

REACH

Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis • Intervention • Hope

Aspiranet and Kern County Adoption Support Program



Happy New Year!

We hope you had a wonderful holiday season and were able to spend some quality time with family and friends! Though often a fun time for families, it can also be a time of stress and we hope that you are taking the time to care for yourself and tend to your own needs.

The end of one year and the beginning of a new year are traditional times to reflect on experiences and accomplishments and to create goals or resolutions. This past year, 2018, was the inaugural year for the REACH program in Kern County. During the course of the year, REACH provided a three-part parenting training in conjunction with Bakersfield College's Foster Kinship Care Education program and provided two trainings for professionals in our community. REACH also hosted a free event for families at Rush Air Sports during the summer, which everyone seemed to enjoy. In November, the Aspiranet adoption and REACH programs enjoyed the privilege of partnering with Kern County Department of Human Services and other community agencies in celebrating families who adopted children on National Adoption Day. We look forward to continuing to provide trainings and events for families and professionals in our community in 2019.

For the 2019 newsletters, the REACH team is focusing on the Seven Core Issues in Adoption and we will be sharing information about each of these core issues throughout the year. We hope you enjoy our Winter newsletter and please reach out to our team if you have any questions or concerns, or ideas you have about enhancing the REACH program in the coming year.

Sincerely,
The REACH team

**Kern County
Winter 2019**

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Introduction to the Seven Core Issues in Adoption Carrie Ontiveros, M.A.

Over the course of the next year, the REACH newsletters will be introducing and exploring what are known as the seven core issues of adoption. The idea of adoption encompassing seven, lifelong experiences was originally developed in the early 1980s by Deborah Silverstein and Sharon Kaplan and focused on what was known as the adoption triad: the adopted person, the birth parent and the adoptive parent. Since the development of this concept, the idea of the adoption triad has expanded to include other terms, with the idea that adoption often involves more than these three individuals, such as the “extended family of adoption”, “the adoption circle” and “the adoption constellation” (for the purposes of this article, the term adoption triad will be used). A reason behind recognizing the seven core issues was to help establish a method for members of the adoption triad understand each other and the lifelong impact of adoption. An added benefit of recognizing these universal experiences is an awareness that many experience similar issues. The hope of Silverstein and Kaplan was to increase feelings of being understood and feeling supported.



The seven core issues in adoption are loss, rejection, guilt and shame, grief, identity, intimacy and mastery/control. The presence of these experiences should not be considered concerning or abnormal. The opposite is true, these issues are a natural result of the adoption experience. According to Silverstein and Kaplan, “many of the issues inherent in the adoption experience converge when the adoptee reaches adolescence.” They further explained that, at this age, “three factors intersect: an acute awareness of the significance of being adopted; a drive toward emancipation; and a biopsychosocial striving toward the development of an integrated identity.” In other words, expect to see some of these issues develop during your child’s teen years, although they could surface earlier or later, depending on the individual.

Each of the seven core issues in adoption will be further explored in future newsletters.

A brief description of each is listed here, as a general overview:

- 1. Loss-** Loss is considered to be the “hub” of the seven core issues. As Silverstein and Kaplan noted, “adoption is created through loss; without loss there would be no adoption.”
- 2. Rejection-** All members of the adoption triad may experience rejection, in their own way. Feelings of rejection can compound feelings of loss.
- 3. Guilt/Shame-** This core issue results from feeling as though one is deserving of the loss experienced, that something about them is “wrong” or they did something to lead to the loss.
- 4. Grief-** Silverstein and Kaplan state “every loss in adoption must be grieved.” Each member of the triad experiences grief in a different way and grief can be compounded by additional losses or during different developmental stages.
- 5. Identity-** Those involved with adoption may experience personal challenges about who they are, and who they are not.
- 6. Intimacy-** Feelings of loss may lead one to avoid close relationships or difficulty maintaining commitments.
- 7. Mastery/Control-** Adoption changes the direction of one’s life, no matter which member of the triad. Recognizing the altered path of one’s life may impact personal growth, development and self-control.

In summary, the seven core issues in adoption will be a part of the lives of those touched closely by adoption, regardless of the circumstances of the adoption. It is our hope that our adoptive families will gain more information about the seven core issues over the course of the year, through our newsletters, and that they will be able to use the information to better understand their children, their children’s birth parents and their own experiences. Check out the Family Talking Points for ideas on how to start conversations about adoption in your family. Please contact the REACH team for further information or additional support.

Credit: Silverstein and Kaplan

7 Core Issues: Family Talking Points

- Think about losses, large and small, that you have experienced in adoption.
- What feelings do you have that are associated with those losses?
- Are there experiences in your adoption journey that have led to feelings of rejection?
- Do you ever see yourself rejecting others before they can reject you? When? Who?
- What guilt or shame do you feel in regards to adoption?
- What feelings do you experience when you talk about adoption?
- Can you identify your behaviors and reactions due to the grief process?
- How do you grieve and do you feel you are at peace with your losses?
- How has adoption impacted your sense of who you are?
- When you think about your identity, what piece of yourself has been most positively impacted by adoption?

