

[00:00:01.390] - Lisa Qualls

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,

[00:00:10.410] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:18.630] - Melissa Corkum

Hey, friends. Welcome to episode 156 of The Adoption Connection podcast. This week, we're talking about something, it's kind of like the unsung hero of the adoption in foster care world. It's kinship care, and there are so many ins and outs. I kind of came into this episode knowing just a little bit, like kind of having an idea of what it was, you know, family taking care of children. But as I listened to Shelley's interview with Lisa, there were so many nuances that I had never thought of. Yeah, just a whole new appreciation for families who step up to be in this role and kind of fill this unique need in foster care and adoption.

[00:00:59.670] - Lisa Qualls

I honestly didn't know very much about kinship care myself, really, until I started a community of adoptive moms and began meeting all of these women who were caring for sometimes their grandchildren and different parts of their family, and I realized that what they're doing is in some ways different in some ways the same. Anyhow, I was super happy to meet Shelley. Her full name is Michelle. She's actually a teacher, author, and she's the cofounder of Bithiah's Family Services. She specializes in supporting teachers to create empathetic, Grace based classrooms, and she trains educators across school districts to educate students through a trauma informed lens. She and her husband started Bithiahs as a residential treatment facility, providing services to children in the foster care system, and they've continued to expand the services and support it provides to vulnerable children and their caregivers. She's a Southern California native, and she's the mom to five through birth and adoption. I hope you enjoy my conversation with Shelley.

[00:02:10.510] - Lisa Qualls

Well, hello, Shelley. Welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast.

[00:02:14.200] - Michelle Thompson

Hi, how are you?

[00:02:15.880] - Lisa Qualls

I'm doing really well. How are you?

[00:02:17.740] - Michelle Thompson

Good, I'm so glad to be here.

[00:02:19.580] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. I'm glad you're here, too. It was such a joy meeting you, and I just appreciate you coming on the podcast with me.

[00:02:26.450] - Michelle Thompson

It was so awesome meeting you in real life. I feel like I've met you virtually before, but it was neat to be with you in person.

[00:02:36.080] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, well, that is mutual, so thank you. Well, before we get started on our topic today, can you just tell us a little bit about you and your family and how foster care and adoption have touched your life?

[00:02:50.240] - Michelle Thompson

So I'm a Southern California native, born and raised and probably will be here forever. I love California. My husband and I have been married almost 18 years. Early on in our marriage, but even before that, we had big talks about what we thought our family would look like, and that was always just our heart

was always kind of foster care and adoption, and it wasn't a conversation of whether we would or not. It was just more of a conversation of when that would happen. And so we're parents to five kids through birth and adoption, through the foster care system, and I feel like foster care and adoption and supporting families has just been woven into our daily life. And so through growing our family, but also expanding that into the last six years, we started a nonprofit, which started out as residential. And so we really felt that, especially in La County, there's a big need for emergency placement while they kind of figure out where the kiddos are going, if they're going with family, if they're going back home, if they're going to temporary placement, we felt that there was a big need, so we started off our nonprofit as residential. And so with the heavy, heavy, trauma informed connected model, we took really high level kiddos. Our age range of the group home was actually zero to seven, which is not common. But in California and La County, there is a really big need for placement of little kiddos that can't fit into a typical foster home because of their medical needs or their extreme behaviors. So we would take them in this residential and our staff would bring them to a lower level of care, so the county can then place them in a regular foster home. And so that is how Bithiahs has started, and the last couple of years we've kind of expanded to more support system, which really has fit our family and just kind of our niche, like coming around families and supporting them. My husband and our educators, I've been a credentialed teacher for almost 20 years, and so a natural expansion to Bithiahs was to train teachers on how to work with kids that come from her places. Teachers are really trained in typical kids with typical responses and behavior management systems that work for the average child and with kids, not necessarily even kids in the foster care system, just all kids have different needs, and so we're really passionate about training teachers. And so one of our big additions to our program at has been teacher training and then also wrapping our arms around supporting kinship moms and foster moms and adopted moms through retreats and just supportive services. So the last couple of years, we've kind of really honed in on where we feel like our niche is with our family. And I'm just kind of seeing the common thread of supports, right, supports of all different kinds of families and just working together kind of for the common good of the kids, so that's how we kind of landed where we are today.

