

[00:00:00.920] - Melissa Corkum

Is your parenting journey turning out differently than you imagined? It's never too late to begin your family's transformation journey.

[00:00:09.280] - Lisa C. Qualls

Welcome to the Adoption Wise podcast, where you'll rediscover the confident and connected parent you long to be. I'm Lisa C. Qualls.

[00:00:18.090] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:24.600] - Lisa C. Qualls

Hey, friends. Welcome to episode 238.

[00:00:29.560] - Melissa Corkum

So Lisa and I, just a couple of weeks ago, were in person, again, together. What you might not know, if you haven't listened to the podcast for a while, if you're new to Adoption Wise, is we started this podcast way back in 2018, and we started it without having ever met in person. And that could show what we did. Well, we tell our teens, our kids, never to which is meet someone on the internet and form a legally binding relationship with them without ever having met in person. We podcasted for a whole year together, really, or worked together for a whole year before we ever met in person. And really, I mean, I could probably still count on two hands, the number of times we've ever met.

[00:01:23.980] - Lisa C. Qualls

That's true. We spend so much time together virtually on Zoom that I feel like we've spent lots of time in person together. But it's true, we just travel and COVID and everything. We haven't spent as much time together in person. Although you did come stay at my house for a week when we were writing Reclaim Compassion, or about five days or something, right?

[00:01:46.060] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, and I was laughing because when we parted, we ran into each other in the airport in Grand Rapids, where we just were together. And you were like, I'll see you Tuesday. I was like, Wait, do you have something else coming up? Like, back to back. And then you were just talking about our typical Tuesday meeting. I'll see you on Zoom.

[00:02:05.080] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yeah, it feels very much the same. And we do. We used to meet a couple of times a week for work, and now we do one long meeting every Tuesday, and we found that that's just much more productive. But what we were really talking about before we hopped in here to record is how great it was to just be with a bunch of parents, and in this case, a bunch of moms, together at a retreat that we just spoke at in Grand Rapids. It was just wonderful to see everybody interact with each other and for us to get to teach and share our stories and all kinds of things. It was just really great. I enjoyed it so much. How about you?

[00:02:50.750] - Melissa Corkum

I think it's always interesting to watch the dynamic play out in spaces like that because inevitably, there's a mom who feels all alone in her situation. It was a small enough retreat, and the room was set up in such a way that we were able to facilitate table discussion. The women were sitting in tables of eight-ish. It was also a size room where we could ask the general audience a question and people could share across the room. Someone would share something pretty vulnerable, and then someone would piggyback it and either add encouragement, like we were there and we're a little bit further along or have another idea. I mean, it's the reason why we have continued to provide group opportunities, whether they be in-person or virtual, here at Adoption Wise, because we get to see that dynamic play out, and there's really no substitute for it. People will come to us and think that they want private coaching because either there's a lot of shame or they need the intense support.

[00:04:22.990] - Lisa C. Qualls

Or they think their story is so different that nobody else will understand, which actually is almost it's never the case.

[00:04:31.350] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. We always encourage people to get into a group situation, and then if they need more support, to complement that maybe. But there is something magical that happens in group settings, in-person or virtual, that you cannot replicate anywhere else. It's worth, like multiple therapy sessions, to be validated and to connect with someone who really understands your situation.

[00:04:59.590] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yeah. And a lot of times people think what they really want is to hear from us. And that's great. We love sharing all the things that we've learned. But there's always so much wisdom in the room, whether it is a in-person room like we were just at. Or in the room, I put quotes around that, in our group coaching community, the parents in there, many of them have so much wisdom and so much knowledge. And so, sometimes I'll get in there in our community and people will be posting questions, and I'll get in there to answer, and there will already be so many great responses. I feel like I start a lot of my responses with, Well, you've already gotten some great answers here, but I'll just add, especially because I live on the West Coast. So much is happening before I even start checking things in the morning. If someone on the East Coast posts something in the morning after they drop their kids at school or whatever, by the time I get into it, there's already been a lot of responses. And I love that. I don't think you can... Like you just said, Melissa, there just is no replacement for that.

[00:06:14.830] - Lisa C. Qualls

It's just really, really special. And when we can have it in person, when we can have friends who live locally, who really, really get it, who understand our lives and have lived similar things, that is wonderful. And when we can gather together live like we just did in Grand Rapids, that was so beautiful. I absolutely love women's retreats, but a lot can happen virtually, too. I mean, seriously, I've made some of my best friends in the whole world, primarily virtually since we adopted. I wish I got to see them in person more, but so much of it just has to happen from a distance.

