

# REACH

*Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis • Intervention • Hope*  
*Aspiranet and Tulare County Adoption Support Program*



Happy Summer REACH Families!

What a whirlwind the past couple of months have been! In March, many of you took part in “Journey to Hope” our first Youth Symposium. What an experience with our amazing youth who attended and speakers Ashley Rhodes-Courter and Allison Davis Maxon. Ashley’s story is filled with trauma, grief and loss as well as strength, joy and empowerment. Her power over pain story gave our youth the connection and safety they needed to share pieces of their story with us at the end of the day. What a powerful experience that day was!

In April and May, families joined us for a Parents Night Out at Imagine U Museum and a Family Social Event at Quantum Leap. We loved spending time with your children and getting to know your family a little bit better. I also watched as parents and children made new friends and new support connections. What we learn through these events is that you enjoy meeting other adoptive families. Look for future REACH emails for upcoming events.

In this issue of the REACH Newsletter, we’ve focused on “unrealistic expectations”. We hope you enjoy browsing through the articles and reflecting on what some of your expectations might be. We often set ourselves and our children up for failure and disappointment when our expectations are unrealistic. Is this the case with you?

I hope you have a wonderful summer and I hope we will get the opportunity to spend some time together. Be well!

Best, JulieAnn

**“Move from looking at their behavior and creating rules to looking at their needs and creating relationships.”**

Karyn Purvis, Ph.D.

## TULARE COUNTY Summer 2018

### Inside This Issue

1. Greetings
2. My “Journey To Hope” Youth Symposium Experience
3. Book Review
4. Unrealistic Expectations
5. Calendar of Events & Support Group Info
6. REACH Services

### Your REACH Tulare Support Team

JulieAnn Jones, MSW  
REACH Program Supervisor  
[jujones@aspiranet.org](mailto:jujones@aspiranet.org)

Marva Bourne, DMFT, LMFT  
REACH Social Worker  
[mbourne@aspiranet.org](mailto:mbourne@aspiranet.org)

1840 South Central  
Visalia, CA 93277  
Ph: (559) 741-7358  
Fax: (559) 741-7368

[www.reachtularecounty.org](http://www.reachtularecounty.org)

## NEED HELP

Is your adoptive child exhibiting any of the following behaviors?

- Frequent running away
- Sexualized behavior
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Aggressive/assaultive behavior
- Oppositional/defiant behavior
- Self-injurious behavior
- One or more hospitalizations in a Mental Health facility
- Substance use disorder
- Fire starter
- Minor criminal behavior
- School behavior/ truancy problems
- Beyond control of parents and or primary care adults
- Mild Developmental disorder not recognized by a Regional Center

If so, we can help! The REACH program can connect adoptive families to services that can help. Some of the services available to your family include Therapeutic Behavior Services (TBS) and Tulare County Wraparound. TBS is an intensive one-to-one behavioral mental health service. The service is available to parents/caregivers of children/youth who experience serious emotional challenges. Tulare County Wraparound provides high-risk youth and their families an alternative to group home care. Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven philosophy promoting the reestablishment of at-risk youth and families into community support systems.

# My “Journey To Hope” Youth Symposium Experience

By: An 18 year old youth

March 17th, 2018 is the day I realized how grateful and lucky I am to have been adopted by my wonderful family and I will forever remember that. On this day I woke up thinking it was just going to be another day, little did I know I'd be reflecting on things from my past that will always be a part of who I am. My mother and I went to a Youth Symposium hosted by REACH Tulare and Kings County. We were invited by JulieAnn Jones, a social worker and a close friend of ours, who knew our story and thought we might enjoy it - and she couldn't have been more right. It was an eye opening experience realizing that there were other people who had similar issues to us when going through the process of adopting and having to adapt to a new environment.

At the Symposium, New York Times Best Selling Author and Social Worker Ashley Rhodes-Courter was the keynote speaker, she was absolutely amazing. Her story was extremely moving and proved to the kids that there can be happy endings to rough beginnings. The real stars of the Symposium were the kids who showed up and decided to speak out and share their own opinions and thoughts of their own past and history, even if that meant making themselves and other grown adults cry. It was hard to look deep into the whole process, which I had blocked out of my mind because it was so depressing and grey. I am happy I did, I pushed down a barrier I didn't even know I had put up. The whole experience made me appreciate my mother, who adopted me, chose to keep me and love me, even when I made it almost impossible.

I hope the Symposium was as helpful to all the youth, parents and social workers who attended as it was to me. I can only imagine this Symposium being even bigger and better in the future. This is an event I think everyone should take part of especially if you are looking to adopt. I think this training put being adopted and going through the whole process under the spotlight. It shows that not everything is going to be sunshine and rainbows, but if you persevere it can have an amazing outcome and forever change your life for the better.



