

[00:00:00.720] - Lisa C. 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.

[00:00:09.980] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:18.440] - Lisa C. Qualls

Each month we host a workshop where we invite a guest expert to share their knowledge and expertise. This week, we're bringing you a recording from a recent workshop. We hope you enjoy it.

[00:00:29.770] - Lisa C. Qualls

Welcome everybody to our workshop, Helping Kids Who Live in La-la Land with Robyn Gobbel. I know that we've all been looking forward to this. Robyn, why don't you take it from here?

[00:00:48.960] - Robyn Gobbel

Thank you, Lisa. So glad to be here with you and your community. Such an amazing community that you all have. For those of you who aren't familiar with me, I am a former therapist. I actually don't do therapy anymore. But I was a therapist for 15, 20 years working with kids and their families who primarily were adopted kids and adopted families, kids whose history of complex trauma, relational trauma. I now say kids with vulnerable nervous systems and these big baffling behaviors, like these confusing behaviors that were like, What in the heck is even going on? We're going to talk about these kids whose behaviors aren't necessarily big and out of control. Sometimes they can even fly under the radar, especially if you have big, out of control kids also in your family that the starting to shut down kids can almost disappear, fly under the radar. We're going to talk about those kids today. If you're not familiar with my work, I'm going to give you some resources at the end where you could go and learn a little bit more about the overarching neuroscience and then metaphor that I use to help kids and families understand more about their own nervous system and their own nervous system experiences and then how that's driving behavior.

[00:02:28.650] - Robyn Gobbel

Because of our limited time together today, I just didn't want to spend any time talking about theory, especially because I have free resources where you could go and get that theory and get that background information. I'm just going to dive right in that the model that I have is based on the neuroscience of the polyvagal theory as well as Dr. Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model Therapeutics. Then I hold all of that in context of the broader field of interpersonal neurobiology and relational neuroscience, which was my theory as a therapist and the theory that I'm grounded in and then teach others how to help families through that lens. So if we're looking at that neuroscience that's available to us, I was a play therapist, so I had to make it playful and understanding for kids and then, of course, their grownups. I have always talked with kids about three different nervous system or energy pathways in their brain and in their nervous system: the owl pathway, the watchdog pathway, and the possum pathway. The owl pathway is the pathway we go down. I'll talk about how the owl brain emerges when we're feeling safe. The corresponding state or behaviors tend to be calm, connected, socially engaged. It doesn't necessarily have to be sitting at math class, calm is what I'll say kids. It could be recess, where we're playing and we have energy, but we're still socially connected and engaged to one another and there's overall sense of felt safety. For me, I talk about that as the owl brain or the owl pathway.

[00:04:30.270] - Robyn Gobbel

Then if we're not feeling safe, and I know you all talk about felt safety so much, so we've got safe or not safe. When we're not feeling safe, we shift into protection mode. Then there's two different pathways that the nervous system can choose from the watchdog pathway or the possum pathway. The watchdog pathway is what we think about with fight or flight, there's energy, there's activation there. For our kids, they're oppositional, defiant, and mouthy, and maybe taking off or refusing to talk to us, but in this very energized way, like "no" way. Aggression, verbal and physical aggression, all of that's watchdog pathway. Then we also have what I call the possum pathway. Dr. Perry calls the watchdog pathway, the fight-flight pathway and the possum pathway, the disassociation pathway. Dr.

Porges and his polyvagal theory talk about it just a little bit differently. I've given you those words on the slide. If those happen to be words that are familiar to you. If they're not, they're really not necessary. We've got one pathway when we're feeling unsafe, but there's a watchdog pathway.

