

[00:00:00.000] - 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.

[00:00:10.000] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:18.470] - Melissa Corkum

Hello, friends. Welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast. I am so, so excited. This week, we get to welcome a good friend of ours, Suzanne Stabile. I've been listening to Suzanne's podcast, The Enneagram Journey, for a while. Honestly, it's one of my favorites, and I'm not just saying this because she's sitting across the Zoom screen from me and had the incredible honor to be in one of her Enneagram cohorts a couple of years ago and have stayed in touch. The Enneagram and adoption keeps coming back for all three of us. Lisa is here as well. And so, Suzanne, welcome.

[00:01:04.300] - Suzanne Stabile

Thank you. Thank you. I'm a big fan of both of you and of all of the work you do. And I'm in awe of your professional expertise in dealing with adoption. Honestly, I think the enneagram is so important. And when I read what you all have written and when I listen to you talk to people, I think, golly, how could the enneagram fit in with the depth that the two of you have? So I'm just trying to say I'm very respectful of what you're doing and how you're doing it in a community that desperately needs it. And if I can add a little something to that by being with you today, then that would be a privilege and an honor. And I would be grateful for having had the experience.

[00:01:56.880] - Melissa Corkum

Well, I'm super grateful for the depth that you bring, that you show us that the enneagram has, because, as you know, there's a lot of trendy enneagram out there that has reduced it to 40-question quizzes and short memes. And I honestly had no idea how deep it could get, but I think the work that you all are doing at Life in the Trinity is just extraordinary. I mean, it just... The enneagram doesn't go as deep pretty much anywhere else that I've noticed, and you've matched it with a lot of other deep spiritual practices. And so I think I'm drawn to all of that. And honored that we can impart a little bit of that wisdom in the work that we do. But I would love for you to tell our audience a little bit about you, both as an adoptee, however much of your story that you feel comfortable sharing, and then currently what your work is.

[00:03:10.570] - Suzanne Stabile

Sure. My mom and dad were founding members of a community of people that made up a town. In the 1930s, a lot of young couples moved to Floydada, Texas, and each of them brought their business or their expertise. My dad happened to be a doctor, and my mom was a nurse. They did life like people do. And they had two biological children, both boys. They also lost a baby, which would have made it three boys. And they were doing life. And my dad delivered a baby one night and went home the next morning and the baby was me. And I was available for adoption and I was breach, and I wasn't breathing. And so he breathed life into me after he delivered me, he stayed longer than normal. He went home the next day and said to my mom, I delivered a baby last night that's available for adoption and I think we should adopt her. It's a long, fun, wonderful story, but there's so much more happening. I think I'm going to just say that they took me home the next day. They were phenomenal parents. Because my brothers were 18 and 15, I never really was very close to them growing up. One of my brothers has died, and I'm not close to the other one, by his choice. And in my generation, if you were adopted, you were generally not told. You found out sometime later in life. You found out when your parents died or some cousin told you or all the ways that people find out. But because my parents were central figures in this whole thing, I knew I was adopted before I knew what that meant. I think it was always treated by everybody as a gift, including me, and I was told regularly how lucky I was. And that's true, I am lucky. But the mix of that with my enneagram number is pretty tricky because essentially the messages that I received from the community that I grew up in were, You're so lucky if you were in the orphanage in Lubbock, you wouldn't have the things you have, you wouldn't have the opportunities that you have. Essentially, people were saying to me, You just don't need a thing. And the lost and unconscious childhood messages for 2s play right into that. And 2s believe that it's not

okay to have their own needs. And so I grew up believing that I didn't need a thing.

