

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope

Aspiranet and Tulare County Adoption Support Program



Hello REACH families!

The sun is out and summer is here! We hope your family has great plans this summer as children enter summer break.

As we welcome summer, we are excited to welcome a new season of the Adoption Preparation Training which we initially held in Fall 2021. The free, virtual 10 session training began on Monday, June 6th and will continue through Monday, August 22nd. Session One focused on Understanding my Child and introduced the Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency, provided insight to core adoption and permanency issues, discussed loss/grief, as well as touched on anxiety and trauma. This newsletter edition focuses on these topics as well. The following is a quote by adoptive parent and author, Sharon Rozia, which addresses the significance of loss, one of the Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency discussed in the Adoption Preparation Training as well as this newsletter:

“Adoptive, foster and kinship families are created through loss. All adoption and permanency constellation members share in having experienced at least one major, life-altering loss. Loss is the beginning out of which the additional core issues flow.”

—Sharon Rozia, Author of **Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency: A Comprehensive Guide to Promoting Understanding and Healing in Adoption, Foster Care, Kinship Families and Third Party Reproduction**

The Adoption Preparation Training includes topics such as Adoptive Parents Perspectives, Correcting and Discipline, Birth Families, Redefining Family Issues/Stuck Spots and many more. Parenting through adoption is a unique experience, which often requires new tools and resources. We hope you are able to attend one or more sessions of the remaining series to further your knowledge in this area!

The Aspiranet Statewide Support Program continues to provide support for permanency and resiliency of families through financial support and linkage to services like specialized therapies, camps, respite and much more! Please visit www.aspiranet.org/aspsp to apply.

REACH continues to commit to providing adoptive parents with education and opportunities to share with others who are on a similar journey. We are offering three support groups each month, two in English and one in Spanish. Please keep a look out for in-person services or contact the REACH office for more information.

We hope you enjoy the Summer 2022 edition of our newsletter!

Sincerely,

Your REACH Team

Tulare County
Summer 2022

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NEED HELP? Is your child exhibiting any of the following behaviors?

- Frequent running away
- Sexualized behavior
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Aggressive/assaultive behavior
- Oppositional/defiant behavior
- Self-injurious behavior
- 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
- One or more hospitalizations in a Mental Health facility

If so, we can help! The REACH program can connect adoptive and guardianship 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 residential care. Wraparound is a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven philosophy promoting the reestablishment of at risk youth and families into community support systems.

You Can't Have Adoption Without Loss (And The Other Core Issues)

By Beth Hurlbert, LMFT

There are Seven Core Issues that those involved in adoption and permanency face. It benefits all touched by adoption and permanency to be aware of these issues and how they affect individuals at various times throughout their lives. Adoption and permanency are not one-time occurrences.

These are issues that are cyclical and repeat in various order throughout one's life.

Let's take a closer look at these Seven Core Issues as it relates to the adoption triad.

