



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

CALIFORNIA ADOPTION CONFERENCE



2020 WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS - MARCH 28TH

Morning Keynote

Seven Core Issues in Adoption & Permanency *CE Eligible*

Sharon Kaplan Roszia

Adoption, foster, and kinship care are important resources for addressing the needs of children in crisis. Families built through foster, kinship care, and adoption represent bitter sweet forms of family building as they incorporate the joys and pain of both loss and gain. All members of the adoption/permanency constellation—which include adopted persons, birth/first parents, permanent parents, and extended family—experience lifelong intergenerational losses and complexities. Sharon will discuss the seven core issues and their accompanying tasks that help constellation members better understand how the experience of adoption/permanency has impacted their life and relationships. Using this unifying lens enables everyone to better address the complex challenges and feelings that adopted children often experience throughout the various stages of development.

Early Afternoon Session

Birth/First Parent Voices

Panel moderated by Susan Dusza Guerra Leksander

Nationwide, the adoption discussion is too often missing the perspective of first/birth parent voices and instead dominated by the voices of adoptive parents. When first/birth voices are missing, the message is sent to adoptees that their origin, the beginning of their life story and the connection to their first heritage and family is not important, not worthy, or perhaps is even something to be ashamed of, or overcome. Hear from several birth/first parents about how they are processing and managing their own adoption experiences. You will hear about different adoption scenarios including open adoptions with ongoing contact and adoptions where contact is challenging. We will offer insight into creative ways to maintain connection with first/birth parents who have engaged in unsafe behaviors.

Digging Deeper—Trauma Informed Parenting Strategies

Bryan Post

The most common parenting practices taught today to parents and teachers have one very common denominator. This denominator explains exactly why parents struggle for years with their children's behaviors and don't see the results they desire. In this workshop, Bryan will enlighten parents to a new way of seeing children's most challenging behavior and the exact understanding needed to help reduce them.

Open Adoption in Intercountry Adoption

Lisa Clark

In the last 30 years the option to relinquish a child for adoption for birth/first families has increased throughout the world. "Abandonment" is no longer their only option. This means adoptive parents and adoptees often have names and addresses of birth family making a search much easier than in years past. We are seeing adoptive families opening their children's international adoptions more often and at earlier ages. Cell phones and apps like Viber and WhatsApp make ongoing contact possible. What can we learn from domestic open adoption, and what unique issues should be considered in open international adoptions? Where have families succeeded and stumbled? How can we help support adoptive parents who may not have been prepared or educated regarding open adoption? How can families help support their children in having a relationship with their family in other countries? We will dive deep into this concept to explore this ever growing trend in adoptions that research has shown to be beneficial not only for the overall development of the child, but for their sense of identity and self.

Chill Out: Tools for Families to Address and Prevent Stress *CE Eligible*

Rachel Michelsen

Life's pressures can become stress and stress can result in all sorts of challenges: fighting with friends and family, difficulty with school and work, physical exhaustion and even illness. Create an individual and family self-care plan to prevent stress from taking over your life. Rachel will teach simple tools from the fields of energy medicine and energy psychology that can be used by parents and the professionals supporting them.

Talking with (not to) Children about Adoption & Foster Care

Beth Hall

Initiating conversations with children about being adopted can feel scary for parents who want to protect their children from feeling "less than." Learn how to start conversations and introduce concepts without going over your children's heads. When should we tell? What should we tell? How do we tell? Get ideas and words to use to introduce the concept and details about adoption to your child. This workshop provides research-based tips for understanding a child's point of view and feelings about adoption. You will receive practical guidance on how to create a plan for sharing information and managing the unknowns. We will cover topics including: Handling your own fears, understanding how children understand & experience adoption, why the words we use matter, why beginning with a child's birth makes sense, how to talk about first/birth parents and answering and anticipating children's questions, whether they ask them or not

The Art of Attachment: Using Sensory Strategies as a Key to Connection *CE Eligible*

Laura Anderson

Attachment is the cornerstone of connection, healing, and harmony in an adoptive family. This workshop provides some understanding of the way that children with trauma histories and/or attachment disruptions can have differing brain and body chemistry, including differently developed sensory integration systems. Understanding a child as a sensory being can provide important hints at finding ways to soothe, and connect with them. The goal of this workshop is to explore issues related to sensory processing, and assist adoptive parents in finding concrete sensory integration strategies that are trauma informed and strengthen attachment. Children ages 0-18 will be discussed.