[00:06:21.440] - Lisa C. Qualls

I'm sure you all hear this all the time, but there's a place in growing up if you're adopted, you are always adopted, and that's different generally from the other people in the classroom. But when they do genetics and science, then that's when you're out. When they do write your family history and where you come from historically, all the things, then you're out. As a female, when you go to your first gynecology appointment and you start filling out your own papers for other doctors and they say, What is your family history? Then you're out. I think that all of those constant reminders lead us as adults who are adopted to want to know the answers to the questions that we're not able to answer for other people. I didn't know that I wanted to know the answer to the questions on the thing that you have to fill out to see a doctor. But at 72, with children who range in age from 35 to 45, and with nine grandchildren and probably going to have 11 soon, I think all that stuff is pretty important, and I don't know the answers to any of it.

[00:07:40.320] - Melissa Corkum

So it's interesting to me, Suzanne, that I'll let you continue, is one of the things that we wanted to talk a little bit about is we get a lot of questions around, do our experiences shape our enneagram type, like how we're motivated or how we see the world? And I hear you talk a lot about we're born our number. And so there's a lot of questions then about, especially in adoptees, and does that early attachment wound or early trauma change any of that? And I've had all the experiences around the family tree and not being able to answer all that paperwork. And I've never... And you said something, I wish I could hit rewind, something about answering the questions for other people. It was very relationally focused, which we know 2s are. And that is not my orientation to life. And other than the slight awkwardness of having to explain that you can't answer those obnoxious number of pages of questions, I have always found it a privilege to be an adoptee and not have to answer any of those questions.

[00:09:00.030] - Suzanne Stabile

Yeah.

[00:09:00.540] - Melissa Corkum

The reframe. It's all about finding the positive. Just as an example of similar experiences, and we all come to the world with a different lens.

[00:09:15.520] - Lisa C. Qualls

Sure. And, Melissa, I think I've heard you tell the story of doing the family tree in school and feeling like you had so many choices of how to do it, and that you could make your identity whatever you wanted it to be. That you could infuse your own creativity because you didn't have the answers, and so you could just take the little bits you knew. Is that right? Am I remembering that correctly?

[00:09:41.010] - Melissa Corkum

I tell parents that. But as a way to reframe this. Here's the thing about the family tree assignment. One, we all take it so seriously and no one actually knows the answers. I could make up a family tree and turn it in, and the teacher... It's not like the teacher knows. I don't know why we took it all so seriously. I don't remember feeling a lot of big, negative feelings about the family tree assignment. I do remember maybe thinking I could get out of it because I didn't have all the information that was needed. But I do tell parents, there are lots of creative ways to get around this, and there are ways to give our children options for how they can see it. And I don't want them to force a reframe, but I like to provide it as an option.

[00:10:37.120] - Suzanne Stabile

Sure, and you would. And I didn't recognize that I wanted the answers. I was just aware that I couldn't give the other person the answers that they were asking me for. It took me a long time to get to, and I mean a really long time. I mean, like in the last six or seven years to get to, I want to know the answers to those questions.

[00:11:12.050] - Lisa C. Qualls

Did you find that you wanted to know them for yourself or for the sake of your kids and their genetics and their health history?

[00:11:20.570] - Suzanne Stabile

Well, interestingly enough, my kids, for the most part, don't care. They don't care if I find out or if I don't. They don't care. We don't have any conditions or illnesses that are ongoing, or diagnoses that are going to last a lifetime where we would yet, we don't have any of that yet. There are 19 of us, so we certainly might. We're knowing that would be really helpful. I don't know what creates curiosity in me around adoption. I just know that I have chosen to hold it at bay. I think that has to do with protecting myself. But in a weird way. Let me give you an example. It's another long story. I'll make it as short as I can. I'm now to a point where I'm very frequently recognized in public. By my voice, sometimes people in an elevator who hear me talk will say, Are you Suzanne Stabile? Yes. I would recognize that voice anywhere. Well, then what are you going to do about that? I'm learning to receive that well, but for a long time, it just made me feel inadequate because I felt like in the time and in the moment, I didn't have what I would normally offer to someone who is trying to connect to me. Does that make sense for me as a 2? I'm teaching at Pepperdine in Malibu for a weekend, and we go out to eat with friends at this beautiful place, with a friend who wanted us to meet his other friends. A long conversation occurred, but I'm going to tell you two parts that matter. The couple walks in and I stand up and I'm introduced to them and I shake hands with both of them and say, It's really nice to meet you. The woman says, Well, actually, we met this morning.

