

Welcome to The Adoption Connection Podcast, where we offer resources to equip you and stories to inspire you on your adoption journey. I'm Lisa Qualls.

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

Hi, friends. Welcome to episode 152 of The Adoption Connection Podcast. You guys are going to want to grab some tissues and maybe find a quiet place to really absorb this week's story. You know, here at The Adoption Connection, we are really passionate about giving voice to all sides of the triad, and we are bringing you another birth mom story this week, and it is just stunning. I previewed it before we started to record and chat about it, and I needed tissues, and I was enthralled. I was so captured by Zoe's authenticity, the way that she shared what her experience was, and then just the actual facts, like just some of it is almost like movie Hollywood, unbelievable.

Well, I don't get to have conversations like this with very many birth moms, and so as we talked, I think we were just sort of locked in to each other, just hearing her story and sharing some of mine with her. It was, I think she and I could have spent a whole day together just talking and connecting about this because it's a sadly, very unique experience. Zoe is fantastic. She's actually Dr. Zoe Shaw. She's a licensed psychotherapist, motivational speaker, podcast host, life coach. She is really passionate about helping women who struggle in difficult relationships. And she's also a frequent blogger, and she has a podcast, too, which we'll give you all that information at the end of the episode, but I think you're really going to enjoy hearing from Dr. Zoe Shaw.

Hello, Zoe. Welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast.

Thank you so much for having me.

Well, I'm really glad you're here. Would you start by just telling our listeners a little bit about who you are?

Sure, so I'm a licensed psychotherapist with a doctor in clinical psychology, I'm a Mama of five, a wife, I'm a little bit of an athlete, and I love working with women. I'm also an author, speaker, podcaster, but I love speaking and working with women on finding strength in difficult relationships. That's kind of my passion and my jam.

There's something really unique about you that we wanted to have you on the podcast.

I'm also a birth mother.

Yes, adoptive parents, we have a lot of our listeners who are adoptive and foster parents, and we always are thankful to hear stories and, of course, here at The Adoption Connection, we are very interested in representing all the voices of the triad. Melissa and I together make up the entire triad, we're both adoptive moms, she's an adoptee, and I'm a birth mom. So we really want to represent every voice here. And I'm just delighted that you will share your story with us.

Well, I'm delighted to come on. Thank you for having me.

Well, can we go back to when you were a teenager? Do you want to just sort of set the stage for what was happening in your life and how you became a birth mother?

Yeah, so I'll go all the way back. I was born in Nashville, Tennessee, to two young parents. My dad was a medical school student, and my mom was a University student at that time, and they moved to Maryland. Well, actually, Washington, DC, which is where I spent the beginning part of my life. I should also mention I'm African American and growing up in Washington, DC, I was very kind of sheltered, I think, in terms of just culture, and that wasn't a really big part of my life, the color of my skin. But then we moved to rural Maryland, Mennonite area, actually. And it was just a very huge culture shock. And I had a lot of negative experiences growing up just regarding the color of my skin, and it shaped my identity and certainly going into adolescence there was a lot of self esteem issues. And I got involved

very quickly with a guy who became my boyfriend throughout all of high school. And I got pregnant at 16, and my parents were very conservative Christians, and my dad and mom had very high standards for me and my life. And I was generally the very good girl who performed very well academically and athletically. It was a huge shock to my parents. And there is a lot of guilt and shame involved for me. I did attempt to have an abortion. My boyfriend snuck me to an abortion clinic, and I literally just changed my mind at the very last minute when I was on the table and ran out of there.

Wow, okay. Can you tell us a little more about that?

Sure.

You don't need to, but that's a pretty intense part of your story. What led you to consider it? Do you want to go there? We don't have to.

Absolutely, absolutely. I did grow up in an evangelical Christian home where I learned that abortion was wrong, but then I'm in that situation, and the very last thing I want to do is tell my parents, and my whole life is going to be ruined. And my boyfriend wanted me to get an abortion, and so we went. And the whole time, internally, there was that pulling of there's this baby in me who was I was already starting to connect to. But yet I wanted to not have to deal with all the repercussions, right. And I had friends who had had abortions and made it seem like it was so easy. And, you know, going through the experience of being in an abortion clinic gives me so much empathy for other women who have been through the experiences. I have zero judgment for anybody who chooses that path. We all have to do what we feel is best in the moment, right. But for me, I remember sitting because when we're in abortion clinic before we go in, they have this, like, little group where you talk and they tell you what you're going to do. And the lady gives everybody a pill. And I remember when she gave me this pill, my first question that I asked her is, is this going to hurt the baby? And she gave me that crazy look like, do you know where you are and what you're getting ready to do?

