

[00:00:00.000] - Lisa C. Qualls

This episode is sponsored by the Adoption Connection Village, a place where you can connect with other adoptive moms who get it and be surrounded with support so you know you're not alone.

[00:00:11.200] - Melissa Corkum

We are really excited about the Village because adoptive and foster parenting really brings unique challenges to families, and a lot of people around us don't understand. And so we need to be surrounded by people who get us.

[00:00:24.220] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yes, that isolation is really the breeding ground for shame and guilt. And both of us have been to these dark places. I don't think either of us could have anticipated what this journey would cost us in our relationships, sometimes even with friends and family. It's very hard for people to understand what we're going through.

[00:00:45.250] - Melissa Corkum

Absolutely. But we do get it. And we want to have a special place where we can really connect in a much deeper way as close as we can to actually be in person. So obviously, we can't all gather around Lisa's kitchen island, but we have created something called virtual coffee chats. And these happen over video chat. And it's a whole group of us. And it's been really fun to see your faces, get to know your stories, and connect with you on a much deeper level. We do these coffee chats in the Village three to four times a month, and we focus at least one of them a month on specifically the challenges of teens and young adults, because we have heard from you guys that that is a space that needs a little extra TLC and support.

[00:01:33.810] - Lisa C. Qualls

So the Village is for you if you feel like you need more people in your life who understand you, you crave authentic and intimate community. And especially if you don't have Facebook or you want to limit your time there, so you don't want to be in a group maybe that's based on Facebook. And I think the thing that's so important is that we know you are pouring your hearts and your souls into your kids, and maybe nobody is pouring back into you. But we want to do that.

[00:02:03.170] - Melissa Corkum

Besides the coffee chats, we have a discussion forum that's like a Facebook group on steroids, that really helps connect you with topics that are relevant to your story and folks who are local to you. We also release monthly premium content such as deeper dives into what connected parenting really looks like in real life. And there's even a monthly enneagram connection video where we help you better understand yourself and your family's dynamics. The Village really is your one stop shop for personalized support. We want this to be accessible to as many parents as possible. So it's just \$24.99 a month. There's no commitment you can cancel at any time. Go to [theadoptionconnection.com/village](http://theadoptionconnection.com/village) to find out more or get started.

[00:02:44.050] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:02:52.530] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:02:57.030] - Melissa Corkum

Today is a Mentor Moments episode where we answer a listener question. These episodes give you a chance to join the conversation and guarantee we're providing the most helpful tools and resources for exactly where you are.

[00:03:11.420] - Melissa Corkum

This week's question is, I'm freaked out about the school year. It's not at all what I hoped it would be. How am I going to survive?

[00:03:20.310] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, that's a great question, and we are right in it with you. And I know that most of our listeners also are facing this brand new school year, and we have nothing to compare it to. This is so different. And I know for me and for a lot of us, when the kids came home and they stayed home, we were all like, Okay, we can make it. We can do this. And now all of a sudden, maybe your kids aren't going back at all. Maybe we just found out yesterday, my kids are going to a hybrid, where they're going two days a week. And so the reality of this school year, whether your kids are already in or they're getting ready to go in, the reality is hitting all of us. And quite likely it's not what you expected and not maybe what you wanted. And so I think we all can say this is hard. This is not an easy thing for any of us. How about you, Melissa? I know it's a little bit different for you.

[00:04:15.530] - Melissa Corkum

It is. So specifically for our family, we already have our toughest kid at home by choice. We actually had a daughter decide to go to school to be enrolled in school this year. And here in Maryland, our schools, at least in our county and the surrounding counties, have already called that they're 100 % virtual through the first semester. And for us, that means pretty much through the end of January. And then they'll reevaluate. And I don't know. I feel like back in March, we thought, surely this won't go on all summer. And here we are. So I'm holding it loosely that our schools will go back at all. So we want to just give you permission to admit that this is hard. And in some ways, this feels like a second wave, a second round of disappointments, because our school actually announced that they were going to go part time and possibly even full time. And then all of a sudden, seven days later, they completely walked that back to 100 % virtual. And so I know that that was a roller coaster for a lot of people.

[00:05:25.440] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, and here, so we just found out that kids will be doing a hybrid school, but honestly, I think a lot of parents, we're holding our breath about sports. My kids play a lot of sports, and it's a very important part of their education, their mental health, their physical health. And I am trying to hold it loosely, but actually it's really hard for me because I want this so badly for them and for me. Happy or healthier kids makes it easier to be a mom. So yes, this is hard. And if you're feeling like it's hard, we are right there with you for sure.

