

[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 to find out more or get started.

[00:02:43.670] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:02:51.530] - Melissa Corkum

And this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it and we're here for you. Hi, friends. Welcome to Episode 95 of the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:03:02.650] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yes, hello. We're so happy to be with you today. Today, we're going to listen in on a conversation that Melissa had with fellow adult adoptee Sara Easterly. Sara is mom to two tenacious daughters and the daughter of two amazing moms, both her adoptive mom and her birth mom. She enjoys supporting other mothers in their journeys and has a passion for helping others understand the often misunderstood hearts of adopted children.

[00:03:31.290] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So I really love how Sara told her story. And we get to explore a little bit about how to handle loss and also how to handle big fears that our kids have. We recorded this during the time of the pandemic, but she also talks about other experiences she had as a child and how she just had a lot of fears and how she talks about how she thought that might be related to some of her adoption loss. And she shares some really practical tips towards the end that I think will be really helpful to you all. So here's my conversation with Sara. Sara, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:04:12.290] - Sara Easterly

Thank you. I'm glad to be here.

[00:04:15.000] - Melissa Corkum

So you are an adoptee. And as we've mentioned numerous times here on the podcast, we really value having as many voices from the adoption triad or the constellation as there's a lot of pieces to folks who are connected to adoption here on the podcast. Of course, Lisa and I make up all three parts of the triad between the two of us. And so I'm just thankful that you're here to share your perspective and your story because as we know, we've all, as adoptees, had different experiences, different stories, different thoughts. And I just am really excited to bring yet another story and perspective to our audience.

[00:04:53.040] - Sara Easterly

Thank you so much. I'm really happy. I respect your podcast a lot. There's so much great information here, and I'm just happy to be a part of it.

[00:05:01.720] - Melissa Corkum

Thank you. So take us back to your first memory. Do you remember when you realized you were adopted or do you remember being told?

[00:05:12.330] - Sara Easterly

I do remember being told. I was nine years old and my mom sat me down and explained it. It's interesting because she has said that she told me before. And so looking back now as an adult, I wonder if that was the first time it really sank in developmentally that I understood what it was. I don't remember what preceded that exact conversation. I remember it was a little bit turbulent. And so I think that it may have been coinciding with some teasing from kids in the neighborhood who may have used the word adoption, and your mom didn't want you thing. And that it really upset me and I needed more answers. It was around the same time that I grasped Santa Claus. It was just all the magic of childhood.

[00:06:06.230] - Melissa Corkum

Melting away all in one fell swoop! So what do you remember feeling? Obviously, being teased about being adopted probably didn't feel really great. Do you remember thinking that makes a lot of sense? Do you remember being surprised? What was wrapped up in this understanding now?

[00:06:29.450] - Sara Easterly

I remember being really hurt. I felt that relinquishment and that being unwanted by my first mother, my birth mother, I took that really hard. But I internalized that. I didn't always speak that out loud. I did in one pivotal time when I was cleaning my room, just uncharacteristically, and I write about this in my book, this scene that I was picking up clutter, and I found I couldn't throw away this broken watch that I had. And it made me think, why would my birth mother have given me up? She just threw me away and tossed me away. So it was definitely a lot of sadness, so much sadness that I would be speaking that because I kept so much, so private, so much of that turmoil. And I really did, after that day I went to my mom crying for answers that day. And she said, things that from the head make sense about my birth mother's age and why she couldn't keep me. But there was still that deep inside my soul feeling of that I was rejected and I wasn't wanted by her, and that I struggled with for a long, long time, very privately.

[00:07:54.870] - Sara Easterly

I mean, I think that's been the one interesting thing with having the book come out and people close to me and especially my adoptive family reading it. It was so private that I blindsided a lot of people who had no idea because I had this outer face of life is great. And it really was. I could hold both those things and keep one really secret inside. And the other was true, too. The external facing was also very true. But that internal pain was private and felt.

