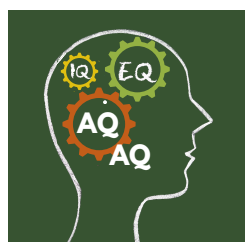


10. Complete the [Lesson 1 Quiz](#) on LearnDash





# Pretest



## Test your “AQ”

Circle the number of each true statement

1. Clients do not need to complete a thorough discernment process.
2. Clients can rely on what they already know about adoption.
3. The coach’s mindset and presuppositions regarding adoption can impact the client.
4. Infertility is the most common motivation that propels clients to consider adoption.
5. Couples who lack agreement about wanting to adopt can benefit from coaching.
6. Unresolved feelings about infertility are not relevant to the decision to adopt.
7. Adoptive parenting and bio parenting are exactly the same.
8. All adoptees experience trauma whether adopted at infancy or at later ages.
9. Therapists and other professionals who know little about adoption can still provide adequate support to adoptive families.
10. The adoptive family’s decisions have little to do with the birth mom.
11. When working with clients, a Tri-spective coaching approach is helpful but not necessary.
- 12 The Elements of Adoption Attunement support a Tri-spective coaching model.
13. All people should always strive to use Positive Adoption Language.
14. Only adoptees feel the impact of the seven core issues of adoption.
15. The dominant cultural narrative about adoption is hyper-positive and incomplete.



# 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.

- 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.



# Adoption Attuned Parenting®



Your clients may wonder what it means to be Adoption Attuned Parents and why it matters. It means that they

- Use a Tri-spective viewpoint
- Practice Adoption Attunement Elements
- Embrace Tri-relational Interconnectivity
- Strive to be **High AQ\*** parents
  - Educated about adoption complexity
  - Attuned and connected to each other
  - Openly discuss adoption
  - Appreciate and encourage the joy of family connection

\*Refer to the Dictionary of Adoption Terms

# 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.





**The 19 Elements of  
Adoption Attunement  
can be distilled down to  
three key principles:**

- Use an ADOPTEE-CENTRIC approach to parenting
- Acknowledge adoption complexity
- Consider parenting distinctions between adoptive parenting and bio-parenting

# 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.

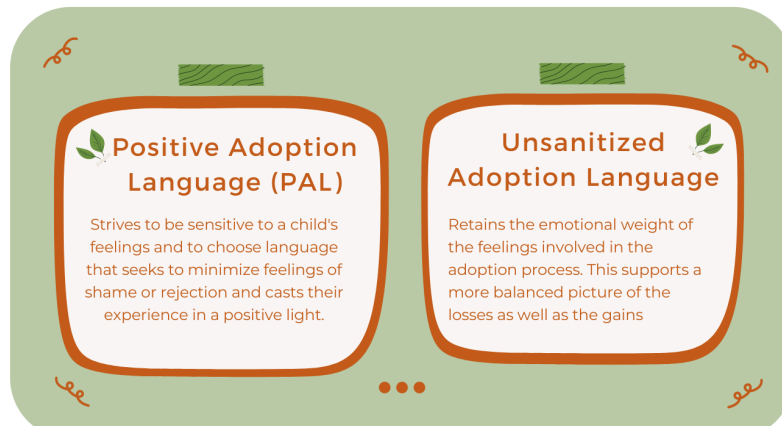
Other important terms used in this lesson:

- 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 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.

