

# AKA CONNECTIONS



## ADOPTION KNOWLEDGE AFFILIATES

*essential wisdom ► lifelong support*

### From the President's Desk...

For those unaware, I am Rod Lind. I am an adoptee in reunion (thanks to AKA and Connie Gray) and a Licensed Professional Counselor. I have been an AKA member since 2012 and a Board member since 2016.

Early in 2012, a stalwart AKA supporter strongly encouraged me to do a search and to join AKA. I am deeply indebted to Patricia Dorner for that encouragement, as it led to meeting many wonderful people including Connie Gray who located one of my brothers. Since then, I have met almost all of the entire remaining family, to include nieces and nephews. Prior, I was not at all interested in searching for my birth family, but through AKA I have gained the highest regard for all members of the adoption triad. Thank you, AKA!

As most of you are aware, AKA suspended much of its activity due to a lack of participation and impetus to move it forward. It appears this has been resolved, as a number of people have come forward to help us update our program and service delivery platform. On behalf of the AKA Board, I would like to thank you, friends of AKA and Members, for hanging in there with us during this hiatus.

### OVERVIEW:

- From the Presidents Desk
- Meet the new Board Members
- Guest Blogger: Lesli Johnson
- 2019 Legislative Session News
- Conference Updates!

I assure you, we haven't been dormant! So far, several people have volunteered to share their knowledge and skills as we develop a digital platform, and others have stepped up to begin planning for a Conference for spring of 2020. I would like to thank those folks. AKA is nothing without its volunteers.

I would also like to welcome our newest Board members, Ty Cliffler and Keri Moran. Both have extensive experience in the world of adoption. We will introduce each of them in upcoming newsletters. Thanks for your patience. Stay tuned!

## 6 Ways to Feel Good as an Adopted Person

By Lesli Johnson, MFT

### 1. Find community.

Finding a place where you “feel felt” is so important. Our feelings need to be validated and our experiences shared. When we are able to do that in the context of community, inviting others to witness our stories, transformation happens and healing occurs. I certainly see this transpire among the members of a group I co-facilitate for teens who were adopted. Teen AdoptCONNECT is a safe place for kids to express their feelings and in return get the validation from others who “get them.” Find a group or create one if there isn’t one in your city or town. Attend an adoption related conference or talk to others who are on a similar path. While in person

meetups are great, there are also wonderful opportunities to connect online. Check out the podcasts AdopteesON and Born in June Raised in April, and the Facebook pages Ask Adoption and Hello I’m Adopted.

### 2. Move your body!

Walk, run, hop, dance, skip, swim, ride your bicycle! As people who were adopted, we experienced a profound loss that many of us can’t recall consciously because it happened before we had language to describe the event. The memory instead is held in our midbrain and our nervous systems are often sensitive and can easily become dysregulated. Others who do recall separations and transitions and can put words to the events may still experience a heightened state of vigilance leading to anxiety or depression.

Exercise and movement are

great regulators. Exercise activates the body’s natural healing process by boosting the levels of serotonin and endorphins in the brain. These are the “feel good” chemicals. Yoga, tennis and biking are my go-tos.

### 3. Practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness is moment to moment intentional awareness... of thoughts, emotions, and sensations, without judgment. It’s a way of focusing your attention. It’s being awake. Mindfulness is a way to recognize thoughts, feelings and sensations and relate to them more skillfully. It’s the opposite of being on automatic pilot where many of us spend a lot of time. Mindfulness allows us to feel more in control of our thoughts and feelings rather than being controlled by them.

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## APRIL 2020 AKA CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED

*Save the Date!*

Many of you have reached out over these past few months to express what an educational, healing, and supportive experience the AKA conference has been in your lives these past 26 years. We are pleased to announce that AKA will continue our conference tradition. We still

need a few volunteers, especially in, but not limited to, the areas of tech expertise. Please contact AKA if you can be of assistance. Financial support is also greatly appreciated. We are a volunteer run organization and cannot do this work without you. [Click here to donate.](#)



Over time, with regular practice, it prunes away the least used connections and strengthens the ones we use the most. Mindfulness makes our default a more resilient state. Attention becomes more focused and we cultivate compassion for ourselves and others which leads to feeling more connected. Mindfulness lowers our blood pressure and stress level and strengthens our immune system. In short, we feel better! I enjoy the wisdom of Jon Kabat-Zinn, Tara Brach and Sharon Salzberg (to name a few) and I LOVE the apps Calm and Insight Timer. As Sharon Salzberg reminds us, "Mindfulness isn't difficult; we just need to remember to do it."

4. Explore nature. Get dirty. I put these two together because there's something fantastic and oh so healing about being in nature and if you get dirty while you're out there, good! Take a walk, go to a park, find a green space, even if it's just a patch. Find a river or stream...a pond or the ocean and count seagulls or ladybugs. Pull out your bicycle and ride like you did when you were nine...ring that bell. Consider camping and if you go, build a campfire and roast some marshmallows under the stars. Do you

have a space to plant a garden? If not, get a pot and plant a flower or two in the morning sunshine. It all adds up.