[00:06:09.260] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. We also want to acknowledge that it's okay if you feel like you don't want to spend more time with your kid, and that doesn't make you a bad mom. We've talked a lot here, at least in our Adoption Connection community, about something called blocked care. But just in general, depending on the age of your child, we have older kids, not only do you not want to have your people at home with you all the time, your people probably don't want to be stuck at home with you all the time either.

[00:06:43.450] - Lisa C. Qualls

Right. It's not just hard for us. It's hard for the kids, too, especially if you have kids who are social. And one of mine, in particular, is very social. And so the idea of doing school at home is tough for him, too. So I think it's okay for us to say, parenting at the level that many of us do, this therapeutic, intense parenting takes a lot. And the thought of it continuing on 24/7 into the school year can be a little overwhelming.

[00:07:15.720] - Melissa Corkum

And honestly, I think with that part, and then from a nervous system perspective, just from a global level, we were not built to be this sedentary. I think a lot of the quarantine restrictions, gyms have been closed. In Maryland, all of our sports seasons are canceled, too. So they've actually canceled fall and winter sports already. We can't be as social. And so we're doing a lot more Zoom meetings. Everyone's gotten a lot more sedentary, I think, minus those walks we're all getting around our neighborhood. And so I think that's frustrating. Our nervous system was meant to have some more movement in it. And so this is hard for everybody from that perspective as well. We're just building up residual stress, I think, in our bodies.

[00:08:07.710] - Lisa C. Qualls

So we talk about the importance in terms of caring for our bodies that we need movement. We really do. Even if it's really simple, small things. So if we have some episodes about that, maybe let's put those in the show notes, Melissa, shall we? So, okay. We want to give you permission to admit that perhaps you're frustrated about the disruption for your own life and the sacrifice this is for you in terms of your own plans and goals. And if you work outside the home, this is very, very challenging. And I know a lot of parents are scrambling to figure out how to manage work and school and childcare and all of those things. So we feel for you and we know that you're going to have to get super creative to manage this time. If you work at home, like Melissa and I do, this is really a disruption to a lot of plans and goals. And I am a goal setter for sure. And I had a big event I was working toward all year with the launch of my book last month in July. And then I had big plans for what this year was going to be like once the kids went back to school. So I think a lot of us are feeling like, Wait a minute, I had all this planned. I had all these things I wanted to accomplish, and now we may not be able to do those. So if you're feeling that frustration, we understand.

[00:09:35.930] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, definitely for sure. So with that said, just because we're all, even as parents, dealing with these really big feelings about what the school year is going to look like, and we're feeling frustrated and overwhelmed, I think there's also this tendency to put our kids first, almost forgetting that we have some needs we need to take care of in terms of just regulating ourselves and making sure that we're the stable foundation for our family. So we want to give you guys permission to take a deep breath, pause and figure out what are the things that energize you? What are some things that can help make this season a little bit more bearable? How can you prioritize yourself? And if you're co-parenting with someone, your partner, your spouse, what are those things? Because they're not selfish. Being the stable foundation has this cascading effect that will help our entire family feel more stable, which is definitely needed right now.

[00:10:35.150] - Lisa C. Qualls

Absolutely. So it is not selfish to take a walk by yourself. It is not selfish to go to the gym if your gym is open. You are important and you need to take care of yourself. And if that means taking a little break during the day, instituting quiet hour like I did when I was homeschooling all those years, one hour in the day. And it wasn't nap time. It wasn't just for little ones. It was for the entire house. I shut down my house for one hour every day, really so that I could have a break from everybody, from people talking to me so I could have a moment to catch my breath. So you really do need to take care of yourself. And if you are married, our kids not only need us to be the stable foundation, they need their parents together to be the stable foundation. So prioritize your marriage, too. And if that means letting go of some of the things that you feel maybe you should do for your children, you know what? Put yourselves in... You don't need to be a child-centered home completely. You need to be the stable foundation.

[00:11:37.390] - Melissa Corkum

Okay. So with that, you might be thinking, Melissa and Lisa, my kids would never let me have a quiet hour, and I don't even know how to get a second to myself. So we want to give you permission to get some help, get some respite. There are lots of creative ways to do that. If you do have a spouse or a co-parent trading off time to do school work, my kids don't argue the same way with me that they do with my husband. So it might be a smart idea to save some school work till after dinner when your spouse can, after their off work, can help. But also, I know we're in a pandemic and there's some quarantine and some safety things to take into consideration. But that risk is an unknown. Your risk of losing your own mental sanity by not reaching out for help is pretty much a guaranteed. So widen your circle just a little bit. Find one other neighborhood family that you can trade off. All the kids do school at one house one day and they all do school at your house the other day. Or find a local homeschool high schooler, well, or in our case, just a local high schooler because they're all going to be at home with not a lot to do to come and help, be a mother's helper, be a home school helper, be a school helper, do some extra chores, whatever you can do to create more support in your family so that you can keep your sanity.

