CASA of Tarrant County’s Recommended Reading List

Please record your continuing education hours in Optima, under the training tab. Every 100 pages equals one CE hour.

1. The Connected Child *by Dr. Karyn Purvis and Dr. David Cross*: The adoption of a child is always a joyous moment in the life of a family. Some adoptions, though, present unique challenges. Welcoming these children into your family--and addressing their special needs--requires care, consideration and compassion. Written by two research psychologists specializing in adoption and attachment, The Connected Child will help you: build bonds of affection and trust with your adopted child-effectively deal with any learning or behavioral disorders-discipline your child with love without making him or her feel threatened-"A must-read not only for adoptive parents, but for all families striving to correct and connect with their children."
2. The Body Keeps the Score *by Bessel Van Der Kolk:* Trauma is a fact of life. Veterans and their families deal with the painful aftermath of combat; one in five Americans has been molested; one in four grew up with alcoholics; one in three couples have engaged in physical violence. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, one of the world’s foremost experts on trauma, has spent over three decades working with survivors. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he uses recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers’ capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust. He explores innovative treatments—from neurofeedback and meditation to sports, drama, and yoga—that offer new paths to recovery by activating the brain’s natural neuroplasticity. Based on Dr. van der Kolk’s own research and that of other leading specialists, *The Body Keeps the Score*exposes the tremendous power of our relationships both to hurt and to heal—and offers new hope for reclaiming lives.
3. The Out-of-Sync Child *by Carol Kranowitz*: The revised edition of the ground-breaking 1998 book that introduced Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) to parents, teachers, and other non-specialists. SPD is a common and frequently misdiagnosed problem in which the central nervous system misinterprets messages from the senses. This new edition features additional information on visual and hearing deficits, motor skill difficulties, ADHD, autism, Asperger syndrome, and other related disorders.
4. The Whole Brain Child *by Dan Siegel* offers a revolutionary approach to child rearing with twelve key strategies that foster healthy brain development, leading to calmer, happier children. The authors explain—and make accessible—the new science of how a child’s brain is wired and how it matures. The “upstairs brain,” which makes decisions and balances emotions, is under construction until the mid-twenties. And especially in young children, the right brain and its emotions tend to rule over the logic of the left brain. No wonder kids throw tantrums, fight, or sulk in silence. By applying these discoveries to everyday parenting, you can turn any outburst, argument, or fear into a chance to integrate your child’s brain and foster vital growth.
5. Parenting from the Inside Out *by Dan Siegel* In Parenting from the Inside Out, child psychiatrist Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., and early childhood expert Mary Hartzell, M.Ed., explore the extent to which our childhood experiences shape the way we parent. Drawing on stunning new findings in neurobiology and attachment research, they explain how interpersonal relationships directly impact the development of the brain, and offer parents a step-by-step approach to forming a deeper understanding of their own life stories, which will help them raise compassionate and resilient children. Born out of a series of parents' workshops that combined Siegel's cutting-edge research on how communication impacts brain development with Hartzell's decades of experience as a child-development specialist and parent educator, this book guides parents through creating the necessary foundations for loving and secure relationships with their children.
6. Brainstorm *by Dan Siegel:* In this New York Times–bestselling book, Dr. Daniel Siegel shows parents how to turn one of the most challenging developmental periods in their children’s lives into one of the most rewarding. Between the ages of twelve and twenty-four, the brain changes in important and, at times, challenging ways. In Brainstorm, Dr. Daniel Siegel busts a number of commonly held myths about adolescence—for example, that it is merely a stage of “immaturity” filled with often “crazy” behavior. According to Siegel, during adolescence we learn vital skills, such as how to leave home and enter the larger world, connect deeply with others, and safely experiment and take risks. Drawing on important new research in the field of interpersonal neurobiology, Siegel explores exciting ways in which understanding how the brain functions can improve the lives of adolescents, making their relationships more fulfilling and less lonely and distressing on both sides of the generational divide.
7. The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog *by Bruce Perry* How does trauma affect a child's mind—and how can that mind recover? In the classic The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog, Dr. Perry explains what happens to the brains of children exposed to extreme stress and shares their lessons of courage, humanity, and hope. Only when we understand the science of the mind and the power of love and nurturing, can we hope to heal the spirit of even the most wounded child.