[00:06:06.910] - Lisa Qualls

Well, you know, when I met you at the retreat, one of the groups that you were really wanting to support at that retreat was moms providing kinship care and kinship, I didn't really understand until I was well into all of this journey. I did not fully appreciate how different kinship care is from regular foster care, and how where it's also the same. Like, I didn't really understand that. And now, of course, I know a number of moms and grandmothers now doing kinship care. And so I wanted to really dig into that a little bit with you today and share that with our listeners because I am guessing that we have listeners who are providing kinship care and potentially many of us who it's touched on us or we know somebody doing it, but we really don't know. So can you tell me what initially moved you to become interested in supporting kinship families?

[00:07:09.010] - Michelle Thompson

Yeah. Kinship is just this incredible group of people that are the true heroes of foster care and out of home placement. You're talking about the retreat, and we made a commitment that every single kinship mom was going to go for free. And as we were meeting these women at the retreat, they were saying things to us like, I didn't know that we were called kinship. I'm just caring for my sister's kids. I didn't know that there was, like a community of us. And so that has been such a neat, but an important need that needs to be met, and so we feel very passionate in our own family, but also our nonprofit that kinship families need to be supported like crazy. You asked what brought on that desire, and on a personal level, one of my children was actually in kinship care before he came to our family. He moved from his family to extended family for a little bit. And while they were not the long term placement for him, and we were the long term placement, it opened the door to a completely open adoption. And his family is our family. We're so intertwined that you can't see the beginning and you can't see the end. In fact, I was just texting his great aunt ten minutes ago about an adult blanket that's tie-dyed. I mean, we just can't even, it had opened the door to our lives being so intertwined, and I truly believe that's because of kinship care. And not only him being in kinship care kept him from being moved multiple times, it kept that stable, and it also helped alleviate any kind of anxiety or apprehension that may have caused, you know, how sometimes between with visitations and things there can be a little bit of anxiety or uncomfortableness. I really felt that that bridge of kinship kind of

broke down that and we had this common thing, right. We all had this common relationship, and it was really neat, and so I truly believe that kinship care for one of my kids has completely changed the trajectory of our adoption and doubled my family in size. It's been pretty incredible.

[00:09:37.050] - Lisa Qualls

So why don't we back up just a tiny bit? Let's define what kinship care is. Can you do that for us?

[00:09:43.810] - Michelle Thompson

So kinship care can look informal and formal. So basically, kinship care is when children are cared for by family members. And so across the nation, actually, 4% of all kids are in kinship care. I think we in the foster care world think of that as well, they're in foster care, but they're living with grandma, but a lot of this is happening informally, right. So Grandma is caring for her daughter's kids that she can't care for at that moment or needs a little extra support. I feel like we all know people who they were raised by Aunties or raised by Grandma. And so this is happening all over the place. It really is family members stepping up. I think kinship families are the true heroes in this because they didn't seek it out, they really just stepped up. And that's truly how this community should function, right? We're all kind of supporting each other, and when some of us need a little extra support, then family steps up to fill that need at that time. And it's better for the kids. It really is better for the kids to stay with family. And we know this and studies show it, and it just is better when their family fills that need and there is less transition and less movement, and they stay within their culture and they stay within what they know in their community. And it just is the best solution for a lot of kids.

[00:11:15.970] - Lisa Qualls

Okay. So we know there's informal kinship happening all the time. How is kinship care different from traditional foster care when it's happening within the system?

[00:11:29.680] - Michelle Thompson

Right. So an example of that would be, say, my sister was having a hard time and I knew that children and family services was getting involved, and I knew that there were referrals and I knew that there were investigations or maybe I wasn't aware, right. And then maybe my sister says to a social worker, hey, my sister can take my kids. She has a couple of kids, but she can take my kids. An example of formal kinship care would be the Department if the children are removed instead of placing them in a foster home of possibly family that the kids don't know, they would place in our home. So they're there as foster placements, but through kinship care. So now what that means in California, is that would mean that I still have to become a foster parent. I still have to go through the classes. I still have to do the background checks. I still have to do the home checks and all of that, but I'm doing it for my family as foster care placement. That also in California means that I have the same access to kind of like the county offers supports. They offer trainings, they offer support groups, and I can access the kids have insurance and things like that. I would have access to that, but it means that I have to do the same thing, which can be very frustrating for family. Why would I have to take a class to care for my granddaughter? That can be very frustrating, especially if I'm not the one. I wasn't seeking out to be a foster parent. So that can be really hard, especially if their life is already busy. And if this was very unexpected and unplanned, which typically is and it can really throw a wrench into that because they are now in California having to do these classes and the background checks and the paperwork and all the things to really step up and care for their kids. And sometimes in the county, this happened a lot in our residential. The kids would actually be in formal foster care until that family is ready because they do need to do that thing. For example, if they have a pool, there are some regulations about bodies of water. Sometimes the kids before they go into formal kinship care, they're actually in foster placement until that family can be ready, it can be expedited and it can go under kind of emergency placement, but it still takes a hot second. Fingerprints still have to be approved and things like that, so it really is a process for formal kinship care.