[00:08:32.700] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Was there something that you sensed from your adoptive family? Or do you think it was part of your personality to hold some of that pain and some of those questions so closely?

[00:08:45.380] - Sara Easterly

Really good question. Yeah. I always feel so uncomfortable. I don't want to do parent blaming because I don't think that's helpful. But I do think it's helpful to tell the truth, too, and to be helpful in the spirit of being helpful. My adoption took place in 1972, and so it was a totally different era. It was the closed adoption era. It was a private adoption, gray market adoption. It was a time where there wasn't a lot of information for adoptive parents to know how to address relinquishment. I don't think the word relinquishment was even in the vernacular at that time. Adoptive parents at the time were given some talking points of don't bring it up and focus on how special the baby is really special. My parents being religious came later in my childhood, but they came to a lot of God brought you to us. It was very centered on their experience. Because my side of the experience wasn't talked about or acknowledged, then I just decided that was off limits. I read the cues. I made some assumptions because my birth mother wasn't spoken of, that she was promiscuous and a shameful person. I just had these filters that the void filled in for me because they weren't discussed in any way. There wasn't a sharing and an honoring through words of the woman who brought me life. And so I think trying to go back to your original question here, and I hope I haven't lost it.

[00:10:44.980] - Melissa Corkum

And I think you answered it well. And again, not to, again, parent blame because I think, especially in the era where we were both adopted, there were so fewer resources and we didn't know what we didn't know. And we've come a long way. Will you come back and just define for audience who might not be familiar what a gray market adoption?

[00:11:10.330] - Sara Easterly

I hope I can define it. But an adoption where the circumstances... My adoption was in Montana, which was one of the last states to have regulations around adoption. And so I can speak to my case. I think gray market hits where the use the word illegal because it wasn't illegal at the time. But I think in today's day, it probably would be on those.

[00:11:36.160] - Melissa Corkum

Maybe questionable.

[00:11:37.550] - Sara Easterly

Yeah, exactly. So in my case, the obstetrician who delivered me was friends with my adoptive uncle, and he was known in the area as the go to guy for unwed mothers. And so he helped broker privately adoptions for people he knew who needed babies. And that's how my adoption came to be, which I didn't know until my adult life when I was beginning to search for my birth mother. But my uncle just candidly told me that.

[00:12:12.300] - Melissa Corkum

I mean, it probably answers a lot of questions, though. It's probably nice to know in an era where there weren't a lot of records and there wasn't as much openness to be able to fill in some of those holes because we talk about telling our kids the truth at an age appropriate level as much as possible because, like you said, the things that are unspoken, kids are filling in the blanks for themselves. And a lot of times the stories that they're telling themselves aren't necessarily true. But then that can be really impactful through your childhood. You've been telling yourself a story for a long time, and it becomes truth.

[00:12:47.090] - Sara Easterly
Yeah, exactly.

[00:12:50.080] - Melissa Corkum

So as you're getting older and really processing, can you speak to just how your identity as an adopted child intersected as you formed your identity as just the rest of your person? As we go through adolescence, we're trying to figure out who we are. And so how did your adoption story play into that?

[00:13:13.380] - Sara Easterly

What a really good question. I think I was always a fearful person, so that definitely played into who I was. Even with friends, there was just always that role I played, going on roller coasters. I was one who would have to be pumped up really big, and then I might dash off and leave my friends. I was just very, very fearful. I definitely was seeking to belong and looking for belonging. And I think we all have that to some degree. I think that's an existential feeling. But I think as an adoptee, I think it was more prevalent, maybe because of the adoption that I was always looking to belong. I was always on the lookout for my birth mother. I had a lot of fantasies. So much of this was unconscious, but I was constantly, anyone who might be the right age to be my birth mother and the right look would be a potential birth mother for me. I could take that fantasy pretty far. I did that up until when I was an adult in my... About to turn 40, I found myself, I ended up joining this women's group where the woman who was running it, I had just had decided in my fantasy brain that she must be my birth mother. There were enough details that seemed like they added up. In hindsight, no, they didn't at all. But I just had enough to glue on to. Just a lot of that pattern of looking for belonging and looking for a mother, these mother roles to fill definitely shaped me in big ways.

