

[00:00:01.140] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:00:09.060] - Melissa Corkum

And this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it, and we're here for you. Hey, friends, welcome to Episode 132 of the Adoption Connection Podcast. We have a fantastic interview for you today in honor of National Foster Care Awareness Month, we have Tori Hope Petersen here. And I was at the pleasure of meeting Tori recently at an in-person retreat, no less and she was one of the speakers. And she just has an incredible story and I really enjoyed getting to meet her in person.

[00:00:44.550] - Lisa Qualls

You know, she's a really delightful person and she's very passionate and her story is amazing. Like you said, you know, she is a former foster youth and that is a voice is very important to us and she has overcome a lot of odds from foster care and now, in addition, she's now a foster care advocate and a foster mom herself. So, you know, we deal with real life stories and sometimes real life stories are gritty and sometimes there are things in the stories that might not be appropriate for young children. If you're listening with young children, you might want to use your ear buds or listen at another time just in case there's something in here that you would prefer they not hear. So now let's go to our interview with Tori.

[00:01:36.000] - Lisa Qualls

Hello, Tori, welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast.

[00:01:39.120] - Tori Petersen

Thank you for having me, Lisa.

[00:01:41.370] - Lisa Qualls

That's really fun to get to be here with you. I appreciate you doing this. Would you just start us off by introducing yourself to our listeners?

[00:01:50.550] - Tori Petersen

I grew up in the foster care system. That's really why I'm talking here today, and people, mostly foster parents, are in adoptive parents are very interested in my perspective. And I first went into the foster care system when I was four and I know that sometimes it's always funny when you tell your story because there are things that you know, not because you know them, but because other people know them and they told you. So in the foster care system when I was four, I was taken from my mom. We lived with her boyfriend and my mom and her boyfriend, they were drug dealers. The SWAT team, what I know now to be a SWAT team, I don't know what it was then, busted into our house, busted down our door. I was laying on the couch. My mom and her boyfriend was still asleep. I was in an oversize t-shirt. Yeah, the door just busted down and there was lots of yelling, lots of crying, and that was the first time that I went to the foster care system. I lived with a woman who I did not get along with because I didn't like what she cooked. I would say this is an interesting part of my story because when people imagine foster children, children who might come out of poverty, they imagine kids not having food. And she cooked me like mac and cheese and peanut butter and jelly and because my mom was a drug dealer, we had a lot of money. And we didn't eat butter and jelly or mac and cheese, and so I was like, where's my steak and where my crab legs and where my green beans. I am not eating mac and cheese. I was a pretty stuck up four year old, I guess you could say. I just knew what I liked and I didn't like that she was trying to feed me this food. So I didn't get along with her, not just because of the food though. She wouldn't let me swim in her pool because, if I didn't eat my food, so I wanted to go back to my mom the whole time I lived with her. My mom did work the reunification plan. I was everything to my mom. I still would say that I am everything to my mom. So I went and I and, my mom worked her reunification plan and I think I was in care for like six months and then I went back to go live with my mom. I lived with my mom, she struggled with mental illness, there was abuse in the home, there were drugs in the home, but I wouldn't say that I had like this, it wasn't a terrible childhood. It was just different. Like, we would go get my mom's boyfriends out of jail and then, but my mom would like have another boyfriend. And so there were just things that were like,