[00:06:59.140] - Melissa Corkum

I have a really special group of women that I stay in touch with on Marco Polo. It's not adoption-related, which sometimes it feels good because we eat, live, and breathe adoption, I feel like, because it's such a big part of our family stories. Then, I mean, even me as an adoptee, I was doing adoptee work, my own personal work. And then we support adoptive family. I did hit a point a couple of weeks ago, and I was like, Oh, my gosh. There are only so many more adoption topics, things I can think about, take. I have this whole stack of books. People send us books all the time. I cannot bring myself to read them because honestly, when I go to read, I want to read about some beachy scene somewhere. Lisa is always like, what's the book, *Demon Copper*?

[00:07:47.690] - Lisa C. Qualls

Oh, *Demon Copperhead*. That was by Barbara Kingsolver. It won the Pulitzer. You got to read it. I know. It's foster care, but it is a lot of trauma. If anybody's listening and you're sensitive to language or even other maybe inappropriate kinds of things. You may not like it.

[00:08:04.570] - Melissa Corkum

And there was another book, too, that I actually started that had to do with adoption that you, someone mentioned. Maybe it was you. It's about a Black girl at Howard University.

[00:08:19.160] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yeah. So good. What was that one called? I just read it. Okay. It's in my Libby app. You keep talking. I'm going to look it up right now.

[00:08:26.940] - Melissa Corkum

Okay, I'll keep talking. Anyway, she was like, Really good book. And I didn't even know it was about adoption of foster care. And you had me a really good book, and then you were like, *Adoption of Foster Care*. And I was like, I think I'm out. Anyway, all that's to say.

[00:08:41.080] - Lisa C. Qualls

Okay, I found it. I found it in my app. It's called The House of Eve. It was very, very good. Again, if you're a sensitive person, you may not like it, but it gave a perspective, especially for me as a first or birth mom, it gave a really, I felt pretty honest and true representation of that experience. It's written by... Yeah, she's just a wonderful author. I will recommend it with all the cautions that it may not be your kind of book, but it is about adoption. But I know you're like, No, don't want to read it. I know. But you really should.

[00:09:21.600] - Melissa Corkum

I think I'm a fifth of the way through. I actually forgot about it until just now, and I was like, Oh, yeah, I did start that book. I'm reading too many books right now, obviously. I can't even remember which ones they are. But all that to say, I have a group of women who I met when I did Suzanne Stabile's Enneagram cohort back in 2021. There was a small group of us that really connected, and we stayed connected. That group Marco Polos multiple times a week. We have really rich, deep conversation, which I think is why it has kept going because it's not just these surfacey things. We're really digging deep.

[00:10:07.260] - Lisa C. Qualls

I don't think we have time for surfacey things, Melissa.

[00:10:10.040] - Melissa Corkum

I really, really, at this stage of my life, enjoy deep conversations that are about adoption and foster care. That group, we have really stayed connected and gone really, really deep, virtually. I mean, we have met in person. We had a base of in-person, and actually, we just started talking how it's been too long since we've all seen each other. So we're itching for in-person time. But I don't think I would feel connected to them in the way that I do if we only anchored our group on every 18 months seeing each other in person.

[00:10:46.860] - Lisa C. Qualls

Right. I have something similar where when I was doing my spiritual direction program, my training, they put us all into triads, randomly assigned. So I was randomly assigned with two other women who are also in the process of becoming spiritual directors, and we were put in this triad, and we did have the opportunity to meet four times in person over two years. But we also have continued to meet every month virtually. So it's like this really... And we do text each other as well, but for the most part, we have one group spiritual direction meeting once a month, but it's so Like you said, it's deep. These women are really wise. They have a ton of life experience and just so thankful for them. And we have a really specific topic that we're talking about, mostly the movement of God in our lives, but it is really, really sweet. I do also have lots of adoptive moms, different kinds of groups and things that I stay very connected to, and I'm thankful for that. I really am. There just aren't a lot of people who really understand our lives very well.

[00:12:07.470] - Melissa Corkum

We talk about this in *Reclaim Compassion* in the book, is that blocked care happens because our nervous systems are under excessive stress. In a lot of cases, a big part of that stress is our relationship with our kids. It could be behaviors, it could be the amount of therapy appointments they need to go to, it could be just some of it's a big family. Even if all of our kids were neurotypical and you were parenting 6-8 kids, that's just busy.

[00:12:39.820] - Lisa C. Qualls

It could be the hard things, like aggression or toward you or toward your other children. I mean, there are some really hard things in there, too.