| Core Issue | Adopted Person | Birth Parent | Adoptive Parent |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Loss | Fear, ultimate abandonment; loss of biological, genetic, cultural history; issues of holding on and letting go. | Ruminate about lost child; initial loss merges with other life events; leads to social isolation; changes in body and self-image; relationship losses. | Infertility equated with loss of self and immortality/ issues of entitlement lead to fear of loss of child/overprotection; loss of impact of child's early years. |
| Rejection | Personalize placement for adoption as rejection; issues of self-esteem; can only be "chosen" if first rejected; anticipate rejections; misperceive situations. | Reject selves as irresponsible, unworthy because permitted adoption/rights terminated; turn these feelings against self as deserving rejection; come to expect and cause rejection. | Ostracized because of procreation difficulties; scapegoat partner, may expel child to avoid anticipated rejection; child's behaviors may cause rejection by others. |
| Shame/Guilt | Deserving misfortune; shame of being different; may take defensive stance/ anger. | Party to guilty secret; shame/guilt for placing child; judged by others; double-bind: not okay to keep child and not okay to place. | Shame of infertility; view childlessness as curse/punishment; religious crisis; shame about child's behaviors; guilt if they don't like the child. |
| Grief | Grief may be overlooked in childhood, blocked by adult, leading to depression/ acting out; may grieve lack of "fit" in adoptive family. | Grief acceptable only short period but may be delayed 10-15 years; lack rituals for mourning; sense of shame blocks grief. | Must grieve loss of "fantasy" child; unresolved grief may block attachment to child; may experience child's grief as rejection. |
| Identity | Deficits in information may impede integration of identity; may try on identities of birth family in order to create sense of belonging; may see search for identity in early pregnancies. | Child as part of identity goes on without knowledge; diminished sense of self and self-worth may interfere with future parental desires. | Experience diminished sense of continuity of self; are and are not parents; role confusion about being a foster parent versus an adoptive parent. |
| Intimacy | Fear of getting close and risking reenacting earlier losses; concerns over possible incest; attachment issues may lower capacity for intimacy. | Difficulty resolving issues with other birth parent may interfere with future relationships; intimacy may equate with loss. | Unresolved grief over losses may lead to intimacy problems; child may split the parents; may avoid closeness with child to avoid loss. |
| Control | Adoption alters life course; not party to initial decisions; haphazard nature of adoption removes cause and effect continuum. | Relinquishment seen as out of control. Disjunctive event/ lack of control over court process; interrupt drive for self-actualization. | Adoption experiences lead to sense of "learned helplessness;" child welfare system seems to have control; mastery linked to procreation; lack generativity. |

Being aware of these issues is half the battle to working through them. Other ways to work through the Core Issues include healing and creating rituals, such as celebrating certain days, and milestones or writing letters. Parents can find support through support groups with others who understand and have been through similar experiences. Education is another way to work through the core issues of adoption: attend trainings, use the REACH lending library, and research articles or websites about adoption. Keeping

a journal or blog about your experiences and feelings is another way to work through the Core Issues. A parent can also work with a therapist or counselor who is competent in issues related to adoption, to help process these Core Issues. Having an awareness of these issues, voicing when they are present, and working through them can help an individual embrace the adoption and permanency journey.

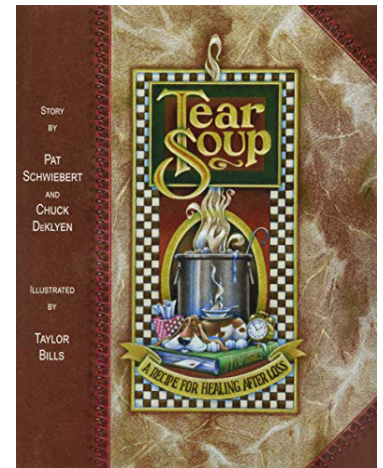
Book Review

Tara Soria, MSW

“Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss” by Pat Schwiebert, Chuck DeKlyen, et al.

With its beautiful artwork and gentle tone, at first glance “Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss,” appears to be a book for children, however, in my experience, it has resonated deeply with adults. The main character, Grandy, has suffered a significant, yet unspecified, loss and is cooking up a batch of “tear soup.” Directions for making Grandy’s soup begin with selecting the size of the pot that suits the particular loss, then combining the ingredients of tears, heartache, patience, and self-care- which is then seasoned with the memories of good and hard times. As Grandy wades through her grief process, she acknowledges its many stages, from losing interest in the things she used to love doing, to admitting to a trusted friend she was unraveling, to watching her husband, Pops, experience loss in his own way. Upon learning about a neighbor

going through a similar hardship and taking a turn making her own tear soup, Grandy gathers a group of thoughtful cooks to discuss the soup-making process. Together they share their unique journeys through grief and loss. As time moves on and Grandy begins to smile again, her grandson asks her, “So what else have you learned by making tear soup, Grandy?” She replies, “I’ve learned that there is something down deep within all of us ready to help us survive the things we think we can’t survive.” At the conclusion of the book is a list of resources, recommendations, and practical wisdom around navigating the depths of grief. To hear the story recited aloud, [please click here](#)



Healing Activities to Address Grief

Yaneth Arceo, MS

Grief does not just occur when someone passes away, it can occur when we lose a relationship with someone or the idea of a relationship. For example, children who have been adopted may experience feelings of grief related to their family of origin. They may experience loss even if they have not been with their biological family since they were very young, or even if they never lived with that family. Adults may experience loss related to the child they did not have. If you are attempting to work through those complicated emotions, or are helping children do so, consider some of the activities listed below, which allow one to express and understand the emotions that accompany grief.

