

[00:00:01.640] - Melissa Corkum

This episode of The Adoption Connection podcast is sponsored by the Enneagram and Adoption Collective. We invite you to join this intimate group of adoptive moms as we use the Enneagram to gain powerful insight, build stronger connections, and have greater compassion for ourselves and the people we love.

[00:00:20.510] - Lisa Qualls

This group is for you if you're an adoptive mom, if you're curious about the Enneagram and new to it, or if you already love the Enneagram, if you want to explore your adoption journey in a deep and meaningful way, if you want to have a better understanding of how God made you and why you do what you do, and lastly, if you crave community and connection with other adoptive moms.

[00:00:43.100] - Melissa Corkum

So we are super, super excited about this new group. We do have a Facebook group that has started already and will be meeting a couple of times a month on Zoom with some themed conversation. We just could not be more thrilled to be digging so deep into what our adoption journey has for us as people and as moms. And I think especially because of maybe covid and the lack of in-person connection when we've started some of these conversations already and the deep, deep connection is like feeding my soul. I love it.

[00:01:21.020] - Lisa Qualls

Me too. I'm so thrilled about this group. And right now you can be a founding member. We are just getting rolling. If you like to be in on the ground floor of things and if you want to pay a special founding member monthly fee, we invite you to jump right in with us.

[00:01:36.480] - Melissa Corkum

You can find out more information or become a founding member at theadoptionconnection.com/collective.

[00:01:45.500] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:01:53.390] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:01:59.060] - Melissa Corkum

Hey, friends, welcome to The Adoption Connection podcast episode 127. We do our best here at the podcast to bring you not just stories, but also really practical tools that we think will be really helpful for you to consider as you think about what the next step is or what's best for your family. And this week, we are having a guest to talk about EMDR, which is a topic that we know comes up a lot like in our Facebook group and things like that, but we've just never had a chance to explore it here on the podcast, so we're really excited to bring that to you today.

[00:02:35.330] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, we've talked about having a therapist on probably over the last year. We've talked about it several times. So I'm really pleased that we're able to bring this to you today. I had a great conversation with Laura Taylor, who lives with her husband of almost twenty three years, and their two boys, ages 16 and 12, in north Idaho. Actually not too, too far from me. Laura graduated with her MSW in 2001 and then completed her basic training in EMDR in 2005. She is an EMDRIA certified therapist and approved consultant in private practice. She finds EMDR therapy to be very helpful for clients with attachment wounds, as well as many other types of traumatic issues and distressing life experiences, which I know many of us are dealing with in our family, so I hope you enjoy my conversation with Laura.

[00:03:29.290] - Lisa Qualls

Hello, Laura, welcome to The Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:03:32.890] - Laura Taylor
Hi, Lisa. I'm so glad to be here.

[00:03:35.470] - Lisa Qualls
Well, I'm excited to have you here. We've actually wanted to have somebody, a therapist, come on to talk about EMDR for quite a while and there's a lot of interest in EMDR. We asked some questions in our Facebook group, the Adoption Connection Facebook group, and they just poured in. So I know this is a really important episode that a lot of people are going to want to hear. So my first question for you would be really, how did you, what motivated you to become trained in EMDR in the first place and then can you tell us basically what it is, how it works?

[00:04:17.350] - Laura Taylor
I worked in a residential care center after I finished my bachelor's degree and learned a lot during that time about attachment and trauma and how it impacted kids and families. And then when I went to graduate school, I became even more interested in just helping people heal from trauma and different ways to do that. A professor of mine had mentioned EMDR, so it wasn't super old at that time and there was still a lot of questions and people didn't know a lot about it. So anyway, I finished my master's degree in 2001 and then I was living in Quarter Lane and working with a local mental health agency. And the my supervisor was interested in EMDR and she and I both were able to get trained in it. That was back in 2005, so I've been doing it for 16 years. I hope that has answered your question.

[00:05:17.920] - Lisa Qualls
Yeah, yeah that's great. So for anybody listening and probably for a lot of us, we don't really know what EMDR is or it's, you know, seems kind of mysterious, how does it work? So can you give us sort of a broad explanation of what EMDR is?

