



bringing cutting edge education
to all members of the adoption &
foster constellation year after year

CALIFORNIA ADOPTION CONFERENCE

Room **Workshops Session I: 10:30am - 12:00pm**
Gym Complex = GC; St. Paul's House = SPH

Continuing the Conversation: To Have & To Hold, Holly van Gulden

**SPH
Room 1
1st Floor**

If you didn't get enough in the morning, join Holly to talk practical strategy and get your questions answered about how to apply her techniques under the specific circumstances that exist in your clinical or family situations. Professionals and parents will learn additional skills about building a resilient sense of self in the child, strengthening their capacity to receive, hold and offer to others a sense of safety, comfort, warmth, value and joy.

Preparing to Adopt, Lisa Clarke, Abby Williams, Katie Stickles-Wynen

**SPH
Room 2
1st Floor**

Learn the basics about domestic (both private and foster) adoption and international adoption, as well as infant vs. older child placement, special needs parenting and other options including gender and/or race selection and open adoption. This workshop will guide you in finding the right placement path for your family if you are considering adoption. Panelists will address the following: How to choose an agency and what questions to ask; What goes into a home study and what (if anything) you need to be nervous about; How to choose a country to adopt from and what questions to ask; How to choose which adoption professional(s) to work with and more.

Adult Adoptee Panel - What Does It Mean to Normalize Adoption?, Theresa Vitt and Panel

**GC
Gym**

Adoption is complex; adopted people, adoptive families, and first families have unique experiences that can be overlooked or denied in an effort to align with societal norms that are based on traditional biological, heterosexual, two-parent families. How do we bring the experiences of adoption into everyday conversation? How can we encourage others to 'lean in' to the realities of adoption when faced with family or social assurances that the adoption experience itself has no impact on adopted people, adoptive families or first families? In this session, a panel of adult will provide their perspectives on discussing adoption with family, friends, and community.

Honest Talk About Adoption and Race, Malaika Parker

**SPH
Room 4
2nd
Floor**

Hear from two professionals who are also adoptive parents – one white, one black – about the intersections of race and adoption. Pre-adoptive and adoptive parents will learn to confront racism and talk about it with their children in empowering ways that will build trust and closeness. Learn how to initiate essential open communication in a way that supports children in building a proud and strong racial identity. This workshop is appropriate for pre-adoptive and adoptive parents of all races, and will be beneficial for teachers or other professionals who work with young adoptees.

Opening Adoptions & Tracing Heritage: Tools and Impact, Janet Shirley and Beth Hall

**SPH
Room 5
3rd
Floor**

How does opening an adoption affect one's sense of identity? What happens when one meets his or her birth family for the first time? Or when cultures and language can present a challenge to connection? What happens when one's expectations are met with a different reality? There are often ways to find family members in domestic and international adoption. And, when family cannot be located, adoptees and their families can still make a journey to the country of birth. Learn about search options and the steps you can take to open your child's adoption. This workshop is appropriate for pre-adoptive families, adoptive families, and adoption professionals.

Voices of First/Birth Parents, Susan Dusza Guerra Leksander, LMFT and Panel

**GC
Library**

A facilitated panel of first/birth parents will speak about their experiences, including factors that led to the adoption, their relationship with their child and the adoptive family, what their life has been like since placement, and how they have navigated varying degrees of openness. Hear recommendations about how adoptive parents can address power differentials and build a lifelong relationship with first/birth parents founded on honesty, mutual respect, and putting the child at the center. Audience members are invited to ask questions.

The Wild, Wild Web: The Internet's Historic Impact on Adoption, Adam Pertman CEU Eligible

**SPH
Room 6
3rd
Floor**

Social media and other elements of the Internet are instigating life-altering changes in every aspect of adoption. These historic shifts range from creating challenges and opportunities for child-placement, counseling, outreach and other professional practices; to facilitating search and reunion to an extent never before imagined; to complicating the ability of courts, agencies and parents to determine the nature of contact between minor children and members of their families of origin. In short, for good and for ill, the Internet is forever rewriting the rules of adoption.

When Point Plans Don't Work CEU Eligible, Laura Anderson, PsyD CEU Eligible

**SPH
Room 7
3rd
Floor**

The most well-intended therapists can miss the mark if they stick too closely to traditional behavioral management strategies with children who have trauma and/or adoption histories. This workshop provides some understanding of the way that children with trauma histories and/or attachment disruptions can have differing brain and body chemistry, as well as relational triggers- and as a result, often warrant thoughtful and specialized interventions. Children with sensory integration challenges will be specifically discussed as well. The aim is to rethink points charts and offer strategies that can truly be helpful to children and families to navigate daily family life.