\*A special thanks to Ashley Rhodes-Courter for her keynote speech and private youth session at this REACH event. If you want to learn more about Ashley's powerful story or her best-selling books, you can find information on her website: <http://rhodes-courter.com/>

# Book Review

## **Drowning with my Hair on Fire: Insanity Relief for Adoptive Parents**

**By: Ce Eshelman, LMFT | Book report by: Patricia Kasper, MA, MTh**

*Drowning with my Hair on Fire: Insanity Relief for Adoptive Parents* is a compilation of blog posts by Ce Eshelman, an adoptive mother and licensed marriage and family therapist. Ce is an attachment specialist and founder of The Attach Place Center for Strengthening Relationships in Sacramento, CA. Each blog post is in effect a letter to adoptive parents. The book is not meant to be read cover to cover in one, or even a few, sittings. Rather, she suggests that it serve as a devotional of sorts, as well as a reference book to return to throughout your years of raising your adopted child from difficult beginnings.

Ce's prologue begins with a general discussion of trauma and its impact upon child development, and how these experiences spill over into many unexpected places throughout life. Ce began her journey as you have: as an adoptive parent who was caught off guard by her children's behaviors. Like many of you, she sought help from many sources and in finding none that was effective she embarked on a journey of learning for herself, by reading A LOT, and by attending conferences on the subjects of trauma and attachment. Her understanding of, and her therapeutic approach to, trauma was shaped by the best minds in the business: Dan Siegel, MD, Bruce Perry, MD, PhD, Bessel van der Kolk, PhD and Karen Purvis, PhD. Ce became determined to be a source for other adoptive parents of the healing strategies needed which she had struggled to find.

Section One, with its 101 letters to adoptive parents, is entitled Letters on Children - Drowning with Your Hair on Fire is Lonely Business. Section Two, with its fifty-five letters, is entitled: Letters on Adolescence – Pedaling Forward While Drifting Back. Section Three, with its thirteen letters to adoptive parents, is entitled Letters on Adult Children – Adult Children is Oxymoronic. Part Four, with its seventy letters, is entitled On Therapeutic Parenting – Love Matters. Section Five, with its twenty-nine letters, is entitled Letters on Things that Flip your Life Upside Down – Holidays, Beginnings, Endings, Parties, Celebrations, Fun. Ce's epilogue shares more about her children and the appendices in her book provide recommended reading lists for parents, children, professionals, as well as resource organizations, newsletters and informational sites.

Ce's book is written with compassionate authority born from her professional practice and from personal experience. Her writing expresses her humility and is fundamentally relatable. She lays bare the mistakes she has made in the belief that she will help you to avoid making the same mistakes, or at least to rest assured in your own humanity that your family will get through it, whatever "it" is. Her hope is that the adoptive parent to whom she is writing stop wrestling with self-doubt about not being the perfect parent, in order to recognize that they only need to focus on how to best parent their traumatized and attachment challenged child. She lovingly challenges her readers to "begin with the end in mind," which means to her to "be the love every day you want to see manifest in your child, as an adult." Her topics are far-reaching and not sugar-coated, yet always shared in a way that the reader knows Ce has come alongside them in their journey. Since discovering this book, I have recommend it to nearly every adoptive parent I have worked with.

## **DROWNING WITH MY HAIR ON FIRE**

**INSANITY RELIEF FOR ADOPTIVE PARENTS**



**CE ESHELMAN, LMFT**

# Unrealistic Expectations

By: Maria Aziz, MA, AMFT

Parents who adopt often have a vision of what they want their families to look like. These dreams and expectations are formed based on our own life experiences. But unrealistic expectations set our children up for failure. If the expectations are not met, we may lose hope. If hope derails then how does our behavior change towards children? Children are very gifted when it comes to sensing energy. If they feel our negative energy, it will reciprocate and begin the domino effect. It is very important that as parents we lead our children. However, at the same time, it is important to remember our kids have gone through multiple traumas such as being separated from everything they have known, including their homes, pets, and most important families, with whom they had formed an attachment and familiarity.

As parents, we can get caught up in our own “stuff,” and the truth may start to become cloudy. The truth may be that the child is still grieving and living in fear of opening their heart. These children have an abundance of losses with which they are coping, and we cannot put a timeframe on the healing process. In addition, as foster or adoptive parents, it is important that we

walk along side our children. We need to be supporting their process rather than putting our own expectations upon them. Imagine the impact on our perception if we try to understand what it may be like for our children. And imagine carrying their trauma, reflecting on a time when we experienced loss, and remembering our process.

It is true that all parents start out with some unrealistic expectations. But for adoptive families, these unfulfilled expectations can lead to disappointment and even disconnection between parents and children. When a child’s history of pain and loss begins to depart from what parents expected their adoption journey to look like, parents can be tempted to protect their wishful assumptions rather than acknowledge their child’s history and feelings. When a child’s behaviors begin to collide with the “way we do things as a family,” parents can find themselves quickly nearing the point of despair. Embracing what their needs are and letting go of what we “expected” things to look like, will be an incredible first step in the healing process. Once we take this first step, things will start to move forward without the heaviness “expectations” can bring.