[00:05:38.680] - Laura Taylor
Sure, yeah. So it stands for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. Francine Shapiro is the woman that discovered it in the late nineteen eighties, and she was dealing with some stressors in her own life at the time and took a break from work and went for a walk and realized that as she was walking her, her state in her body started to shift and the amount of distress that she was feeling about the things that were going on in her life had come down. What we know is that when information comes into the brain and the body, if we don't have the ability at the time to naturally process that information, then it can get stuck. And a lot of times when things are traumatic, we don't have the resources we need right in the moment, and information can get stuck. If shortly after that time period the information doesn't get processed through our brains natural processing system because of the support that we have or the inner resources we have people helping us through that, then that stuck information ends up in these fragments in our body and in our brain and that's why people get triggered. So with EMDR, what we do is we access that stuck information and there's different ways to do that. And then we activate the brain's natural processing system, which is where the eye movement comes in and people can move their eyes back and forth. And what we've discovered is that it doesn't have to be eye movements, but it needs to be a bilateral stimulation of the brain. So, we activate the brain's natural processing system with the bilateral stimulation through the process of EMDR, people are able to take those stuck, fragmented pieces of information and put them together in a whole clear picture. And it does desensitize the body and brain's response to things that have been traumatic in the past or that have triggered a reminder of that.

[00:07:49.140] - Lisa Qualls
OK, so it kind of helps our brain organize this traumatic event.

[00:07:56.400] - Laura Taylor
Definitely.

[00:07:57.090] - Lisa Qualls
And then by doing that, we don't have these kind of random, big responses. Is that a good way to describe it or?

[00:08:07.900] - Laura Taylor

I do think that's a good way to describe it. Yes, it does help the brain organize in a more adaptive way. One of the key phrases that's used in EMDR training in the EMDR world is "adaptive information processing." So we've taken information that has been stored maladaptively and we have adaptively processed it to the brain's natural systems so that we can file away the useful information, you know, what we learn from the experience that might be helpful in the future, but we don't have to stay stuck in the intensity of the physiological response or the emotions or a negative belief, what I like to call a lie.

[00:08:52.780] - Lisa Qualls

OK, now, when you are working with a client and you've worked with children and adults, you've used what's the age range that you've used EMDR with?

[00:09:06.020] - Laura Taylor

For me personally, I have worked with kids as young as age four, and then I have worked with people into their 70s. I don't know the exact age, but definitely the older generation.

[00:09:20.110] - Lisa Qualls

OK, now is EMDR in general, like when we're talking about our population, which is primarily adoptive families, so we've got children coming with early adversity, we've got parents parenting under great stress, would this be a stand alone therapy or is EMDR something that is used in conjunction with other therapies?

[00:09:46.190] - Laura Taylor

I believe it's always used in conjunction with other therapy because even if a client comes in and they have a lot of trauma, there's a lot of other things that you might need to work with them on. And so you're not going to use EMDR in every single session.

[00:10:01.330] - Lisa Qualls

OK, great. A lot of questions came in about what types of issues EMDR is helpful for, and I think what you've explained is that it's helpful for probably all kinds of traumatic situations. Is that correct?

[00:10:18.480] - Laura Taylor

Yes, and I think it's important to recognize that trauma is any kind of threat that we're not prepared for. I think a lot of people think of trauma as, you know, fighting in a war or some type of physical or sexual assault or car accident or things like that, and those are definitely traumas. They're what we might call a big trauma. There are little traumas where, you know, maybe someone gets humiliated in front of their classroom because they said something wrong and the teacher didn't respond to them in a way that was very supportive. And I'm not trying to pick on anybody, but these things happen. And then there can be even our misperceptions of information that's out there in the world and that can feel threatening to us. And so something that we might not even look at and consider as traumatic for whoever is experiencing it, it could be trauma.

[00:11:21.500] - Lisa Qualls

OK, that's interesting. In one of our early episodes, we had a therapist say that she has worked with a number of children who their trauma was their family moving to a new location, that that was really traumatic for the child. And that resonated so much with me because my family moved when I was in late elementary school and it was pretty pivotal. It was really hard for me. And had I had support processing it, I think that probably my teen years would have taken a different course.

[00:11:57.410] - Laura Taylor

Oh, very likely. I always look for, when I'm doing an intake with someone and assessing what their situation is, that's one of the things I screen for is "How many times have you moved and what was that like for you?" Because when we move, we're experiencing a loss.