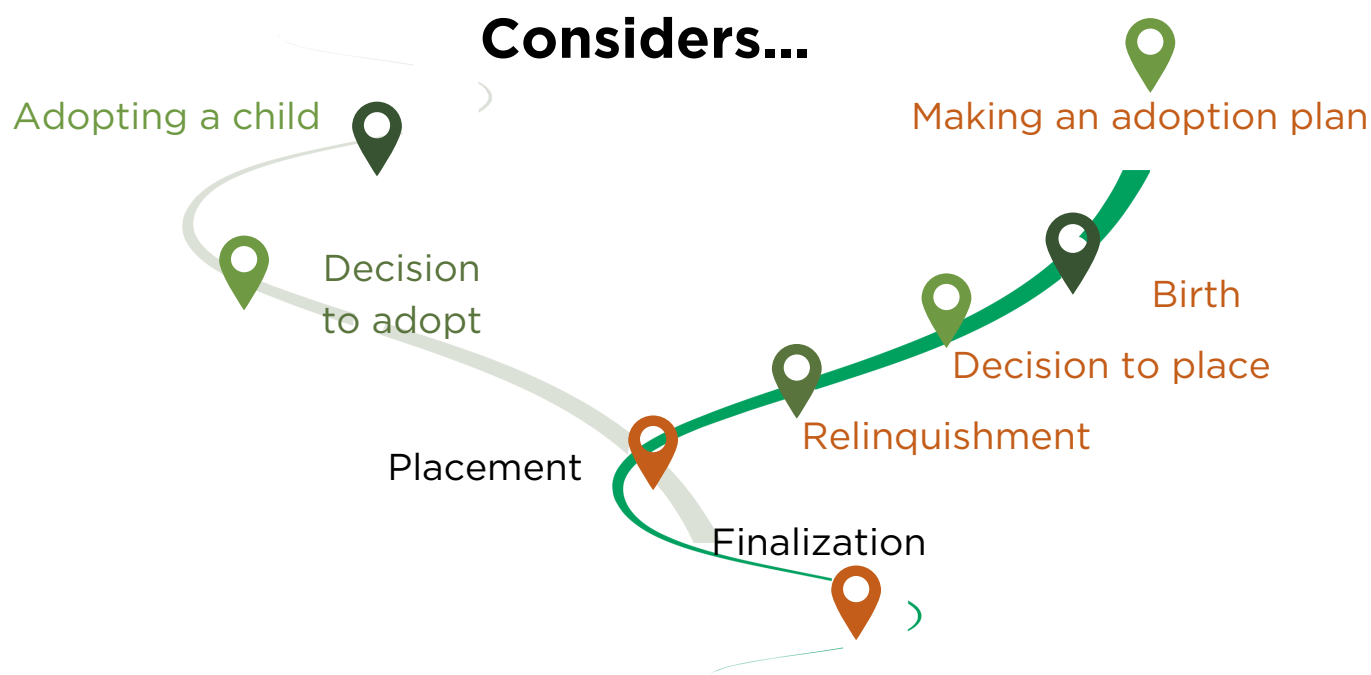
When a client consistently looks through a rose-colored lens and uses positive languaging like "Adoption is such a blessing" or, "I hope the birth mother will do the RIGHT THING" or, "We can provide a child with a better life." This positivity bias influences what they see, think and feel about adoption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





# Awakening the Tri-spective POV



A coach trained in the Adoption Attuned Coaching Competency Program awakens the Tri-spective point of view in their client. This develops empathy, awareness, and respects the needs of all—adoptee, birth parent, and adoptive parent.

To do this, the coach will explore the coexisting time lines, different emotions, and distinct concerns that a prospective adoptive parent is experiencing compared to what an expectant mother is experiencing. Adoption brings

- Separation to the adoptee
- Life-long loss to the birth mother
- Joy to the adoptive parent



# Seven Core Issues of Adoption



This lesson focuses on how to coach clients through the discerning process. To do this competently, you need some basic knowledge regarding adoption complexity at every stage—before, during, and after adoption. Part of that foundational knowledge is learning about and understanding the seven core issues in adoption and permanency. The significance of these issues is well established. Yet, few people outside the world of adoption know about or understand these core issues. Furthermore, these issues impact not only the adoptee, but also, birth parents, and adoptive parents.

Knowing about these issues while they are *in* the discerning process provides clients a more accurate picture of what they are considering. This will enable them to make an informed decision about adopting a child—what they would be choosing, how it will change their life, the challenges they will be facing, and whether they are suited to taking on the mantle of adoptive parenting.