Late Afternoon Session

Preparing to Adopt

Lisa Clark, Susan Leksander, Abby Williams

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.

Threshold Crossings: The Work of Navigating Transitions for Adult Adoptees

Jemma Elliot

Throughout the complex stages of existence, the lifelong process of adoption makes itself known through various gifts and challenges. Nowhere can this seem more prevalent than at the thresholds, or the moments when important life transitions are occurring. For the adult adoptee, navigating these threshold moments can often feel especially difficult, as transitions poignantly remind us of the ways in which our developmental trajectory as adoptees is unique. With conscious attention to both the potential values and challenges in working with personal transitions, the adult adoptee can garner a sense of grace and mastery in moving through the thresholds. This presentation and accompanying dialog are meaningful for the adult adoptee, for loved ones who wish to better understand the lived experience of the adult adoptee, and for helping professionals who support adult adoptees.

Voices of Adopted Adults

Panel Moderated by Katie Wynen

Hear from adopted adults about their adoption journey including the role their first/birth parents/families have had in their lives and understanding of their own identity. Too often in the adoption field, the adoptee perspective is subordinated to that of the adoptive parent. We believe that adults with first-hand experience are the truest experts on that experience. The voices of adopted adults born both domestically and internationally, adopted transracially and in same race placements, will be featured.

Having Hard Conversations with Children About Adoption, Race and Class

Malaika Parker

Our country is far from a “post-racial” society, as recent events demonstrate. Add to that the uncomfortable truth that privileges are extended [or denied] based on class in all forms of adoption, including foster care, private domestic and international. Class dynamics always butt up against intersections of oppression. How can parents and other adults talk with children about difficult truths? How is the conversation different depending on the race of the child and parent? How does the conversation need to be different depending on the age of the child? Hear about the intersections of race, class and adoption. Learn how to talk with children in empowering ways that will build trust and closeness and initiate essential open communication in a way that supports children in building a proud and strong identity.

The Inclusive Family Support Model: Facilitating Openness for All Post-Adoptive Families **CE Eligible**

Kara Anderston & Angela Tucker

We will describe our practice model of the same name used for facilitating openness between adoptive families and first/birth families. For many adoptive parents, considering openness with their adopted child's birth/first family is difficult. Adoption agencies often provide pre-adoption advice and encourage families to agree to openness but then leave it up to the adoptive parents to navigate this potentially challenging journey alone. Prioritizing open relationships within the adoption constellation increases the chance for a healthy identity for all involved. The Inclusive Family Support Model provides agencies and practitioners a road map for empowering birth families' role and helping all members of an adoptive family system manage, and ideally thrive within, an open relationship.

The Developmental Stages of Understanding for Adopted/Fostered Children **CE Eligible**

Sharon Kaplan Roszia

As children grow, parents may find themselves searching for understanding of their child's behavior. Parents may struggle to develop empathy for their child's confusion, hard questions and challenges. Children explore their world through the lenses of their social, emotional and cognitive ability to process their experience of adoption/ foster care; this understanding evolves over several years. This workshop will teach the ages and stages at which children tend to focus on particular aspects of their adoption/foster experience and how parents (by birth, foster care and adoption) can use that knowledge to normalize, guide and support their child's emotional journey.

Elephants in the Room: Bias We See – and Don't See – in Adoption

Adam Pertman

All of us are the products (for better or worse) of our life experiences, our individual perspectives and opinions, and most pointedly for this workshop, our biases. This session will examine how these factors and others – from race and age to societal stigma and workplace culture – impact decision-making on a host of challenges in the adoption world. Most importantly, we'll talk about how they affect everyone touched by the adoption process, from social workers and other professionals to adopted people and all their parents. Please be ready for a highly interactive session, including honest discussions; storytelling, including about attendees' own experiences; the opportunity to explore your own feelings and biases; and brainstorming about strategies that could help us all move forward more positively and effectively.