



Join AKA and These Leaders in Adoption

November 3rd and 4th

“Coming Home to Your Self”



FRIDAY KEYNOTE:

Kristin Neff, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at UT Austin. She is a pioneer in the field of self-compassion research, conducting the first empirical studies on self-compassion over a decade ago. In addition to writing numerous academic articles and book chapters on the topic, she is author of the book "Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself". She co-developed an 8 week training program called Mindful Self-Compassion, and offers workshops on self-compassion worldwide. Kristin is also featured in the bestselling book and award-winning documentary *The Horse Boy*, which chronicles her family's journey to Mongolia to find healing for her child with autism.

SATURDAY KEYNOTE:

Bennett Greenspan, President and CEO Family Tree DNA, is an entrepreneur and life-long genealogy enthusiast. Mr. Greenspan founded Family Tree DNA in 1999, a Houston-based company and one of the largest commercial DNA Testing companies in the country. Mr. Greenspan was on the forefront of the now exploding field of genetic genealogy. He is also a known supporter of the fight for original birth certificate access for adult adoptees in Texas. He believes, "It is the right of all human beings to know their origins, and while many are curious about their distant ancestors, adoptees' quest for their immediate parentage is even more compelling and should not be legally denied."

SESSION SPEAKERS

Torrey Carroll, LPC-I and Nikki Carroll, LPC-I, are adoptive parents and therapists, who understand and respect both the pressures involved in building a family, coupled with the unique gifts and learning experiences that the adoption dynamic brings. Both hold Master's degrees in Professional Counseling and Marriage and Family Therapy.

Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW-S, has specialized in the field of child welfare, working with individuals, couples and families who have adopted for the past 18 years. Her passion includes educating and training others within the community to help lift the voices of marginalized and oppressed groups. Melanie was adopted from South Korea.

Patricia Martinez Dorner, LPC, is a pioneer in open adoption and search practices and has been a relentless advocate of adoption reform since the late 70's. She has authored several books including *How to Open an Adoption: a guide for parents and birthparents of minors*. She is an adoptive mom of two adult daughters in open adoptions.

Amy Ford and her partner Kim served as foster parents for 8 years with TDFPS. From her experiences in loving and living with children of different races, Amy wrote the book *Brown Babies Pink Parents*. She is a paid speaker/trainer for foster and adoption agencies, helping families navigate the challenges presented in transracial parenting.

Pam Greenstone, LPC, a counselor in private practice for 15 years, has extensive experience and training in Group Psychotherapy. She has worked for Waterloo Counseling Center, The University of Texas Counseling Center, and has served as the President of the Austin Group Psychotherapy Society. Pam is an adoptee in reunion.

Lesli Johnson, LMFT, EMDR Trained and Certified, CAMFT Supervisor, Adjunct Professor: Pepperdine University, is an adult adoptee and works as a licensed therapist and coach specializing in adoption. She regularly contributes to Huffington Post, Adoption Today, GoodTherapy, and the podcast Adoptees On.

Joy Jones, who holds a B.S. in Psychology and a Master's in Leadership & Management, combined her experience as a birth mother and corporate trainer to found Black Adoption Story, where she proudly calls herself "Chief Storyteller" for Adoption in the Black Community.

Leslie Pate Mackinnon, LCSW, has maintained a private psychotherapy practice for 40+ years and has been featured on Good Morning America, CNN, and more. Her story of placing her two firstborn sons for adoption as a teenager has been included in, *The Girls Who Went Away* and the documentary, *A Girl Like Her*.

Katy Perkins, LMSW-AP, is a board member of STAR (Support TX Adoptee Rights), and President of Kingsman Consulting, LLC, providing therapeutic support to the adoption constellation. Katy has provided training and educational sessions about adoption, cultural competence, and intimate partner violence for fifteen years.

Raya Shelashka holds a Specialist in Psychology and Management degree in the Ukraine. She is a foster parent and serves as a certified trainer for foster and adoptive parents.

Andrew Tash, JD, a birth father, father, and a late-discovery adoptee, produces documentaries, including Six Word Adoption Memoirs. His work builds community among those touched by adoption by giving voice to authentic storytellers.

Randy Whited, an avid genealogist for 30+ years, serves as President of the Texas State Genealogical Society and serves on the board of the Federation of Genealogical Societies.