[00:05:43.020] - Robyn Gobbel

Another pathway when we're feeling not just unsafe, but actually the potential for life threat. That's the possum pathway. That's what we're going to talk about today. I borrow from, especially Dr. Perry's work here, when I think about how there's really four levels of falling down the possum pathway. There's four levels on the watchdog pathway, too. Dr. Perry differentiates between these four different levels based on the level of neuroceived danger or life threat. When the nervous system is experiencing a little bit of threat and a slight loss of connection and slight dysregulation, we move into this first level that is the level I call la-la land. Dr. Perry calls it alert level of arousal and the possum pathway. Kind of confusing because I think alert doesn't really match what the characteristics are that we're seeing. I call this the la-la land stage, and we move into nervous system state of avoidance. Then the behaviors that we see are being spaced out, ignoring, being in la-la land, right? Now I've put here for you what I call distinguish between the three other levels of being on the possum pathway. Actually, all the strategies we're going to talk about today, they really apply to all. If we get further along in our time together today and you're like, Actually, my kid is even more shut down or further along the possum pathway than just la-la land. All of these strategies we're going to talk about today apply. How they differ is in the energy that we as the grownups are using when we offer the strategies, as well as we have to shift our expectations for how quickly the strategies work. If we have kids who are only in the la-la land place, the strategies might work quickly. But if we've got kids who are all the way down into what we would call shut down, then we have to have a lot more patience and a lot more just awareness of the fact that it takes a long time for the nervous system to come out of being in such an intense state of shutdown. The difference is in our energy, in our expectations of how fast the strategies will work. Otherwise, the strategies are essentially the same.

[00:08:42.980] - Robyn Gobbel

With the exception of what I call the trickster possum, which is like a people-pleasing, over-compliance, robotic behavior, overly agreeable. The strategies that we talk about today don't totally apply to that trickster possum. If you have a kid that you feel like is more on that side of things, they have a lot of over-compliance, lots of people-pleasing, it's just like, Yes, yes. Not in a cooperative way, but in a I'm afraid to have my own opinions way, then I'm just going to send you I do have a resource on my website. It's robbygobbel.com/peoplepleasing. Put it in the chat here for those of you who are here live. But it's robbygobbel.com/peoplepleasing, and that's specific to this trickster people-pleasing possum. We're going to talk about the other ones today. The La-La Land possum has some general cues and clues. I teach parents to use the cues and clues I offer as just a jumping-off point, to start to get to know your child and their unique nervous system and the cues and clues that they demonstrate. For example, my kid, who tends to go more watchdog than more possum when he's dysregulated, he has some real specific cues and clues that let me know where he is, how dysregulated he is, how activated he is that are really unique to him. I would never put them on an overall characteristics list because they're super unique to him and the kinds of things that he says. When I give you this slide of cues and clues, I really want you to take them as that. Just cues or clues or just a jumping-off point. These are not definitive behaviors that tell us exactly where our kids are. That's not even possible. We are just using them as cues and clues to get to know our unique child.

[00:10:54.760] - Robyn Gobbel

This La La Land possum, these are the kids that are starting to feel shut down. There's an instead of an increase in energy, like what happens for kids when they're on the watchdog pathway, they get more energy in their arms and their legs and their mouths. These kids get less and less energy, and the energy tends to leave the arms and their legs. We tend to start seeing a more collapsed body posture. We might see eyes that are either staring off into space like that la-la land thing or eyes that start to go a little bit down because in the body posturing on the possum pathway, we start to see a C-shape happening with shoulders, torso, eyes and chin coming down. We might see what we would call a flatter facial expression. Not a lot of shifting or changing happening in facial expression due to there's a lot of shift or change in affect. It's just a flatness. What's actually happening on the possum pathway, which does have a real physiological basis that Dr. Porges calls the dorsal vagal complex,