obviously not healthy. It was just like life and I didn't really think anything of it and I think, my mom always told me she always made sure to tell me, I love you, you're beautiful. And she said a lot of harsh things, too. I was conceived out of rape and there were times when my mom, it was, like, now I know I could see that my mom was like triggered and she would say, you're a product of rape or your rape product. But there's something about how many times she told me she loved me and that I was beautiful. That didn't necessarily compensate for the insults, but I think it reminds me of, now as an adult, like, who she did believe me to be when she didn't have to deal with her own trauma. So I lived with her. There were a lot of ups and downs and then I went into the foster care system two times as a pre-teen. I went in for a short time, lived with some cousins, and then I just went back and lived with my mom after, I went with my cousins because the teacher found scratches on my neck from my mom. She reported that, went to live with my cousins, and then I went back to live with my mom. There was abuse and then I got a domestic violence against my mom. So I went to a juvenile detention center I think for like 18 days and then I went to court to determine what my, I guess, what my crime would be. I had a GAL, a guardian ad litem. So that's like, for people who don't know, that's someone in court who advocates for the young person. She took me to this room by myself and she said, she was like trying to, tell me, tell me about your home life. Then we hear bangs on the door and it's my mom and she's screaming and she's like, "you can't be alone with my daughter. She's a minor." So we're moving to all these different rooms trying to get away from my mom. And finally we find a room, it's quiet. I tell her what my home life is like and I'm like, OK, this is it, like, I'm free. I'm going to go into the foster care system and it's all going to be good. And I walk out of the room and my mom was right there. And that was really hard because that loyalty was, loyalty I mean, the idea of loyalty was strong, but really it was manipulation. I know that now, but it was presented to me as loyalty then, so that was a pretty big deal. And then the judge determined because of that scenario that he was like, it's evident that there's something going on and that my mom was mentally ill. And so I went to the foster care system. I lived in 12 different homes throughout that time for many different reasons and then emancipated when I turned 18 with no forever family and I've kind of been like, I was at the point where I was like, I don't really expect to have a forever family. I think that kind of happened when I was like 16, 17. Caseworkers said I was unadoptable, that was kind of my label. I just kind of moved on from the idea. And I also, I was going to church with some foster parents and I came to know Christ and even though I didn't have a dad growing up, it became very comforting to me that God was my dad and he had taken care of me and protected me and loved me better than an earthly father could have and so I held on to that hope. At the end of my senior year, my track coach, he offered me to be a part of his family and I kind of shrug my shoulders and was like, yeah, I've heard stuff like that before. But he's kept all of his promises to this day and he, he's just loved me well, and I went back to his house throughout college for holidays, he walked me down the aisle at my wedding to my husband, and he's a grandkid to my kids. He's everything that I could ever want in an earthly father. He's awesome.

[00:08:44.840] - Lisa Qualls

Wow. OK, that, that is so much. I mean, I was listening to you and thinking, wait, what about this, what about that. So let me ask you a question. I mean, clearly the first time you were taken into care, that was an extremely traumatic event and strangers broke into your home.

[00:09:02.450] - Tori Petersen

So my mom had kind of training that law enforcement was bad. Like we don't like cops. I say I know now that it was a SWAT team, but even then, like, it, it was like they weren't cops. They were just like these uniformed men, and so I wouldn't say I was too frightened and my mom, you know, I had, even though there were drugs, I had not been, I wouldn't say I was unsafe living with my mom. My mom always made sure to make sure I was safe and that I felt very taken care of and loved, and so when there are these adults who are just like, OK, you're going to go for some time, I was like, OK, I guess I'm going to go for some time because I have no reason not to trust adults. The scariest part, a caseworker, what I know now is caseworker, then it was just a woman on the scene. There was a woman, she picked me up and she walked me to our backyard. So she had to walk through the kitchen and my mom was on the kitchen floor and the cop was holding a gun to her head, but even then, I didn't know, I don't think I really even knew what a gun was. You know, It just, and my mom was crying and she was saying, my baby, my baby, my baby. And so I knew there was something wrong, but there was an adult who took me. And I think because there was an adult who led me and said, OK,

we're just going to go for some time, I was like, OK, I guess we're just going to go for some time. And she told me, she said, and, you know, you'll see your mommy again soon, and I was just like, OK, I'll see my mommy again soon. And so I think having these adults just kind of lead well and lead confidently made a big difference.

[00:10:46.220] - Lisa Qualls

Now at that point, you were pretty young, had you had teachers or other good adults in your life or anything that would have given you a framework for that do you think?

[00:10:56.840] - Tori Petersen

At this point in my life, not that I remember. My mom, but my mom was my person, like me and my mom, of course, a four year old is close to their mom, right. But, like, I loved my mom and my mom loved me and we just lived a good little life together. I was, I was kind of spoiled because there was all that money. We would go get pedicures together. I don't think my mom ever even said no to me up until that point. Like, I just kind of got whatever I wanted and my mom was very comforting to me.

[00:11:38.600] - Lisa Qualls

Now, were you, you're not an only child, though, is that correct? Do you have a sibling?

[00:11:42.650] - Tori Petersen

So I was an only child until I was 10. My mom had another another daughter when I was 10. I kind of did live life as an only child for a while, but I would say I'm not an only child now.