[00:13:31.020] - Suzanne Stabile

I'm the one who came to your table during breakfast to thank you for your work and all that. Well, so then I'm aware that somehow I don't connect in those moments. I get through them. And I don't want to be that way. So that's why I'm working so hard on all of this. Well, then it turns out as the conversation goes through the evening that there's a point where it is relevant to the conversation that we're having for me to say, that I think there's a possibility that my birth father is from Abilene, Texas, and that everybody called him the chief and that he drove a big red Cadillac. The woman who I had already not connected to from breakfast to sitting next to me. The more I say of the story, the more uncomfortable she gets, and she's crying. I turned to her and say, Are you okay? She said, No, because if that's your father, then I want you to know that is my grandfather. And then she explains to me that her grandfather was not faithful to her grandmother, that they know that he had children with other women. It made all of it seem like a possibility. So to end the suspense, I'll just tell you that it turned out that her grandfather is not my biological father. And yet she and her brother call me Aunt Suzanne and always will. They live here in Dallas. And I'm thrilled to be in relationship with him. And at the point of first meeting her and finding out that she lives in the Dallas Metroplex and that their family lives here and they have a big family, what I thought was I don't have the capacity to be in that many relationships. What I'm trying to say is when you are adopted and you grow up, this is true for me, Melissa, it may not be for you. When you grow up, you adapt to things as they come. This big, huge secret out here that you may find the answer to, you get no time to adapt to. It arrives and you have it and you have it to deal with if it works out that the other person will deal with you.

[00:15:48.950] - Suzanne Stabile

Another long story, I found my birthmother. She wouldn't talk to me. She wouldn't see me. With the presence and support of my husband, Joe and Father Richard Roar, we went to her door and knocked on the door, and she wouldn't answer. We knew she was there. That gave me additional curiosity to carry about being adopted. It didn't solve anything. It just added to... Well, maybe it solved something, I don't know. But it added to the mystery. I find that when I'm around other people who are talking to one another, sometimes it happens here in the Micah Center. Somebody will say, Well, you're just a mystery to me. I feel like I've been tapped on the shoulder to remember that so much of my life is a mystery. Then you move forward. I was divorced when Joe and I married. I had three children, and we had a fourth. He adopted my three children, and their father, who lived close by, chose not to be part of their life until he died. There's that adoption on top of my adoption. Now, our youngest son is gay, and he and his husband are adopting, and they're adopting out of the foster care system. And so then there's adopting with adopting with being adopted. I think it's... In our family, for some reason, it's easy to ignore because it works. Now, with B.J. and Devon, that's a different thing right now. But for what

preceded B. J. and Devon adopting, everything worked for us, and that squelched the mystery. I'm not sure, an enneagram-wise yet, that there are numbers who want to pursue the mystery, who have to pursue the mystery to be okay, who are pursuing the mystery for one thing, and they end up getting all that comes with that, I don't really feel like looking back. I needed to be rejected by a birth mother twice. It creates curiosity in other people. So my birth mother wouldn't see me or talk to me. But a cousin's daughter that she was really close to wanted to have a relationship with me. I'm surrounded by people with whom we're doing hard work to have good relationships. And I'm not just talking about my family. In our cohorts, we build relationships, and we all work at it. And they are all intentional relationships. And I don't, based on my life and the reality that my work, I'm not just out hoping for another relationship. I don't know where to put another one. So I keep wondering what motivation is, what is my motivation for pursuing this whole thing?