[00:13:16.110] - Lisa C. Qualls

And I think don't be afraid to be creative. Yes, when kids are in school, they go generally five days a week, but you may not need to do school five days a week. And maybe you need to plan some fun things and some three day weekends and just take some of that pressure off of yourself. And I am a huge fan of hiring a teenager to help you. When my kids were younger, I had, we called her our homework helper, and she came a couple of afternoons a week just to finish up all the homeschooling stuff with my kids and give me a little bit of a break. So I strongly encourage that.

[00:13:53.650] - Lisa C. Qualls

We also want to give you permission to change the plan. So we're all starting out this year, and although it may not feel like it, we do have some options, whether we're going to... For me, we can hybrid school, we can do a full at home program. I could pull my kids out of the school system and homeschool them. There are a lot of options. And it's important to know that we are not signing an agreement for the year when we make a decision. We can start out with a plan that we think is going to work best, but if it doesn't, we can change, we can switch. It's okay to think outside the box, even try something very different from anything you've done before. So don't be afraid to make a decision because you think, Oh, my goodness, we have to do this for the next nine months.

[00:14:44.560] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, for sure. And for instance, in Maryland, it's really easy to declare that you're going to homeschool. And we do have guidelines here, but they're pretty flexible. And for instance, you could make your child's entire homeschool about Legos if that's what they're excited about, and show regular and thorough instruction in counting Lego bricks or doing math with Legos and science experiment with Legos. I mean, there's a lot that you could do if you're not feeling that creative about learning. There are box curriculums that are not all that expensive that you could just sit your child in front of a workbook and not have to worry about all the Zoom calls and the extra exposure to screen time and parental controls and the Internet and all of those things. And then you can put your child back in school when the doors open back up. Or if that doesn't work for you, you can also then re enroll them. So none of these decisions are set in stone. And there are get in a Facebook group. We have a fantastic Facebook group at [theadoptionconnection.com/Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/theadoptionconnection). See what other parents are doing, brainstorm. A lot of times when we're feeling overwhelmed and stressed, our nervous system starts to shut down and our creativity goes out the window. So feel free to borrow from other people's ideas and creativity because there are so many ways to skin this cat for the school year.

[00:16:06.540] - Lisa C. Qualls

And in terms of thinking outside the box, as hard as this might be for a lot of us, it's also an opportunity. And if you have kids who are old enough, which most children would be old enough to have this conversation, I would ask them, what would you really like to learn? And so maybe you can find something. Maybe you have a middle schooler or high schooler who wants to learn how to do some of the cool cooking that they see on cooking shows. Or maybe you have - one of my daughters did a master gardening program. There are opportunities that we may have room for in our lives because our kids are out, we're all out of our normal routine. So don't be afraid to dig into some things that actually interest people in your family. But I think overall, the overarching thing in this whole conversation is we want to encourage you and give you permission to always keep the relationship at the center of every interaction. Keep connection at the center because your relationship with your child is actually far more important than their academic successes and failures. What they learn this year, what they will remember this year, hopefully down the road will not be all the specific lessons, but the relationship that they had with you and things that you did together. So I think for me, that means there's a lot of surrendering here. There's a lot of letting go and saying, Okay, what is before me? What can I make the most of here with my kids?

[00:17:41.550] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. And don't be afraid to advocate for your child in that vein in terms of if you're still answering to a public or private school to say, This assignment or this situation is not going to work for us because of the needs of our family. And so we're going to opt out of this, or we're going to do it this way, especially, and I've probably said this before on the podcast, but especially if your kids are below high school level. There's really not much that the school can do. You guys are in charge of your children and their education. The schools are designed to not dictate to you, but to support you

in your parenting. But ultimately, you're the parent and we want you to be able to prioritize relationship with your children. And for adoptive and foster families, it's just so much more, even more important that we think intentionally about that and don't let academics ruin our life.

[00:18:50.300] - Lisa C. Qualls

Absolutely. So if you have a question for a future mentor moment, give us a call. Leave a message on our listener hotline. Nobody answers it. It doesn't ring anywhere. You just get to leave us a voicemail. So call us with your question at 208 741 3880.

[00:19:08.620] - Lisa C. Qualls

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as The Adoption Connection.

[00:19:17.100] - 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.

[00:19:27.760] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:19:33.660] - Melissa Corkum

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