Krista Woods, LCSW, is the founder and President of Integrity Clinical Consulting & Training, where she provides training about adoption, cultural competency, chronic mental illness, and crisis intervention.

The Good Adoptee*— **Susan Bachner (Playwright & Director, *The Good Adoptee*) is an award-winning playwright, director and adoptee with an MFA from the Actors Studio Drama School at The New School University. Suzanne's new play, *The Good Adoptee*, won awards for Best Autobiographical Script and Best Actress when it premiered in the United Solo Theatre Festival in New York City. **Brad Brader** (Dramaturg, *The Good Adoptee*) is an award-winning actor, writer, and monologist. Bob's acclaimed solo show, *Spitting In The Face Of The Devil*, toured all over the US and Canada and has won seven Best of Fest Awards. **Anna Bridgforth** (Performer, *The Good Adoptee*) is an award-winning actress of stage and screen and a Virginia native who has lived in NYC for over 10 years. Anna won the Best Actress award for her starring role in this play.

Please visit adoptionknowledge.org/aka/conference/schedule/ for full speaker bios.

Friday, November 3rd

9:00 – 9:30am Welcome

9:30 – 12pm **Keynote: Self-Compassion: A Source of Strength and Support in Times of Challenge, Kristin Neff, PhD**

2.5 hours CEU

Self-compassion involves treating ourselves kindly, like we would a close friend we cared about. Rather than making global evaluations of ourselves as “good” or “bad,” self-compassion involves generating kindness toward ourselves as imperfect humans, and learning to be present with the inevitable struggles of life with greater ease. It motivates us to make needed changes in our lives, not because we’re worthless or inadequate, but because we care about ourselves and want to lessen our suffering. This talk will present theory and research on self-compassion, which a burgeoning empirical literature has shown to be powerfully associated with psychological wellbeing. We will also discuss how self-compassion helps to prevent burnout among caregivers and mental health professionals. A brief self-compassion practice will be taught that can be used in daily life.

12-1:00pm Lunch (on own)

1-1:15pm Networking

1:15-2:45pm 1.5 hour CEU

A. THE NEXT PHASE: Rebalancing the Resources, Leslie Pate Mackinnon, LCSW

Focusing on the Gold Standard of counseling for the expectant mother as she makes decisions for her expected infant. This format for counseling is readily standardized and can be made applicable to all 50 states. Let’s reassess what our next phase of adoption looks like and how rebalancing resources could change the institution as we’ve known it. We’ve learned a lot in the last 100 years. Now it’s time to put those lessons into action, while simultaneously assisting the burgeoning field of 3rd Party Reproduction in avoiding all the mistakes made in the early days of adoption. You are already working with lots of families formed in this manner and need to be prepared for even more.

B. How Open Should Your Open Adoption Be? Traci Pirri, LCSW

Most people agree, open adoption is best practice for adoption these days, but how much openness works best? What if one part wants more than another? Traci W. Pirri will help you take a closer look at these issues. She will identify key questions to ask and help you develop guidelines for sorting out your open adoption. Adoption is different for everyone, so the key is working out the best adoption experience for you and yours.

C. Creating Safe and Secure Spaces for Transracially Adopted Children and Families, Katy Perkins, LMSW-AP & Krista Woods, LCSW

Raising children of color in today’s society has become increasingly challenging since just before and after the election in November 2016. This workshop will explore and discuss how parents can help support, advocate and be allies for their children (and others) and teach children how to advocate for themselves as they age. Adoptees and children with traumatic backgrounds are at greater risk of being triggered, which can cause mood dysregulation. When living in a world that a child perceives to be unsafe, external factors such as community violence or even headlines can activate an emotional response. This highly interactive workshop will provide attendees with new insights and skills on how to support children that can be applied in schools, communities and faith-based settings.

D. Group Therapy and Adoption, Pam Greenstone, LPC

This workshop will give the history of Pam’s group therapy experiences and describe how it helped her navigate both a troubling birth family reunion and her more recent reunion with over 40 members of

her birth family. It will cover the many special needs that all members of the adoption triad might have in a group therapy setting. It will cover the many ways to prepare yourself or your clients for a group therapy experience and examples of group agreements and formats.

