

[00:00:01.195] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to The Adoption Connection Podcast where we share resources by and for adoptive and foster moms. I'm Lisa Qualls.

[00:00:09.085] - Melissa Corkum

And this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it and we're here for you.

[00:00:14.695] - Lisa Qualls

Today is a Mentor Moments episode where we answer a listener question. These episodes give you a chance to join the conversation and guarantee we're providing the most helpful tools and resources for exactly where you are. This week's question is, "How can the Enneagram help adoptive parents?" Well, you all know that Melissa and I are big fans of the Enneagram and that we became certified Enneagram coaches just about a year ago, really at the very beginning of covid. We think it's a great tool for helping us understand ourselves and the people we love. You know, the Enneagram is really a tool for self discovery and personal growth. And the Enneagram is a little different from other personality typing systems like strength binders, and Myers Briggs, and things like that, in that it identifies nine different types or lenses for seeing the world. And I was just meeting with a mom talking about this yesterday and the thing also that's different about the Enneagram is it does not focus on a person's behavior, but actually on the internal motivations that are bringing that behavior about.

[00:01:25.885] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so the interesting part about looking at your motivations is that if you're brand new to the Enneagram, one of the first things people often ask is how do I find my type or what's the best test to take? And so, as it turns out, tests aren't 100% accurate. In fact, they're not very accurate at all because, again, it's really hard for multiple choice tests to kind of tell you what your internal motivations are. So the Enneagram is what we call self affirming. So really the best way is to read a book, listen to some podcasts, do a narrative typing exercise, think about typing as a journey, not the beginning or a necessary part. I mean, it is important, but you can learn so much about yourself, even just during the process of thinking about your core motivations. So I took a test because I didn't know any better. What I realized was for a couple of years, I misidentified my type because I was going off of false information and more of my behaviors rather than my core motivations. And so really taking a deep dive into my motivations and even going back into memories from my childhood really helped me find my dominant type. And then that journey even of itself, because I don't think backwards in time very naturally, really helped me process and make sense of a lot of my story as an adoptee, as an adoptive mom, I just had so many of these like, "ah ha!" moments. Things clicked into place. And we know even through trauma work that having a cohesive narrative of our experience is really important to healing and integrating trauma. So that doesn't come back and kind of rear its ugly head in our lives over and over again.

[00:03:10.325] - Lisa Qualls

Right, the Enneagram, once I knew my number, which I can share a little of that very long process, but once I knew my number, I was able to look back on things in my life and think, "That's why I did what I did," or "That's why this went the way it went," because there were things I didn't quite understand about myself, you know, and I thought I was a pretty self-aware person. But the Enneagram for me, I did not start with a test. I started with reading "The Road Back to You" by Ian Cron and Suzanne Stabile. And I believe they say right in that book, don't take a test. And so that was my first exposure. I didn't take a test, but I continued to read and learn and it took me still a very long time to figure out what my number was because I had to really think carefully about what is it that speaks to me, what is it that motivates me? And each number, each of the nine numbers has these different core motivations like we talked about. And one of the things we talk about is what is the message your heart longs to hear? And I think that was one of the things that helped me really settle on my number, because there were other parts of it that didn't seem to be quite me. But then the more I learned about my number going deeper and deeper, it began to make more and more sense.

[00:04:30.405] - Melissa Corkum

I've shared my story about being an adoptee here on the podcast, and one of the things that, I don't

think it's unusual, but it's just not told as much is I was a fairly happy adoptee and I don't ever remember feeling these big feelings of grief and I don't remember thinking about my birth mom at every birthday. And I am a seven and seven are super forward thinking. We are eternal optimist. We're always looking at the bright side of situations and we process a lot of our experiences through logic, through thinking. And so, when I learn these things about how I'm wired, all of the sudden, instead of feeling guilty that I didn't feel the same way as so many adoptees share, I thought, "Oh, I am, this is how for me, as a type seven, I process my story." And it all clicked into place and it made so much sense. And then it also made sense of our journey as adoptive, as an adoptive family and me as an adoptive mom and what I did under stress and why that was such, it would have been so helpful to know what I might look like when I got really stressed out and I probably could have avoided so many of the battles I fought with my kids because part of it was me, you know, as under stress, I get really critical and I get really grumpy. And so that's what happened to me as an adoptive mom when we brought three older, unrelated kids home. And so that really helped me take ownership for my part in kind of the chaos that made up three to four years of our life.

