

Reflections from Adoptive Parenting Consult Group

10 Key Resources to Strengthen Your Parenting Approach

Facilitated & curated by Cam Lee Small, MS, LPCC

Key quotes and concepts from Cam's recent Adoptive Parenting Workshop, along with a "must-have" resource to consider for each:

1) Adoption as a Lifelong Journey

"Adoption is a lifelong event. As I mentioned in my TED Talk, it takes a village to relinquish a child, and it takes another one to keep us from talking about what happened. A lot of people have to be in on it."

This means we're recognizing adoption not as a single event but as an ongoing reality that involves entire communities. It points to the systemic nature of adoption and the collective silence that often surrounds it.

Adoptee-Led Resource: "[Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption](#)" edited by Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin

This collection of essays by transracial adoptees breaks the silence around adoption's complexities, addressing power, race, and the systemic forces behind family separation. The diverse adoptee voices create a powerful counter-narrative to the "rescue" adoption story.

2) Holding Complex Emotions

“Gratitude and loss can coexist. And when we’re thinking about identity development, for me, it was a journey of recognizing how I really am connected to the Asian American community.”

Here I acknowledged the “both/and” reality of adoptee-sensitive emotions. Together we’re challenging the false binary that adoptees must either be grateful OR sad. It points to the complexity of the adoptee experience. Check out my [guest blog with Ann Voskamp](#) for more dialogue on that.

Adoptee-Led Resource: “All You Can Ever Know” by Nicole Chung

This memoir beautifully articulates the nuanced experience of simultaneously loving one’s adoptive family while grieving birth family separation. Chung’s storytelling helps families understand how appreciation and longing, belonging and difference, can exist in the same heart.

3) Humanizing Adoptee Behavior

“When you can help the child name that, I’m not just angry. I don’t just have these weird feelings. No, I’ve got a response to something real that happened to me...that kind of changes the whole thing.”

We’re reframing “problem behaviors” as natural responses to unnatural situations, traumatic events, shifting from pathologizing adoptees to understanding them. We want to highlight the importance of validation in healing. [not “condoning” harmful behaviors, but understanding some of their origins]

Resource: “The Body Keeps the Score” by Bessel van der Kolk

This accessible book on trauma explains how the body and brain respond to overwhelming experiences, helping parents understand that their child’s behaviors may often represent normal physiological responses to abnormal circumstances.

4) Parental Approach

“Don’t get furious. Get curious.”

In some ways this idea encapsulates an entire philosophy of parenting children who’ve experienced early adversity (or any human child!), emphasizing connection over correction. Relationship before reason. My work often emphasizes the therapeutic value of approaching behaviors with empathy rather than judgment.

Adoptee-Led Resource: [“Parenting in the Eye of the Storm: The Adoptive Parent’s Guide to Navigating the Teen Years”](#) by Katie Naftzger

Written by an adult adoptee and therapist, this book specifically addresses the unique challenges of launching adoptees into adulthood. It provides gentle approaches for supporting independence while maintaining connection.

5) Expanding vs. Replacing Stories

“What does it look like to help expand their story rather than replace their story, expand their family and the information that they know rather than burying it and pretend it doesn't exist.”

My multi-week Adoptive Parenting Consultation Group helps caregivers challenge the historical approach to “adoption as replacement” and offers a more inclusive alternative. It points to the importance of narrative continuity in healthy identity development.

Adoptee-Led Resource: [Therapeutic Life Story Work](#) by Richard Rose

“The Rose Model of Therapeutic Life Story Work is the first model subjected to independent research and validated as an evidenced based narrative model that has excellent outcomes for children, young people and adults who’ve experienced traumatic events.”

6) Presence During Difficulty

“I see you’ve got some big feelings right now. Would you like me to hold your hand? Would you like a hug? I’m with you.”

Here I offered a concrete example of attuned parenting during challenging moments. It points to the concept of co-regulation in attachment theory.

Resource: “[Developmental Repair](#)” by Anne Gearity

“A training model that teaches an intentional and practiced stance that allows adults to remain active regulating partners for children who are unable to sustain adequate self-regulation and self-organization in the face of distress.”

7) The Journey Metaphor

“Pain is part of the process, and it’s never too late to start.”

We press into both realism and hope, acknowledging difficulties while encouraging action. As individuals and as a collective we’re mindful of the resilience-building aspect of caring for children who’ve experienced separation, relinquishment, foster care, and adoption.

Resource: “[3-5-7 Model](#)” by Darla Henry

“The 3-5-7 Model is built on the belief that all children placed in out-of-home care experience separation and loss, and this loss must be acknowledged and grieved before permanency can be

pursued... The model is an integral practice engagement strategy to support the work of young people and all of their families to build relationships of permanency.”