[00:15:01.870] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And you talk about it in your book, how it shaped your view of whether or not you wanted to even be a mother. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[00:15:10.280] - Sara Easterly

Yeah, it sure did. I was really hesitant about it. I just didn't like babies. I just remember in my early 20s, coworkers would bring in their older coworkers would be bringing in their babies for viewings. And I was like, Great, get me away. And I think I just didn't want to face that preciousness that all babies have. I think it was too painful for me to want to see babies as precious because it would have disproven that belief. Speaking of beliefs, we just fill in for ourselves. I had a core belief that I was not precious. I was unwanted and broken. And so looking at babies too close would have challenged that false belief. And so I was running from it. I wore it like a badge of honor. I love telling people I was never going to have kids. And even my husband was really concerned because he wanted kids. And sometimes even after having kids, he's like, you never... And it's just like, Yeah, I said that, but I never really meant that. That wasn't deep down in my soul. I definitely am happy to be a mom. I love being a mom. But it was this outer protective thing to not want to admit that and run from it.

[00:16:27.280] - Melissa Corkum

I think that's a good reminder that we self protect pretty convincingly. And so you had the world convinced you didn't want to be a mom when really that was not your core longing at all. It was just this facade that helped protect some of your deepest hurts. And I think our kids say things to us a lot, and they're very convincing, and we start to believe them.

[00:16:51.240] - Sara Easterly

Yeah, they're so believable. Yeah, of course.

[00:16:55.780] - Melissa Corkum

So at some point, what motivated you to get really serious about searching deeper into your story, searching for your birth mom?

[00:17:08.000] - Sara Easterly

It was a culmination of factors. One thing was that my adoptive mom had an immune disease called

polymyositis, and she got a lung transplant and a double lung transplant, which bought her more time. It was a really scary time, but we got more time because of the lung transplant. She had planted a seed that she knew my birth mother's name. This is after she had her surgery and she was just almost like a... Just all of a sudden it's this open topic. I think she had things she wanted to say, and adoption in our family was a subject we just didn't talk about very often. I think she came out of that experience where she had a very impactful experience for her and wanted to start bringing that up a little bit. So she had hinted to me that she knew her name. And so that was the first subtle thing I said, Oh, what was it? Casually. And again, this is like hiding from our adoptive parents. I pretended my mother had no idea. I really even... That meant anything to me because I put this big fake, Cool. Five minutes later, what was it? Then I pretended to go to the bathroom, type it in really fast. My poor mother hadn't seen that I really needed that. It was just these unspoken feelings I had that was a shame for our relationship. But I wrote it down. That was the first little seed.

[00:18:50.380] - Sara Easterly

Then in the meantime, I had mentioned that women's group that I had joined right about the same time. I had become a new parent and I had this perfectionistic, I'm going to get everything right and study and be the perfect parent. My children will have nothing, nothing's going to go wrong for them. I'm going to make sure I learn everything about child development. I started studying child development and this women's group that I joined, I actually thought I was going to a parenting retreat with the woman who had been facilitating some workshops. It turned out to be much more, and I talk about that a lot in the book, it was essentially a conflict group. It wasn't good for me in the long run. But what it was good for was when I realized she wasn't my birth mother. I was about to turn 40 and I had this moment where I was like, I have been... Just this realization. I've been unconsciously searching all my life for this mother, this fantasy mother. And I just can't keep going on like this. And it's not healthy and not good and not great to talk about it. And so that was when I had my big wake up moment that motivated me to just grow up a little bit.

[00:20:12.020] - Melissa Corkum

What was that search process like? And how long did it take you to find out some of the answers that you were looking for?