what happens there is the way that the nerves, the neurons are sending and receiving information from the body, the muscles in the face and around the eyes lose their tone. It's hard to demonstrate it. It's something that really just happens because of nervous system shapes shifts, but just like a more flaccidness in the face and this just flatter expression. I would say with 98% of consistency, parents actually use the words, it feels like they're in la-la land. They're not very connected to you. They're not paying attention. It has this... I mean, parents will be like, It's like I want to be like, Hello, are you in there? Kind of a feeling. It can feel a bit maybe defiant or oppositional, but it has a different energy sense than the oppositional or defiant behavior that emerges from the watchdog pathway or the fight-flight pathway, which has a bit more intense, energetic feeling to it. It feels like an active defiance on the watchdog pathway, whereas then the possum pathway is just this like... Does it feel really that active? It just feels like this gone, just daydreamy. In other words, kids and parents will use spacey, gazing off. Teachers say work avoidance, but also in a very passive way, staring off into space, maybe just slowly wandering around the classroom, which does have a different feel to it than behavior we might call work avoidance, but is a very active no, I'm not doing it. Does that make sense? Kind of these different energetic places. We have to start to learn how to trust ourselves to really feel into the energy and start to learn our kid's own unique nervous system.

[00:14:31.340] - Robyn Gobbel

I'm going to give you five strategies and three things that I see as common pitfalls or things to look out for when parenting kids who are on the possum pathway, on the la-la land, beginning la-la land, which is the beginning of going down that possum pathway. But again, these strategies will work even for kids who are in a much deeper state of shutdown. The very number one strategy is actually we have to recognize that this is a sign or a cue or a clue of distress. What I've seen is, especially if you also have a watchdog kid, that we really overlook these early cues and clues of our possum kids because they don't seem that distressing, especially compared to watchdog kids. They also can seem almost like what I would call how we describe the characterological defects. We'll describe these kids as lazy. Then we'll just chalk it up to like, Well, they're just lazy. Well, let's get a little more curious than that because while humans actually are designed to use the least amount of energy possible to get a job done, that's a survival that we need that. All humans are designed to use the least a lot of energy to get the job done. Laziness really says there's something else going on. Because humans, while also wanting to conserve energy, are also designed to be creative in seeking of new things and information and to have energy that mobilizes them to engage in the world and engage with relationship. If we're really regularly using words like lazy, we want to just keep getting curious about that. Like, I wonder what's underneath that. Strategy number one, recognize it as a sign of distress. Recognize it the same way as a lack of felt safety as we recognize these more watchdog behaviors like aggression.

[00:16:58.850] - Robyn Gobbel

The reason this is the strategy number one is because absolutely without question, changing how we see people changes people. First of all, it changes us. If I'm seeing my child who is frustrating me and seeming lazy or slow or like, Oh, my gosh, could you just put your shoes on so I'm not late to work again? Very valid frustrations on our part. But if we see their behavior as a sign of nervous system stress response, as opposed to just like they're being difficult or they're being lazy or they're not listening to me, it shifts how regulated we are, which then shifts how we respond to them. Our possum kids, especially really need us to respond with our own, well, our own owl brain, our own sense of safety and connection. Because if we go to possum kids with our own frustration, our own irritation, which makes perfect sense why we feel that way, but it tends to increase the distress in our possum kids, which defeats what our goal is, which could be truly as simple as like, Let's get our shoes on so we can get out the door thing. So changing how we see people changes people, but especially it changes us. And then eventually, I actually think this is the most important thing for our kids is that we shift how we see their behaviors. As a therapist, I've seen that to be without question, the number one important thing that as adults, we shift in seeing their behaviors as these deliberate, challenging behaviors to behaviors that are telling us about their stress response. That really actually is a strategy, and I think it's the most important strategy. It's not the only one, but it's a really important one. That's strategy number one, recognize it as a sign of distress.