Yeah, wow.

I felt like I was already a mom at that time. And so I got on the table and the doctor came in, and I don't know why I waited until the very last second, but I literally just said, I can't do this. And the words came out of my mouth before I even knew they were happening. And the doctor was so irritable and so rude to me and he was just like, I wish you good luck, but if you come back here, I'm not going to treat you. I wasted his time and I understand that. So I did, I literally ran out of the abortion clinic holding my socks and my shoes in my hands, and my boyfriend looked at me with wide eyes like, what's going on? Is it over? And so then we had to go eat and figure out, okay. I guess I'm not going to do this. And so, now what?

I think what that points to is that I want people to hear is that fear can drive us a lot of places where we wouldn't imagine we'd go, like, you're this young girl. You know that when this comes out, when your parents learn you're pregnant, when your teachers or community, whatever, that this is going to be like a tragedy to you, especially back then. This is what you're thinking, like, it can't happen. And it led you all the way to the abortion table before you were like, the core you knew that that wasn't what you wanted deep in your spirits. But I think that's a powerful story because, you're right. I think any one of us who's been pregnant as a young teen, I have so much compassion for other women, even if they choose abortion. I mean, this is a really hard, frightening thing, you know, and we just can't judge each other in these situations.

We cannot judge each other because it's the whole thing until you've been in those shoes, you just never know. You just never know. And I just believe that my daughter, Sarah, was just meant to be here. And so that's why I was plopped down in that family and had that experience and got to that point because for some reason, she's meant to be here.

Yeah, it's just God's Grace, absolutely.

It is.

I always think it's just God's Grace that I didn't choose that, I'm thankful. So how did your boyfriend take it?

He was so wonderful, really. He was shocked because he thought we were going to be done with this after that, but he was just like, okay, so I guess we're going to do this. He was really wonderful and supportive, but I still was not able to tell my parents. I was never able to get those words past my lips. I was so just scared and devastated and I felt guilt. I felt bad for my parents that they had to deal with me. And so I never did, I really took a chicken way out. I had my pregnancy for many months, and I was an athlete. I was running track and playing volleyball, and I remember one time I dove to reach a ball, and I hit the floor, and I felt my baby. It felt like a ball was literally in my stomach. And then I was like, oh, wow., his is real.

Did you tell any friends?

I did tell one friend, yes. And she was the friend who took me to the crisis pregnancy center where I found out I was pregnant to begin with, because back then, I don't think you could just go to the drugstore and get a pregnancy test. I'm sure I would have done that.

Especially if you lived in a small town, right?

Yeah.

Did your boyfriend also go to your high school? I mean, did he keep it a secret?

No. He went to College in a town about an hour away. So he did keep it a secret. He did eventually tell his mom when I went to the pregnancy home. So I really waited until my mom figured it out herself. By that time, I think I was about five months, and she figured it out from little things, and I allowed her to take me to a pregnancy clinic, another one, and have the lady tell her that I was pregnant because I literally could not say the words. So that's how my mom found out. And then they made the decision to send me to an unwed mother's home because they felt that I would be a bad influence. And of course, on top of that, they needed for their own reasons to keep it secret. And so they did. So they announced that I was going to a boarding home or boarding school. That's what they told the outside family. Inside my family, I later found out they told my siblings that I had a psychiatric breakdown and I needed to go to a psychiatric hospital. I didn't find that out until I was older.

Wow, okay, and let's just pause and think about this. Your parents were motivated by their own fear.

Absolutely.

There's just so much fear, and they're trying to protect you, trying to protect your siblings, trying to protect themselves and their reputation. Like, all of us, if we could go back and do things differently, they may do things, may feel that they would have done things differently. Actually, I know my parents would have done things differently had they not been motivated by fear and if they could do it all again. But one of the things that's interesting about your story is this was 1991, right. And maternity homes were few and far between, for sure. And the whole model is sort of disappearing and coming back. In 1991, I don't think that was very common. I think it was unusual.