[00:20:19.310] - Sara Easterly

The name that my mom had was a little bit off. And so that threw us to a situation where we couldn't find anything online. And it's interesting. I did my search in 2012, and things have come so far just in the last eight years because DNA, there were DNA testing, but I didn't go that route. It wasn't as prevalent. So we ended up hiring a detective. And I think it was 24, maybe 48 hours. It was really fast. It was really fast. And he came back and gave me a lot of information, a big report and names and links and all kinds of details. And it was interesting. There were two things that, it happened so fast that it was almost just like a tsunami washing over my adoptive mom and I. It was a lot for our relationship to hold in a very short period of time. And it was really good that it did happen that way, I guess, in hindsight, because it was only another couple of years and then my mom died, so my adoptive mom. So I'm glad that we had all that go through. We weathered that storm together while she was here.

[00:21:46.780] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Do you feel like it brought you closer?

[00:21:49.420] - Sara Easterly

It definitely did, eventually. It was hard. It was hard for a good while. And a lot of the reason it was hard was because of that conflict group. It was less about the searching, but more about the conflict group and where my heart had gone because I did that. Then I was really still immersed in this group. My mom sensed, she sensed an abandonment. She had her own abandonment wounds that she came by honestly. She tended to be just more jealous, just had such a negative connotation, but she was envious. She got very possessive of even calling my birth mother the word mother in it. I'm your mother was her feeling. It was hard. I got really frustrated with having to convince her that there was no other word. It got really hard. I had to create some space. My creating space was really hurtful to her. But in the end, it really did bring us a lot closer. Really close. That's what my book is about, is just

the attachment with my mom and finding our way together. It culminated in closeness while she was dying, which is heartbreaking, but it also looks super special. So heartbreaking in that it took so long.

[00:23:21.460] - Melissa Corkum

What would you say to adoptive moms who are feeling probably some of the same feelings that your mom was having about this tension and this possessiveness of, I raised you, I did all the work, I put in all the hours, I'm the mom. And can you talk from your perspective as an adoptee who now holds these two mother figures in your life, what would you want to say to adoptive moms who have children who also have this birth mom size hole in their heart in terms of what that means for their roles?

[00:23:56.340] - Sara Easterly

Yeah, I think just making a room for it. One thing in my quest for parenting information, and I've been studying with attachment and child development with the Neufeld Institute for about 10 years now. One thing I like this analogy is that Dr. Gordon Neufeld says is that when you think of a toddler and when you are... They're asking to be carried and you're constantly saying, No, you're old enough, you can walk, you can do it. They almost become obsessed with that. They get obsessed about being picked up. I think it can be the same for the birth mom relationship for the adoptee with the birth mom. If there's no room for it, it can become an obsession. I think that's where that fantasy took off for me and got so much power. I think it's in everybody's interest just to make room for that relationship to just take away, diffuse some of that power and that energy. Make room for it because there is... Well, and again, this is where I want to be careful. I don't want to speak for all adoptees, but the loss is there on some level, whether felt or not. There was... Dr. Neufeld often says, There's an invitation to exist in my presence. When there is no invitation to exist in another's company, that's when there's trauma. And so I love how he distills it so simply. But as adoptees, that happened. There wasn't an invitation for whatever the reasons, noble, great, it doesn't matter. But there wasn't a felt invitation at some point.

[00:25:44.960] - Sara Easterly

Just recognizing that for the adoptee that that's there and just making room for it. And it's not always feasible if it's a closed adoption or situations where it can't be a relationship. It doesn't have to even be a relationship. It can be as simple as just, Oh, your birth mom would have loved this about you. I bet your birth mom would love seeing this about you, or I wonder where you get that from. I wonder if you get that from her. Just some subtle things like that that I think can go a long way, a lot longer, even if they seem really innocent and simple. They can go a long way for an adoptee's heart who just might have some big feelings inside that are being held in close.

[00:26:31.980] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I appreciate that. I think it's the same with a lot of parenting things. The more we hold on to something, the more it grows in power. Even for our older kids, we went through a really rough season and we did find that it was in the letting go that they were able to come back. And so I think what you're saying resonates with that season that we had with our kids. And it wasn't that they were even pushing away for birth family. They just were pushing away for independence of some sort. But I think you're right. It gives it so much power when we hold it so tightly.