[00:11:53.960] - Lisa Qualls

And were you, when you went back into care when you were older, did you both go into care at that point? Was she born then?

[00:12:01.250] - Tori Petersen

Yes, so she was born and we went into our first foster home together. Like I said, when I walked out of that room, I was like, OK, we're going into the foster care system, it's going to be good, we're going to live this normal life. And so I was really happy when I went to our first home together. Not that you can't have big families and not be a great foster home, but I just remember my room had about eight beds in it.

[00:12:24.510] - Lisa Qualls

Wow.

[00:12:24.990] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, and there was a lot of kids who lived, and me, we were, me and my sister were the only two in that room and then there were still a ton of kids in the house. And so there were just a lot of kids not having their needs met and a lot of un-supervision. I remember something that I read in the connected parent that is stuck with me that you wrote is that you just got to keep your kids close. Even if you're just cleaning your kitchen, you know, just have them on your belt loop. I would say this foster home is kind of like the furthest thing from that. There's a lot happening behind closed doors and my sister came to me, she was three and she said that she had been sexually abused in her little girl words. And then I went to my, I went, I called my youth leader because I didn't know what to do. I called my youth leader, my youth leader I assume called my caseworker and an investigation started. They came to our school, asked me questions, and it was pretty quick. I remember I couldn't, I didn't want to say the words that my sister told me because, you know, she was just a three year old little girl, so she said it so raw because she didn't know what to say, like how I'm saying it now. So she said it so raw and I didn't want to say that. And so I kind of kept sugarcoating what had happened and then my caseworkers, because I kept changing my language, my caseworker said that I was lying and me and my sister were separated and I went to go live in a residential group home for girls with mental illnesses and behavioral issues. And I had, I never had been diagnosed with a mental illness, nor did I have extreme behavioral issues. That was probably one of the most heart wrenching things ever being separated from my sister.

[00:14:20.280] - Lisa Qualls

Did she end up staying in foster care even after you aged out, and did you ever get to live with the same family again?

[00:14:28.890] - Tori Petersen

So I never lived with the same family. I moved and moved and moved and my sister stayed at that house for a couple more weeks. When I heard that, I kind of just kept badgering my caseworker and I was like, how can you leave her in there? I just was, I wasn't very easy to deal with. So, not that I was bad, I wasn't bad, I just wasn't easy for a case worker to deal with, so they eventually moved her. I think she was there for like two weeks and then she stayed in the foster care system, then she went live with her biological dad because we have different biological dads. Then she went lived with one of my mom's boyfriends for some time.

[00:15:10.430] - Lisa Qualls

Wow.

[00:15:10.430] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, it was very interesting because there was no there's no relation. And my mom, it was actually at the time it was my mom's ex-boyfriend, so I'm in contact with her now. And she told me that he started doing drugs and she didn't want to live there anymore. And so she started living with my biological mom again and we think over the summer, she's going to come spend a month with us. And that'll be like the first time that we have lived together and been close since we got separated, so that's a pretty big deal. It's something I've been wanting for pretty much since me and my husband got married. I'm like, I can just take my sister in, but I didn't want to pressure my sister. And she's never said like I want to, I've always said, you can come visit, you can come stay here, I was trying to drop the hint and she's never really taken it until it was just like two weeks ago we had the conversation about getting her a plane ticket. So that is very exciting for us because I've been hoping for that for like three years now.

[00:16:14.240] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, yeah. Now, how old is she now?

[00:16:18.090] - Tori Petersen

So we're nine and a half years apart and I'm twenty five, so she'll turn fifteen in October. So she's 14 now.

[00:16:27.100] - Lisa Qualls

OK, and she lives with your mom?

[00:16:29.730] - Tori Petersen

She lives with my mom now, but my mom never, so my mom is an amazing saleswoman. The best salesman. My mom is bipolar, so she has mania. And I say this is where like her mania goes, and so she's not home. So my sister is just a very independent person. And I know that sounds like it can sound bad, but I think it's good for her. It's, it's better than, so when I lived with my mom, my mom is on disability. She was home all the time, and I think if she wasn't home all the time, I would have probably just lived with her.

[00:17:05.090] - Lisa Qualls

Another question that came to mind, when you went into foster care that that second time when you told the guardian ad litem when you were in foster care, did you ever regret telling the truth? Did you ever wish that you hadn't?