8. The Glass Castle *by Jeanette Walls*, memoir, The Glass Castle is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant. When sober, Jeannette’s brilliant and charismatic father captured his children’s imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn’t want the responsibility of raising a family. The Walls children learned to take care of themselves. They fed, clothed, and protected one another, and eventually found their way to New York. Their parents followed them, choosing to be homeless even as their children prospered.
9. Three Little Words *by Ashley Rhodes-Courter* An inspiring true story of the tumultuous nine years Ashley Rhodes-Courter spent in the foster care system, and how she triumphed over painful memories and real-life horrors to ultimately find her own voice. "Sunshine, you're my baby and I'm your only mother. You must mind the one taking care of you, but she's not your mama." Ashley Rhodes-Courter spent nine years of her life in fourteen different foster homes, living by those words. As her mother spirals out of control, Ashley is left clinging to an unpredictable, dissolving relationship, all the while getting pulled deeper and deeper into the foster care system. Painful memories of being taken away from her home quickly become consumed by real-life horrors, where Ashley is juggled between caseworkers, shuffled from school to school, and forced to endure manipulative, humiliating treatment from a very abusive foster family. In this inspiring, unforgettable memoir, Ashley finds the courage to succeed - and in doing so, discovers the power of her own voice.
10. Ginny Moon: A Novel *by Benjamin Ludwig* Ginny Moon is exceptional. Everyone knows it—her friends at school, teammates on the basketball team, and especially her new adoptive parents. They all love her, even if they don't quite understand her. They want her to feel like she belongs. What they don't know is that Ginny has no intention of belonging. She's found her birth-mother on Facebook, and is determined to get back to her—even if it means going back to a place that was extremely dangerous. Because Ginny left something behind and she's desperate to get it back, to make things right. But no one listens. No one understands. So Ginny takes matters into her own hands…
11. Beautiful Boy: A Father’s Journey Through His Son’s Addiction *by David Sheff*, a Memoir, What had happened to my beautiful boy? To our family? What did I do wrong? Those are the wrenching questions that haunted every moment of David Sheff ’s journey through his son Nic’s addiction to drugs and tentative steps toward recovery. Before Nic Sheff became addicted to crystal meth, he was a charming boy, joyous and funny, a varsity athlete and honor student adored by his two younger siblings. After meth, he was a trembling wraith who lied, stole, and lived on the streets. David Sheff traces the first subtle warning signs: the denial, the 3 A.M. phone calls (is it Nic? the police? the hospital?), the rehabs. His preoccupation with Nic became an addiction in itself, and the obsessive worry and stress took a tremendous toll. But as a journalist, he instinctively researched every avenue of treatment that might save his son and refused to give up on Nic. Beautiful Boy is a fiercely candid memoir that brings immediacy to the emotional rollercoaster of loving a child who seems beyond help.
12. Finding Fish *by Antwone Fisher,* Baby Boy Fisher was raised in institutions from the moment of his birth in prison to a single mother. He ultimately came to live with a foster family, where he endured near-constant verbal and physical abuse. In his mid-teens he escaped and enlisted in the navy, where he became a man of the world, raised by the family he created for himself. Finding Fish shows how, out of this unlikely mix of deprivation and hope, an artist was born -- first as the child who painted the feelings his words dared not speak, then as a poet and storyteller who would eventually become one of Hollywood's most sought-after screenwriters. A tumultuous and ultimately gratifying tale of self-discovery written in Fisher's gritty yet melodic literary voice, Finding Fish is an unforgettable reading experience.
13. A Child Called “It”: One Child’s Courage to Survive *by Dave Pelzer* A controversial memoir describing horrific abuse sustained by the author as a child, before he was finally rescued by an astute teacher. This book chronicles the unforgettable account of one of the most severe child abuse cases in California history. It is the story of Dave Pelzer, who was brutally beaten and starved by his emotionally unstable, alcoholic mother: a mother who played tortuous, unpredictable games--games that left him nearly dead. He had to learn how to play his mother's games in order to survive because she no longer considered him a son, but a slave; and no longer a boy, but an "it." Dave's bed was an old army cot in the basement, and his clothes were torn and raunchy. When his mother allowed him the luxury of food, it was nothing more than spoiled scraps that even the dogs refused to eat. The outside world knew nothing of his living nightmare. He had nothing or no one to turn to, but his dreams kept him alive--dreams of someone taking care of him, loving him and calling him their son.
14. Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis *by J.D. Vance,* The Vance family story begins hopefully in postwar America. J. D.’s grandparents were “dirt poor and in love,” and moved north from Kentucky’s Appalachia region to Ohio in the hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually their grandchild (the author) would graduate from Yale Law School, a conventional marker of their success in achieving generational upward mobility. But as the family saga of Hillbilly Elegy plays out, we learn that this is only the short, superficial version. Vance’s grandparents, aunt, uncle, sister, and, most of all, his mother, struggled profoundly with the demands of their new middle-class life, and were never able to fully escape the legacy of abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma so characteristic of their part of America. Vance piercingly shows how he himself still carries around the demons of their chaotic family history. A deeply moving memoir with its share of humor and vividly colorful figures, Hillbilly Elegy is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.
15. Dreamland: The True Take if America’s Opiate Epidemic *by Sam Quinones,* From a small town in Mexico to the boardrooms of Big Pharma, an explosive and shocking account of addiction and black tar heroin in the heartland of America. In 1929, in the blue-collar city of Portsmouth, Ohio, a company built a swimming pool the size of a football field; named Dreamland, it became the vital center of the community. Now, addiction has devastated Portsmouth, as it has hundreds of small rural towns and suburbs across America--addiction like no other the country has ever faced. How that happened is the riveting story of Dreamland. With a great reporter’s narrative skill and the storytelling ability of a novelist, acclaimed journalist Sam Quinones weaves together two classic tales of capitalism run amok whose unintentional collision has been catastrophic. The unfettered prescribing of pain medications during the 1990s reached its peak in Purdue Pharma’s campaign to market OxyContin, its new, expensive--extremely addictive--miracle painkiller. Meanwhile, a massive influx of black tar heroin--cheap, potent, and originating from one small county on Mexico’s west coast, independent of any drug cartel--assaulted small town and mid-sized cities across the country, driven by a brilliant, almost unbeatable marketing and distribution system. Together these phenomena continue to lay waste to communities from Tennessee to Oregon, Indiana to New Mexico. Introducing a memorable cast of characters--pharma pioneers, young Mexican entrepreneurs, narcotics investigators, survivors, and parents--Quinones shows how these tales fit together. Dreamland is a revelatory account of the corrosive threat facing America and its heartland.
16. The Other Wes Moore *by Wes Moore* Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, The Other Wes Moore tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world. "The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his."
17. I know why the Caged Bird Sings *by Maya Angelou* Here is a book as joyous and painful, as mysterious and memorable, as childhood itself. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* captures the longing of lonely children, the brute insult of bigotry, and the wonder of words that can make the world right. Maya Angelou’s debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide.
18. The Women Who Raised Me *by Victoria Rowell* Born as a ward of the state of Maine, the child of an unmarried Yankee blueblood mother and an unknown black father, Victoria Rowell beat the odds. *The Women Who Raised Me* is the remarkable story of her rise out of the foster care system to attain the American Dream—and of the unlikely series of women who lifted, motivated, and inspired her along the way. From Agatha Armstead—a black Bostonian who was Victoria's longest-term foster mother and first noticed her spark of creativity and talent—to Esther Brooks, a Paris-trained prima ballerina who would become her first mentor at the Cambridge School of Ballet—*The Women Who Raised Me* is a loving, vivid portrait of all the women who would help Victoria transition out of foster care and into New York City's wild worlds of ballet, acting, and adulthood. Though Victoria would go on to become an accomplished television and film star, she still carried the burden of loneliness and anxiety, particularly common to those "orphans of the living" who are never adopted. Vividly recalled and candidly told, her story is transfixing, redemptive, heartbreaking, and, ultimately, inspiring.