[00:14:03.190] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. I think we don't fully realize the women who are doing not just women, but families. I work mostly a lot with moms. You're going about your life, maybe never having thought you wanted to foster care or adoption. Maybe you have children of your own you're raising, maybe you've already raised your children, and now you've got grandchildren who've been removed. You're thinking, oh, I'm

an empty Nester now and then you get a call that actually you have grandchildren who have entered the system and they're wanting to know if you'll take them and parent them. I mean, this is a huge thing for people.

[00:14:44.350] - Michelle Thompson

Absolutely, and it's like second time around parents, right thinking they're going to retire and travel and enjoy their grandkids. They're not necessarily thinking, oh, my gosh. Now I'm doing kindergarten pickup and drop off and IEP meetings and doctors appointments and therapist appointments. This throws their life upside down for some people, I would say for most people. I still have younger children, and if someone came to me and said, your nephews, oh, my gosh, I would throw everything. And I'm literally a certified foster parent, I know how to do this, and it would still throw my life in a tailspin. So I can't even imagine. And I think there's a special place in my heart for the grandparents because I think my gosh, it is so exhausting to go through. I just think the school years and the drop offs and the pickups and the teacher meetings and all the homework and the staying on top of kids and then to do it all over again can be so exhausting.

[00:15:45.490] - Lisa Qualls

I have a few women in my small, I have a membership community for adoptive and foster moms called the Hope Circle, and I have a few grandmothers in that group, and I just think, wow, what they are doing for their grandchildren and for their children, it's really beautiful and it's really redemptive, and it's really, really hard. Yeah, I have a ton of respect. Okay, let's talk about these kinds of situations. One of the things that is both beautiful and very complicated, I think, can be a family providing kinship care for a relative. It could be their own grandchildren, it could be a more extended family member, like even like a cousin's children or something like that. But let's say it's a formal situation and there's visitation involved, and now you've got all these relationships that are sort of tangled together. Who is the parent, who is responsible, how is the state involved? Can you speak to that at all?

[00:16:55.450] - Michelle Thompson

I have so much empathy for visitations that family members are facilitating. It puts them in such a pickle because they're towing this line. They're caring for the kids. Naturally, kids, the primary caregiver becomes mommy with their words, so that can actually be triggering and hurtful and harmful to the parent to hear, maybe someone being called mommy, but also to be responsible to navigate these visits, but also to hold the boundary that the county requires you to hold. Where I live, parents have to confirm visitation like a day before or the visit doesn't happen. Who's going to hear about that when mom forgets to confirm or confirms late, the family member is going to hear about that, and that puts them in such a tough position. And so I think for kinship families, especially, it really blurs the line, and it really makes things tricky and challenging for them because they also have to navigate all the dynamics of the family, right. So think of grandparents caring for their kids. If the county is managing that through foster care, their child does not confirm for the visit, the visit cannot happen at the visitation office. Not only are the kids hurt and disappointed that the visitation didn't happen, they have their child angry at them. I mean, they're having to just make both sides happy, and it can be so challenging. From a foster parent perspective, you kind of try to manage those disappointments with the kids you're caring for. It's such a bummer the visit didn't happen, but I can separate myself because I'm not doing Christmas with them, but with kinship, I can't even imagine how hard and blurred those lines can become. I think that is probably one of the biggest barriers and challenges for kinship families is visitations and having to follow guidelines and regulations that the county sets that they necessarily wouldn't have access to the child, right. Because in a family, I know a lot of my when my parents and aunties and uncles want to have access to the kids, of course, they just text and they can come over any time and see the kids, because that's what we're used to in our family. You can come see the kids, you can take them to ice cream, can you give them a ride here? But the access is really speculated, and it's very controlled, and that could be very challenging for families. When someone tells them, like, you cannot do this, this person cannot be alone with this child. This visitation has to happen. We're talking 4 hours a week, and that's a court order. That can be really challenging.

[00:19:48.010] - Lisa Qualls

Absolutely. We had the experience of fostering a teen girl, and we were considered fictive kin. Do you

have fictive kin in California? Do you know what I'm saying or what that is in California?