[00:19:07.260] - Suzanne Stabile

Then Joe retired from ministry, but still had to at 72, still wanted to be pastoring. He's on staff as a retired pastor at first United Methodist Church in Dallas. The head of hospitality there is a forensic genealogist. Over dinner, he just wrapped his arm around me and said, I've listened to all your work before you ever came here, and I know that you found your mother and she wouldn't see you. What about your biological father? You want to look into that? Because I can help you. Now I've seen a picture of my biological father who has died. I have a photograph. I keep looking at the photograph, and I don't feel anything. I found out that I have a living half-brother, and I don't know what to do with that. I guess I would say that I think it's very difficult to incorporate mystery into your life. I don't know how to set it aside. And to be honest with you, if I were in your shoes, the question I would ask me next is, what is the difference in mystery and curiosity? I don't know.

[00:20:28.260] - Melissa Corkum

Many parents who deal with big behaviors are looking for practical solutions and may also be struggling with blocked care. Private coaching or group programs that require regular Zoom meetings place even more burden on your already busy lives.

[00:20:44.950] - Lisa C. Qualls

We've created a group coaching program that fits your busy schedule, goes where you go, and provides true transformation. Reclaim Compassion is like having experienced coaches and a support group in your back pocket, accessible from a computer or mobile device when you need it and wherever you are. We provide a clear roadmap for transformation for families struggling with challenging behavior and possibly blocked care.

[00:21:11.230] - Melissa Corkum

In our program, you'll reclaim compassion for yourself, your child, and hope for your family. It's never too late to begin your family's transformation journey. For more information or to sign up, go to [reclaimcompassion.com](http://reclaimcompassion.com).

[00:21:25.370] - Lisa C. Qualls

I think one of the things Melissa and I talk a lot about together and with other adoptive parents is if we believe that our children are born their dominant type, that that is woven into the core of their being, and we recognize that adoption is built upon loss, like you have to lose somebody to be adopted or a lot of somebody's. Then how do you think our dominant type impacts the way a child might respond to being adopted, to having lost a family, gained a family? I know every child is so different in so many circumstances, but big picture. Even if we just think in terms of triads, how do you think our dominant type impacts that process?

[00:22:29.900] - Suzanne Stabile

Let's go with triads because I think the other would take too long and it's too complicated.

[00:22:35.350] - Melissa Corkum

Do you think triads or stances impacts more?

[00:22:38.130] - Lisa C. Qualls

Exactly. I think the answer is that we all, regardless of our circumstances, have to manage our dominant center and bring up our repressed center. And if you're feeling dominant, you cannot find peace with the realities of adoption without thinking. And so that's me. But fours can't find peace without doing because they can ruminate, which is a poor substitute for thinking, but they can ruminate and ruminate and be comfortable in that. Ultimately, the answer is I don't think you can do effective work efficiently in bringing up your repressed center unless you can manage your dominant center. There are lots of feelings to be had around being adopted and the loss that goes with that. And whether or not you're feeling dominant or feeling repressed, it's a problem. I think the goal is to help adoptees address and then manage their dominant center and have help bringing up their repressed center.

[00:24:18.820] - Lisa C. Qualls

For some of our listeners, who are not familiar with the enneagram, we can't really go back to the beginning and explain it all in this episode, but for people who are familiar but don't know it at a deeper level, would you mind just defining just a little more about the dominant and repressed center?

[00:24:42.990] - Melissa Corkum

Or at least name all three. At least name all three.