[00:12:13.570] - Lisa Qualls

Right, right, and there's a lot of fear in newness, you know, new situations and all of that.

[00:12:19.840] - Laura Taylor

Yeah, there can be fear, there can be excitement too, you know, but we just don't know what to expect.

[00:12:24.320] - Lisa Qualls

And when you were talking about the importance of this bilateral stimulation, you mentioned eye movement. Can you explain a little bit other ways you might do this bilateral stimulation and what it might look like to a parent if their child is doing it or if they're doing it themselves?

[00:12:45.460] - Laura Taylor

So with eye movements, Francine Shapiro discovered EMDR by moving her own eyes back and forth in a diagonal pattern while she was walking. And so when she was initially trying to explain this to people and kind of see if this is something that could help, she would hold her fingers up and move them back and forth. And so that is the way a lot of therapists still to this day do the eye movements.

[00:13:12.730] - Lisa Qualls

And so as she moved her fingers, the person would track her fingers with their eyes. Not moving their head, but just with their eyes.

[00:13:20.350] - Laura Taylor

Yes, yes. Another, that is a good point. It's not it's not a shaking of your head. It's just allowing your eyes to move. Some therapists have a electronic light bar in their office or now that some people are doing EMDR online, there's a number of different ways that people can have something that tracks on the screen that they follow with their eyes. The other ways that we can access or stimulate the brain, though, with that bilateral movement is through headphones that have a bilateral beat or sound of some kind and also tactile stimulation. I sometimes use my hands and will gently tap on people's knees or ankles or maybe the tops or backs of their hands if they're OK with that. And then I have also, and lot of EMDR therapies have them, there, I call them buzzies. I think they're called TheraTappers, but there's these little devices that you hold in your hand and they connect to, I call it a gadget that can turn on and adjust the speed and the intensity of the vibration in the hands, but it goes back and forth as well. So there's lots of ways that we can stimulate the brain right and left. And some people really like to close their eyes to process. And so it's hard for them to do eye movement.

[00:14:47.000] - Lisa Qualls

So the buzzies would be easier, which do kids tend to do better with, or does it just depend? I think it really depends. Kids are usually very curious and want to try it all out, and that's great. And I have worked with some kids who want to have maybe two types of bilateral stimulation at the same time. And so there's not a right or wrong. It's just whatever they're most comfortable with, whatever they can use to stay engaged in the process.

[00:15:16.640] - Lisa Qualls

So would EMDR be helpful for someone who maybe, let's say, it's a little bit older child or even a teen who experienced medical trauma early in their life.

[00:15:27.740] - Laura Taylor

It can definitely be helpful for that.

[00:15:30.770] - Lisa Qualls

Can you tell us a little bit more? Well, I guess the bigger question is if, what if the person can't actually remember, like, let's say they experience a lot of medical trauma when they were little and they don't, it's not stored in a place where they can just pull it out and have memories, but it's stored in there and it's creating problems. How would that work for a person like that?

[00:15:55.660] - Laura Taylor

So there's a couple different ways that we can help them access the memory. One is through a parents telling them a story, and I often have parents write stories for children and even teenagers

sometimes. I usually use that more, the storytelling method more with younger kids, but I have used it for some teenagers. Someone can tell them the information and what I always tell kids when I work with them that way is, you know, have your mom or your dad or whoever the caregiver is, you know, share this story with you. And by then, we've talked about EMDR and they know what the buzzies or the headphones or the eye movements are. And I let them know, as your parents shares this story, if something doesn't feel right to you or you remember it differently, I want you to tell me, because what we're doing when we engage the brain is that bilateral stimulation is we're making connections. And so sometimes they may not explicitly remember something, but there is some implicit memory the way it's sort of the body. And as someone starts to give them more information and their brain makes the connections, then they may say, "Oh, no, it was actually this that happened." So a parent can tell a story and that's one way that we can access information. The other thing is, and I would say this might work better with teenagers, and with some younger kids too, is if they are able to identify that they're having some issue in their life that for them is causing a problem and they don't like it, then if they're willing to tune into their body and what it's like to feel whatever that feeling is, physiologically or emotionally with the problematic current issue, we call it at present day trigger. We can ask them "What's the earliest time you remember feeling this way?" And sometimes that will help access that information. Sometimes that doesn't work and so we can process a present day trigger, whatever the current problem is, and occasionally in that the brain will then link them back to whatever they need to remember.