[00:18:56.160] - Robyn Gobbel

Strategy number two then is that we have to slow down and I want to think about matching their

energy. I teach matching the energy to be with our kids on either side. With our watchdog kids, we increase our energy and we match them up there. With our possibly kids, we decrease our energy. Okay, so slowing down, matching their energy. We can do that really verbally and non-verbally. I'm going to show you a couple of images and you can see this kid has some of those classic possum stances and their behavior. This kid that I'm showing you is classic possum cues and clues. C-shaped in their spine, dazed off, chin is down. This child is even covering their torso, which is another really common sign in possum kids. Possums cover their head and their torso often. Not always. Again, none of these are like always cues and clues, but this kid is a very possum body stance. Then this grown up who's with them is mirroring that slightly. Chin is down, eyes are down, shoulders, there's this like she's-C shape to the spine. This person is using some touch that can be really good for possum kids or not good for possum kids. You have to know your own kid to know if touch is helpful, but touch can be really grounding, which is super important for possum kids. It's a sensory experience that helps their body come back into the now. Again, here's another image of matching an older kid. Again, we've got hands covering faces, we've got chins and eyes down, and we've got an adult who's matching their body. But also, the best we can tell, isn't saying anything. Just quiet. If they were saying something, I would help parents just say things like, Yeah, super hard. Those kinds of things, like with low tone, low energy, slow.

[00:21:26.300] - Robyn Gobbel

Now, we're not necessarily going to hang out there, especially in the example I gave, which was like, We got to get out the door maybe. You've got a possumy-kind of kid. We're not necessarily going to hang out there forever, especially with a la-la land kid. With a la-la land kid, we can assume that if we connect, match the energy, do some of the other strategies I'm going to tell you, we probably can get their body to start to mobilize again and they can start to be cooperative and bring their owl brain back. Again, the further down you are in the possum pathway, like if you got a kid who's regularly shut down or moving all the way into like, play dead, collapse possum, you are going to hang out in this place a long time. Those are my families who's like, Kids really aren't leaving the house or not going to school. It takes a long time for those possum kids to come up and out of that deep state of collapse. But a true la-la land possum, these strategies, there's an expectation that they'll probably bring the nervous system back into a sense of safety. Then we can again move towards getting done whatever needs to get done, like mobilization. That was strategy number two, match their energy. Slow down. This is hard in our very fast paced world. Slow down. Match their energy. With a la-la land possum, you probably don't have to do that for too terribly long. If you do have to do it for too terribly long, you probably have a kid who's not just on the la-la land side. They're probably further down the pathway than you thought.

[00:23:09.770] - Robyn Gobbel

Strategy number three is think about ways to connect them to their sensory world. Now, I've given you... I've given you access to several handouts. I call them like fridge sheets, cheat sheets with the strategies, but also some sheets specific with some of these sensory strategies. Again, these are just jumping off points. They tend to think of sensory strategies in these four categories: movement, sensory experiences like taste, smell, that kind of sensory, rhythm, or breathing. I've given you just a list of some very basic ideas like movement. Think about is there a way to help this child's body get some movement? Now, some of your possum kids maybe would respond to something like, Hey, this is feeling hard right now. I can see getting this homework done or thinking about leaving the house. That's making my brain feel really tired. Let's take big steps together all the way until we get to the kitchen. Big, huge steps. When we get to the kitchen, let's get a drink of super duper cold water. You may have a kid who is capable, even when they're on the possum pathway of big movements, like big, huge steps. Possum kids usually need to get their body moving before they could do anything with a faster pace like running or playing basketball or something like that. Usually, we've got to do something like scaffold them up to that. When you're with your possum kid, think about the pace of the movement you're inviting them into. Is it close enough to their collapsed possum energy that it would be possible for them? It's like, Hey, let's get up and run around the block really quick. When you've got this spaced out la-la land kid, might be too far of an energetic jump for them. I mean, why not? If that works for your kid, by all means, go for it.