[00:20:04.980] - Michelle Thompson

Are you speaking of non relative placement where you have a relationship with the family, but you're not biological family. Is it called fictive kin?

[00:20:14.370] - Lisa Qualls

I think some States, they call it suitable adult placement or something. But again, we were not foster parents, we were not licensed, we were adoptive parents. And I think they maybe called us fictive kin because that way we could fit in. But honestly, until we were talking about this interview, I never really thought that fictive kin actually meant we were sort of like a kinship placement, except we weren't really. I mean, like, we were in this weird, but we had to do everything backward. Tell me, do you have something like that in the state of California?

[00:20:48.510] - Michelle Thompson

That actually happened to us.

[00:20:50.790] - Lisa Qualls

Okay.

[00:20:51.870] - Michelle Thompson

It's funny how names change across and what they call things and titled things. But we actually were certified, however, we were about to foster a kiddo we already had a relationship with, but because our agency didn't handle that level of medical care, they treated it as if we were anybody who had anybody in his life that had a relationship with him, and we had to start over. And so they called us non relative family placement. So we weren't family, but we had a relationship and they weren't accepting our current foster status, so they were treating us as if it was just a non relative placement. So, yeah, we had to do again, everything over just for this kiddo, but family is kind of I stayed in quotes because it's just this loose, ambiguous thing, too, right? Because especially if there's second marriages involved and step parents, that's family. So biology, yes, matters with kinship care, but also it could be my stepsister's kids, things like that. I think that's so important because the goal is to keep families together. And so obviously, we know family isn't just biology, and so if any of extended family or kids that have been at my house every single Thanksgiving, and we always do this together, family. And so I think I would be so thankful that I was called instead of, I was called and given the opportunity to be able to help these kids while their mom, who I love needs and a little bit of extra time, I think that's great that they are kind of opening the circle, but it certainly doesn't waive any of the requirements.

[00:22:43.450] - Lisa Qualls

Right. Well, I have a friend who was an empty nester stage of life, and they got a call because years earlier, they had been Iguana leaders. And for anybody who doesn't know what Iguana is, it's sort of like a Bible club for kids. And they had been Iguana leaders for this boy, and when he was taken into care as a teenager, they asked him, Is there anybody you know, who might be willing to have you come live with them? And he gave the names of these people? I think that speaks to a few amazing things, one that they had had enough influence in his life when he was younger, that he had not forgotten what they had meant to him and how they must have treated him that made him feel valued and special. And then, secondly, that this couple completely out of the blue years later, gets this call and says, yes. I mean, it's pretty mind blowing because, like you said, it's not easy. For us, we were still very much in the thick of parenting. We at least had been through the process of becoming adoptive parents, so we were sort of familiar. But honestly, when we took our foster daughter in, I really knew very little about how foster care worked, and we did have to do all the licensing. We had to do everything as if we had never been background checked before. We had to go through all the classes. It was a very big commitment. So I think about these families doing it. At least we had the frame of reference for okay, we embrace adoption, we embrace caring for vulnerable children, and we were able to go forward from that point. But if you were completely unexpected it, it's pretty big deal.

[00:24:32.050] - Michelle Thompson

I think of it, I completely agree. I think of it, like, with any new thing we're doing, we kind of throw ourselves in and research it or whatever. So say, I was moving out of state. If my husband and I and our five kids decide to move out of state, I would spend some time. I would try to find communities out there that fit our needs. I would be researching houses. I'd be looking at schools, possibly emailing teachers and principals and seeing how they can meet my kids needs, right. I am seeking that out, I'm looking for community because I'm about to make this change that affects my family. With kinship care, sometimes it's completely thrown on you, and you didn't have that opportunity to seek out support. And so you're thrown this. Also, you're thrown that, oh, hey, you also need to get certified, which is a lot of classes, we know this. And then they didn't seek it out, so they weren't able to say like, oh, let me join this Facebook group for moms parenting kids that are having a hard time. I mean, that's not even on their radar. So I think when we were getting certified, like, 14 years ago, I was like, give me all the support groups. Let me read all the books. I want to learn as much as I can because I knew it was coming. When you don't know something's coming, yeah, you become an expert, but you are kind of thrown into it. And so I think a lot, especially the grandparents, the second time around that can feel very overwhelming, especially if they're thinking I already raised my child. I did a pretty good job, and now you're making me take parenting classes to prove that I can raise my grandchild? That's insane. My hat goes off to them because I can't even imagine, I can't imagine.