ACTIVITIES FOR GRIEF

Journaling: Journaling can help you express your feelings and understand the importance of your loss. You can share the journal with others or keep it for yourself.

Exercise: The mind and body are connected. Physical activity helps keep you healthy and prepares you to cope better emotionally. Ways to take care of one’s physical health and combat stress and fatigue include getting plenty of sleep, eating healthy, and exercising.

Rituals: Rituals are activities to remember and honor a loss, or a change. Some ideas include:

- Planting a memory garden or plant
- Making a Memory Box, Sculptured Memory, or a Handprint
- Honoring a certain day of the year or anniversary

A Support Group: A support group is a way to engage in conversation, share with others what you are feeling, and get a different perspective to cope.

Anxiety in Adoption

Katia Hawkins, BSW, MS

It is difficult to predict how a child will adapt to his or her new home and family, so it is important to prepare for several different considerations about the mental and emotional wellness of adopted children.

Research has found that adopted children are at risk of suffering from mental health disorders. Twelve to 14 percent of children who were adopted in the United States between the ages of 8 & 18 are diagnosed with a mental health disorder each year, and adopted children are almost twice as likely as children brought up with their family of origin to suffer from mood disorders like anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues.

Anxiety is a sensation of unease or uncertainty, accompanied by fear and discomfort. Anxiety disorders include panic attacks, phobias, social anxiety, generalized anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Other mental health concerns, such as depression, commonly present themselves in tandem with anxiety.

Several factors contribute to an adopted child's risk of experiencing a mood or behavioral disorder, such as:

- Age of adoption
- Where the child was adopted
- Conditions of the home and family
- Whether the child has contact with their biological family
- History of mental illness in biological family

These factors directly affect the child's ability to attach and bond with their adoptive parents. Attachment issues are common and often a major contributing factor to the onset of mental health issues. For example, many adopted children suffer from reactive attachment disorder (RAD), which is a disorder in which a child is uncomfortable with, and avoids being comforted by, caretakers. Children who are adopted can develop RAD as a result of not getting sufficient nurturing, comforting, & consistent care.

Children with RAD tend to experience:

- Self-esteem issues
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Self-harm
- Behavioral issues

- Academic struggles
- Difficulty building meaningful relationships

As the adopted child grows, they may begin to understand more about the world. With that understanding comes more questions. Some questions an adopted child may begin to think about are:

- Where did I come from?
- Why was I adopted?
- What are my roots?
- Do I fit in here?
- Am I lovable?
- What is going to happen once I leave for college / enter the adult world?

Such questions cause stress, anxiety, and sometimes anger and depression. There may be resentment toward adopted or biological parents, or a poor sense of confidence and low self-esteem, which are triggered by the confusion behind these unanswered questions.

Adoptees often try to hide their anxiety. In the article, "Navigating Anxiety," Ronda Payne, wrote:

"I focused on coping mechanisms to deal with and hide my inner feeling and dialogue when I was at school, work or with family and friends. I had no clue that the way I thought was different, but I did know the way I felt was different and that certain behaviors garnered lots of disapproval or uncertainty."

6 STEPS TO COMBAT ANXIETY

When in the throes of anxiety, consider the six steps suggested by the Midwest Center for Stress & Anxiety:

1. Recognize you are feeling anxious & accept it; fighting the sensations makes them stronger because you're saying "I shouldn't feel this way."
2. Give yourself permission to feel anxious. It's okay. If you know why you are (your child is hurt, conflict with your boss) let yourself feel anxious about it.
3. Breathe, inhale for a count of 2, exhale for a count of 4. Continue for 1 or more minutes.
4. Talk positively to yourself. Be comforting. Anxiety can't hurt you.
5. Get busy. Distract yourself from how you are feeling by doing something.
6. Let time pass & try to see a little humor in how you are feeling.