[00:27:06.970] - Sara Easterly

Yeah, it does. And I feel that as a parent, too. We've got middle school looming, and I can feel myself wanting to help. But yeah, it's just like this natural parental thing we have to do. And we may not want to.

[00:27:23.080] - Melissa Corkum

Can you talk a little bit more about the life of a fearful kid, one who has a lot of spoken fears? I'm afraid to go to bed. I'm afraid of the dark. I'm afraid of roller coasters. And how much you think that was because of early abandonment? How much was personality? And then maybe we can jump into just some of the practicals. What would have been helpful to you as that scared little girl?

[00:27:48.190] - Sara Easterly

Yeah. I mean, I was always the scared cat. I really was. And usually vocal when you say that, it makes me wonder. I think a lot of it was not vocal, but I think it was probably vocal. My parents knew. Everyone knew how scared I was all the time. Firework shows, I'd be buried under the blanket. It was tortured to be watching fireworks. Thunderstorms, tornadoes. I grew up in Colorado, and so there were afternoon all summer long, every afternoon, pretty predictably, there's thunderstorms and then a lot of tornado warnings. I think what was influenced by my adoption, that piece of it, was this feeling that... And I wouldn't have had the words for this. This is adult words overlaid on my childhood experiences, but I've already lost my first family and now my family is going to die. I'm going to lose my parents. And so for me, one thing that was really powerful was, and it turned into just decades of nightmares was tornadoes and this feeling that I could never get my family to come down to the basement during a tornado. I was raised in this family where they just didn't get afraid. They were unaffected.

[00:29:17.610] - Sara Easterly

Of course, now as an adult, it's like, okay, I think that I can appreciate that. But it was really hard as a child because it... I know this is a buzzword right now, but there was a way it felt like gas lighting. When I'm seeing tornado warnings on the news flashing, and we lived by a golf course where we would hear the sirens, and I was begging them, Please, let's go down to the basement. They're going about their business. It was a form of not recognizing the storm outside. I think that was an adoption thing. Then it just triggered more adoption things because it's like, Okay, I can go down by myself all alone. I'll be taking care of me. But who's taking care of my family? I'm going to lose them. There's just a lot of wrapped up adoption stuff that I can even... That visual of the tornado is perfect because it's just the swirl of emotion. I'm going to lose my family. I have to take care of myself. No one else is going to take care of me. I'm all alone. Just these not always true, but beliefs that I could tell myself.

[00:30:30.980] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, thanks for sharing that. What would have been helpful? What would you say to parents who are parenting children with a lot of obvious anxieties? I believe that we're all parenting children with a lot of anxiety, and of course, we're recording this during the quarantine. So I think that's all on steroids. I think a lot of our kids' anxieties don't always show in the way that we're looking for it. But if our kids are clearly fearful, what would you say to parents in terms of what are the ways that those children can be seen and heard, comforted?

[00:31:04.840] - Sara Easterly

I've been thinking about this a lot. And of course, like you say, my kids come with their anxieties as well and things that I have to look through as a parent. So just switching gears to that. I think age and developmentally appropriate, the truth. Even just thinking about the pandemic that we're going through right now. If I were a child right now going through this pandemic, it probably to me wouldn't feel that different from the tornado warnings and everything else. What would make me feel comforted is to be present with my... Have my family there and with me. First and foremost, it's those attachments and feeling that they're there. So does that mean... Probably would have helped me just to have my mom just wrap me up and go to that basement and just say, here, I'm here and we're okay. We are okay and I'm here for you and we're going to be okay. And the truth, there can be scary. With Coronavirus, it's real and it is scary. It's not imagined. What you're experiencing is valid and I'm here and you're safe and you're going to be protected.