[00:18:13.840] - Lisa Qualls

OK, so does the memory have to come all the way forward, like be really formed for them to be able to organize the information? I guess what I'm wondering is, like parents asking things like preverbal trauma, in utero trauma, things like that. What if a memory doesn't come where they're like, I don't remember. Can they still benefit from EMDR working even if they can't pull forth a memory? I guess that's what I'm asking.

[00:18:53.770] - Laura Taylor

So I think the answer is yes and in that we store, our body stores information, have you read the book? The Body Keeps the Score by Bessel van der Kolk.

[00:19:06.320] - Lisa Qualls

Yes.

[00:19:07.430] - Laura Taylor

I think that's a really good explanation of helping us understand how we, and that's what I would call implicit memory. It's memory in the body that we don't have words for. And so if we access that information somehow in EMDR processing, even though someone still might not have what we would call a conscious, clear memory of something that happened, if their body can access that while they're doing the bilateral stimulation, and they can begin to make some more sense of it, I think it can still be helpful.

[00:19:48.530] - Lisa Qualls

OK, great. Now, what about how or would EMDR work for a teenager who is struggling but refuses to talk about hard things they've been through, like they're not ready. Would it still work for them?

[00:20:07.890] - Laura Taylor

They're not ready to talk about things or they're not ready to be in therapy at all.

[00:20:13.950] - Lisa Qualls

Well, that's a really good question. Well, OK, let's talk about that. What do you think? I mean, if a teenager is saying "I don't want to do it" and their parents says, "Well, we're going to do it anyhow." What would you say as a therapist?

[00:20:27.600] - Laura Taylor

I let parents know just when I talk to them on the phone that if their child, no matter what age, doesn't have any interest in getting help, that I have no guarantees. Sometimes with teenagers, especially

though, I will often tell parents, "I don't know that it's even worth bringing them in," because what it can do is then create another trauma for them where they feel forced to do something that they don't want to do. It's kind of a fine line. Some parents are able to have enough of a conversation with their child to get them to come in and say, "Well, I'd like you to go meet a person and let's let's just see how the first session goes." And I usually will know that ahead of time. And then I'll address that up front and say let's let's talk today a little bit about your life. And I'm going to I'm definitely going to take doing an intake with that person differently than I do with someone who comes in and they're ready. Someone who comes in and they're ready, they usually will answer any questions and they'll start sharing even more information. Those that don't really want to be there, I'm going to have to really evaluate, ok, this is someone that I have to really just gently spend more time building a core with them, you know, talking about things that they like to do, maybe engaging with them on something that we share in common, which I always do some of that as a therapist, I think that's an important part of making a connection with any client, but definitely have to spend more time with the, usually teenagers but sometimes kids that are just a little, little more what we call resistance, but to me resistance is always some level of fear.

[00:22:14.390] - Lisa Qualls

Now, that's a good point, that's a really good point. So with a teen, well, really with any child, I'm thinking more about teens, maybe because I'm in the thick of parenting teens. Will you start by processing more of the little traumas before you dove in for the big traumas, or does it just depend?

[00:22:35.200] - Laura Taylor

Well, that's a really good question. The EMDR training, the standard training, tells us that we should process things, if at all possible, in chronological order.

[00:22:48.030] - Lisa Qualls

Oh, wow.

[00:22:49.120] - Laura Taylor

Because as information comes into the brain and the body and it gets stored, whether it's stored in a healthy way that I think you said earlier, organized, filed away for her use in the future. If it's stored that way, that's great. If it's stored maladaptive and they're stuck maybe in some of those fragmented pieces of what happens, including belief, then that's going to impact how they experience other things in life. So we want to go back as early as possible to clear out the root systems. So my preference is to work chronologically with any client. That's not always possible, though, and so you can get creative and, and often if I have someone who is unsure even about doing EMDR, I will have them pick something that, we use the 0 to 10 scale a lot with the EMDR. I'll have them pick something that doesn't feel very big to them that maybe is a more recent issue. And we'll process that just so that they can experience what it's like to do some EMDR and hopefully experience a little bit of a shift in how they feel about it or what they're thinking about themselves in relation to that issue.