Television Review:

By Patti Kasper, M.A.

Long Lost Family, starring Lisa Joyner and Chris Jacobs, is a weekly TV series on TLC. It is a show that features searching and reconnecting between adult adoptees and their birth parent(s). Each week features two families, generally one initiated by the adult adoptee and one initiated by the birth parent or parents.

In adoption trainings, we talk about how the seven core issues of adoption also impact birth parents. Long Lost Family puts these feelings on display in a sensitive and beautiful way each week. In every story, we see how birth parents wrestle with feelings of rejection, guilt / shame, grief, identity, intimacy and mastery / control.

The stories vary in their details and circumstances. Adoptees and their birth parents alike share how they have wrestled with the questions and feelings related to the seven core issues of adoption throughout the years. Watching this TV show captures our hearts with chords of compassion to vanquish any traces of judgment that may be lurking in the crevices of our minds. If any such thoughts are in our minds, our adopted children will pick up on those thoughts. Watching this TV series will provide examples of wonderful ways to talk to your kids about their birth family as well as examples of things to avoid. Above all, the series demonstrates that, in addition to the seven core issues, there is ample love to go around as well.

If you're not already a fan of the show, grab a box of Kleenex and look up some old episodes on TLC. If you have not yet started to have discussions with your adopted child about their journey then allow these episodes, and your emotional response to them, to lead you along the way.



Movie Review: Instant Family

By JulieAnn Jones, MSW

Instant Family is a “feel-good” family movie produced by Paramount Pictures. Sean Anders co-wrote and directed this movie, which is inspired by real events from his life as a foster and adoptive parent. Here is a synopsis of the movie: “Pete (Mark Wahlberg) and Ellie (Rose Byrne) decide to start a family, they stumble into the world of foster care adoption. They hope to take in one small child but when they meet three siblings, including a rebellious 15 year old girl (Isabela Moner), they find themselves speeding from zero to three kids overnight. Now, Pete and Ellie must hilariously try to learn the ropes of instant parenthood in the hopes of becoming a family.”



My personal favorite character in this movie was the social worker, played by Octavia Spencer. But hey, I might be biased! Watching this movie through the lens of both an adoptive mother and adoption social worker tugged on all of my heart strings. I laughed and I cried throughout! The complexities of adoption are touched upon during the course of the movie. When the credits roll at the end, there are several pictures of REAL adoptive families. Five of these families live in California's Central Valley and are clients of Aspiranet. Additionally, a handful of Aspiranet/REACH social workers and families were able to attend the Premiere of Instant Family just days before it was released in theaters! We have all enjoyed this movie and hope you enjoy it as well.

Seven Core Issues: Book Recommendations

By JulieAnn Jones, MSW

Hole in My Heart by Lorraine Dusky

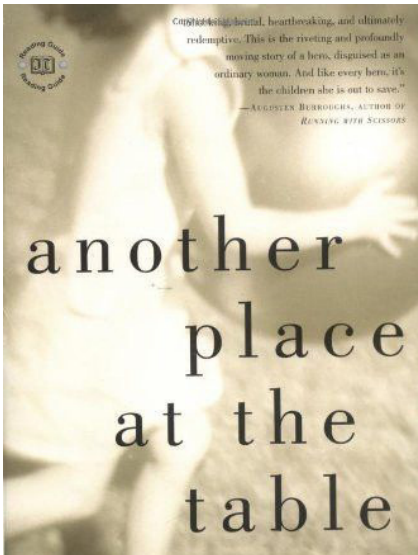
is the powerful story of a mother separated from her child by adoption in the 60's and the state-imposed secrecy that keeps them apart. This book will cause you to re-think some of your views on adoption and consider how deeply rooted they are in our cultural, legal and historical past. Lorraine reunited with her daughter early in the 80's when such reunions were rare. In the process she became a staunch advocate for reform of America's antiquated adoption system – most specifically our history of sealed birth and adoption records that deny adoptee's their own personal information. Lorraine calls it “identity theft” and “state-sanctioned robbery”. But this book is about so much more than her personal quest to end the secrecy that shrouds our adoption journeys. It illuminates the hard truths that are at the center of every adoption – loss, guilt, abandonment and an incomplete sense of identity. Her daughter, the adoptee with two families, also speaks of the complications and uncertainties that infuse her life. Their reunion is complex, beautiful, and tragic. Once you start reading her story, you will not be able to put this book down. Her book is summed up by a quote she uses by Harriet J., an adult adoptee “This is not to say that everything about adoption is wrong, but everything about adoption is painful. For our modern, legal concept of adoption to exist, families must be broken. Adoption is not, and can never be, a best-case scenario. It relies upon the worst-case situation having already come to fruition. From there, you're working with what is instead of what should be. That should be will never go away. For the entire lifetime of everybody involved in adoption, that should be exists, and it hurts. What is can still turn out to be wonderful, beautiful, incredible, but what is will never be what should be. It is that should be that necessitates education, sensitivity, and trigger warnings, because it never goes away.”

