

Melissa Corkum (00:00)

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

Lisa C. Qualls (00:09)

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

Melissa Corkum (00:18)

And this is Melissa Corkum. Don't worry, we get it, and we're here for you. Kayla North, thanks so much for joining us here on Adoption Wise podcast.

Kayla North (00:31)

Yeah, absolutely. Glad to be here.

Melissa Corkum (00:34)

Will you start by just telling folks a little bit about who you are, who makes up your family, and then just what you and Ryan are up to these days?

Kayla North (00:47)

We are a big family. We have six kids. We were foster parents for 10 years. Adopted four of our six kids through the foster care system in Texas. Just got started... Gosh, it's been almost 20 years since we started the journey. Our oldest is 21.

Melissa Corkum (01:06)

Yeah. Can we also say that 20 years ago is still after the year 2000 now? What in the world is that all about?

Kayla North (01:13)

That's crazy to me. The first time I said that out loud, I was like, Yeah, we started our foster care journey almost 20 years ago. I was like, Oh, gosh. I'm like, This summer will be 20 years since we took our first class to start fostering. I was like, That's just insane to me. I just can't comprehend it. That's too many years. That makes me feel old and sound old.

Melissa Corkum (01:40)

Right. Our first kid will be 21 this year, too. We were starting parenting around the same time.

Kayla North (01:47)

Right. The same time. It's just crazy to even think about that. We started that journey almost 20 years ago. Then from there, just really realized the need for more equipping for families, more equipping for people walking the journey, people who were past the foster care days and were like, I have no more support, and I don't know what to do. In the last 10 years or so, we have become TBRI practitioners, both my husband and I, and we have started a company where we just do a lot of traveling and speaking, and we write curriculum, and we do trainings for churches and other organizations, foster care organizations, and parents. We do parent coaching, just anywhere we can fill a void that's needed in the trauma-informed world. We step in and try and fill those voids for families and organizations. It's been a lot of fun. My background is actually education. I was a teacher for 10, 11 years. It's funny now because I used to be I was terrified on parent orientation days. I was like, Oh, my gosh, I have to stand in front of a room full of parents. I'd rather eight-year-olds. Now, if you asked me to stand in front of a room from eight-year-olds, I'd be like, Give me the parents. I'd much prefer I just talk to the parents at this point. It's a total 180 from where I was, but it's fun. It's a fun journey.

Melissa Corkum (03:21)

I've had the privilege of being with you guys. We've been speaking together. I got to do an in-person podcast with you all at some point. I've never done an in-person podcast. That was super fun. In this world of supporting foster and adoptive families, there's really no competition. There's clearly enough. There are plenty of families in need, and we're all just out there doing the best we can. So it's been

really been a pleasure to be in. We run in similar circles. Like, we bump into each other continually.

Kayla North (03:57)

Right. Even though we live nowhere close to each other, we see each other several times a year, usually.

Melissa Corkum (04:01)

Yeah, I know. And it's so fun because just finding foster and adoptive parents who share similar stories, it's always great to connect those parts of your stories. And so to connect on that level with you guys, and then also to be able to talk shop and be like, Okay, so-

Kayla North (04:19)

Do Ministry together, right?

Melissa Corkum (04:20)

Yeah. What's going on from that perspective. So that's been really fun. I invited you here today because we really wanted to bring stories to the podcast this year of parents who had overcome blocked care. We talk about it all the time, and then all of a sudden we're like, You know what? We tell people that there's hope out there. We should start introducing them to people who have been in this journey as long as we have, and the ups and the downs. And we'll get this a little bit later. But you also, through your ministry, led a couple of book groups this summer. Can you tell us, was there a point in your journey where you felt this blocked care piece? And for those of you who are listening who maybe don't know what that is, I'll let Kayla explain what it felt like. We can circle back to the actual definition. My guess is perhaps Lisa and me, maybe you had the experience before you knew it had a name. Can you just share whatever you're willing to share about that experience?

Kayla North (05:39)

Of course. When we had about 30 kids in and out of our home over the 10 years we were fostering, and then even when we finalized our last adoption, which was back in 2014, we experienced so many different things. I didn't know there was a name, right? You'd hear the term, like compassion fatigue, or secondary trauma or things like that. But when I heard the term blocked care and had this explained, I was like, That's what it was. It wasn't these other little pieces here because it was really... There were different points. In your book, you talk about the 10 different signs of blocked care. I looked through them and I was like, Thankfully, I don't think I ever had all 10 at the same time. But I can say there was a point at which I had all 10 of them at different points along the way. I don't know if I've experienced it to the same degree as some people that I've talked to. But I know there were times with different kids.