[00:32:24.350] - Sara Easterly

Play can go a long way, too. It's so important. Just sad, making room for just even just generally speaking, even just fear and anxiety can be a sign of other things going on, and grief and sadness. I know just one thing that I've always had a bent toward is sad books, sad movies, *Charlotte's Web*, all the childhood things that were really wonderful for me because they were outlets for my emotions to get those emotions moving. I think it doesn't even have to be direct about whatever these fears are, but you can just drain feelings through other avenues. I mean, I'm a huge children's book, I do children's book reviews and I'm a huge believer in just the power of children's books. I think sad books, that's what we're doing right now in our family right now is lots of sad and some alarming. My daughter loves World War II and scary, alarming books. But I think it's a way for her to just access scary things happening to other people. It's a time that was real. And so there are real people who

survived these big, really horrible situations. And then by way of reading the book, you're reading about a hero who survived and is okay. You can see that resilience. So I think just going about it that way in a more sleuthy way rather than addressing the fears head on can go a long way.

[00:34:03.700] - Melissa Corkum

I think that's so wise. I think some of our best parenting moves are those backdoor solutions where we're not taking on something directly with our kids because I feel like that just hardly ever goes well by experience. So I appreciate that advice. And it's a little counterintuitive to lean into some of those big feelings. My tendency would be to, let's think happy thoughts. Let's watch the hallmark things, the things that have happy ending. And so your advice to use play, use story to give an outlet, an indirect outlet for big emotions is really wise, I think. Thank you for that.

[00:34:46.760] - Sara Easterly

Yeah, you're welcome. I have to say I'm doing that for myself right now as an adult. I just intentionally watched the first 20 minutes of the Pixar movie Up the other night because I could just, we're in such close quarters and I was just getting... And there's been so many losses and so much fear right now for all of us, kids and adults. And so I had to take my little time out. I knew that that movie always makes me feel my feelings and I only need the first 20 minutes. And then I turned it off and I was a lot softer the next day. So what are those things that do that for the kids, too? And there are some kids who actually, my daughter is one of them, who she won't watch horse movies, won't watch dog movies because she knows they're going to make her cry. But laughter is good, too. We had a day the other day where my youngest is super sensitive. We just watched, we binge watched for a full hour Holderness Family videos.

[00:35:52.650] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I just found those recently. They're hilarious.

[00:35:54.070] - Sara Easterly

Yeah. Just moving emotions. Moving emotions would be huge, I think. One of the thing I was thinking about when I said the word resilience is, and I think I learn this more as I age, but just adoptees are incredibly resilient people. And I don't think we always think of ourselves as resilient, but we are because we've survived. We often tend to focus on this, I have a mentality where I just naturally gravitate to the losses and the sadness and the grief. I'm a 4 enneagram, so I'm focused on the past. But we don't give ourselves credit for how resilient we are. And I think that's something to even just how can we instill that strength and let our kids know how strong they are? They have survived whatever they needed to survive, whatever that was in their past that brought them to, saw them in a circumstance of adoption. Just helping them see their strengths, helping them see how strong they are and see that they can survive. They've survived worse and they can survive.

[00:37:10.390] - Melissa Corkum

I think that's wise. We are enneagram fans here at the Adoption Connection, and I think that is also important. I think we always start by saying every story to each his or her own, but also recognizing that there are very different personalities. And we view the world through very different lenses with different motivations, different core fears, and digging into our kids and their personalities and starting to learn what that can look like can help give us a lot of wisdom into what will help our child because of their particular lens on the world process whatever big thing is going on, whether it be new revelations about their adoption story or current events, a worldwide pandemic. And so I appreciate that you've shared that and just done that work because I know from my study of the Enneagram, what comes with being a 4. And like you said, focused on the past. And to know that you have a child who's focused on the past is helpful in how we speak to them versus a child who might be future focused, where you need the time and the space to process all the things that you're remembering, thinking about, and wondering about the past. Conversely, I'm a 7, so I'm a future gal. And so I think I want to know what's coming next. And there's so many beautiful ways that we can help our kids understand those things about themselves. And or even understand why you may have so many questions about the past and another child might not. I appreciate that. And we're going to do more exploring of that here at the Adoption Connection soon. So that makes me excited when people mention the Enneagram, just because I think there's so much insight and wisdom that comes with

that about ourselves as parents and how we react to our kids, but then also our kids.