hole
in my
heart

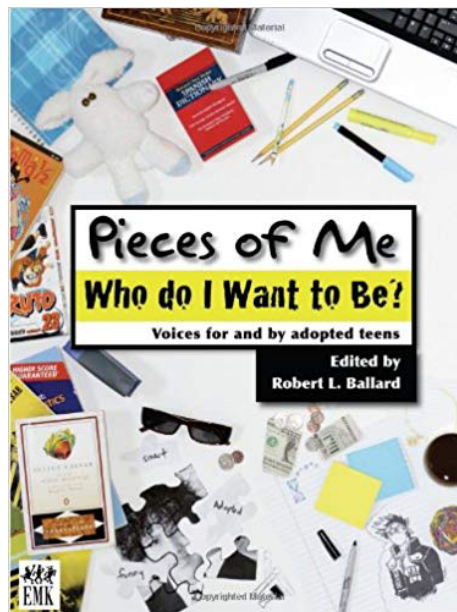
Another Place at the Table, by Kathy Harrison

is a touching memoir, beautifully written from the heart of a foster and adoptive mom.

It is hard, it is painful, it is heart wrenching and you may need a box of Kleenex when you read this. Kathy is straightforward; willing to admit her mistakes and depicts life in the trenches of our nation's child welfare system. Her personal but vitally important account should be read by public policy makers, child welfare professionals and anyone considering foster care and/or adoption. It is truly a story of “shattered childhoods and the redemption of love”.



Pieces of Me: Who do I want to be? Voices for and by adopted teens.



This book is a beautiful collection of stories, poems, art, music, quotes, activities, provocative questions and more – all focused towards the young adopted person who wants to figure out his or her story but doesn't know where to begin. It is a rare book of adoptee voices, from ages 11-63, speaking honestly and authentically about what it means to be adopted. It is a series of experiences, expressions, feelings, hurts, hopes, dreams and struggles. This book is written for those

adopted adolescents, “all of those like us, figuring out where The Pieces of Me fit in with Who I want to Be.” I highly recommend both parent and child read this book. This is a great tool to connect with your child and talk about how and why the stories resonated with each of you.

Support Groups & Events

January

15 Managing Children's Anger
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
4900 California Ave, Suite 300-A,
Bakersfield, CA 93309
(Cal Twin Towers Buildings, Tower A)

February

19 Age Appropriate Life Skills/School System Issues
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
4900 California Ave, Suite 300-A,
Bakersfield, CA 93309
(Cal Twin Towers Buildings, Tower A)

March

19 Boundaries with Children
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
4900 California Ave, Suite 300-A,
Bakersfield, CA 93309
(Cal Twin Towers Buildings, Tower A)

REACH Adoption Support Group for Parents

REACH Parent Support Groups are designed for adults thinking about adoption, families awaiting adoptive placement, and new and experienced adoptive parents. Please join us to share your family's challenges and triumphs. Suggestions for topics are welcome. RSVP for childcare for toddlers and older children. Infants may join their parents.

Bakersfield College Foster & Kinship Care Program

Bakersfield College Foster and Kinship Care Program offers training of interest to foster and adoptive parents at no charge.

For a complete list of classes, visit the FKCE website at <https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/FKCE>

Register for classes by calling the registration line 661-319-1836 or BC Program Manager at 661-395-4737

Understanding the Impact of Parenting Traumatized Children

Wed, Feb 13, 2019 | 9 AM – 12 PM

This workshop will introduce foster and adoptive parents to the essential skills of trauma-informed caregiving, as well as, the impact of trauma on child development. It will help caregivers understand the effects of parenting traumatized children and introduces the concept of vicarious trauma. Participants will identify circles of support, focus on the importance of self care, and develop skills to strengthen their families.

This workshop will be held at the Department of Human Services office at Columbus Center, 3711 Columbus St./ Bakersfield, CA 93306.

Please call 661-319-1836 to register.

Becoming a Trauma Competent Healing Parent, a 2-part series

Tuesday, March 12 & Tuesday, April 2 | 6-9 PM
(dinner provided)

When a child enters a foster/adoptive home with a history of drug exposure, abuse, neglect and/or trauma, that child will greatly impact the family. Often times the experience is nothing like what parents expect. This causes confusing emotions and parents may feel ill-equipped for the journey ahead. This workshop will support parents and caregivers of children who come from hard places with a practical how-to approach, specific tasks and skills. Based on Jayne Schooler's book "Wounded Children Healing Homes: How Traumatized Children Impact Adoptive and Foster Families". Participants who complete training series will receive a free copy of the book.

These workshops will be held at the Weill Insitute, 2100 Chester Ave. 93301

Please call 661-319-1836 to register



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REACH and Kern County Adoption Support Services

Resource: We provide 1) telephone support & 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 held twice a month 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.

Hope: We utilize our agency values of Respect, Integrity, Courage families. Our goal is to promote safe, healthy and stable adoptive families through access to our services.