[00:17:22.810] - Tori Petersen

Nope, I didn't. I, you know, sometimes I talk to my mom still, you know, my mom and I still have a relationship and sometimes it's hard because she'll tell me stuff like I made it all up and then I have to go to my mother figure or like the people, the adults who were there, I'm like, am I crazy? You know, did this really happen? And then my mother figure would go, yeah, I watched your mom beat you.

Remember this one day, remember this one time? I'm like, Oh, yeah. Sometimes, I wouldn't say I regret it, but sometimes I just wish someone else would have said it, so then I wouldn't have been the person who then comes back on and I made it all up because sometimes it feels like I didn't have, even though I did have witnesses, even there are people who saw it, and there are people who know, sometimes when I'm talking to my mom, it just feels like I'm I'm the one to blame and that's hard.

[00:18:23.530] - Lisa Qualls

That is hard. That's really hard because your sister went into care, too. So that's, you know, I was just thinking during that period, I mean, you were placed in a group home, you had 12 placements in how many years?

[00:18:40.450] - Tori Petersen

It wasn't even five. It was about five. Almost five.

[00:18:44.710] - Lisa Qualls

I feel like you paid a heavy price for your truth. I mean, I think you absolutely, of course, did the right thing, but, wow, that's a lot to carry as a young person. You know that you went through some really, really hard things.

[00:18:58.320] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, I think the hardest part is just, so I remember when I was, I was about the third grade, I had, there was a really bad beating and I had bruises on my hips and I got on the bus. I lifted my shirt up and we had assigned seats so I sat by the same girl every time when I was on the bus. I lifted up my shirt to look at the bruise and it was exposed and she saw it and I remember thinking all day, I hope she just tells somebody, I hope's she just tell somebody. And I was in the third grade. And that is the, that's the hardest thing for me is, and I did have a teacher I said who told someone about the scratches on my neck, but then I was reunified with my mom again. It's hard because I want to have a great relationship with my mom, and that's the thing that she can never let go because in her perspective, I betrayed her. I didn't appreciate, she always said I don't appreciate, like, I didn't appreciate all that she did give me because of the bad stuff. So that's the hard part. I just wish someone else would have said it so me and my mom couldn't have the big dent in our relationship that we do.

[00:20:03.770] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, I can understand that. So you have experienced a lot of different foster families. In those families, were there any things that families did that were helpful that made you feel welcome, that made you feel supported and were there, were there things that they did that were exactly the opposite, that made you feel alone and unsupported?

[00:20:29.370] - Tori Petersen

Oh, a big thing, I moved into foster parents house and they let me paint my room. And I know that's such a material thing, but it communicated to me that, like, the room was mine and if it was mine, they must have thought that they, like I was there to stay and they weren't going to send me off, like they were committed to me. So I had two foster parents that let me do that. And that was a pretty big deal to me. I just felt like it communicated commitment, love. In my very last foster home, I had, so I ran track and I was pretty good at it. My senior year I became a five time state champion and that's what paid for my way to college.

[00:21:14.240] - Lisa Qualls

Wow.

[00:21:14.730] - Tori Petersen

So track was a pretty big deal. I feel like God used it to build my confidence and, like, show me that he had a purpose and a plan for my life. Track has been a really big deal in my life. And obviously my track coach, like, he was my father figure, he's the one who ended up adopting me. There's nothing else that I really had confidence in and in my last foster home, the foster mom, just, like, totally believed in me. So my junior year of high school, I really hadn't done anything super impressive yet

when it came to track, but the summer between, the summer before my senior year, my track coach, whose now my dad, said, I think you can win state and I think you can get a pretty hefty scholarship to college. And I was like, OK, let's just try it. Like, I'm going to just do what he tells me to do because he's my coach and then if it doesn't work out, then I'm going to blame it on him because he's my coach and he's the one telling me what to do. My foster mom just really supportive that. She made sure that I had the shoes I needed and I was kind of high maintenance about the food that I ate, like I want to eat healthy and to eat healthy is more expensive. I just felt like she never treated me like, because as a foster, all foster youth know that foster parents are getting paid and as they should, that's totally fine. And I even think that part of that money should go back to the foster parents. It's a service, but also some of that money should go towards the child and so I think that she had a really good balance with that, and if I ask for something and say she didn't, she was like, no, she would explain to me, she's very transparent and explain to me why she didn't feel like it was necessary or she wanted me to learn about saving money and buying things myself. And so I just felt like the transparency and her just unending support and belief in me when she really didn't have a reason to believe in me was a really big deal.