[00:24:04.800] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, I like that because if they're skeptical, it gives them a chance to see that it's not a scary process and it also lets and builds some trust with you before they really open themselves up to something big if they're not ready.

[00:24:23.280] - Lisa Qualls

And I think one thing you asked earlier that I don't think I answered was maybe they're not ready for therapy at all, or maybe they kind of want some help, but they're not ready to talk about some of those really hard things. And so what I like to do in that situation is let the teenager, I always meet with a parent first to do an initial intake. And then when I meet with the client, whether it's a teen or a younger child, I will let them know or usually their parents let them know, but I have already met with the parents and I'll have some information and I will say "and I recognize there may be things that you're not ready to talk about yet. And that's OK." And then at some point, I will also talk to them about EMDR and let them know with EMDR, there are things that we can process as long as you're willing that you don't have to tell me about. And so for some people, that's really enticing because there might be, it's usually issues around shame or that have a shame attached to them that they don't

want to talk about out loud, but they know they need some help. And with the EMDR, as long as the client and I have together an idea of what we're working on. And if I know that they're able to tell me if they're actually moving along in the process or if they're getting stuck, then we can work on things that they don't have to talk about out loud or they really don't have to give me very many details.

[00:25:54.680] - Lisa Qualls

Oh, wow, that's really interesting. So as long as they can focus, you can guide them through it without them having, you know, I think that's really helpful for a lot of parents especially, but even for anybody, because you're right, I think shame keeps us, first of all, from getting help and secondly, from really making the most of the opportunity to do therapy. If there are things we just can't really bear to talk about, knowing that there's a way to actually make progress on those without having to speak it all out is really wonderful.

[00:26:31.680] - Laura Taylor

I think it is, and I also when I've done that with some clients, whether they've been kids or adults, what I notice is that somewhere in the process or at the end of it, they are then able to give more voice to what has happened because they get set free from some of that shame or other protective emotions that are really weighing them down.

[00:26:56.530] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah.

[00:26:57.660] - Laura Taylor

And I always tell people that it's really freeing to be able to talk about things if you've never spoken something out loud. Bringing it out into the light is freeing in and of itself.

[00:27:11.070] - Lisa Qualls

Does it take a really long time to see results? Are we talking about many, many, many sessions of EMDR or what's, what's that like? What would the expectation be?

[00:27:23.510] - Laura Taylor

I think that is always a really hard question to answer, because it depends on the amount of trauma that someone has lived through. Then we look at what we call single T trauma, which is very rare, especially with kids that come from hard places, they usually have more complex trauma, you know, lots of big and little Ts. So, people can see changes in their child if we're talking a parent or even in themselves that this is, whether it's a child, teen, or adult, they can notice that they feel differently, that they respond differently, that they're less reactive. I have worked with a client who I would say had a signal T trauma. I don't remember her age. This was many years ago, but she was maybe late elementary school, early middle school, had one incident in her life that was pretty traumatic. And I saw her for a total of four sessions. One was just the intake, the second one was, you know, kinda building some core and talking about EMDR and how we might use it, and then we did it in the next session, and then we had one session to wrap up and she was done. So that's a child that definitely didn't come from hard places and didn't have a lot going on. Kids that have a lot more going on, you can see some progress quickly with EMDR, but it takes a while to work through all that stuff. The other thing, though, that I think is really helpful about working with kids is because their life experiences are less than adults, even though maybe they've had quite a bit of complex trauma, their neural networks aren't as complicated as adults. So they can process through something pretty quickly, whereas an adult might need a longer time as far as the length of the session or the number of sessions.

[00:29:36.030] - Lisa Qualls

OK, so let's talk about adults. You know, most of our listening audience is adoptive, made up of adoptive and foster parents, you know, parenting children who come to us after so much adversity and often bring lots of needs and sometimes lots of behaviors. It can actually be really difficult on the parents. A lot of times because even though we have prepared, you can't always imagine what it's actually going to be like to parent a child with this level of need all day, every day. So how can EMDR possibly help parents who are in the thick of parenting kids that it takes a lot.