Right, it was. And there were a number of girls in my high school who got pregnant and didn't leave and disappear, and we found out about it. And some of them went on to have babies and that's the reality, I think then and even now, sometimes. But my parents, my mom came from an era, I think, where she saw that happen. She grew up in Catholic school. Her father was a professor and prominent person in the community at that time. And she saw that happen to some people in her high school that got pregnant and went away. And so I think that was just a model that she had that that's what you do. And I think also probably multigenerationally, there's some passing down of secret keeping and how important your image and really just having respect in the community, I suppose. So that was a big thing for my parents. And I think that created a perfect storm for them to make that

choice.

Yeah. Can you tell us about your experience at the maternity home?

It was another culture shock. And I think maybe the good thing is that I had that experience when I was nine of moving from Washington, DC, to rural Maryland. I had that culture shock experience. So in some ways, maybe I was prepped for that. The maternity home was filled with a lot of young girls who came from very difficult situations, broken homes, foster care. Not really what I had experienced growing up. Being with girls who were in that situation, it was just very different for me. And I felt very much like a fish out of water just in terms of the things that they talked about and even the hierarchy in the home. It was like girls who had been raped got really privileged. And it was just kind of this hierarchy of who you are. What's your story? How you got here?

Okay, let me ask, was that hierarchy reflected with the staff as well as the girls, or was it mostly with the girls themselves?

No, I think it was reflected mainly with the staff.

Okay.

Right, and then with the girls, I know there is a little bit of separation between those who placed and those who were going to keep. It was just a very difficult experience also because there was always kind of this ticking time bomb. So you would make friends and then when someone had a baby, they were whisked off and they disappeared and you could never talk to them again.

They never came back.

They never came back. And so you would never know if in the morning you'd wake up and your friend would be gone, especially when she got closer to term. And we never really heard, like, what happens on the other side. And so there is a fear about that. And I don't know why the staff kept it all so secret and why they didn't want any communication with women afterwards. The reality is that the Liberty Godparent home, which is where I went, was also an adoption agency. And so they did have an incentive for wanting girls to place. And I think the whole mission was really to, I hate to use the word feed, but feed the adoption agency. And then also they felt that it was a mission and that I'm sure they felt that children were better off in two parent homes. There is that underlying message as well, which I think probably is why they didn't want girls to communicate afterwards. But yes, it was an interesting experience.

So let me ask, what happened when a girl decided to keep her baby in that place? Well, first of all, was there a lot of pressure to place? Obviously, they did have motivation and this was my experience as well, but tell me what it was like if a girl decided she was going to keep her baby, did she leave the home?

No. She was allowed to stay. And I would say there was never outward pressure. It was more subtle pressure. And we all also had weekly therapy that helped us make our decisions. So there's that as well. So all I can say is subtle pressure, but definitely not outward pressure. And if you chose to keep your baby, then that was okay and you could stay for the duration of your pregnancy.

Okay. And did those girls also just disappear when they had their babies?

Yes, everybody disappeared.

Wow. I'm sure you've probably read *The Girls Who Went Away*. Have you read that book?

I have not.

You might, it's really about the era of.

I've seen that book, so that book details stories of women who were in those types of homes.

Yeah, it's really heavy. I avoided reading it for many years because I was a little afraid of how deeply painful emotionally it would be to read. And it was, but I'm still glad I read it. It was also sort of validating. So like, oh, yes. My experience was, it's happened to many women, very sadly. Okay. So tell us about, you went into labor.

I did, yeah. So I went into labor in the afternoon in my therapist's office, and my poor therapist somehow got stuck with taking me to the hospital, and she ended up having to stay with me there. But my mom did come along at the tail end of my birth, and she was able to be there and witness it. It's a little traumatic, I think, for a 16 year old girl not having any idea what she's getting ready to go through and not having pain medication and just being expected to kind of go through it. But the birth was relatively, I think, as birth go simple and straightforward. And then my daughter was there.

So are you saying that there was no or minimal child birth education preparation? Were you prepared for labor?