*\*Use the following worksheet to think about the expectations you had/have about your adoption. Are they realistic? Are they fair? Do they promote healing? What can be the first step in managing your unrealistic expectations?*

#	Expectation	Expectation Met?	Expectation Not Met?	Experience
1	Our love will be enough.			
2	We will feel love and connection to this child quickly.			
3	This child will step into our family system and easily learn how to function within our rules, goals, and ambitions.			
4	This child’s needs will be just like those of our biological children.			
5	Our biological children will embrace this new child as a sibling.			
6	Our child will fit well into our extended family and be welcomed by them.			
7	Our friends and acquaintances will validate our role as parent in our child’s life and support us through the adoption process.			
8	Our child will see us as his family and forget about his birth family and his past.			
9	We can do for this child what was not done for us, or we will not do to this child what was done to us.			
10	We will never feel any regrets or ambivalence in adopting this child with a traumatic past.			

# SUPPORT GROUPS & EVENTS

## Upcoming Calendar of Events

### JUNE

- 5** Tulare REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
Congregation B'nai David, Visalia
- 12** Kings REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
South Valley Community Church, Lemoore

### JULY

- 3** Tulare REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
Congregation B'nai David, Visalia
- 10** Kings REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
South Valley Community Church, Lemoore
- 20** Becoming a Trauma-Competent Healing Parent  
9:00 am – 3:00 pm  
COS Room Pending, Visalia

### AUGUST

- 7** Tulare REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm  
Congregation B'nai David, Visalia
- 14** Kings REACH Adoption Support Group  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
South Valley Community Church, Lemoore

### Tulare County Reach Adoption Support Group

This group is designed for new and experienced adoptive parents as well as others touched by adoption. Training hours provided. **PARENTS MUST RSVP FOR CHILD CARE.** Infants are welcome to join parents/caregivers.

**Where:** Congregation B'nai David, Education Building  
1039 S Chinowth Street  
Visalia, CA 93277

**When:** 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM  
• June 5th • July 3rd • August 7th

**Contact:** JulieAnn Jones (559) 741-7358, ext. 4506 or [jujones@aspiranet.org](mailto:jujones@aspiranet.org)

### Kings County Reach Adoption Support Group

This group is designed for adults thinking about adoption, parents awaiting adoptive placement and parents of adopted children. Training hours and childcare provided. **PARENTS MUST RSVP FOR CHILD CARE.**

**Where:** South Valley Community Church  
1050 W. Bush Street  
Lemoore, CA 93245

**When:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM  
• June 12th • July 10th • August 14th

**Contact:** JulieAnn Jones at (559)741-7358 ext. 4506 or email at [jujones@aspiranet.org](mailto:jujones@aspiranet.org)

### College of Sequoias Foster & Kinship Care Education Program

The College of Sequoias Foster and Kinship Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge in Visalia and Hanford. For a complete list of classes, Google the key words **COS Visalia Kinship**. Register for classes with Miriam Sallam at (559) 737-4842 or email [miriams@cos.edu](mailto:miriams@cos.edu). Classes are available in English and in Spanish.

### Becoming a Trauma-Competent Healing Parent

**Friday, July 20, 2018**

9:00 am – 3:00 pm  
COS Room Pending, Visalia



## Aspiranet

151 Canal Drive  
Turlock, CA 95380

---

---

NON PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Stockton, CA  
PERMIT NO. 451

---

---

## Visalia Aspiranet

1840 South Central  
Visalia, CA 93277  
Phone: (559) 741-7358  
Fax: (559) 741-7368  
reachtularecounty.org



## REACH and Tulare County Adoption Support Services

**Resource:** We provide 1) telephone support and referral to local services 2) referral to local adoption related community trainings 3) linkage to local therapists with experience working with adoptive families 4) lending library and website access 5) quarterly newsletter which includes book reviews and relevant adoption related information.

**Education:** Educational support groups and meetings are regularly held and offer a variety of topics pertinent to adoption. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and the impact of adoption on all members of the triad (adoptive parents, adoptees and birth family).

**Advocacy:** We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive families. We assist adoptive parents with advocating for the assistance needed in working with educational, legislative and community partners to best meet their children's needs.

**Crisis Intervention/Case Management:** Participants are eligible to receive short-term therapeutic services, free of charge, by master's level social workers who are trained and experienced in adoption-related issues. Families are also eligible to receive in-home case management services as needed. Spanish translation services are provided.

**Hope:** We utilize our agency values of Respect, Integrity, Courage and Hope (RICH) to guide our work with adoptive families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive families through access to our services.