# Coaching Before an Adoption Occurs

**Coaching your client through the discerning process might include...**

- **Several foundational tasks exploring adoption**

- Understanding motivation
- Establishing partner agreement
- Addressing infertility issues
- Exploring grief and loss
- Discussing what choosing a child-free life might be like
- Understanding that the adoption process requires a deep, personal and honest self-appraisal

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

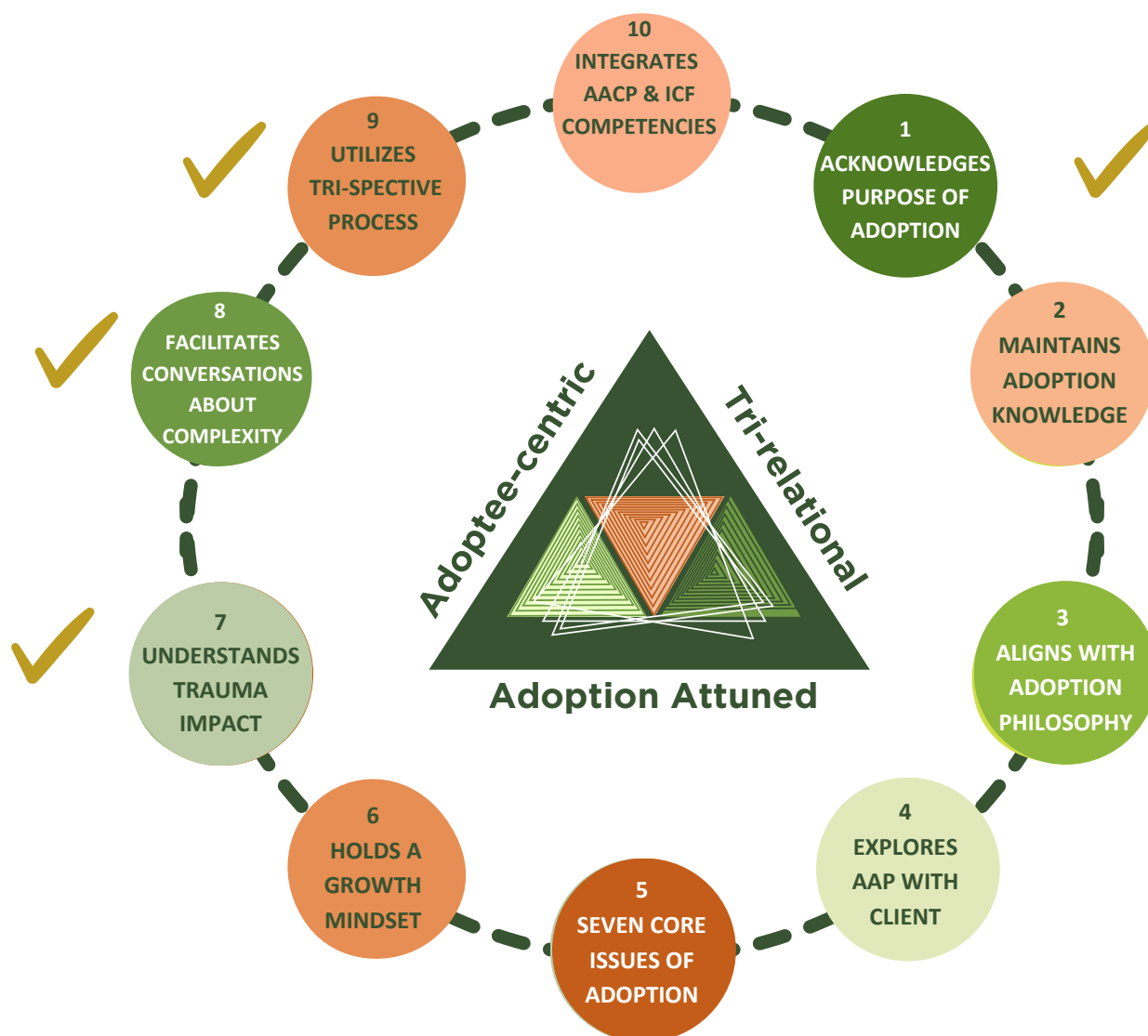
- Adopted children become adopted adults who will eventually seek answers, information and explanations for the decisions parents made on their behalf
- All triad members will face Ambiguous Loss\*

- **Learning about adoption realities**

- Both adoptive and birth family connections are permanent
- Child will reflect their own DNA, temperament, aptitudes, and preferences
- The lack of genetic mirrors has an impact
- Seven Core Issues in Adoption
- Some common mental health issues seen in adoptees

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

# Adoption Attuned Coaching Competencies



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



# 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



# Talking about... the Discernment Process

The way that your client talks about adoption is affected by his world view, current knowledge level, and his presuppositions about adoption.