[00:12:48.780] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, and in our case, we have a couple kids. They're not the most logical. They spin around in weird ways or they aren't. They're not logical. They're not logical. We'll just leave it at that. We are created to be in relationship. And part of feeling regulated as a person is being able to co-regulate

with other people and connect with other people. I think sometimes we're in relationship with all of the people in our family and kids, and that feel like it sucks all our relationship bucket empty. It feels like we're in a relationship all the time because we're with people all the time. But we're really not in life-giving relationships.

[00:13:40.980] - Lisa C. Qualls
Right.

[00:13:41.950] - Melissa Corkum
We're talking to people all the time. We're in the presence of other nervous systems all the time. But those things might not be life. They might not feel very life-giving. We have to be intentional about staying connected to people that fill our relationship bucket.

[00:14:05.840] - Lisa C. Qualls
Yeah. I find, too, that I really need people who know me well enough to speak the truth to me, even if I don't necessarily want to hear it. I can lose sight sometimes about different things about my kids or my marriage or whatever. Having people who know me well enough to say, Okay, pause. Let's think about this for a minute. Or, Have you thought of it this way? Or those kinds of things are just so valuable. I know, I'm just really thankful for the people who are life-giving for me. We talk about the nervous system and filling the buckets. Our relational bucket is relationships with life-giving people, relationships with God. Then lastly, relationships with our children, because we have to fill everything else first before we really have that capacity. So when we have life-giving people in our lives, whether we see them in person, whether we talk on the phone, whether it's virtual, whatever it is, it really helps to fill that bucket and help our nervous systems be healthier so that we have the capacity to parent our kids.

[00:15:26.250] - Lisa C. Qualls
I have a somewhat new friend who's an adoptive mom and actually lives in Michigan. I got to meet her in person for the very first time after this retreat that we spoke at. But we keep in touch on Voxer, which is another app. Marco Polo has a video. Voxer is just a voice. And that has just been really wonderful for me, too, because she's also a spiritual director. And so she can ask me the hard questions. Not everybody does that. And she can ask me reflective questions. And she said to me, we were talking about something, and I was processing when we were together. And she said, It seems like you already have your answer about that. I was like, Oh, yeah, maybe I do. Maybe you're right. So these life-giving people are just so important.

[00:16:08.890] - Melissa Corkum
I was chatting with a private coaching client recently, and she was just lamenting about how all the feedback that her kids give because they're so dysregulated is that she's a terrible parent. I, objectively, am looking at their situation and know all the different things that she's doing to advocate for their family. I said to her, I wish you could see and experience yourself, like as a mom the way I do, because I think you're doing a fantastic job. And so it occurred to me. I was like, I... Like, your assignment this week is to go spend some time, even like, virtual time, with other people who recognize that you're great parent. Because even though on some level, we know that some of the things that our kids are saying, especially if they're dysregulated, are not true. If you hear that all the time, it wears you down.

[00:17:14.680] - Lisa C. Qualls
And it's not like it just rolls off. I'd love to say that it just pings right back off me, but it doesn't. It hurts, you know?

[00:17:22.270] - Melissa Corkum
Yeah. And so I was like, You need to go spend some time with people who will tell you that you're a good mom doing good work. And she took me seriously. I think even just... It might have even just been some phone calls or some text messages with another group of mom, and she was like, You are right. I just needed to hear that from some other people to counterbalance how hard it is. I mean, there are so many positives to community, and we know that that feels probably fitting another thing

in. So start small. Maybe start a Marco Polo conversation with someone, or maybe just take it- Or Voxer.

[00:18:11.530] - Lisa C. Qualls
Yeah. Or Voxer, another app.

[00:18:14.450] - Melissa Corkum
Or just take the next step towards connection. You could pop into our Facebook group and just say, Are there any other parents who are struggling near... And put your major city.

[00:18:31.090] - Lisa C. Qualls
Where you live.

[00:18:31.660] - Melissa Corkum
Yeah. I mean, that's what a group that size is good for, is those connections. And in a group of more than 5,000 people, there's a really good chance there might be someone near you.

[00:18:44.230] - Lisa C. Qualls
Yeah. Driving distance anyhow. Yeah.

[00:18:46.420] - Melissa Corkum
Yeah.