[00:23:23.890] - Lisa Qualls  
Did she come to your track meets?

[00:23:26.530] - Tori Petersen  
Oh, yeah, she came to my track meets. She would come to my track practices and so, I had a pretty bad reputation in our town that there were rumors about things that I did with my foster dads that weren't true. And my mom, my mom would spread these rumors and then if, if my mom said it, then, you know, there has to be an investigation. And so this is one of the reasons why foster families didn't really want me and it was understandable.

[00:23:59.520] - Melissa Corkum  
Hey there, we're jumping into the middle of this episode to make sure that you know about our new interactive workshop that's coming up, it's on overcoming blocked care. You see, when our children experience early adversity, it activates a premature defense mechanism that may put them in a chronic state of survival. This results in something called blocked trust. As a result, some children do not respond to our efforts of caregiving. You may begin to feel ineffective and experience a sense of apathy called blocked care.

[00:24:31.860] - Lisa Qualls  
In this interactive workshop, you will learn the brain science to understand your feelings and make powerful changes; you'll gain the motivation and endurance to pursue a relationship with your child; you will overcome feelings of shame and guilt; and you'll learn step by step practices you need to reclaim the parent you know you can be. For more information or to sign up, go to the [adoptionconnection.com/blockedcare](http://adoptionconnection.com/blockedcare).

[00:25:00.780] - Melissa Corkum  
This will be a great refresher for those of you who have already done some blocked care work with us or a great introduction if you've never even heard of blocked care. We hope you can join us on Tuesday, May 25th at 1:00 p.m. Eastern, 10:00 a.m. Pacific. Now back to the episode.

[00:25:23.160] - Tori Petersen  
Foster families didn't really want me, and it was understandable. Because of that, because of these allegations and rumors, my foster mom had to sit at the practices. And I like to not be unsupervised. I was very isolated in foster care, I didn't go to regular events that kids went to, and so that was another big thing, is that she was a nursing student, and she worked, and she was a foster mom, and she would make time to sit at my track practices so that I could, I could practice two hours a day.

[00:25:59.750] - Lisa Qualls  
That's impressive. Did she have other children?

[00:26:03.200] - Tori Petersen

She did it towards the end. She had two toddlers and it was rough.

[00:26:10.010] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, bringing the toddlers to all you track practices and meets would have been pretty difficult.

[00:26:13.970] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, it was rough.

[00:26:15.680] - Lisa Qualls

Do you still have a relationship with any of your former foster parents?

[00:26:19.880] - Tori Petersen

Oh, yeah. So I made a very big mistake in one of my foster parents homes. I say that I want to I always want to protect them the best that I can because I love them so much. But I try to say like this, when teen boys and teen girls are not biological brother and sister, but they live in the same home, that creates a lot of tension. And so me and my foster brother, we made a very big mistake. And I would say we both regret it immensely. We both regretted it immensely. I think the moment happened. But that made me be removed from the home, and I remember my caseworker coming to me and telling me the parents don't want you to be removed, we just have to remove you because you can't stay here. And I knew that it was heart wrenching for them because they really did view me like I was that girl. I was their daughter. And they always made that really clear. And so that was a really, really hard move, but when I became an adult, they would come to my college track meets, they would buy me presents for Christmas, they came to my college graduation, they sat in the front row at my wedding, I mean, I say that they're the epitome of God's forgiveness on earth because it was wrong what I did, but they have just always continued to have this ruthless love for me.

[00:27:45.690] - Lisa Qualls

Wow, chokes me up, Tori. It's really, it is beautiful, right, because we're all I mean, life is hard. We all make wrong decisions and I'm really thankful that we're were able to continue to love you in the way that they did. And I think that points to the fact that they're, the foster child and the foster parents have very limited control.

[00:28:13.110] - Tori Petersen

Oh my gosh, so little. Caseworkers have all the control.

[00:28:14.940] - Lisa Qualls

So talk about that. Talk about that for a minute.