[00:24:46.350] - Suzanne Stabile

Yeah. All right. Well, let's start with this. We are all three. I do believe that we are born genetically predisposed to be a certain number. We are also born with three native intelligences, and we're all born with all three, and they are thinking, feeling, and doing. And for twos, threes, and fours on the enneagram, feeling is dominant. For five, sixes, and sevens on the enneagram, thinking is dominant. For eights, nines, and ones on the enneagram, doing is dominant. However, in childhood, we figure out that one of the three doesn't really work for us, and so we intuitively stop using it. It remains more pure and less damaged than the other two centers because they're out in the world and they're being used all the time so that we can make our way in the world. I think the heart of enneagram work lies in understanding that two of the three centers leaves you always lacking one of the natural resources that you have to do life and do it well. Stances are about which of those three centers of intelligence is repressed. Threes, sevens, and eights are feeling repressed. Fours, fives, and nines are doing repressed. And ones, twos, and sixes are thinking repressed. It doesn't mean you don't think, feel, or do. It does mean that you don't do it effectively, that thinking is not productive, feelings are too controlled, and doing is doing what you like to do or what you want to do or knowing what other people should do. Then you have to manage your dominant center by doing work around that. Then you have to understand that you're going to have to learn to use this center that you haven't been using. It's the purest part of you. It's really lovely, but it's also immature. And then in enneagram work on the levels that we do it, you would add that the default emotion for two, threes and fours is shame, for five, sixes and sevens is fear, and for eights, nines and ones is anger. And you have to use that support center of intelligence that's between the two to manage and address effectively your default emotion because it's always just waiting in the wings.

[00:27:34.990] - Suzanne Stabile

If we just talked about default emotions for a minute, if you imagine me as a two and you think I'm adopted and right over here in the wings, no matter what I'm doing on what day ever, shame is waiting to take center stage. Well, it's really easy to feel shame around adoption. But then you move to five, six, and sevens. It's really easy to feel fear around adoption. Then you move to eights, nines, and ones, and it's really easy to feel anger. Now, to do something about the shame, fear, and anger is a different thing. I thought for years and years and years that if I had my dominant center managed and I was bringing up my repressed center, that it was going to handle my shame, and it didn't. All of that is deep enneagram work. Enneagram work is layer upon layer upon layer upon layer, upon layer, upon layer. It should be done in a certain order. And when it is, Melissa, you can speak to this, it all fits.

[00:28:44.550] - Melissa Corkum

Suzanne, what age? And there's a reason I'm asking this question because we hear a lot from families. I hear a lot from families, I think, as an adoptee and an adopted parent. Because, and I think thankfully, mental health is a more prominent conversation than it was when either one of us was

growing up. And there are so many more resources, particularly for the adoption constellation. But I think it's given parents this false sense of, I don't even know what, but that they can accomplish something with their kids because they're providing them with therapy and resources. I mean, talk therapy as young as four and five. And I hear a lot from parents, My 16-year-old just won't open up in therapy, or we're trying this, that, and the other thing, and it's not working. We only have so many years before my child ages out of their services, and so we're trying to get from point A to point B. And I spend a lot of time telling parents, both from my experience and also from our young adults like, I was in my 30s before I ever started to even think about the impact adoption had had on my life. And I'm still resistant in therapy. I can find a lot of things to talk to my therapist about and avoid really getting down into the attachment wounds and all the things. So what would you say to that? And/or how old were you when you were starting to put the pieces together around how much your adoption has impacted so many other parts of your life?

[00:30:36.500] - Suzanne Stabile

I'm not sure about how old I was. I think probably when I had my first baby is when I- We hear that a lot. Yeah, is when I started thinking, Wow, how do you do this? And my birth mother was 21 when I was born. So there's not some story about she was 14 or I don't have that story. From the point where I became curious as a pregnant woman, all things having to do with having three more babies after that and parenting and all the things, it came up for me from time to time. And I was aware of it. And I thought, Yeah, I don't have time to do anything with that, really. I've had the same therapist for 19 years. That's an advantage that a lot of people don't have. And he says to me in the last three years, maybe, or four, he started saying to me, Are you aware that no matter what you bring to me, once we start working it, it always ends up being about adoption? It always goes back to that. It has been maybe nine years or so since he started saying, I think we've learned together that adoption is a hole that you cannot fill. In relationship to some things you were saying about parents and therapy and all that, I think there's an acceptance piece of what is that can be a place of freedom. Because I'd rather just deal straight up with abandonment issues and insecurity and relationship and that stuff than think there's something I can go get to put inside of this hole inside of me that's going to handle that. There is no handling it. There are some things that you're never not and adopted is one of them. And it's like the enneagram. When I teach the enneagram, I say, The best part of you is also the worst part of you. You can't just get rid of this, so you better learn to just put your arm around it and recognize that you're going to have to walk through life together. I'm 72. I'm not trying to be callous about anything. I don't think it's easy to be adopted. I think my adoption is a piece of cake compared to a high percentage of people. But the hole is the same. I have found it much easier in the last 10 years when I stopped trying to feel it.