[00:30:26.890] - Laura Taylor

Well, first of all, I want to say thank you to all of you who are doing that hard and necessary work to raise those kids. It takes a lot of your heart, a lot of your time, a lot energy, and I have a lot of gratitude for that. So thank you to all of you for doing that. When I started my career, I set out to work with children and families, but primarily my focus, I thought, was going to be on working with children. And for a number of reasons, I think God help me make a shift and I still work with some kids, but I primarily work with adults and partly because of what you're asking about. I found that in working with kids who were dealing with trauma and attachment was that they sometimes weren't able to make the progress that I would like to see them make and their parents wanted to make because the parents are stuck, or like you're talking about the parents just in that day to day living, helping these kids that come from hard places that the behaviors and the emotions and outbursts and everything, that is kind of like secondary trauma. And I do remember learning about that in between my bachelor's and master's degree when I worked in a residential treatment center for a couple years, I remember reading a book about attachment and understanding that parents of, you know, kids that have attachment issues often end up with secondary PTSD and like you said, the depression and anxiety that goes along with that. So I actually started offering sessions to some of the parents that I was working with and helping them. And I really believe that as a parent, the greatest gift we can give our children is to be healthy and to be healed ourselves wherever we might have wounds. I've gone to therapy three times since my kids came into this world and my husband and I are doing marriage counseling. I just feel like if we're healthy as individuals and as a family, then we're giving them, you know, a better opportunity to be healthy as well.

[00:32:46.410] - Lisa Qualls

I completely agree, and I think sometimes we may not realize that things from our early lives are being very much triggered and coming up as we parent our children. And, you know, when I first started learning about, you know, our own attachment histories affecting the attachment we have with our kids, at first I just felt sort of overwhelmed and accused like, well, you know, I'm really doing the best I can and now you're telling me that maybe I'm the problem or part of the problem. Now, that's not what was actually being said, but I think I was so weighed down and so exhausted and I was trying my very, very best. But as I thought about it more, I realized that we bring ourselves into every relationship we have. We bring, we bring all our history and ourselves into our marriages, into all kinds of relationships, and so, of course, that's going to impact the way we parent, you know, and so I, I keep saying this, but I need to do my own EMDR work. I know I do. I've said this to you many times because I think that it would help my brain to be calmer when I am parenting my kids, because there are things that may be said or done that definitely dysregulated me way too quickly. And if I could work through that, I'd probably be able to maintain more calm and regulation in general.

[00:34:31.230] - Laura Taylor

I agree. I have found that for some of the parents that I've worked with that it really, not only has been helpful to them just, you know, on their own life journey, but really in their parenting and then also the ripple effect is helpful for their child and the child's feelings as well. And I do like that you're bringing up that it's not at all about blaming the parents. Yes, you're doing the best you can.

[00:34:59.450] - Lisa Qualls

Right, right, for sure, and we couldn't control a lot when we were little either, we didn't have control over our lives, so it's no, you know, it's not surprising that we would all have things to process and work on. Do you feel the EMDR is useful with a variety of diagnosis? Let's say someone's child has ODD, ADHD, FASD, all these different things. Can EMDR help those kids?

[00:35:31.290] - Laura Taylor

I think it can and I think I maybe have mentioned to you before that, I kind of have a different lens for looking at things. And while some of those diagnoses definitely are helpful in communicating some information about what a cluster of symptoms look like, I'm always looking for what's underneath that. Where is it maybe coming from? And if we can figure out that, then it can help alleviate some of the symptoms of some of the other diagnoses that we see.

[00:36:12.090] - Lisa Qualls

That's so good because, you know, it's not unusual for kids like many of our listeners to have their kids diagnosed with oppositional defiance disorder. And really, what what is the root of that? What, why is this, my child looking so oppositional in the first place? So if, you're saying if you can get down underneath to the actual fear, the root of whatever it is, we can actually help those kids heal and they may not have that diagnosis eventually.

[00:36:46.110] - Laura Taylor

Absolutely. You know, that's, it's one of my least favorite diagnoses. Although, you know, I understand that, again, a lot of the diagnoses exist because they help communicate information. They help us understand a cluster of symptoms or behaviors. But with an oppositional defiant disorder diagnosis, if you look at what's what's the root issue there, in my opinion, more than likely, the child doesn't have a healthy connection and doesn't feel safe and well, what's the root of that being an issue for them?