[00:28:21.360] - Tori Petersen

Oh, I even don't know. My caseworkers made all the decisions. I definitely saw when my foster parents were trying to advocate for me to have more freedom when they were saying, no, she really is a, she's a good kid. I was a 4.0 student. I got taken out of school my junior year, went to go live in another group home because they couldn't find me a place to stay. And that was the first time I got my first B that semester because I wasn't in school for like three weeks. But I was I was a good student, I was a good kid. I saw, I saw my foster parents advocate for me and say that, but the caseworkers, I think they just didn't it, at the end of the day, I think they didn't want to deal with my mom. And I think my mom, my mom did make a lot of threats to them. She would threaten to sue them, my mom started a lot of rumors about prosecutor, the prosecutor in our town, like various caseworkers, caseworkers' husbands, me, and so I think everyone, like I thought that they were trying to protect themselves from me. I remember being called at one point a legality and that just really stuck with me. So I thought that for the longest time, everyone was trying to protect themselves for me. And maybe it was just a story I tell myself to feel better about myself, I don't know. But looking back now, I think people were trying to protect themselves from my mom and in the rumors that could potentially bedspread because my mom wasn't quiet, she's still not quiet.

[00:30:01.440] - Lisa Qualls

So they were maybe trying to minimize some liability.

[00:30:04.980] - Tori Petersen  
Yeah, yeah.

[00:30:06.270] - Lisa Qualls  
And unfortunately, that meant harder things for you.

[00:30:10.830] - Lisa Qualls  
Yeah. So tell me a little bit, like, what is life look like for you now? Anybody who follows you on Instagram, which everybody should follow her, she's @torihopepetersen on Instagram, but your life is kind of wild and lovely and tell us about it.

[00:30:32.410] - Tori Petersen  
Yes, my cup overflows, it is a wild and lovely. I just love my life and sometimes I don't, but overall, I do. I am married to my husband, Jacob. We've been married for three years and before we got married, we asked each other, like, what's your motto for life? And he said, he listen to, he made me listen to this sermon or talk that Bob Goff did and in the talk, he said, "love God, love people, do stuff." And Jacob said, that's, that's like me. And I am a really big Brennan Manning fan. He, the way that he just describes God as Abba, as father really captivated my heart and obviously related to me a lot. And so Brennan Manning in the furious longing of God, he just says, just do the next thing and love. And so I feel me and Jacob, we just came together and we had the same heart, a little bit different. Jacob's and enneagram 7. He's a little bit more fun than I am, a lot more fun than I am. Well, he's a, he's an eight, wing seven, but that seven is a big wing. And so, and it was even bigger when we were in college. So I feel like we came together and every day is like, how do we love? And that can be pretty intense, like, we're both very passionate people. So that can be pretty intense sometimes, but how do we do that? We have two biological babies, right now, we have a sibling group of three foster babies, we have adopted a 19 year old immigrant young man. He was living in bathrooms before we met him and he needed a place to stay, so he came to live with us and we just all fell in love with each other. It wasn't that cute of a fairy tale, we actually had a lot of issues in the beginning, but overall, like, at the end of the day, I was always in love with them.

[00:32:39.940] - Lisa Qualls  
OK, let me ask you.

[00:32:42.480] - Tori Petersen  
I write and, I mean, there's so much, go ahead.

[00:32:43.630] - Lisa Qualls  
Yeah, I want to hear about that, but let me ask really quickly, how old was he when you adopted him and did you legally adopt him?

[00:32:48.910] - Tori Petersen  
We legally adopted him. His last name is Petersen which I think is so cool. We adopted him when he was 19, so, an adult, yeah, he's an adult adoptive.

[00:32:59.280] - Lisa Qualls  
Wonderful. OK, and keep going, and you write and tell us what else.

[00:33:03.040] - Tori Petersen  
Yeah, I write and I speak right now. I signed a book deal with \*inaudible\* so I actually just handed in my manuscript yesterday.

[00:33:12.260] - Lisa Qualls  
Whoop! That's a huge deal!

[00:33:15.530] - Tori Petersen  
Yeah, it is a huge deal and that is supposed to be published in August of 2022. So I'm pretty excited

for that.

[00:33:23.150] - Lisa Qualls

Tell us, tell us the title of the book and what,

[00:33:26.330] - Tori Petersen

We don't know yet! I'm so sad, I wish I could tell you.

[00:33:29.810] - Lisa Qualls

What's it about?

[00:33:31.140] - Tori Petersen

It's a memoir.