[00:25:35.850] - Robyn Gobbel

But my point with movement and sensory experiences is when we go down the possum pathway, we start to disconnect from our bodies and from the reality that's happening right now. So bringing experiences into the body that engages the body can be really helpful. Then the nervous system going, Oh, I was starting to feel like things weren't very safe, but actually everything's fine here. I gave you some ideas there. I mean, this is simple stuff, but I know it's really easy to have a word bank, essentially, of things to choose from running, walking. I used to have kids who thought it was really funny to take teeny, teeny, teeny, tiny steps. We would take inching, inching, inching steps, and I thought this was silly, so silliness plus any movement in the body is great. Oh, yeah, someone says that's why crawling or slithering like a snake seems possible, but walking doesn't. Totally. You're intuitively scaffolding in the movement that feels possible for the nervous system on this side of their pathway. Absolutely. Things like thumb wrestling, arm wrestling, cooking and baking, playing with balloons. When I was a play therapist, balloons and bubbles were my top go to things for kids on either pathway. Unless you're allergic or have some fear, which some people do have. Generally speaking, balls and bubbles and balloons are things that delight people and do wake up our sensory experience. We have balloons on hand, play around with balloons. Blowing up balloons actually is a great way to get some sensory experience into a possum kid. Literally, I can tell you I've had sessions where all we did the whole session was blow up balloons. Then later I have to figure out what am I going to do with this office full of balloons. But the breath, it's a lot of work to blow up a balloon. It starts to bring that nervous system up.

[00:26:51.430] - Robyn Gobbel

Temporary tattoos. I don't think I have that on this list either. I might on the next page. Temporary tattoos are really great thing for possum kids, crafty stuff. We might play around with seating options. I'm sitting in a seat right now that moves, and that can be really good for possum kids. Think about that at your dinner table or your living room furniture where your kids are lounging. Is there a way in the way that they're just lounging that they can get some movement, like rocking chair, recliner, an exercise ball, things like that. Just can keep a teeny tiny bit of movement going, which can be really good for these kids.

[00:28:11.660] - Robyn Gobbel

Small fidgets, Legos. These are like... Again, we're thinking about movement, but on a really small scale. Thinking about your five senses, again, like smelling, seeing visual fidgets. Well, they remind me of sand timers. You can flip up and down. They're water-based, and then they have colorful oil in them. Things that stimulate slightly the visual sense can be really helpful for possum kids. Changing the smell in a room, essential oils, simmering cinnamon, playing around with your air fresheners. If you use air fresheners, just a change. Then there are certain smells that might be more alerting, like peppermint or citrus. But I really think about just inviting a change. It tells the brain to like, Oh, pay attention to what's happening here. Then it tells the brain, Oh, what's happening here is safe. Taste. Drinks and snacks, especially drinks and snacks that pack a sensory punch, sour, hot, really cold, really sweet, crunchy, salty. Things that have a little sensory punch can be really helpful. Changing what you hear auditorily in the environment, what music is playing maybe, or maybe an audiobook that's out. Just think about what's the background noise? What are we hearing right now?

[00:29:50.080] - Robyn Gobbel

Playing with touch sensory stuff, shaving cream, water beads, again, cooking and baking can help these possum kids. There's a sense called proprioception, which is the sense that helps us know where our body is in space. It's in our muscles, tendons, and joints. Things like weighted blankets, lycra, deep pressure help with our proprioception or give us more proprioception. Our vestibular sense is in our inner ears, and it's with our balance. Our vestibular sense is engaged with things like swinging, jumping, skateboarding, those kinds of movements. That can also be, again, offering some vestibular experience can be helpful. I'm going to give you another resource, which is the book, *The Connected Therapist* by Marti Smith, who is an occupational therapist. Brilliant. Occupational therapist, expertise in our kids. She's trained significantly with everyone important, especially like Dr. Perry. She's also just highly relational. So she really values these sensory and physical experiences and the context of relationship. Marty's TBRI trained, all that good stuff. So *The Connected Therapist* is chock full of ideas for supporting our kids with their sensory systems. And I think that can be super helpful for kids who regularly fall down the possum pathway is paying attention to their body and their

sensory system.