I think there was some type of class that we took at some point, but prepared? No.

Okay. And you said you didn't have any pain medication. Was that your decision, your choice, that you did not want to?

So I was never offered an epidural. Later towards the end stages of my labor, I was offered something I don't know what it was, but my mother actually refused it.

Okay.

So that was an interesting kind of shaming experience at the end of everything.

Wow. And so your daughter was born and was she put in your arms? Did you feel happy? Do you remember?

I do. Yeah, she was put in my arms and I was able to hold her. And she was brought to my room. I did get a call. So I had her late in the evening. I did get a call the next day from the woman who ran the adoption agency. And her first thing is, you need to probably leave as soon as possible because it's better to not have too much contact with your daughter. And so they were pushing me to leave the hospital very quickly. I remember this young, super, nice doctor who came in my room that morning before I left, and somehow he had missed on the paperwork that I was a birth mother. And he came in and he was so sweet. And he told me how beautiful my daughter was and what a great mom I was going to be. And I just remember thinking, I hope that he never reads in that file that I was a birth mother because somewhere he's going to hold that. That thought will be held in the world. But that was just a really nice experience that I had with that doctor, and everybody else was fine. But there's no training for how you go through a pregnancy and leave your child at the hospital and then just go on with life.

Yeah, yes.

There's nobody who tells you how to do that.

Right.

And so that's what I did. They told me I should go and my mom wanted to go. I know she didn't want me to stay and change my mind. And so I just left and walked away, and my mom took me to a hotel. Well, here's the interesting thing. My mom showed up at the hospital with a brand new car for my 16th birthday. I call it my push present, and that sports car was supposed to kind of make me forget I guess that I had just had a baby and left her in the hospital. We drove that little sports car to a hotel,

and we stayed there for a few days, which I later realized was because I still looked pregnant and we couldn't just go home. And my mom bought me, what are those things called corsets?

Oh, like a girdle?

Girdle, yes. My mother bought me girdles to wear when I came back home. And so that was an interesting excursion. And we went to an amusement park a day after me having a child.

Wow.

And started this whole process of pretending like it never happened.

It was almost like the sports car and all those things were supposed to sort of un-mom you. Like, she wanted you to revert back to being a young, successful teenager. Wow. It almost takes my breath away.

That first night in the hotel, I woke up to sounds of myself crying like my whole body was just heaving and crying. And it was almost a dissociative experience because I didn't know what it was. It took me a minute before I figured out that was me. And I know my body was grieving. My mind, I think, was just overwhelmed. But my body was definitely grieving at the same time that I had to figure out how to just like you said, un-mom myself and just be a teenage girl.

Did your milk come in?

It did, yes.

Mine too.

Did they give you pills?

They gave me a shot.

They gave me these pills that gave me horrible headaches, and I eventually stopped taking them. But then my milk started. It was a whole process of milk coming in again because I stopped taking the pills and very painful.

And was that painful for you, emotionally as well as physically?

Yeah.

Were you informed at all of your rights or how long you had to sign the papers if there was a waiting period? Were you informed of all of that?

I was, yes. There was an adoption counselor, and she informed me of all of that. And Interestingly enough, the parents that I chose for her backed out a few months later.

After she was with them?

Well, the other thing that I found out is that my daughter didn't go straight to them. She went to a foster home.

We're interrupting this interview to ask you to do us a favor. Really, it's not for us, but for adoptive and foster parents, just like you.

If you find our podcast helpful, pause this episode and revisit your podcast app where you can rate and review the show. Honestly, this isn't about making us feel good. This is about other parents finding confidence, hope and friends who understand.

Thanks so much for helping us get the word out. We really appreciate you.

Now back to the conversation.

Well, the other thing that I found out is that my daughter didn't go straight to them. She went to a foster home, something that nobody told me.

Okay. So this happened to me, too.

Really? Wow.

And nobody told me either.

Right. No one told me.

Okay, wow. I could almost cry in this conversation.

It must be a practice. And obviously I wouldn't have placed her if I had known that she was leaving a hospital to go to a foster home.

Exactly.

But I found that out later. Yes. And so a few months later, I found out that they had changed their minds. And so then the question is, do you want to choose another couple? Which, of course, how do we choose these couples? We look through books of pictures of people and a couple of paragraphs they write about themselves, and we choose parents for our children that way.