[00:33:52.370] - Lisa C. Qualls

I just recognized, Yep, that's a part of who I am. It's part of who I am. I take it with me everywhere I go. I find it difficult to not be a little bit, feel a bit undeserving as I hear the stories of the children that are available for adoption out of the foster care system in Tarrant County where my son and his husband are trying to adopt. Honestly, it's very difficult for me not to think, What in the world, Suzanne, do you have to feel is lacking? My desire about my birth mother for most of my life was to walk into a restaurant and have an angel appear to me and say, The person right over there at the table that you can hear talking is your birth mother. I would have been good with that, I thought. I don't know if I would have been or not. Because I wanted to know if she had big boobs. I wanted to know if she had good hair. I wanted to know if she would look like me or if I looked like her. I wanted to know if she was friendly. I wanted to know if she was warm. I wanted to know if she was living a life with family like I was living a life with family. But I never had a dream of, boy, I hope I meet her and we just walk off in the sunset together.

[00:35:27.460] - Lisa C. Qualls

But I've had a really beautiful life. What if I hadn't? And what if I didn't have somebody to tell me that nothing can feel this hole? I just kept looking for it and looking for it and looking for it and found it. Then the dream would be that the fantasy would be, it's going to be so great. So when I did find my birthmother, I found out that she lived right across the street from the Albuquerque Hotel, where I had been working with Richard Roy's organization and staying four or five times a year. And she was right across the street. Well, you know what? You if you're adopted, you make up that, Oh, this is how God

works, and we get to be together, and she's going to be so happy to hear from me. And she wasn't. In fact, she was angry. Then you say, Well, maybe it was about her family. She didn't marry until she was 50. She never had other children. I think what I'm trying to say, offer, I think what I'm trying to offer is, I guarantee whatever story you make up, that's not the one. And honestly, I'm discovering through my friend doing some DNA work, I'm discovering that the stories that I was told as a child about my biological parents are not true. So you go to look for a biological parent based on the story you've been told. And I don't know what you all's experience is, but my experience is that story is usually not the truth. So then what do you do? I think you recognize that adopted is one of the things you'll never not be. And you wrap your arm around it and you take it with you everywhere. Not only can you not fill the hole, but other people can't fill it for you either. You can't have children to fill the hole. It doesn't work. You can certainly have beautiful children, I do. And my daughters look like me. So does Joel, actually. And it's lovely and wonderful, and I still have the home.

[00:37:45.160] - Melissa Corkum

As we're wrapping up, we unfortunately also can't type our kids as much as we want to. What is the best place by your estimation for adoptive parents who are watching this happen for their adoptees and wishing that they could find the right therapy to fill the hole or the right thing or the right words say or be the right thing to fill the hole, what does the enneagram have to offer us as parents who don't have control and who can't type our kids?

[00:38:29.150] - Suzanne Stabile

When we adoptees are dealing with adoption and struggling, we are for sure in excess in our number. Being in excess in your number means different things. For you, at least I don't know you as well as I know Melissa, but for you, Melissa, being in excess in your number would be running away from the reality that you have this hold that you can't feel. But mine would be building relationships with people, believing that they can feel the whole from me. A three's would be, I can live successfully enough that this whole is not going to interrupt my life. A four would get lost in the hole. And a five would intellectualize things that have to be felt. And a six would be uber-anxious when adoption things come up. And an eight would be in charge and say, I don't need that. And a nine would just think, my presence didn't matter to her. It doesn't matter now. Now you have to know the enneagram.