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Room Workshops Session II: 1:00pm - 2:30pm

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Attachment Parenting for Young Children, Jill Dziko, MSW

SPH
Room 1
1st Floor

Healthy attachment is an essential cornerstone for children to grow into caring, functional adults. This workshop will explain what healthy attachment looks like, why it is essential and how to build a healthy attachment with your young child. For professionals and parents, Jill will provide information about how to identify attachment styles as well as strategies to help parents ensure they are creating positive attachments with their children. The three learning goals are to be able to answer the following: What is attachment parenting? What does healthy attachment look like? What are some tools for achieving healthy attachment with my child?

For Birth/First Parents in Adoption: Understanding and Responding to the Developmental Needs of Your Adopted Children, Rachel Herndon, LCSW and Tara Noone, MSW For First/Birth Family Members Only

SPH
Room 2
1st Floor

A joint presentation and discussion for birth family members *only* of the developmental needs of adopted children. We will discuss how children's understanding of their own adoption story changes over time. We will also discuss the ways adopted children need different things of their adoptive and birth families at different stages. Finally, we will make suggestions to first/birth parents for how best to support these needs, and partner where possible with adoptive parents to keep the child at the center. We will facilitate discussion among attendees about what has worked for them and draw on group and presenter expertise to help support newer birth parents.

The End of Closed Adoption? Why It's Happening and What It Means for All of Us, Adam Pertnan

GC
Gym

For an array of reasons – from what is understood to be best practice to the advent of social media and DNA testing – the era of closed adoptions is rapidly coming to an end. This highly interactive, research-based presentation reviews the history of adoption in the U.S., including how and why it became such a secretive, stigmatizing and shame-filled process; examines the factors that have (and sometimes have not) led to greater openness and honesty; and discusses what the future might look like – including the challenges and problems that linger despite the progress that has been made.

The Joys, Challenges and Triumphs of Being an Adoptive Parent of Color, Malaika Parker

SPH
Room 4
2nd
Floor

Hear from a panel of experienced parents as they discuss what they have learned about exploring ways to support children who join their families through adoption and or foster care. Participants will learn new skills, build community, engage in discussion, and explore ways to support children who join their families through adoption and/or foster care. Enjoy community with adoptive and foster families headed by adoptive and foster parents of color.

Mindfulness in Adoptive Parenting: The Neurobiological Connection, Kathy Bargar, LCSW

SPH
Room 5
3rd
Floor

This workshop will allow parents to explore and better understand the role of mindfulness and the interplay of neurobiology in adoptive parenting. Current research points heavily to the influence of our neurobiology in the way we respond to parenting dilemmas, challenges and the unique traumas many children of adoption have experienced. Understand this research and gain concrete tools to use in successful parenting. Mindfulness will be introduced as a concrete concept and a tool that parents can use to ground their interactions in parenting.

Transracial and Transnational Adoptee Voices, Katie Stickles-Wynen, MSW and Panel

GC
Library

Are you planning a transracial adoption and/or international adoption, or are you already parenting across racial and/or international lines? In order to successfully meet your child's needs, you must be prepared to think about, learn about, and talk about race and racism, as well as loss of country and culture. Hear directly from adult transracial and transnational adoptees about the challenges and joys of transracial and/or transnational adoption, as well as the importance of talking about race and not taking a "color-blind" approach. Other topics covered include how to handle comments about your "visible" family and building a diverse community.

Attachment: The Importance of Sensory Integration and Play, Toni Brown, MS & JulieAnn Jones, MSW CEU Eligible

SPH
Room 6
3rd
Floor

Attendees should come away from this workshop with an understanding of trauma's impact on typical attachment. The impact of sensory deprivation on attachment will be explored. Participants will learn about building attachment through sensory activities based on the teachings and methods of Trust-Based Relational Interventions (TBRI), Theraplay and Jayne Schooler. Additionally, attendees will understand the power of play in parent/child attachment and how to recreate early playful attachment experiences.

This Is Not What I Expected: Reducing Parental Stress in the Adoptive Family, Dan Thorne, LMFT CEU Eligible

SPH
Room 7
3rd
Floor

Many adoptive children also have special needs, i.e., mental health, intellectual disabilities, and/or physical disorders. Parents of these children tend to have higher levels of stress in the form of depression, anxiety, and marital conflict. When parents cannot handle the extra demands of these children, they also reduce the child's development and can cause them further emotional delays. Most focus on parenting is with parenting skills and to help the child, yet the parent's emotional health is left unattended. This workshop defines the three core principles of the PRAXES program and demonstrates stress management skills to be taught to the parent. *This workshop will be filmed for use in training California Social Workers, all identifying information about participants will be removed from the film before it is made public.*