2:45 – 3:15pm **Networking Break** (visit exhibit booths and book store)

3:15 – 4:45pm 1.5 hour CEU

A. Suicide within the Adoptee Community: Breaking the Silence, Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW-S

Within the last several years, the discussion related to suicide and adoptees have risen. In October 2013, the University of Minnesota’s Department of Psychology released their longitudinal findings about suicidal behavior, adoption status, and non-adoption status—and the findings were significant. Based on reported suicide attempts, the research revealed that adoptees were four times more likely to attempt suicide than their non-adopted peers. While adoption-status alone does not cause suicidal behavior or attempts, it is critical to examine the unique variables that may contribute to a higher risk of suicide within the adoption community. This workshop will explore some of the unique factors to consider related to suicide and adoption.

B. Transracial Adoptions: Building Self-Esteem and Parental Tasks with Children in Transracial Adoptions and Foster Care, Torrey Carroll, MA, LPC-I and Nikki Carroll, MA, LPC-I

Discussions about race can be complex and challenging, especially for adoptive and foster parents. No one can live in an environment “diverse enough,” “friendly enough” or “good enough” to insulate children of color from the touch of racism. Initiating open communication in a way that supports children in building a strong identity as a person of color is essential. Join us for a day to learn, engage, and compassionately support one another as we explore transracial adoption and foster care together. Questions like, “Why does race have to be so important? How can we break the racial sound barrier in our homes? What are the blind spots that can hinder us from becoming effective allies for our children? How do we provide cultural experiences that will help our children?” and many others will be discussed during this workshop. Hear from experienced professionals and TRIAD members about how to initiate essential conversations that support children in building a strong identity. This workshop will provide tools and perspectives shown to be beneficial in supporting transracial families.

C. “We Don’t Do That”: A Birthmom’s Experience, Joy Jones

How do you change a negative perception of adoption that is pervasive within a culture? This session will provide an in-depth look at the five adoption decisions impacting “the black triad”: 1) The decision by black families to adopt; 2) The decision by pregnant women to choose adoption; 3) The decision of birth parents to seek support/therapy; 4) The decision by adoptive families to have the “you’re adopted” talk; 5) The joint decisions made by the black family triad. We will also address the search and reunion process to help you develop guidelines for sorting out your open adoption. Adoption is different for everyone. The key is working out the best adoption experience for you and yours.

Saturday, November 4th

9:15am Welcome

9:15 – 11:00 am **Keynote: DNA: Impacting the Ever Changing Landscape for Adoptees, Bennett Greenspan, President and CEO, Family Tree DNA** 1.75 hour CEU

Mr. Greenspan will give a brief overview of the inception of Family Tree DNA and his personal story of discovery. He will update atten-

-dees on the state of today's field of genetic genealogy, its latest technology, and what it can tell us about ourselves. He will also present his views on what he believes is the right of every human: access to their ethnicity and origin information. Finally, we will discuss the futility of legally barring a person from their own truth and the ethical implications of attempting to do so. There will be time for questions and answers, both preselected and from the audience in attendance.

11:00 – 12:30pm The Good Adoptee: Suzanne Bachner, Anna Bridgforth, & Bob Brader 1.5 CEU

The Good Adoptee is the totally true story of award-winning playwright Suzanne Bachner's search for the truth of her origins in the face of New York State's sealed records. Once she opens Pandora's Box, can she find a way to integrate her dual identities and still remain the Good Adoptee? Suzanne's play won awards for Best Autobiographical Script and Best Actress for star Anna Bridgforth when it premiered in the United Solo Theatre Festival in New York City. The show has toured to the London Fringe Festival and all over the US, including a 7-week 9-city Connecticut tour to support the vital legislative efforts of Access Connecticut. A brief talk-back with Suzanne and Anna will follow the performance.

12:30-1:15 Lunch (provided on property/networking)

1:15 – 2:45 1.5 hour CEU

A. Genetic Genealogy: Interpreting Your Results and Making Connections, Randy Whited

The presentation will highlight the types of DNA tests available, how to select which test or tests to address specific genealogical questions, and how to interpret the results. The presentation allows for ample Q&A during and after the session.

B. EMDR Therapy and Adoption: Transforming Trauma, Lesli Johnson, LMFT

This workshop will explain the basics of EMDR and Attachment-Focused EMDR and discuss the effectiveness of utilizing EMDR Therapy for symptom reduction in both adoptees and others connected by adoption. Lesli will provide case examples from her work with clients and walk the audience through what an EMDR session looks like. She'll lead an experimental "resourcing exercise" that can be helpful for anxiety and self-regulation and end the session with Q &A.