[00:33:32.280] - Lisa Qualls

It is a memoir, OK.

[00:33:34.070] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, yeah it's a memoir and I do speaking so I travel here and there and I, I say I hear what God has done in my life, but really I try to share what God can do in everyone's life.

[00:33:51.200] - Lisa Qualls

Absolutely. So tell me, how do you think having been a foster child, a foster youth helps you and maybe impacts the way you are as a foster mom?

[00:34:04.100] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, I told you at the beginning, I think I'm a pretty bomb foster mom.

[00:34:10.440] - Lisa Qualls

I bet you are.

[00:34:10.440] - Tori Petersen

And I think it's because I'm a former foster. That sounds so arrogant and like, there are plenty of days, actually today, like, I had a pretty short fuse all day, like, just no energy to like, when my kids do the "pew pew" and shoot me with their fake gun, like, I'm like, I don't want to die, I just want to eat my food and like, can you just please give me space? So today I wasn't bomb, so I just want to, I'm not always bomb, but I think there are things, like, with my foster children's biological mom, I'm very, we have a good relationship and that is not to say that she has not been very mean to me, but I remember so often that I could have easily been her so easily. And the statistics actually say I should be her and my kids, my biological kids, should be exactly where her kids are. And with my, with my foster kids and my biological kids, I'm just always asking myself, what did two year old Tori need? What did three year old Tori need? I think there's a lot of healing that just naturally comes in meeting my children's unmet needs. I think the hardest thing is, so I have a 19 year old and then I have toddlers, and just it's kind of like I have to go back and forth, like, what did 19 year old Tori need and what did two year old Tori need? But I think asking myself that question constantly has been, has been very helpful.

[00:35:54.450] - Lisa Qualls

That's so good, yeah, I, you know, I have some experience with being in foster care and, and also being a first mom, a birth mom, and that has completely, radically shaped who I am as a foster mom and an adoptive mom. I mean, I feel it gives me just a different perspective and I, in your situation is even more dramatic in many ways and so I can imagine it has shaped the way you parent in a lot of ways.

[00:36:24.920] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, for sure. I think that, that idea of just unmet needs because they're, as I heel and as I'm still healing like I still go to counseling and I am still actively figuring out my triggers, and when I have a trigger, I say, OK, that, this is space to step into healing with God. And it happens way too often than I

would like it to, but I think in recognizing my unmet needs throughout my healing process, I can I can see it in my children like, oh, this is what they need. And then I can give them the language, like, do you need a hug right now? Something as simple as that, like, or just asking them, what do you need right now? So much of it is just giving our children the language to communicate what they need because like as, as a young person, I remember, I remember oftentimes I would have these behaviors and I would engage a lot of my struggle was with boys and I would engage in behaviors that would be so cyclical and it was, but I didn't know why, but once I discovered that it was all these unmet needs, then that's when you have the language for it and you can begin to fulfill that need in a healthy way.

[00:37:53.010] - Lisa Qualls

This is such a great conversation. Honestly, we need a few hours together. I hope we end up at the event some time so we can spend some time together, and.

[00:38:01.680] - Tori Petersen

I know we will. We are going to, we have to at some point.

[00:38:04.530] - Lisa Qualls

And we have lots of mutual friends, so we will definitely do that sometime. But as we're wrapping up, I would love to know, you know, we at the adoption connection, we are very interested in the Enneagram and bringing the Enneagram more into the adoption community and I would love to ask you, you referenced your husband's Enneagram number. What is your dominant type?

[00:38:27.300] - Tori Petersen

So I'm a two.

[00:38:30.490] - Lisa Qualls

OK, and was that, was that super clear and obvious to you from the beginning?

[00:38:35.320] - Tori Petersen

I identify a lot with the four, and when people meet me, they think I'm a four, so I like to say I'm just a really healthy two. I'm really not, I'm not that healthy as a two. I can just make myself look like a healthy two. That's part of being a two, too. But no, I'm, I feel like a lot of people say, oh, the Enneagram is a personality assessment. And I, I would say it's a motivational assessment. And that's why I think when people struggle like, oh, which number am I, they can read it like, they can read more into it and they, like, you choose. That's what she says to do, like, if you are going back and forth between like two or three numbers, just read them and then you say what you identify most with. It's not really a test that tells you because only you know your motivations. And so I think at the end of the day, when I, when I read that long list of, "how does your heart speak to you and motivate you to live?" I'm a two. How do I look on the outside? I think a lot is a four.