[00:31:35.810] - Robyn Gobbel

I've also given you just some ideas here for incorporating rhythm, making music, listening to music, but also think about how gross motor experiences have rhythm in them. Like walking, running, swimming, there's rhythm and those experiences. Tossing a ball back and forth, blowing bubbles back and forth, hand clapping games, all of that has rhythm. Then helping kids take control of their breath can be really helpful as well. I already talked about blowing up balloons, blowing bubbles because bubbles only work if you take a good breath. Kids in my office, they would like... Or they would blow so pathetically, no bubbles would come. So bubbles are the perfect way for the material, not us to be the one that's giving feedback. They have to have a good breath for bubbles to work. I can tell you, I don't know that... I've worked with the most dysregulated kids. My office is where the kids came that no other therapists knew what to do with. I don't know that I've ever had a kid not be motivated, at least for maybe a moment to get good bubbles out of a bubble wand. Sometimes the kid will get good bubbles out of a bubble wand and then they'll realize like, Oh, shoot, I just did what these people wanted me to do. Then it might get dysregulated after that. But there was still a moment. A moment of blowing that bubble. Just don't hand the bubbles to the child. Keep the bubbles yourself in your own hand. Keep the wand maybe even yourself and blow them that way because handing bubbles to a dysregulated child just means the bubbles are going to get dumped. They're going to bubble everywhere and also a disappointed child who has no more bubbles to blow. That was strategy number three. Oh, yeah, bubble gum for sure. Great. I would put that one that's in the taste category, but also proprioception. You're getting sensory experiences in the mouth, again, through our taste buds, but also through the proprioception that's happening when we're chewing. I let kids self-select how many pieces they need. Some kids need a lot of proprioception for their bodies to get what they need in order to come back into safety and regulation. So when kids are taking a lot of gum, what I take that to mean is they need a lot of proprioception to bring safety and regulation back. I take bubble gum rules from Karyn Purvis and TBRI: Bubble gum stays in your mouth or in the trash can. No other place. That's it. And I really actually have a lot of success with kids with bubble gum too. Like you can have a gum. Always you can have gum. Stays in your mouth or in the trash because otherwise they're like... Or when they get five pieces of gum in their mouth, they're drooling bubblegum out. It's pretty gross. We just be like, Uh-oh, bubblegum is not in your mouth anymore. Let's spit it out. Start over.

[00:34:48.210] - Robyn Gobbel

Okay, strategy number 4, change or remove the stressor. This is a hard one because it's like, we've got things to do. We've got homework to do. We've got school to go to. We've got chores that have got to get done. We've got a discussion we have to have. We've got a meal to get done. Things have to get done, and I totally get that. For our la-la land kids, we're thinking, This is a mild stress response. We should be able to remove the stressor briefly, bring back safety and regulation, and then be like, We paused homework an hour ago. I think if we just go back to it for about 10 minutes, we'll be able to just wipe it out. Are you ready to get back to homework? Theoretically, with a La La Land possum, you're pretty easily able to get them back into what I call their owl brain. If you have a child that doesn't come back easily, you probably have a kid who's further down the possum pathway than just la-la land. Those kids sometimes need us to remove the stressors more long term. We just have to sometimes come to the acknowledgment that they just can't do it. They should be able to do it. They should be able to go to school. They should be able to do this homework. They should be able to do this chore, but they can't. Until we lower the bar enough that we are lowering their stress response and giving their stress response the opportunity to heal and find safety again, we're not going to make any progress on these things. Again, for a la-la land possum, we can usually lower the bar, decrease the stressor in the short term. Just take a break. Go do a sensory thing. We're like, We've got to finish that homework. We've got to finish that chore. If they're a lot further down the possum pathway, you might be thinking about, I think I have to really change my expectations for my kid.