5. Play!

Do something fun. Dr. Stuart Brown, the founder of the National Institute for Play says "If adults can begin to reminisce about their happiest and most memorable moments, they can capture the emotion and visual memories of those moments and begin to connect again to what truly excites them in life." Take some time to recall how you played as a child. What did you love to do? Now recreate that, no matter how silly it seems and see what happens?

6. Work with an adoption-competent therapist.

Neuroplasticity is brilliant. Our brains change throughout our lifespan. It's never too late to work through adoption related issues (or any issues for that matter). I wouldn't wake up each day excited about my work if I didn't believe this to be true!

***Call for Presentations***  
*We are accepting presentation proposals for our April 2020 conference. If you would like to present, please submit your proposal by Nov 13, 2019. Visit our website click "conference" for more info.*

Lesli Johnson, MFT uses a collaborative approach in her work with clients and is certified in EMDR, She has presented at AKA conferences several times over the past decade. Lesli is also an adoptee.  
lesli@yourmindfulbrain.com  
askadoption.com



## TXLege Takeaways From the 86th

*by Dawn Scott, Vice  
President STAR-Support Texas  
Adoptee Rights*

Legislative sessions can seem daunting here in Texas, and the political climate might feel so polarizing that we tune out, but here are a few updates you may be interested in hearing about, as they directly impact our adoption community.

House Bill 2725, authored by freshman Rep. Gina Calanni, herself an adoptee, enjoyed one of the highest tallies of Co-authorship in the House with 35 sponsors, aligning both sides of the aisle. It would have restored the right of an adopted person to access their OBC (original birth certificate) without the .

current protracted adjudication process.

HB2725 unanimously passed out of the Public Health Committee after an eleventh inning revote thanks to the continued efforts of advocates and Capital allies. In a pivotal moment, Chairman Senfronia Thompson convened her committee on short notice exclusively to gather that key majority vote before the deadline. It then passed out of the Calendars Committee and was scheduled to be heard for a floor vote on the final night of eligibility. Unfortunately, it was stalled behind a few controversial bills that were hotly debated in the last hours of session, and thus died in the House. Heartbreaking as this seems,

The good news is legislators were still signing on in support that evening, a strong signal that momentum continues to mount for this clean OBC access bill. Equal rights for adult adoptees remains a nonpartisan, popular issue that will return in 2021!

A positive outcome for foster youth was attained with passage of HB 123 by Rep James White. This bill, now law, streamlines procedures for obtaining drivers licenses. Companion bill SB481 by Sen. Kirk Watson was placed onto the coveted local and uncontested calendar in the final days of session and it's passage was widely applauded as a victory to further independence and self-determination of youth overcoming systemic

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Support Texas Adoptee Rights' (STAR) Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, Regional Coordinators, and community allies pose with Legislators who cosponsored HB2725 during the STAR's 2019 Lobby Day.

# Meet the New Board Members!



Ty Cliffel is an LPC, National Certified Counselor, and Licensed Child Placing Agency Administrator. She has served children and families in a variety of settings including residential treatment, group homes and schools. She has also supervised case management services in foster care, adoption and kinship services. Currently, Ty oversees the recruitment and training of foster and adoptive parents, conducts home studies, and provides support services throughout the placement process at The Settlement Home for Children. She is a TBRI Practitioner and Pathways to Permanence 2 Facilitator. Ty is an adoptee who has been in reunion with her birth family for 25 years.

Keri Moran has worked with children and families as a social worker for 13 years. She has worked as a case manager supporting foster, adoptive, and kinship children and families. She earned Bachelor of Arts in Social Work and Master of Social Work degrees from Baylor University. She is a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) and TBRI practitioner. Keri currently works in a supervisory position at a mental health agency in Austin, TX, and provides individual and family therapy and mental health consultation to child development centers.



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In my work with clients I combine talk therapy with two other therapies that are especially effective with trauma and/or events that occur pre-verbally, that is before we have the language to describe what happened. EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) and Brainspotting are helpful therapies that work with the body-mind and allow access to the subcortical areas of the brain where traumatic memories are stored. I guide clients to address memories and work through blocking beliefs so they can live their best lives in the present, knowing all that has happened but feeling in charge of their lives today.

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bureaucratic hurdles. CASA among other groups supported this legislation.

Senate bill 1259, now law, establishes criminal penalties for physicians and others who tamper with or otherwise violate the integrity of transferred genetic material during ART and insemination procedures. Initiated by citizen champion, Eve Wiley of Dallas, whose surprise DNA saga attracted national media attention, even appearing on ABC's 20-20. This law aims to prevent fertility fraud by raising the offense to a felony sexual assault. SB 1259 sponsored by Joan Huffman, was passed unanimously by both chambers, signed by Gov. Abbott and became law effective Sept.1st.



# ADOPTION KNOWLEDGE AFFILIATES

## Currently Seeking Board Members

HAS ADOPTION TOUCHED YOUR LIFE? DO YOU WANT TO SUPPORT OTHERS INVOLVED IN ADOPTION AND PROMOTE ADOPTION-COMPETENT EDUCATION? AKA IS CURRENTLY SEEKING LEADERSHIP TO HELP ENERGIZE AND REVAMP OUR PROGRAMMING.

CALL 512-553-AKA0 (2520) OR EMAIL  
AKA@ADOPTIONKNOWLEDGE.ORG FOR MORE INFO.

THANK  
YOU

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