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Room Workshops Session III: 2:45pm - 4:15pm
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- SPH Room 1 1st Floor** **Preparing to Launch: Leaving Home Again Not for the First Time, Holly van Gulden and Gail Steinberg**
Adolescence can be especially volatile and vulnerable for adopted children and their parents but how come no one mentioned that it doesn't end when our children turn 18! Add to that the experience of adoption and or foster care, where leaving has often meant losing or being harmed and the road becomes even more precarious. How do parents help children when they begin the challenging process of becoming adults without becoming either undermining their independence or watching them spiral out of control? What supports are available on this journey?
- SPH Room 2 1st Floor** **Navigating the Educational System to Advocate for Children with Special Challenges, Patricia Black & Lawrence Siegel**
There are hundreds of thousands of children in California with special education needs and naturally some of those children are adoptees. This workshop will provide families and professionals with an understanding of the law that governs special education and how to successfully navigate that world. A discussion of special education law, requirements and practical strategies to effectively help families with children with special needs and professionals, will include time for Q&A. Main goals/areas of focus include: understanding the law, developing an educational "blueprint" for your child and strategies for implementation, and how to do the above without necessarily having to hire an attorney.
- GC Library** **Young Adoptees Speak: Film and Discussion Guide, Beth Hall**
Adoptees are the truest experts of their own experience. Watch and learn as adoptees, ages 10-17, speak about their experience and thoughts about race, first/birth families, adoption and more. The screening will be followed with discussion points and insights that can be used for discussions with children and parents when viewing the film. This workshop is appropriate for pre-adoptive and adoptive parents, and will be beneficial for teachers or other professionals who work with young adoptees.
- SPH Room 4 2nd Floor** **Adult Adoptees Speak with Birth/First Families, Katie Stickles-Wynen, MSW/Panel For First/Birth Family Members Only**
In this workshop for birth/first families *only*, adult adoptees will share their perspectives on all types of adoptions -- open, closed and everything in between. First/birth family members will be invited to consider how to best keep their experiences and needs separate and distinct from those of the child they placed. First/birth family members will hear directly from adult adoptees about what they would have wanted from their first/birth families through the years. Adult adoptees will address topics such as: birth family relationships with adoptive family, providing access to information, what helps and what has been hard.
- SPH Room 5 3rd Floor** **Using Myth and Archetype to Cultivate Insight and Integrate Self for Adult Adoptees, Jemma Elliot, LPCC, LMFT**
What happens when the label "adoptee" becomes so integrated and internalized that it is difficult to begin to distinguish self from label? Patterns can become ingrained. Thoughts can become automatic. Feelings can become crystallized. The practice of working with the depth psychological tools of myths and archetypes can provide an adult adoptee with the opportunity to externalize the adoptee narrative. We will look at some of the common archetypes and myths for adult adoptees, and discuss both how we identify with them, and how they impact our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Recognition of these stories and patterns leads to greater understanding, and a more whole sense of self.
- SPH Room 6 3rd Floor** **The Kids Are All Right...But Don't Forget Their Losses: Raising Adopted Children in LGBTQ-Headed Families, Kerry Woodward, Ph.D. and Charles Spiegel, JD**
Hear from LGBTQ adoptive parents and professionals about research on the social and emotional well-being of children raised in LGBTQ-headed families. Discuss the challenges children may face as part of any family that does not conform to the heterosexual, two-parent norm. This workshop will consider how these challenges may be compounded for adopted kids because they have already experienced loss, particularly the loss of being raised by their birth family. For children adopted transracially and/or transnationally, the losses are even greater. Pre-adoptive and adoptive parents from LGBTQ and other non-normative families will discuss approaches to parenting that balance the reality that their children are doing just fine with the awareness that there are challenges and losses that may arise when being raised in stigmatized families.
- GC Gym** **Love + Knowledge + Skills = Wisdom: Becoming an Emotionally Healthy Family, Ronald Mah, LMFT, Ph.D CEU Eligible**
Adoptive and/or foster family dynamics can present issues and potential problems that love by itself cannot resolve. Family dynamics as well as family members emotional and mental health affect both children and parents. Four fundamental family systems theories are presented which can be used to help parents and professionals anticipate complications to family cohesion. The four theories also direct four strategies -- discipline, communication, interactions to mitigate and heal problems, and interactions to empower healthy adult leadership. Issues such as attachment styles (secure vs. anxious styles), trauma, stress, family modeling, cross-cultural dynamics, and bio-family experiences are addressed.
- SPH Room 7 4th Floor** **Counseling Expectant and First/Birth Parents, Rachel Herndon, LCSW & Susan D G Leksander, LMFT CEU Eligible**
This presentation outlines techniques for working with expectant parents considering adoption pre-placement, and first/birth parents through the post-placement process. The workshop will include an emphasis on the ethical obligations of adoption providers to remain unbiased and without an agenda when working with this vulnerable population. Presenters will address the importance of revisiting the intention to place, informed consent, and anticipatory grief counseling as well as considerations for post-placement counseling, including ambiguous loss, complicated grief, expectations for openness not being met, and connecting with peer supports.