The Tri-spective point of view expands their understanding of adoption. It clarifies what will be required of them if they decide to adopt a child.

Consider the quote from page 1 of this lesson booklet:

***The primary purpose of Adoption  
is not to find children for adoptive parents.  
It is to find families for children who need them.***

The distinction made in this statement lays the ground work for immersing your client in an adoptee-centric stance regarding adoption.

They can begin to see the humanity of all involved in an adoption and start to see that their decisions have repercussions for the other triad members. These are their first steps towards understanding Tri-relational connectivity.

Raise awareness of how their language choices matter and the benefits of intentionally speaking with consideration, respect, and a Tri-spective sensitivity.



# 5 Essential Qualities



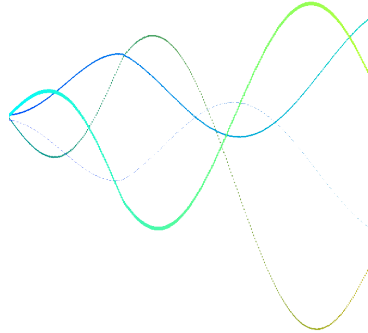
We've coached many people who were trying to discern if adoption might work for them and identified some key personal qualities that made their decision less stressful and helped them navigate the process more smoothly.

Cultivate your client's awareness of these qualities and explore how embracing these qualities might benefit them

- **Flexibility**—Clients who embrace flexibility can cope with the discernment process comfortably and with less stress.
- **Teachability**—Clients who can listen to new information and research about adoption and embrace these shifts in knowledge and understanding can make a more informed decision.
- **Open-mindedness**—Clients who are open-minded will be receptive to learning about a fuller picture of the ramifications of choosing to adopt.
- **Self-awareness**—Clients who can honestly assess their mindset, actions, biases, and decisions are better able to assess the impact of their contribution to a situation. This helps them to identify what is working, what they might wish to change and to identify what they can do differently.
- **Curiosity**—Clients who hold a curiosity mindset see beyond certainty. They embrace possibility, recognize nuance, and appreciate multiple perspectives. Curiosity invites sharing, collaboration, and openness.



# Coaching Conversations...



As a coach, remember to be aware of your own contribution to the coaching conversation. This includes noticing the influence of context and culture on self and others, your world view, biases, and presuppositions -- especially those connected to adoption.

Based on the profile clients introduced in the slide presentation, The Discernment Process, imagine sharing a coaching conversation with Yusuf and David. They have been married for three years and both are eager to adopt a child. They are mindful of the potential bias that their child might face. They want to be as prepared and informed as possible which is why they contacted a coach.

Consider the following:



- Exploring their mindset
- Learning about their world view
- Ascertaining their knowledge base about adoption
- Introducing the Tri-spective point of view
- Discussing Tri-relational Interconnectivity

# 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.



# References

- [Adoption and Trauma: Risks, Recovery, and the Lived Experience of Adoption](#)
- [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)
- [Recommended articles, books, and other resources](#)
- [Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency](#)
- [What Are the Mental Health Effects of Being Adopted?](#)

## **Additional Resources**

- [Articles, books, and other resources](#) from Growing Intentional Families Together

# Code of Conduct



- **Integrity:** We keep our promises and agreements. We demonstrate accountability and responsibility in all we do. We are honest and trustworthy in our relationships.
- **Compassion:** We demonstrate empathy, kindness, and love in our interactions with one another and with clients.
- **Authenticity/genuine-ness:** We work from a place of sincerity. We believe that personal growth and enhanced relationships are possible through authentic sharing and vulnerability.
- **Respect:** We value and esteem our adoption attuned coaching certification community and make decisions that reflect our regard for others' well-being, vitality, health, feelings, and opinions.
- **Abundance:** We approach our lives and our work with a sense of limitless possibility. We believe that modeling a perspective of choice and abundance empowers others to live their best lives.
- **Acceptance:** We embrace everyone and everything as they are by allowing life to unfold and by responding to precisely what we need in the moment for our highest good and learning. We believe that everyone is allowed to determine their own boundaries whether we are in agreement or not and we respect those boundaries.