[00:26:27.530] - Lisa Qualls

Well, and like, in our case, I was a TBRI practitioner, and I still had to go through parenting classes. Fortunately, our classes were actually rooted pretty deeply in TBRI, so it was great. I enjoyed it more than I expected. And you know what I like the best was getting to be with other foster parents because we were all learning together. And I did appreciate that even though the classes, I thought it would all be redundant, but there were parts of it that were not. So I was glad for that.

[00:26:58.960] - Michelle Thompson

Yeah. Also, what I loved most about our retreat is the other kinship moms saying, like, I'm part of this community, and I was like, you always were, you just didn't know. But you've always been in this community, you just didn't know you had access to it. And, oh, honey, you have access to all the things. But, yeah, that was a really neat part of the retreat seeing, hearing one woman say, I didn't even know we were called kinship. I didn't even know that there were trainings for this or that there were support groups for this, and so that's really cool, too.

[00:27:36.420] - Lisa Qualls

Okay, so let me ask. If there's someone listening and they are providing kinship care to whomever, however, the child came to them, and they're feeling not very supportive, where can they find support? Where would you suggest they reach out?

[00:28:00.150] - Lisa Qualls

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[00:28:06.930] - Melissa Corkum

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[00:29:07.630] - Lisa Qualls

If there's someone listening and they are providing kinship care to whomever, however, the child came to them, and they're feeling not very supported, where can they find support? Where would you suggest they reach out?

[00:29:24.470] - Michelle Thompson

So my suggestion would be to first seek out support, especially navigating the system, right. So as any new foster parent learns, there are steps and there's processes and there's deadlines and timelines, court processes, all that. I would most familiarize myself with how the actual system works and what this process and journey is going to look like. I would also make sure I'm very informed on trauma informed care. Whether or not I've always been in the kids that I'm caring for currently their life, maybe I'm Auntie that has always seen them all the time, it's still going to be a major move for the kids. And it is going to be a disruption, and it is a trauma. And so I would also make sure that I am familiarizing myself with trauma. That can be done through books, as you know, that can be done through TBRI, different styles of parenting, right. So I even know as a biological and adoptive mom things that ways I parented my kids that I birthed are not necessarily ways that work. We know this. And then you learn kind of like, oh, the connected parenting way actually works for the group, but not necessarily like if grandparents are doing this and being thrown to it, that style of parenting wasn't talked about much when their children were little, so I would familiarize myself with that. I would also do as kind of what I did. I would seek out, like a local community. A lot of that happened through Facebook when 13-14 years ago, when we were getting certified joining some adoption groups. I know, Lisa, you have a really strong group of support and then finding I would suggest finding local support. A lot of those can happen through churches. I know that even if a Church doesn't have a strong foster care or adoption Ministry, there are foster adopted parents in churches typically. And so they typically are identified and they have some kind of sort of support, but if they don't, reaching out to the Church, usually Church leaders will know who the families are. I laugh because it's very obvious we're like the frazzled big family that's always late. It's very easy to pick out mine.

[00:31:46.160] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, I get that.

[00:31:47.790] - Michelle Thompson

But I would suggest that I do think it's also important to kind of familiarize yourself as a kinship parent, what actually, I have rights over. So am I holding educational rights? Because that does vary, that depends. Am I holding medical rights?

[00:32:02.470] - Lisa Qualls

When you say holding educational rights, define that a little bit. Explain that a little bit right.

[00:32:07.250] - Michelle Thompson

So with typical foster care placement, the foster parent doesn't hold educational rights, typically. There are circumstances where a district representative will hold educational rights or a foster parent will hold them, but typically the parents will hold educational rights, which means that the parent receives notice about IEPs, the parent can make changes to the case plan regarding services provided in the class, I have been educational rights holder, actually, the children that I wasn't caring for in my home. So at our group home, I actually held educational rights for some of the kids, which meant I was the go to person for the district. They would call me. I would attend the IEPs, I could sign on their behalf, I could request other testing. But for kinship care, it doesn't necessarily fall. You don't necessarily have that given to you, so it is very important to find out am my medical rights holder, can I make decisions about their medical care? Do I hold education rights? That's a simple question for the social worker, they can tell you right off the bat, but it is important to find that out. I would suggest, and this is just a personal suggestion. If a kinship family is caring for kids of, let's say, a sister or a daughter or their son and that family member is a little hard to track down and isn't able to be present at IEP meetings, I think it would be worth having a conversation with your family member. Why don't you allow me to just hold educational rights so you're not hounded by district people? I can

attend the IEP because a lot of times with the district, if parents don't sign IEPs and don't show up, they can stop service. They could just make the IEP not be filled. We've had that instance where mom was the only one that could sign and it wasn't being signed, and so the services were stopped. And so sometimes for the kinship family providing care for the kids, if they can just explain. Hey, listen, you can get educational rights back in a jiffy. Let me just hold on for you, so you're not having to deal with the school stuff right now. And so I think that will help the kinship family a lot, because also, again, they're not hounding their cousin or their sister or their daughter to sign something or to show up for a meeting. It kind of relieves some of that pressure.