[00:36:52.660] - Lisa C. Qualls

Then the fifth strategy, and this is especially true for the further down they get the pathway, sometimes we just have to wait. I say waiting with certainty because when our kids are falling down that possum pathway, it's not difficult for us to also fall into feelings of helplessness and

hopelessness. This will never get better. That's us also falling down the possum pathway. But if we can think about this idea of waiting, matching their energy, being with, but also maintain our own sense of thoughts that are like, I'm doing what my child needs right now. I'm seeing their stress response intending to that. My child and me are doing the very best that they can. That's that idea, like waiting with certainty. The certainty is, possum kids actually don't want to live on the possum pathway. It feels like they do, but they really don't. The nervous system wants to find health and vitality and safety and connection. If we just hold that in the back of our minds, that helps us not fall down the possum pathway. If you are parenting a kid who is very regularly falling down the possum pathway, you just need to wrap yourself in support, which obviously all you all are already doing because of you being here and that stuff. You recognize the need for support. I have found parents or kids on the possibly pathway minimize how hard that is for them. In some ways, it's like, I don't even deserve the help. I don't deserve the support. Not like this other person I know whose kids lighting fires or punching their peers or the teachers. Actually, well, we all need it, but our possum kids are a little sneaky, but not on purpose. It just can come out of nowhere that all of a sudden we're joining them on that possum pathway. We really need a lot of support if you have a kid who lives here.

[00:39:08.560] - Robyn Gobbel

Now, I'm going to talk about the three pitfalls that I see when parenting kids who are slipping onto the possum pathway pretty quickly. The first one is that we've overlooked that this is dysregulation. Now, I'm aware of the fact that this is essentially strategy number one, which is recognized this is a sign of stress. This is how important this one is that I'm bringing it back again. Number one pitfall for possum kids is overlooking it as dysregulation and then labeling it something else. They're just work-avoidant. They're just lazy. They're just giving me a hard time. They just... If you hear yourself saying they just, you probably joining them a little bit on their possum pathway too, because that is a statement of hopelessness and hopelessness. Really see it as a stress response. The number two pitfall I see is that we have watchdog brain responses. People on the possum pathway feel really scary to us and we then have a stress response. Sometimes some of us are more likely to match them on the possum pathway, but a lot of us actually tend to respond with a watchdog brain response. We're frustrated, we're angry, we're yelling, we're critical, we're the opposite of what a possum kid needs. This is no criticism, no shame, no blame. We're all just learning more about our own stress responses. If I can notice that la-la land thing makes me go, Ah. Then I can start to notice my own symptoms of my own stress response, take a breath, ground back in my own owl brain, and then do one of the strategies that I've already suggested.

[00:41:04.100] - Robyn Gobbel

The third one that I see on the possum pathway is pushing interventions too hard. What I see, and this is like having a shocker in response, what I see and what I sometimes do myself too, is I got a kid who's really checked out, la-la land, and possum-y. I'm like, Hey, do you want to drink a water? Oh, I know. How about some bubble gum? Oh, let's play balls. Hey, I know, let's do jumping jacks. It has this sense of watchdog-y ourselves in this very helpful way. Like, Hey, let's do this. Hey, just try this. Oh, I know. How about this? When offering possum kids supports for their body or their sensory system, again, we have to think about matching their energy. Like, Hey, sometimes when my brain starts to get foggy, I have found it's really helpful to have a piece of bubble gum. I have some right here. You want to try some bubble gum? You don't even have to be that overt about it. You could just hand them a piece of bubble gum or sometimes even just having it out. Or sometimes I'll start tossing a balloon myself, like to myself. It's like playing with a balloon here. Then eventually, the balloon gets away from me or maybe I purposely send it their direction. Now they're tossing that balloon themselves too. Then maybe I start to get involved in a back and forth a thing. So match the energy with the interventions. That's a really important thing.