[00:39:20.210] - Sara Easterly

Yeah, absolutely. One thing you were just saying made me think of another thing that I say with caution, but I think giving our kids words and gives them consciousness. I think that is what's so great about the enneagram is that it gives words to things that we may not have words for. That's what I like about the Neufeld material as well. It's the same thing where things where, these dynamics that we all have that have. Then you have now consciousness because you've got a way to talk about it. I think it can be slippery with kids sometimes, where we can project too much on them, or it's a temptation anyway to say too much about what they're feeling and not leaving the room to see it and watch it unfold. But I think it's so helpful too. I would have loved so many just different words for different things. I would have loved to have that growing up just to, oh, that's a thing I do.

[00:40:23.970] - Melissa Corkum

Right. Yeah. And we don't want to pigeonhole our kids with personality types or numbers, especially when they're ever really, but especially when they're really young. So there's so much that's changing. But I think you're right. There is this like both and. We don't want to pigeonhole, but the words give us so much and the possibilities of, I wonder if he sees the world this way. I wonder if that's why we're having this conflict. Or why I don't understand this thing, but I wonder if they're seeing the world from a different personality lens.

[00:40:55.800] - Sara Easterly

And what's so great about that, too, I think with them, kids having some sense of this, is it normalizes feelings, too. Even if it's not the feelings they're having, it normalizes. Gosh, I remember when I first came across horoscopes, I had a brief thing where I really got into horoscopes in my young 20s. But just like, Oh, my gosh, I'm not the only one. Just learning that you're not the only one. And that's what's so great about the enneagram, too, is, well, this is a thing. There's a whole bunch of people. Like, this is a thing. There's a whole bunch of people who do this, like, who have this bent. And so it takes some of the shame. We can be so prone to shame, adoptees and 4s. So it takes some of that shame out to just, Okay, well, this is just what I've been given. This is just who I am. And it's not something's wrong with me. Something's not grossly wrong with me. It's something that's there. So how wonderful. What a wonderful gift for children to grow up knowing a lot of these things and not internalizing that and writing their own stories about it, like you said.

[00:42:01.220] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love that. Well, Sara, you have done so much work and you bring so much wisdom and graciousness to this conversation. I'm really appreciative of your work in the world and your willingness to speak about your story as just bringing another voice to the table. And thank you so much for your book, and for spending the time here with us at the Adoption Connection.

[00:42:27.410] - Sara Easterly

My pleasure. Thank you so much for having me.

[00:42:34.280] - Lisa C. Qualls

I loved a lot of things about this conversation. I think one thing I found particularly tender and interesting was her relationship with her mom and how it ebbed and flowed in the openness and not of talking about adoption. And it was just so interesting to me. And I appreciate her sharing that. And she does talk about the fact that she's written a book about her experience. Do you know you want to tell us about that, Melissa?

[00:43:01.840] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Sara's book is called *Searching for Mom*. And so if you love a great memoir and want to hear a little bit more about Sara's journey and her relationship with her mom and the ways that it ebbed and flowed, and I think it's just a great reminder that these are just not neat and tidy things, that all of the relationships and the stories, a lot of them at least, around adoption, are beautifully messy.

[00:43:28.000] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yes, they definitely are. You can find Sara at her website, which is just Saraeasterly.com, or on Instagram @SaraEasterlyauthor. We'll have those in the show notes so you can find them easily, as well as a graphic that she provided for us titled, Ways to Help Fearful Adoptees. And also we'll have a link to her book so you can get that as well. You can find all of that at the adoptionconnection.com/95.

[00:43:59.820] - 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.

[00:44:07.460] - 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.

[00:44:17.810] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:44:25.380] - Melissa Corkum

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