[00:34:37.750] - Lisa Qualls

If someone's listening and they know somebody providing kinship care, how can we as a community, both like community in our towns, in our schools, in our churches, how can we support kinship families?

[00:34:54.070] - Michelle Thompson

One way is they can attend one of our retreats because the whole goal of our retreat is to spoil kinship families and spoil kinship moms and make them feel so supportive, but also to give them all the resources and training in one shot. So one way is our retreats that we have. Another way, I would say, is to treat them as you would if someone birthed a baby. If you would do it for your neighbor that just had a newborn, do it for your friend that's taking care of her grandkids.

[00:35:27.430] - Michelle Thompson

If you would bring a gift to a baby shower, bring a gift to your friend that is taking care of two elementary kids or two teenagers. Bring dinner, but if you don't want to cook, especially, I feel like COVID kind of changed a lot of that, you can from your home send a DoorDash. You can send a DoorDash gift card, you can send a DoorDash via email, there are so many ways to support a new family, a kinship family that will make them feel so seen. A lot of kinship families feel unsupported, and so they kind of feel trapped, right? They feel like they have to do it and they're obligated. I mean, they obviously desire to help, but they feel like I should help, I need to help, but then also, the community is like, hey, way to go! But then they're not doing anything to support them. Whereas generally speaking, people would bend over backwards for someone birthing a baby, right. So I would say, whatever you would do for someone giving birth to a baby, it's completely appropriate and needed doubly for someone who's doing kinship care or foster care.

[00:36:37.870] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, I agree, because, like, we keep coming back to is, this is completely unexpected for people. This is not something they plan for, so I think they need more support than those of us who entered into adoption and foster care by choice and with some thought and planning and prayer and lots of conversations and who maybe even began to alter our lives to accommodate the children who were going to be coming into our care versus these families who had none of that. So I agree, I think they need extra support. I think they need perhaps more compassion, more people just coming around them and helping them in this situation.

[00:37:26.290] - Michelle Thompson

Even something as simple as like, let me get them on Wednesdays from school for you. You and I both know if you have multiple kids drop offs and pick ups and appointments and sports can be very overwhelming. And so just having someone say, Let me handle, I'm going to handle pick ups on Wednesdays, or I'm going to handle once a week for 2 hours. It can be such a gift. It can be such a gift.

[00:37:56.650] - Lisa Qualls

Absolutely. And we had that situation where one day a week, a friend would pick up just one of my children. But it was my child with the highest need and take her home and help her with homework and cook dinner together and have dinner and then bring her home. And it was a huge burden lifted off of us. So I think for those of us who want to help, it does not have to be a big, elaborate thing. It can actually be a really simple thing, but it can make a very big difference for the kinship family. So, Shelley, thank you so much for spending this time with me. I can learn so much from you, and I

appreciate you.

[00:38:37.470] - Michelle Thompson
Thank you so much, Lisa. I love hanging out here.

[00:38:46.010] - Melissa Corkum
Well, again, I am so glad we had Shelley come share this unique part of foster care and adoption. She mentioned the need for kinship families to have support, especially because a lot of them were kind of thrust into this world without a lot of notice. And so we just wanted, if you are a kinship provider listening, we want to let you know that we have kinship families in our membership community, the village, and we would 100% love to have you there. We invite you to join us. You can find out more information about that at theadoptionconnection.com/village.

[00:39:27.710] - Lisa Qualls
And for more information about Shelley and where you can find her, you can find that information in the show notes for today's episode at theadoptionconnection.com/156.

[00:39:40.430] - Melissa Corkum
Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. Our new Instagram handle is @postadoptionresources. Or better yet, join our free Facebook community at the adoptionconnection.com/facebook.

[00:39:55.430] - Lisa Qualls
Thanks so much for listening, we love having you, and remember, you're a good parent, doing good work.

[00:40:03.710] - Melissa Corkum
The music for the podcast is called New Day and was created by Lee Rosevere.