[00:42:50.820] - Robyn Gobbel

I want to be really mindful of time and also know that there's so much about this to cover. I do want to give you just two quick... Well, three quick resources. One is I have a free webinar on my website. It's roblyngobbel.com/webinar. And it overviews this whole owl, watchdog, and possum idea. If you've never heard me talk about this before, you're like, Oh, this is interesting. You can go get the foundations to that there, it's free. It's like an hour-long webinar. It comes with an e-book, so if you'd rather get the information that way, super easy. It doesn't really have interventions. You're not going to

get interventions there, but it's going to give you the overarching ideas behind the owl, watchdog and possum pathways. Then I do have a podcast where we're talking about this stuff all the time. But specifically, I've already directed you to the one for the people pleasing. If you have a possum who people pleases, you're going to want to head and listen to that episode. Then owls, watchdogs and possums are what I've covered in my book that's coming out. Very soon that book is coming out.

[00:44:03.440] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, Robin, thank you so much. This was packed with really helpful, wonderful information. For those of you attending live and those of you in our Reclaim Compassion community, you will be getting a link and email for the recording of this presentation, so you can go back and watch it again as many times as you like. Also, Robin referred to a handout that she has for you. We will be emailing a link for that as well. By tomorrow, you should be getting an email from us with that information. So, Robin, before we go into Q&A, can you tell people? Well, you've already told them about your website, but do you want to tell them where they can find you on social media? And I also want to reiterate that Robyn's book is coming out in September, probably just a couple of days after this podcast comes out. It is already getting tons of pre-orders. So tell us a little bit more about your book and tell us where they can find you on social media.

[00:45:07.190] - Robyn Gobbel

Yeah. So on social media on Facebook, I'm at [facebook.com/RobynGobbelMSW](https://www.facebook.com/RobynGobbelMSW). But you just have to search Robyn Gobbel. It's like trauma, toxic stress. Yeah, maybe spell your name though. Thank you. Thank you for helping me with this. Robin is with the Y, R-O-B-Y-N, Global, G-O-B-B-E-L. I'm real easy to find on Facebook and Instagram. I post there really regularly. So try to get lots of tips and goodness over on social media. Then yes, the book is coming out September 21st. It's called *Raising Kids with Big Baffling Behaviors: Brain-Body-Sensory Strategies that Really Work*. My history is kids with complex trauma, specifically adoption and attachment loss. That is my lens, and that's largely what the book is about. Though what I found over the years—and I know Lisa, Melissa would say the same thing—is there's lots of things that lead to some nervous system vulnerability that the way that we work with our families, it benefits those families as well. The book is a very comprehensive dive into this nervous system approach and the owl pathway, the watchdog pathway, the possum pathway. Lots and lots of very practical interventions, as well as a section, the third section is all about us as parents. How do we take what we've learned in the book up until then and really allow it to help us be with ourselves with compassion. A huge belief I have is our kids are doing the very best that they can, regulated connected kids who feel safe are doing well, but that's also true about parents. I'd spend about a third of the book really addressing that as well.

[00:47:13.950] - Lisa C. Qualls

Wonderful. All right, thank you.

[00:47:17.100] - Robyn Gobbel

Thank you, Lisa.

[00:47:21.840] - Melissa Corkum

We are so thankful for the amazing guests who share their wisdom and expertise with us. Adoptive parenting gives us both the challenge and the opportunity to keep learning new tools and perspectives.

[00:47:33.810] - Lisa C. Qualls

If you'd like to hear more from our guests and get support on this topic, all of our workshops, including the Q&As, are available to folks inside our group coaching program called Reclaim Compassion. To learn more, go to reclaimcompassion.com.

[00:47:49.210] - Melissa Corkum

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. Our new Instagram handle is [@postadoptionresources](https://www.instagram.com/postadoptionresources), or better yet, join our free Facebook community at the [AdoptionConnection.com/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/AdoptionConnection.com).

[00:48:04.830] - Lisa C. Qualls

Thanks so much for listening. We love having you. Remember, you're a good parent doing good work.

[00:48:13.710] - Melissa Corkum

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