[00:39:46.500] - Melissa Corkum

You skipped one. Someone's going to email us about ones.

[00:39:50.140] - Suzanne Stabile

I'm on it. I'm on it. And a one would be over-functioning in correctness. So all of those things are reactions. And reactions to adoption are not helpful. It requires tools and action and making choices and making informed choices, which is why I'm so grateful for what the two of you do. I don't want to have an adoption birthday. I am continually separated from other people because of this thing. I just want to have a birthday. I'd love to have a memory of the day I was adopted, but I don't want a cake and a candle. I want somebody at an appropriate time when I'm at an appropriate in the age to say, This hole can't be filled, but we can grieve it together. I think that there is still an effort to make up for something that can't be made up for. It just has to be accepted. And honestly, you all, I don't know if I'm right about that or not. I don't know, and I don't want to offend anybody for whom those things are really important. From my perspective, it looks confusing. Let me step over here and talk for a minute about something, and I'll come back to this.

[00:41:34.870] - Suzanne Stabile

When I was working with My Treehouse and I was working with parents who had adopted children, and I had the parent part, I was so aware that they were willing to give them anything. They were willing to do anything to make up for the fact that they're adopted. And there's nothing you can do to change the fact that I'm adopted. And you don't have to make up for it. You can't and you don't have to. If I have an attachment disorder, we do have to work with that. But you would work with any child who had an attachment disorder or who had any disorder that is similar to that if you had the resources, right? That's what we would do. And so I don't think the world, the church, our elders, I'm one of them now, and I don't know how to do it well. I think teaching acceptance in a culture like ours is an uphill battle, and some things just have to be accepted. And I'm not sure that's bad. I'm not

reminded that I'm adopted every day. I am right now because my sons are adopting, but I'm not... I don't think about that every day. I never dreamed it would be as big a part of my enneagram talking and teaching that it is. I understand now why it is. I think if I were younger, I would do some more work with it. I think I might still be young enough to do some work with it and some writing, maybe.

[00:43:29.900] - Suzanne Stabile

Honestly, I was more inclined to write before I met the two of you because you are so good at what you do and you have so many tools that it has introduced me to all of the things that I don't know much about. I don't want to add to the confusion. Given an opportunity to know the enneagram when your children are 15 or older, along with what you two know, I think that'd be a pretty great package. As long as parents are using the enneagram to be the healthiest people they can be, not to work on other people. I'm an old Timer. I'm not sure how I feel about open adoption. I'm old, ya'll. I've been adopted for 72 years, and that's different than I was adopted when I was 28 and having my first baby. And it sounds sad, and I'm not. I'm so happy. For a while, a gay couple couldn't adopt children, certainly not in Texas. And I'm so happy for B.J. and Devon that they can adopt. And I'm so happy that my parents adopted me. And I think the mystery and the curiosity overshadow the deeper, more real feelings that are underneath them because it's a quest that can't be satisfied.

[00:45:12.060] - Melissa Corkum

Well, I didn't know what was going to come from this interview and conversation, but I am really, really glad we went where we went.

[00:45:18.220] - Suzanne Stabile

I'm really glad you are because it wasn't where I expected to go either.

[00:45:21.540] - Lisa C. Qualls

I think the biggest thing for me that resonates so much is that there is, like you talk about it being a hole that can't be filled and it's like a wound that we can't just touch it up and heal it. I come from a unique place of being a birth or first mom. I'm sitting here listening to you, but I'm resonating a lot with the grief. I mean, there's just grief.

[00:45:53.840] - Melissa Corkum

But I think the same thing is true of birth moms, right? There's a hole left when you to relinquish a child, and it's the same hole that doesn't get filled.