Support Groups and Events

July

- 11 APT: Attachment**
6:00-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 18 APT: Correcting/Discipline**
6:00-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 19 Parent Support Group**
6:00-7:30pm - In Person
- 21 Parent Café**
10:00-11:30am - ZOOM
- 25 APT: Cultural Competency**
6:00-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 27 Parent Support Group in Spanish**
9:30-11:30am - ZOOM

August

- 1 APT: Birth Family**
6:00-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 8 APT: Redefining Family and Preparing Siblings**
6:00-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 15 APT: Normative Adoption Issues/Stuck Spots**
6:00-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 16 Parent Support Group**
6:00-7:30pm - In Person
- 18 Parent Café**
10:00-11:30am - ZOOM
- 22 APT: Self Care and Supports**
6:00-8:00pm - ZOOM
- 24 Parent Support Group in Spanish**
9:30-11:30am - ZOOM

September

- 15 Parent Café**
10:00-11:30am - ZOOM
- 20 Parent Support Group**
6:00-7:30pm - In Person
- 28 Parent Support Group in Spanish**
9:30-11:30am - ZOOM

REACH Support Groups for Parents

REACH Parent Support Group

6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Designed for adults thinking about adoption through foster care, families awaiting adoptive placement, and new and experienced resource and adoptive parents. Training hours provided. The Adoption Support Group is offered on the third Tuesday of each month, 6:00-7:30pm. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. To register, email Beth Hurlbert at bhurlbert@aspiranet.org.

Parent Café

10:00 am - 11:30 am via Zoom

Based on the Five Protective Factors, Parent Cafe provides an opportunity for parents to explore their strengths and learn from each other's experiences. Training hours provided. Parent Café is offered on the third Thursday of each month, 10:00-11:30am via Zoom. To register for Parent Café, email Beth Hurlbert at bhurlbert@aspiranet.org and a link to the meeting will be emailed to you.

REACH Parent Support Group in Spanish

9:30 am - 11:30 am via Zoom

Este grupo está diseñado para adultos que piensan en la adopción, padres que esperan colocación adoptiva, y padres de niños adoptados. Horas de entrenamiento impartidas. Los enlaces de Zoom y los recordatorios se enviarán mensualmente. El Grupo de Apoyo para Padres de REACH en Español se ven en el cuarto miércoles del mes. Para registrarse, comuníquese con Katia Hawkins at 559.741.7358 x4513 at khawkins@aspiranet.org y se le envirá por correo electrónico un enlace a la reunión.

College of Sequoias Foster & Kinship Education Program

The College of Sequoias Foster and Kinship Care Education Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents, at no charge. For a complete list of classes visit <https://www.cos.edu/fostercare>. Register for classes with Miriam Sallam at 559.737.4842 or email miriams@cos.edu. Classes are available in English and in Spanish. Please note childcare is not available.

Adoption Preparation Training

Aspiranet's REACH programs are pleased to offer Adoption Preparation Training, a free online training series to strengthen families built through foster, kinship care, and adoption and for the professionals who support them. Each session in this comprehensive series will be offered by adoption specialists and cover a wide variety of topics that help provide the knowledge, practical tools, and resources to help support the complex journey of permanency and adoption. This trauma-informed training series includes 10 concise modules on topics relevant to the complexities and challenges that children and caregivers experience through the various stages of permanency and adoption. The remaining dates are:

07/11/2022- Module 4: Attachment

07/18/2022- Module 5: Correcting/Discipline

07/25/2022- Module 6: Cultural Competency

08/01/2022- Module 7: Birth Family

08/08/2022- Module 8: Redefining Family and Preparing Siblings

08/15/2022- Module 9: Normative Adoption Issues/Stuck Spots

08/22/2022- Module 10: Self Care and Supports

The sessions are occurring over 10 separate Monday nights. It is not required that participants attend all sessions. Participants are free to attend sessions that are most relevant to their development. Register for these trainings [here](#).



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REACH and Tulare County Adoption Support Services

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

Education: Educational support groups and meetings are regularly held and offer a variety of topics pertinent to permanency. In addition, access to the lending library and website offer many opportunities to learn more about adoption and guardianship and their impact on all members of the constellation.

Advocacy: We are here to help navigate common issues facing adoptive and guardianship families. We assist 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 permanency-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 families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive and guardianship families through access to our services.