C. Art and Narrative, Andrew Tash, JD-Law

Over the last few years (and actually the very reason we started 6WAM) we've been able to listen to individuals share their stories. Sometimes people say they'd like to share something, but they just don't know what to say. So Derek and I put together a format to develop a narrative. But video isn't the only way to tell stories. We'd like to offer insights, provide examples, and draw from workshop dialogue about how narrative and artful presentation in various media work collaboratively to really impact an audience.

2:45 – 3:00 Break & Networking

3:00 – 4:30 1.5 hour CEU

A. Expectations. Let's Get Real, Raya Shelashka

It is easy to get weary, tired and disappointed when our children constantly fail our, seemingly appropriate, expectations. Our disappointments and endless battles over homework, chores, and behavioral issues could cast a shadow on our relationship with our children. During this workshop, we will talk about how to form healthy expectations towards our adopted children, taking into consideration the effects of trauma on a child's developmental trajectory. More importantly, we will cover how to empower our children and help them feel safe and capable of success in their daily tasks. We will learn how to practice mindfulness, set appropriate and realistic expect-

-tations for our children at a level where they can succeed, and how to raise this bar to help them grow.

B. Best Practices in Transracial Families, Amy Ford

As parents, we draw on our own personal life experiences to raise our children. However, in the case of transracial families, parents may be ill-equipped to meet the physical and cultural needs of their kiddo simply because these skills have not been part of their life experience. We can't teach, or impart, what we don't know! How do Caucasian parents know how to comb African-American hair, care for skin, respond to racism for the first time, develop racial identity in a child whose race is different from their own? Best Practices will scratch the surface of these and many more topics essential in successful transracial parenting

C. Supporting Your Teen's Search in the Age of Social Media, Patricia Dorner, MA, LPC

Adoptive parents, birthparents, adoption professionals, and therapists are often challenged by a teen's desire to search for birthfamily. This workshop will examine the ingredients that maximize positive outcomes while considering social media.

4:30 – 5:00pm Closing Comments / Wrap-Up .5 hour CEU

LOCATION

Westover Church of Christ

8332 Mesa Drive, Austin, TX 78759

HOTEL

HYATT house Austin/Arboretum

10001 N. Capital of Texas Highway, Austin, TX 78759

austinarboretum.house.hyatt.com /512-342-8080

We have set aside a block of rooms honoring the rate of \$129.00

for 11/2/17-11/5/17. Please make your reservations by Friday,

October 3, 2017. Any reservations not received on or before this

cutoff date are subject to hotel availability basis at the best available

prevailing rate. Reserve online or call 866-974-9288

Group Name: Adoption Knowledge Affiliates Block

Group Code: G-ADA2

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BECOME A MEMBER

Join or renew your membership with your conference registration to receive a discounted rate. Individual \$40 (regularly \$52), Family \$60 (regularly \$72), Agency \$70 (regularly \$82)

REGISTER

Register online at www.adoptionknowledge.org/conference through October 31st or mail in registration form by October 25th.

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2017 SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES ARE STILL AVAILABLE!

Sponsor, advertiser, and exhibitor opportunities and benefits are available at www.adoptionknowledge.org/conference. We are also accepting donations for our silent auction.



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AKA MISSION STATEMENT

Adoption Knowledge Affiliates, Inc., is a 501 (c)(3) educational organization whose purposes are to foster understanding of adoption issues and to serve as a resource to people who work with them, and the general public. AKA is supported by membership dues and contributions.



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Adoption Knowledge Affiliates 25th Annual Conference: Coming Home to Your Self

November 3-4, 2017 | Austin, TX



Keynotes:
Kristin Neff, PhD
“Self-Compassion: A Source of Strength and Support in Times of Challenge”

Bennett Greenspan, President and CEO, Family Tree DNA
“DNA: Impacting the Ever Changing Landscape for Adoptees”

16 Educational Sessions Including:

- ◆ Award Winning Play: *The Good Adoptee*
- ◆ EMDR Therapy and Adoption
- ◆ Best Practices in Transracial Families
- ◆ Appropriate Expectations for the Child with a Trauma History
- ◆ Supporting Your Teen’s Search in the Age of Social Media
- ◆ Group Therapy and Adoption
- ◆ Suicide within the Adoption Community
- ◆ A Birthmom’s Experience in “The Black Triad”
- ◆ Creating Safe Spaces for Transracial Adoptees & Families