[00:37:23.820] - Lisa Qualls

And, too, I think sometimes it's not being able to express things verbally, so it comes out in behavior, big behaviors. So, yeah, I think that's a very hopeful thing for parents to consider that, you know, we're all looking for help for our kids. And this is just another modality that might make a really big difference for some kids and definitely for probably a lot of parents. So, again, since most of our audience is adoptive and foster parents, how can EMDR help us, we're all working so hard to build attachment with our kids, and it's hard. It's hard work, right? And we're doing our connected parenting, but how could EMDR help us build stronger attachments? That's a really good question, and I think that when we look at attachment, and the way that it develops in somebody, their ability to attach in a healthy way, if there's been something or an environment, a period of time, a caregiver, something that's gotten in the way of an adult having their own secure or healthy attachment style, then that's going to be a barrier to the attachment that they can develop with their children. If a parent is willing to do their own EMDR work and heal any attachment that they have, that will set them up for more success in helping develop that healthy attachment with their child just because they're in a place where they're able to do that and more capable. And then with children, I don't know if you want me to comment on this,

[00:39:16.070] - Lisa Qualls

Yes

[00:39:16.070] - Lisa Qualls

but I definitely think that discovering what what were the barriers to them developing a healthy attachment early in life? And what are the barriers now? Because with the EMDR, I don't think I mentioned this, but we look, I did say we, you know, we try to work through things chronologically, but we also want to look at, what is the past issue, what's the route to why this is problematic now? What are the present day triggers? What are the things that come up now? And we want to use what I call the standard EMDR protocol to help people process through the past and then any present day triggers that are attached to that past issue, and then also think about, and this, I think, can be really helpful for families, whether it's the parent wanting to connect the child or the child wanting to connect more with their parent in a way that feels better to them, if you ask them, OK, let's say that there's something that comes up in the future and it reminds you of that past issue, how do you want to see yourself handling it? And so we use what we call the future template in EMDR and help people process that way.

[00:40:27.870] - Lisa Qualls

Mm. That sounds really helpful for parents and kids, so thank you. I think that, it gives us, I think, maybe more motivation as parents to work on our own stuff so that we can help our kids form secure attachments because we know that a secure attachment is well, attachment is the foundation for so many relationships throughout our lives. So that's great, thank you.

[00:41:00.020] - Laura Taylor

You're welcome.

[00:41:01.250] - Lisa Qualls

So if a parent is interested in finding a therapist who uses EMDR, of course, we want to be sure that we're choosing people who are adequately trained. Can you tell us how someone would find a good EMDR therapist? So there is an organization called EMDR International Association or EMDRIA. They have a list of certified EMDR therapists and consultants so people can go there. Now, just because someone certified doesn't mean they're the right fit for your child or for your family, but it does indicate that they have pursued more consultation and more continued learning about EMDR because the requirements to become certified are higher than just the requirements to complete the basic training. I would encourage parents, though, if they live in an area where maybe, you know, if they look on the EMDRIA website and there aren't very many certified therapists or there aren't any, that doesn't mean that there isn't a good EMDR therapist. Some EMDR therapists choose to not get certified for whatever reason, I don't know. You know, it's an investment of time and money, and that doesn't mean that they're not good. I would just encourage the parent to call and really ask some questions. Find out when did they do their training and how often do they use it? Do they find that the clients they're working with make progress? And I think that's true for any service we're going to get for our kids or for ourselves. It's good to ask those questions up front.

[00:42:50.150] - Lisa Qualls

In this year, as we're in early March of 2021 during this interview, you know, we've all learned a lot about virtual meetings and telehealth and all kinds of things. Can EMDR be done through a telehealth situation?

[00:43:10.120] - Laura Taylor

It can be and there are some therapists that are finding because of maybe where they live or whatever circumstances they're in, that they just prefer not to work virtually. Telehealth was kind of a thing for therapists before, but it's become a much bigger thing. And there are, there are definitely ways to do it through telehealth. Some of the barriers, though, that you run into in finding someone maybe who lives in a different location, have to do with licensing laws, though. I'm only licensed in the state of Idaho so I can only see clients that live in Idaho, whether I see them through telehealth or in person. With covid, I think we had a few exceptions in the beginning where we could get around that, but I don't know that that's changed.