8) Proactive Resource Development

“We’re not waiting for a crisis to happen before you start looking for this stuff. We’re proactive about this.”

I’m encouraging preventative rather than reactive approaches to adoptee-related strengths and needs. We highlight the profound significance of preparation and ongoing education. I talk more about that here on [my interview with The World and Everything In It](#).

Adoptee-Led Resource: [Permanency and Adoption Competency Certificate](#) by University of MN School of Social Work and Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (Cam is both an alum and training facilitator!)

“PACC is a cohort-based training that enhances permanency and adoption competence for professionals working across child welfare and mental health settings. The program offers over 70 Social Work Continuing Education Hours, including the required 2 hours in Social Work Ethics and 4 hours in Cultural Responsiveness content.”

9) Adult Adoptee Transitions

“Transitions can bring up things, and I think part of the work is helping an adoptee not feel bad for having that, but finding ways to kind of slowly water the garden of awareness.”

This statement points to the wise, kind, empathic, active approach needed for helping adult adoptees navigate independence *and* connection. We want to be honest and informed about what experiences are unique to adoptees entering adulthood. ([Watch the Side By Side Reflections Series](#) to hear clinicians, including me/Cam, discuss these concepts more in depth)

Adoptee-Led Resource: [“When We Become Ours”](#) edited by Nicole Chung and Shannon Gibney

This young adult anthology brings together essays by adoptees of color that explore the complex intersections of race, identity, and belonging. What makes this resource particularly valuable is how it speaks to multiple generations – offering validation for adult adoptees while providing adoptive parents with authentic insights into their children’s potential future experiences. The diversity of voices creates a multifaceted picture of transracial adoption that resists simplified narratives while offering pathways toward deeper understanding and connection.

10) Community Knowledge

“The community has power and wisdom and discernment. Together we share resources. We build our own community toolkit together.”

This final idea decenters ourselves alone as experts – and harkens to the collective wisdom of the group. We want to value the collaborative nature of warm, wise, compassionate support for those connected to the lived experiences of foster youth and adoptees. Check out my [conversation with Haley Radke with AdopteesOn](#) for more on that topic!

Adoptee-Led Resource: [Adoption Mosaic](#)

Adoption Mosaic exemplifies community-based knowledge sharing, bringing together adoptees, adoptive families, and birth families. It’s a BIPOC woman owned, adoptee-led mission-driven collective with over 30 years of experience. “We have created a robust, diverse community who wants to see a future of more adoptee-centered and ethical adoption practices and critical thinking around adoption.”

Your Next Steps

[Register for Cam’s upcoming 8-Week Adoptive Parenting Consultation Group](#)

“One of the biggest take aways for us is the tools for how to SER(ve) our son! We are practicing each day and he is constantly showing affection and coming to us to initiate conversations that he used to just keep inside. This training is such a gift to our family!”

What’s Included:

- 8 weekly live sessions over Zoom (90 minutes each; choose to observe or present your questions, receive live coaching and constructive feedback from adoptee and therapist Cam Lee Small, MS, LPCC, along with fellow members of the group)
- Limited space per cohort for personalized attention
- 30-minute individual consultation with Cam
- Private online community for ongoing support between sessions
- Weekly implementation guides and reflection prompts
- 6-month access to recorded sessions for review
- Immediate access to Cam’s online-course “10 Parenting Strategies to Help Adoptees Navigate Race & Culture” [ten video modules paired with an interactive discussion guide]
- Instant download of the four-part adoptee workbook “This Is Why I Was Adopted”

Grow alongside a community of parents:

*“This workshop has made me **more mindful as an adoptive parent** to what our son may experience as he gets older and more mindful of how I can prepare myself as the one who gets to walk alongside of him.”*

*“Half the battle is finding **constructive ways to talk about hard things**. This workshop has provided just that. We are so grateful for this unique & gracious context!”*

*“The balance of provocations/prompts, group sharing, and Cam’s insights/responses, **connecting what we shared back to larger principles** and constructs and his own experiences as a professional and adoptee, including a focus on the diversity of adoptee responses and needs.”*

*“I really do feel that it's made **our relationship stronger** with our child... We're seeing positive signs, and I think we have better tools to support them too.”*

*“It was really nice to **be with** a group of people who were **willing to share** their struggles as well as their wins... it can feel like a hard journey... it's just something that I don't think you can ever really truly prepare yourself for. So **this group** has been really great.”*

*“Not just the **resources** Cam provided, but the stories and situations from other parents **really helped me understand** similarities and differences in our situation.”*

Remember, adoption isn't a one-time event.

Your child's post-adoption support shouldn't be either.

The Adoptive Parenting Consultation Group is a fellowship of real people, committed to real and lasting growth, not just for themselves but for each other, their growing families and those growing within them, and for the dynamic needs in their local communities to which they've been called to see and serve.

[**Register Today**](#)