[00:18:47.100] - Lisa C. Qualls
Yeah. And of course, I mean, we talk a lot about our private group coaching program, Reclaim Compassion. I mean, if that's something you need and you're interested in, you will meet people who resonate with you and your story. And maybe the two of you or a few of you will start having conversations as well as in the whole group. And we have a mom channel within the group. We have a dad channel within the group, plus all kinds of other things, behavioral issues, everything. But if you're longing for people to connect with who you can be honest with, that's the thing with so many people. We have to be careful with our words because they're not going to understand. So if you're longing for people to be honest with, it's just a great place. Or maybe you even have an in-person support group in your community. Maybe there's a church that sponsors one. Just finding I always say, you found your people. Finding your people is really, really important. I also do think there's nothing like live gatherings from time to time, retreats. Conferences can be like that, but probably retreats are a little sweeter for more intimate conversation, I think.

[00:20:04.720] - Lisa C. Qualls
But as we were standing up in front at the Equip retreat where we just spoke in Grand Rapids, which, by the way, next year, it's going to be awesome. We won't be there next year, but we do know the speaker who will be there, and she's awesome. Anyhow, when we were standing up in front and we would put a question out to the tables, and then we would just turn our mics off and we would just watch everybody talking and laughing and interacting. We always had to bring them, say, Okay, two-minute warning, one-minute warning, because people were engaging on such a beautiful level. It just filled my heart to see it happening.

[00:20:47.030] - Melissa Corkum
Yeah. Well, inevitably, when we get feedback from retreats and workshops, we do like that. Someone always says, I wish we had had just more table discussion time. We're always like, I mean, maybe we should just start standing up in of the room and just put a question out and let them go for three hours.

[00:21:04.030] - Lisa C. Qualls
Presenting questions, and then we can chat together over lunch or something. But yeah, really, people have a lot to share. And again, the wisdom in a room like that is really amazing, the wisdom and experience.

[00:21:16.180] - Melissa Corkum

We are recording this at the end of January. By the time you hear it, we will have already announced that we are doing a very special, very small retreat in the Atlanta area on Friday, March 8th. It's a one-day thing, like a 9:30 to 4:00. We have no idea. We've never done anything like this before. It might sell out with one email. It's brand new. Or when you're listening to this on February 20th-ish- Later. There might still be spots. Or you might still be able to catch us at an upcoming retreat that we're speaking at or conference, you can find those things at adoptionwise.org/speaking. We were talking about crowdsourcing a couple of minutes ago. That's another thing. Hop into the Facebook group and ask, Are there any retreats going on? Some of these retreats are sponsored by churches, and they send them out, get the word out the best that they can. But there might be something happening in your backyard that we don't know about, you might not know about. And more and more are popping up. The closer it is to you, the easier it's going to be to make it happen.

[00:22:43.150] - Lisa C. Qualls

And let me just add, if you are involved in planning a retreat or you know that your church or somebody is going to be looking for speakers, we try to make ourselves available. And let me tell you, West Coast, we need more events on the West Coast. I am forever flying across the country. I couldn't believe it. When I got to Grand Rapids, I got in really late. I went to sleep at 1:00 AM because it was Pacific time for me, so it was 10:00. And I thought, I don't need to set an alarm to wake up in time for breakfast. And I woke up five minutes before the hotel breakfast ended, and I had to jump up and go eat. And I was so confused. And then I realized Grand Rapids was East Coast time. I thought for sure, of course, I did not check, but I thought Central time. But anyhow, I mean, I will travel wherever, but West Coast people, we need more stuff going on out here.

[00:23:37.350] - Melissa Corkum

I know. Well, but it took you three flights to get to Grand Rapids. Then someone asked me about my flight, and I was embarrassed to say that it only took me one hour flight to get there.

[00:23:48.830] - Lisa C. Qualls

Melissa, it took me 15 hours to get home because of a severe delay on one of my three flights. Then I missed my final connecting flight because of that, I did make it to my daughters in Spokane late Sunday. Sunday? Yeah, Sunday night. But I just keep thinking, wow, what would it be like to just fly to California or someplace so much closer. One flight away? Yes. It does seem like the vast majority of events seem like they're Midwest and East. So, yeah, we West Coast people need to pick it up out here, or I need to find you all.

[00:24:32.520] - Melissa Corkum

We would invite you to do one thing this week or today to move towards connection, especially if you feel like you don't have it, it's missing or it needs to be more. You can get to our Facebook group at adoptionwise.org/facebook, and all the other random things that we mentioned, we'll put in the show notes to this episode.

[00:25:00.610] - Lisa C. Qualls

Find your life-giving people or even one, one life-giving person, and speak into each other's lives in ways that nurture your souls and encourage you.

[00:25:11.780] - Melissa Corkum

We believe in you. Go connect.

[00:25:13.780] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yes.

[00:25:14.550] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:25:28.550] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:25:36.580] - Melissa Corkum

Music for the podcast is composed by Oleksandr Oleksandrov.