[00:39:46.960] - Lisa Qualls

Well, then it could be your subtype, which is a layer of the Enneagram that, you know, there are three different kinds of twos. Of course, there's actually a complete range, but there are basically three types, subtypes of Twos, and they do look different. So, yeah, I think that's great. And so what gifts do you feel being a two, brings to you, I guess as maybe both a wife and a mom.

[00:40:12.730] - Tori Petersen

Kind of like, but going back to my and Jacob's motivations of like we just want to love well. We want to, everyone we come in contact with. I do feel we try our best to be very intentional. We're very hospitable to our community. We have people over at least twice a week and we host dinners. And I think just that idea of like being open, like we aren't closed to people because they have different political beliefs, and we aren't close to people because they look different than us. We want, we just have this like fiery motivation, fiery, fiery hearts to intentionally love, and we don't always get it right, but I think having the motivation there is a strength because it does, it keeps us going when things are things are hard. When you have five kids 3 and under.

[00:41:18.810] - Lisa Qualls

Well, you know, it's interesting, we were just talking about that. In the road back to you and Suzanne said that the two was the helper, but I heard him say on his podcast that he now has sort of renamed it to be the befriender. That's kind of nice, right?

[00:41:41.700] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, I like that because I would definitely say that is me. Everyone I meet I want to be their friend and I can, yeah, I can, I can kind of be friends with everybody.

[00:41:57.840] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, and I think it speaks more to the true motivation of the two. Yeah, it's not just about helping, it's wanting that, that to be the friend and be connected and all those things, so.

[00:42:09.450] - Tori Petersen

Yeah.

[00:42:09.990] - Lisa Qualls

Well this has been wonderful. Tell people where they can find you.

[00:42:15.150] - Tori Petersen

So I am at Torihopepertersen.com. Everything is Tori Hope Pertersen and Pertersen is S E N and not S O N, I always have to say that, but yeah, you can find me on Instagram or anything. It's all the same, Tori Hope Petersen and I will be happy, happy, happy if you come along with me. I will befriend you!

[00:42:39.100] - Lisa Qualls

You will be the best friend anybody ever had on Instagram. So, your book's coming out in August 2022, correct?

[00:42:51.870] - Tori Petersen

Yes. Yeah.

[00:42:53.310] - Lisa Qualls

Let's be sure to have you back on the podcast. Either shortly before it comes out, or around the time it launches. Let's just be in touch and we'll be sure to have you back so you can tell us so much more, because, of course, I'm interested to read your book.

[00:43:08.850] - Tori Petersen

Yeah, we're for sure going to do that. I'm excited. Thank you, Lisa.

[00:43:12.240] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, thank you so much.

[00:43:18.980] - Melissa Corkum

Well, again, another incredible story in the lineup of so many experiences we've shared here on the podcast. I appreciate her vulnerability, her honesty, and just how she's been able to see so much redemption and really just how God has shown up in her life. It's such a huge piece of how she's been able to make sense of her story and I just, it's beautiful. And I also just really appreciated her perspective on her experience, like, that, you know, I was just cracking up listening to her talk about how she loved her life with her mom, like, they had lots of money, they they had lots of things and how, like, you know, going to what we would consider, right, a more stable home was like a step down. And, you know, I think these are things, these are the assumptions that we make about people's stories and it's so important to hear like the actual reality and just hear the diversity of so many things. So I just really appreciate her sharing so candidly about her experience.

[00:44:21.830] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, her story shatters some of those misconceptions that we might have about children in care and, or going into foster care. So, yeah, as you could hear, it was a really delightful conversation. I was so happy to spend some time with her, and, you know, it's still pretty fresh for her. She's still a young

woman, and so I think hearing it and also hearing the story of her sister coming to live with her, that is going to be unfolding before our eyes. And speaking of that, Tori's presence is pretty powerfully on Instagram, so if you want to get to know her more and follow her, I'd encourage you to find her there. She's @Torihopepetersen, and we will have links to that, to her social media in the show notes for today's episode, which is [theadoptionconnection.com/132](http://theadoptionconnection.com/132). Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as @theadoptionconnection.

[00:45:22.460] - 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.

[00:45:32.600] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:45:39.800] - Melissa Corkum

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