Like we wouldn't even choose a babysitter that way.

Exactly. I wrote that in my book. My mother would have never chosen a babysitter by looking through a book of pictures of girls and yet that's how I chose parents for my child. And so I asked my mom if I could bring her back when I found out that she was in a foster home and that the adopted parents had changed their mind. But my mom said no. And so I picked another family and eventually sign the adoption papers.

Okay. And your adoption? It was a completely closed adoption. Is that correct? You didn't speak to them? Did you receive letters from them or anything?

I did every couple of years they would send a letter through the adoption agency, which was filled with blacked out stuff like her name and any information about their location. And the agency would then give it to me. And I could send the agency a letter that they would then send through them after they'd filtered it and made sure they blacked out anything they didn't want the adoptive parents to know. So I got every couple of years a letter like that.

Pictures or no pictures.

I only got pictures until the first year. And then after that, they said they would not be sending pictures anymore.

And was that the parents decision or the agency policy? Do you know?

I'm not sure. I'm not sure. Part of me feels like I'm sure the parents could have if they wanted to. Maybe it was an agency policy, maybe they were just required to send pictures for the first year, and then after that, they weren't.

Okay, well, I want to talk about what happened years down the road, but can you speak at all to what

that grief experience was like for you?

I've described it as I felt like the whole world stopped. Yeah, it felt like the whole world was a merry-go-round and I had hopped off and I was just looking at it from the outside and everybody else was going on. I felt like I had grown ten years coming back to high school and all of the trivial high school stuff just didn't seem to matter anymore to me. And I felt like that all the way through College, actually. I was just on this different trajectory. And I got married very early, at 19. And I know a big part of that was just trying to put that away, that life away and start a new and kind of, exonerate myself from that experience. And I was already a pretty driven person. I think that increased my drive to be successful and perform because I'm sure psychologically, I felt that somehow that would validate my having given up my daughter if I go on to do all these great things. And so I continue to excel in school. And also I felt like that was the reason why my parents wanted me to give up my child because they didn't want me to ruin my life. So the very last thing I wanted to do is go ahead and ruin my life anyway after that. So I did continue to excel and I traveled internationally and competed as an athlete in track and field. And I got a scholarship and went to UCLA and did all the things that I was supposed to do. Got my Masters and my doctor in clinical psychology. Along the way I studied and learned a lot about family systems. I learned a lot about my marriage during that time and a lot of dysfunction that was going on. I think probably a lot of it was probably seeking to understand my experience. So that was my post experience after placing her for adoption.

In those early-ish years. It's interesting because I also married very young after losing my son. And I think I was very much still in an acute grieving phase, really. And my husband really walked through this grief with me. How, did that shape your marriage, your loss?

My husband did not walk through my grief with me at all. It was really a topic that he didn't want to talk about. I think I married somebody that in many ways mirrored some of the messages that I had gotten from my parents about the shame of it. And I think my husband wanted to pretend like it didn't happen either. So I didn't have that experience, I think I was very isolated in my grieving.

Do you remember the first time you met another birth mom and you were able to talk about it?

Yes, I do. I met another birth mom online, and I don't remember through what and this was way back in the late 90s, I think. And it was a very refreshing, validating experience. And we ended up meeting in person later. She ended up flying to L.A. and we met up, and she was in an open adoption, so there were many things that she didn't understand about my experience. But just meeting another birth mom was kind of like coming home.

How many years after your daughter was born did you have your first child with your husband?

Let's see, eleven years. So I was 16 when my daughter was born and 27 when my son was born.

What was that experience like, for you being pregnant again. Everybody thinking, It's your first baby, right? Except presumably, your medical provider knew.

Correct, yeah.

Okay, how did that feel for you?