[00:44:07.290] - Lisa Qualls

OK, and I would think with children, in particular adults, we can adapt to things more, but for children, especially if you want to use the buzzies, you know, things like that, you really have to do that in person.

[00:44:21.940] - Laura Taylor

I say yes, I say yes. I'm not a big fan of telehealth and I don't feel as connected to people. I don't, I don't feel like I'm able to be really fully present with them in that sense. And that may be on me and on my clients, but I, almost all of my clients when I was able to be back in my office, they were like, yes, I'd like to come in. So, but I have colleagues, even here where I live, where we're able to see people and I have some colleagues that are still doing things online. They like it better and their clients like it better.

[00:44:59.380] - Lisa Qualls

OK, so. All right, well, you've mentioned a couple of different resources and for everybody listening, we will have them in the show notes, places that you can, the website that E M D R I A website. EMDRIA, so do you call it EMDRIA?

[00:45:16.760] - Laura Taylor

Yes.

[00:45:17.330] - Lisa Qualls

OK, we'll have that and possibly some other resources as well so that you can learn more about EMDR and how it might serve your family. So, Laura, thank you so much for spending time with us, giving us all an introduction and a better understanding of EMDR as an option to pursue for our kids.

[00:45:39.620] - Laura Taylor

You're welcome, Lisa. Thank you for inviting me, it's really an honor to share and I hope it is helpful.

[00:45:50.340] - Melissa Corkum

Well, that was super helpful and very insightful. We have used EMDR in our family on and off, but it was really great to hear her explain a little bit more about how it works and why it's important. So I just found that really, really helpful.

[00:46:09.070] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, I, you know, we've also used it with one of our kids, and when Laura was talking about, you know, the preverbal memories and things, the therapist we worked with did have us write sort of a life story for our daughter and use that in the EMDR. It was really a, it was very healing and beautiful, actually. I'm so glad we experienced it. And honestly, I probably need to do EMDR for myself, but it's always hard to take time for what parents need, right. But we're important, too, so if you're a mom out there thinking, gosh, that sounds good, I should do it. Let's let's all do it for ourselves.

[00:46:48.550] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. Well, and I think, you know, we've talked about other types of what I call body work or body based type therapies here on the podcast, and I do think especially with complex trauma and kind of those big T traumas we've had, like you guys talked about, like, it's not just one acute thing, right? It's kind of this pattern in our kids lives and their stories. And then if we're telling, if we're dealing with pretty big challenging behaviors, it can be a pattern in our family life. I really do think we need as many tools in our toolbox as we can get. Talk therapy is really, really helpful, but I think it does have some limitations and even just if that limitation is it takes time. And what our experience in our family has been is body based therapies that support the body to continue to process our stories are kind of like catalysts in the process. They kind of help some of those blocks in our mind to go away or become less of an issue. Sometimes our kids are more willing to do body work type therapies, right. Like Laura mentioned, they don't necessarily have to talk about what's going on in their mind as they're processing using EMDR. They can kind of do it internally. You know, we've talked about things like SSP here on the podcast, which doesn't, also doesn't require verbalization or that like revisiting of a trauma, we've talked about things like equine therapy and how regulating and healing that can be. And I think one of the girls said, you know, sometimes they can make more progress in like 20 some talk sessions. And so I think there's so many ways to help us holistically process all the things that are happening in our families.

[00:48:49.150] - Lisa Qualls

And different kids are going to need different things, so the more we can learn, the better. And for some of us who have a lot of kids, we might get to try a little bit of everything because something is going to work that for one kid that won't work for another. So, well, I really enjoyed this episode. I hope that you listening also did. We will have a link to the book the Body Keeps the Score that Laura mentioned in the interview, as well as to the EMDRIA website where you can learn more about EMDR and also find a list of certified therapists who practice EMDR. And all of that will be in our show notes at theadoptionconnection.com/127. Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as @theadoptionconnection.

[00:49:37.900] - 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.

[00:49:48.070] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:49:55.240] - Melissa Corkum

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