[00:46:04.350] - Suzanne Stabile

Absolutely.

[00:46:05.040] - Lisa C. Qualls

You were talking about how we can't necessarily just build that for our kids in the loss that they face as adoptees. I was thinking about myself as a birth mom and this deep, deep hole and wound and tearing that happened to me. I think what has been most healing for me is having my husband, who I met young at the end of high school, but he has borne witness to my pain and walked alongside me. He cannot fix it, ever. Nothing will ever take that away. But he's born witness and he's walked with me for years and years and years. We're celebrating our 39th wedding anniversary. That loss has colored our life together. We've gone on to have many children of our own by birth and then to adopt, but nobody can fix it and feel it. But having someone who bears witness and walks with you, I think, is the best gift. It's the most healing thing we can give to each other, to our children, to bear witness to their loss and to let them express it and feel it and to never try to deny it or cover it over or anything else. But even if it's really uncomfortable for us to just sit with them in the pain and the loss.

[00:47:38.350] - Suzanne Stabile

Yeah. We're not good at that. There's no way at this point, Melissa, that I can avoid the temptation to suggest reading Pauline Boss, *Ambiguous Loss*. That helps with grieving. As a culture, we don't grieve, we cover and numb, but we don't grieve because we haven't been taught how to.

[00:48:05.220] - Melissa Corkum



I would add Miriam Greenspan.

[00:48:08.260] - Suzanne Stabile

Absolutely. Healing Through the Dark Emotions. Absolutely. And the other thing I would add for older adoptees, I'm almost positive. You all check it before you put it in your whatever you all do. Joel does all that language. I don't know what it is. Yeah, that. Check it out. But I think the title is *The Girls Who Went Away*.

[00:48:32.300] - Lisa C. Qualls

Oh, my word, Suzanne. That book, I avoided reading it for a long time because I didn't think I could handle emotion.

[00:48:41.300] - Suzanne Stabile

It's so important.

[00:48:42.030] - Lisa C. Qualls

It pretty much wiped me out. But it's so good.

[00:48:46.710] - Suzanne Stabile

To whatever degree it wiped you out, it helped me.

[00:48:51.190] - Lisa C. Qualls

Oh, and it helped me.

[00:48:53.180] - Suzanne Stabile

Here's the story I want to say, and maybe this will be the end, I don't know. You all are in charge of that. But I was just in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, teaching a few months ago. And this woman came up to me and she said, You know, so I've been a fan of your work, and I know that you're adopted, and I am a birth mom who gave up a baby. And she said, We'd met before. And I said, Well, it's nice to see you again. And she said, Well, you know you mentioned the books, *The Girls Who Went Away*. She said, I'm one of those girls in the book. My story is in the book. And then we took a picture of ourselves together and talked about the fact that we both get the other one. And I think what you have to do is get it. I think what everybody's longing for is I just want to get it. I want to understand it. I want to know why. Well, you don't get to know why. And you don't get to know why it's raining today or why the sun is going to come up tomorrow. It keeps coming back to mystery. Can we live with mystery? And carry it. And I think the answer is maybe, or most days, or when I have to. But we don't like to live with mystery about other things.

[00:50:41.720] - Melissa Corkum

But those are good words. I think learning how to live with mystery is probably imperative to not getting swallowed up by the hole. So we appreciate you sharing part of your story, your vulnerability, your wisdom, the years that you've been loving people well down at the Micah Center. And thank you for taking time to share with us and our people today.

[00:51:16.700] - Suzanne Stabile

You're so welcome. Thank you for having me. It is an honor.

[00:51:20.500] - Lisa C. Qualls

It's our honor, too. Thank you so much, Suzanne.

[00:51:22.960] - Suzanne Stabile

You all are doing such good work. Keep it up.

[00:51:25.900] - 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 theadoptionconnection.com/facebook.

[00:51:40.590] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:51:49.470] - Melissa Corkum

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