I remember being in the hospital after I had him and feeling like, I want to get out of here because I just felt like something was going to happen and they were going to keep him. And that was just this feeling that was overwhelming. And I remember telling my husband, let's just go, let's just go. And he's like, why? It was a nice, cushy hospital room. And I remember he got a little bit of a rash, and I freaked out because I was thinking, this is it. This is going to be the thing that's going to make them keep him, right. And I showed it to the nurse, and she was like, oh, it's no big deal. That's the main thing I remember after having him was that overwhelming feeling of I'm not going to get to bring him home. And then when he came home, there was a rush of emotion and fear and worry that I wasn't going to be able to be the mom that he needed me to be. Interestingly, my master's thesis, I wrote

about birth mothers and their ability to connect and parent subsequent children in a healthy way. And I think that that was a fear of mine, that my early loss somehow damaged my mothering part.

So interesting. You know, Zoe, I had that experience of being so terrified in the hospital. I actually, for a number of reasons, but I'm sure this was part of it, I had my babies at home. I could not. And I ended up with my fourth child, my third with my husband, because of some medical risks that I had, I did have him in the hospital, but that was a very scary place for me. And the last place I wanted to be with my child, because deep in myself, that was a place of loss and a place of fear. So really interesting. Okay, I could talk to you forever and ever, but I want to hear about your daughter coming back into your life.

Yes, so when she was 18, she found me on Facebook. She actually found her birth father first and then had a conversation with him, and he connected her to me. My kids were young. I think they were two, four and six, maybe? Or something like that, they were young. It was a shock. I had always imagined and expected that we would find each other. I just didn't think it would happen so soon. And so it was definitely a shock to my system. But we were able to connect over the phone and we had a meet up and my children didn't know about her, my extended family didn't know about her. So that was a whole other experience. And I didn't share with them right away. We just met and we've had a bit of a choppy relationship. Nothing negative. I think both of us have struggled a little bit trying to find our place in each other's lives. It's been one of those. I know I struggled a lot with, I'm not her parent, but I'm her mom. And what does that mean? And what does that look like? And what does she want? And I don't want to overstep my boundaries. And I don't want to go where I'm not wanted. But I want her to want to have a relationship with me. And I think both of us have struggled over the years trying to just find that spot.

Sure. And have you met her parents and her family?

Absolutely, yes. I've met her family, I've met her parents. They're wonderful. They're wonderful people and very gracious. And it's been a wonderful experience.

And with reuniting with her, did the secret go away or there are still people? Well, obviously, you wrote a book, so you must be fairly public, but how did that go with your family, your siblings or parents?

Yes, the secret did not go away with reunification. It took me a number of years before I told my children, and it really took my father's death. So at his funeral is the time when I told everyone. Timing was definitely a little bit crazy there. But my dad died suddenly and I flew back to Maryland, and my daughter was going to be at the funeral. And so it was one of those things where I have no choice, because the very last thing I was going to do was ask her to be a secret or to hold my secret. And so after the funeral, at the dinner at my sister's house, I announced it to my family. I introduced her there, and that was a very awkward experience. Two days prior, I told my children.

Okay.

And my mom was so checked out. I even felt like I needed to get her permission at that time. And she was completely checked out. And so I felt like that decision was one that I made on my own and the first adult decision I made on my own to tell my own story. So it was a very powerful experience for me. Very difficult that I was breaking all of the rules. My mom would have been happy to have pretended like my daughter was a family friend.

Yeah. Wow. Okay, that's pretty dramatic to have the story come out then, but I hear what you're saying. I mean, what would you have done? It's not your daughter's secret. She shouldn't have to be a secret.

Absolutely.

Wow, that's really remarkable. How do you feel being a birth mother has shaped your life, your future, your career, things like that, your faith even maybe? I don't know.

It totally changed the trajectory internally of my life. I don't know necessarily how externally it changed the trajectory, except that I probably wouldn't have gotten married as early. I struggled a lot with that fear of not being able, like I said, that mothering part of me being broken. And so the early parenting of my kids. I struggled a lot of blaming myself and really being hard on myself about connecting with my kids. I think my Psych background did not help because I had this cloud of knowledge about how trauma affects mother-child connections and so many things that I worried about that I don't think serve my older children well, honestly, and my early parenting. I know that it has provided for me and my career an ability to have empathy, I think for people in situations that I may not otherwise not have. It's also really drive my passion for helping women speak their truth, stand up for themselves, not accept less than what they deserve, check their self esteem, and show up for themselves in their lives. I know that my early history of not doing that is what drives me to help women do that.

Tell us about your book.