[00:06:12.155] - Lisa Qualls

For me as an adoptive mom, when I understood my number, my number, I'm a three. A particular kind of three, but I'm a three. And the thing that I longed to hear is that I'm loved for who I am and not just what I do. So I'm very aware of how people perceive me. I tend to be very concerned about it. I mean, and so when we brought our children home and I had always believed myself to be a really good mom and not just in my home, but I felt like I represented that, you know, in my life. So when we brought our kids home and we began to struggle so much like so much, all of a sudden I began to question if, you know, "Was I a good mom? Had I ever been a good mom? Maybe I was actually really a failure." I definitely felt like a failure. I felt very, very ashamed. And in the Enneagram, we learn that certain numbers tend to have a primary motivation that they, or primary emotion that they go to in stressful situations and as a response to things happening in their lives and in the world. And my particular number goes straight to shame. When I learned that I was like, this makes so much sense. So, you know, I was writing a blog post titled things like "I used to be a good mom" right? I mean, we could probably go back to the titles of my blog post to say, "Wow, you were a three in stress, to be sure."

[00:07:47.885] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. And so I think this just gives us one more piece to the puzzle, right? It's so powerful to understand why we do what we do, how we experience it, and then give grace and understand that just because we experience it one way doesn't mean that someone else experiences it another way. And so in that way, having the Enneagram has really helped our marriage. My husband always assumed that everyone had an inner critic, but there was, you know, how did anyone not, how could anyone ignore that inner critic? And so when we started to have this language, I'd never really thought about having an inner critic before until the Enneagram told us that certain numbers have these inner critics and he, we think, identifies as a one. And he was like, "What? You don't have an inner critic?" And I was like, "I don't think so." And he was like, "You would know." And, you know, and so it was just so eye opening, like there's, we know cognitively that people are all different, but then we think we're all different, except there's these core things that everyone must experience. And so the Enneagram has blown a lot of that out of the water and that has given so much compassion for holding space for the experiences of other people, spouses, kids, coworkers, all of the things and it's just made me a better person, I think.

[00:09:13.125] - Lisa Qualls

I would fully agree, I think learning the Enneagram, you know, Russ and I have been married almost thirty seven years like a super long time and we've been parenting for thirty four years and, you know, learning how we see the world differently through very different lenses, learning that has been actually so helpful because you're right, it definitely increases compassion and it increases understanding for me of why Russ and I might see things differently, feel things differently, and how we respond. And so the Enneagram has just been a great tool. And it also does, like I think you mentioned earlier, Melissa, that it tells us something about what we do under stress, what we tend to do under stress and understanding that knowing that Russ and I are under stress a lot with parenting just helps me have more clarity, I think, and just more compassion. So, you know, it's really important not to type other people because this is a journey of self discovery. But Russ identifies also identifies as a one like

Melissa's husband, which I think that's amazing that we're both married to the same type of personality. But of course, within a one just like a color, there's a wide, wide range of what the expression of that will be. So like you don't just say we both love green. I mean, there are all kinds of greens, right? And all kinds of variations. So anyhow, I found it extremely helpful and it's been just a useful tool to, I don't know, have not just compassion for my husband, but for myself too.

[00:10:58.695] - Melissa Corkum

So if this conversation has piqued your curiosity or maybe you're already in love with the Enneagram, as we know, a lot of you have reached out to us and told us and you want to explore your adoption journey in a deep and meaningful way, we would love to invite you to a brand new group that we have called the Enneagram and Adoption Collective. It is open for founding members, which means that you can get in at a super low monthly price right now as a family member and your price will never go up, even if the price of the collective goes up in the future. So this is for adoptive moms only and we're going to use the Enneagram to, again gain powerful insight, built really strong connections, these are deep, meaningful conversations that we have. And again, increase that compassion for ourselves and the people that we love. It's both a Facebook group and meetings on Zoom and the the Zoom meetings where we really dialog and dig deep are just like one of our most favorite times in the month. So if you're interested in learning more or joining us to become a founding member, you can do that at theadoptionconnection.com/collective.

[00:12:16.875] - Lisa Qualls

And if you're driving or washing dishes, we will have that at the Web address for that in the show notes as well as for the book that I mentioned, *The Road back to you*. And we would just love for you to join us. We think it's going to be a wonderful journey that we're going to take together as adoptive moms. So you can find the show notes at theadoptionconnection.com/124. Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as @theadoptionconnection.

[00:12:50.325] - Melissa Corkum

Thanks so much for listening. We love having you. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a quick review over on iTunes. It will help us reach more moms who may be feeling alone.

[00:13:00.495] - Lisa Qualls

And remember until next week, you're a good mom, doing good work and we're here for you.

[00:13:07.675] - Melissa Corkum

The music for the podcast is called *New Day* and was created by Lee Rosevere.