The memoir I'm writing is not out yet. I'm writing it, well, I finished writing it really it's just now and going to agents and finding a place. So my book outlines my entire history with being a birth mother, my pregnancy, all the experiences that I just explained to you and being able to also stand up in my marriage and the dysfunction that we were able to come out of when I was finally able to speak my truth. So that's what my memoir is about, and I'm excited for it to come out. I do have a book out that's currently called *A Year of Self Care*, and that's really just a book that helps women find small ways to care for themselves every single day of the year.

Does your memoir have a working title? I know from experience that sometimes it's not the title it will have when it's published.

It does not, I have three or four titles that are kind of out there, but it doesn't have a working title yet.

Well, I am so happy you wrote it and I cannot wait to read it. And we'll have to reconnect because there aren't, just aren't a lot of books really telling our story, especially more current ones. Like I mentioned the girls who went away, but that's written about women from even before my time, like 50s, 60s, and it wasn't written by the moms themselves. So I think your book is going to be really valuable to our community and not just to birth moms who find such deep connection, but for adoptive parents and foster parents, it gives a window into our experience.

And adoptees as well.

Yes, and adoptees too. So I am really happy you've written it and I can't wait to hear about it when it comes out.

I'm super, super excited and I've got agents that are excited about it as well. So this whole process is going to be fun watching it launched in its world.

So tell me, where can people find you?

So my place, my hangout is Instagram. So you can find me @drzoeshaw. That's where I hang out. You can connect with me through my website as well, drzoeshaw.com. You can check out my podcast, I'm rebranding it right now. It's called *The Dr. Zoe Show*, but maybe when this episode comes out, it will be called *Stronger in the Difficult Places*, and it is a podcast specifically for women who find themselves in difficult relationships, including that sometimes difficult one with themselves. And I really talk about finding strength in those spaces through our lens of psychology, faith, and a little bit of my own kind of feminism.

Sounds great. I'm looking forward to getting to know you more.

Thank you.

Thank you so much for being on the podcast and sharing your story.

It was an honor. Thank you so much.

Like I said, just such an incredible interview. And sometimes I think I underestimate how much being an adopting myself and then developing this close friendship with you as a birth mom over the years has really impacted my perspective on life. And a lot of you know we have a daughter who got pregnant, kind of unexpectedly ended up as a single mom, and she lives here in our home with our granddaughter, and we didn't think too much about it when she let us know she was pregnant. She didn't ask to move home right away, but we kind of let her know right away that that was always a possibility. And we had a couple of friends who were, like, really, do you really want to start over again? Do you really want that kind of drama in your house? And it really never occurred to me to do it any other way. And maybe that was because we had also kind of done this with my sister. She technically had lived with my parents, but my parents lived in an apartment in our house. And so there was a lot of family involvement with her raising her son here until he was four or five. And I don't know, it just breaks my heart that she felt like she almost had to choose between kind of loyalty to her family, her family support, and her daughter. And I don't know, I'm so thankful for her story and for the stories of other birth moms. And just for my husband's openness and our family's openness to loving in kind of situations we wouldn't want to find ourselves in, but our family has, I've watched them just embrace and love kind of radically. And I grew up in a home and a culture and an environment that was kind of similar to Zoe's. So this could have been a completely different situation for both my sister and for Kayla. And so I'm just thankful anyway for our involvement in Ava's life, who is our granddaughter.

Yeah. I think the more we know of people's stories and the more people we know in the triad, it does really change the way we look at these things and the way we look at family and the way we look at adoption. Of course, I just really appreciated so much of what she shared with us. And, you know, this is not her normal thing that she talks about. So it's kind of a special honor, I think, that we got to hear this story because this is not a normal part of her platform so much. So anyhow, if you want to know more about Dr. Zoe and what she offers, her website is just drzoeshaw.com. She's also [@drzoeshaw](https://www.instagram.com/drzoeshaw) on Instagram and other social media. You can find all this information in today's show notes at theadoptionconnection.com/152.

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Instagram as [@theadoptionconnection](https://www.instagram.com/theadoptionconnection) or better yet, join our free Facebook community at the theadoptionconnection.com/facebook.

Thanks so much for listening, we love having you, and remember, you're a good parent doing good work.

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