Kayla North (06:42)

There was one little girl that was really hard, and it just seemed that nothing we were doing was really helping. In the midst of that, we actually were pregnant and lost a pregnancy. We lost a baby in there. We were just struggling to make it. We thought we had all the right tools, and we were trying to find, what can we do? How can we help? Maybe we can try this. Then at some point, we were just like, This is hopeless. I'm so done with this. She was little. She wasn't even quite... She turned two while she was in her house. I was just like, I never thought I would feel this way about a kid in my home. I thought I would love every kid that came in my home and never want them to leave. I remember, actually, when she left her house, it was on my birthday, and somebody was like, Oh, that's so sad. She left on your birthday. It was like, That was the best present I could have ever gotten. And then I felt really guilty because I was like, How could I think that about a kid leaving my home and think that that was the best gift? But I had gotten to such a point of, I don't know what else to do with her. I don't have anything more to give. I'm so tired. I'm so exhausted. The behaviors are so big, and I feel like I can't navigate them. I felt like at that point, I was just like, I'm done. And so it really was probably a blessing to both of us that she moved to go live with an aunt and uncle who would go on to adopt her. She's doing really well. We've kept in touch with that particular kid. We've kept in touch with family. But I just remember just this feeling of just like... I just was tired. I didn't want to get up in the morning. I didn't want to do anything. I didn't want to navigate one more meltdown or one more, I mean, just violent outbursts or any of that. I was just like, I don't know what to do. I felt bad because we were, I

think we were her fifth or sixth home in less than a year. Because everybody had said, I can't do this anymore. But I just remember that experience being really exhausting and draining and hearing people go, Well, you chose this. You wanted to do this. And feeling like there's—

Melissa Corkum (09:08)

So helpful.

Kayla North (09:09)

Yeah. I was like, Thank you. I mean, I didn't choose this particular situation. I didn't choose, right? But I was like, I don't know what to do. Maybe I'm doing something wrong. Maybe it's me. Maybe. I think I was experiencing some blocked care, and I just felt hopeless in that situation. That there was nothing that we could do. Then again, actually more recently, we had a situation with one of our older kids. It was just really horrible. There were a lot of lies being told. There were a lot of accusations being made. We'd run into people who'd be like, Oh, I heard. I was like, Actually, that's not true. You know, and stuff like that. I remember getting to the point where I was like, Why did we do this? Why did we journey this far? He probably would have been better off if he had just been able to stay with his biological family, and we'd never gotten involved. Maybe we wouldn't have gotten to this point. You know? And then, again, I felt really guilty. I felt really like, How could I even think that? I love this kid, you know? But I didn't have anything more to give. And I felt like I didn't have any compassion for this kid. This kid, I was just like, You are making your own bed. You got to lie in it. You know? Yeah. There was a point at which I was just like, I just want to cut it off. I'm going to stop talking to you.

Melissa Corkum (10:38)

All structure, no nurture.

Kayla North (10:41)

Yes. I was just like, I don't have anything left to give you. You have taken everything from me. Thankfully, my husband didn't get to that same point. I'm sure he could probably tell you stories of when he got to that point with different kids. But thankfully, we weren't both there at the same time. So he was able to stay connected and help ground me so that I could come out of that and feel like, Okay, I have something more to give. I can get through this. I was waking up at 4:30 in the morning and couldn't sleep. I've never had a problem sleeping. Sleep is like, I could take a nap in the middle of the day. I go to bed just fine at night. I'm asleep as soon as my head hits the pillow. But I would be awake until 12:30 or 1:00, not able to fall asleep. And then I'd wake up wide awake at 4:30 in the morning and just thinking about the situation and ruminating on it and just getting really upset about everything. And so ultimately, I was just like, Okay, Lord, if I'm going to get up at 4:30 in the morning, I'm going to be productive with this time, and I'm going to pray until I can't pray anymore.

Kayla North (11:53)

And I would just sit and I would pray, and I would read my Bible. And my husband would come down at a normal time when he woke up and find me either still praying because I was just in that same place or having finally been able to fall asleep and get a little bit of rest. But I really think in that period of time, really just leaning into the Lord and saying, Okay, this is completely out of my control. I don't feel like loving this kid right now. I don't feel like being his mom right now. I don't feel like... I have nothing to give. It is all going to have to come from you. It was in that moment. In those moments, I really have told people, I'm like, I really know that... I think the Lord was waking me up at 4:30 because he knew that was the only quiet time I was going to get to be able to really focus and say, Hey, this is the space that you need to be able to say, There's nothing you can do. None of the training that you've done, none of the things that you teach people, right now, it's all about just leaning into relationship with me and recognizing how I can fill your cup so that you're able to then be a mom again. Because there's probably three or four months where my husband would be like, Kayla is checked out. She is not available for anything, for this particular kid, but also for my other kids. I could go through the motions, but I wasn't really available for them. It was a rough period.

Melissa Corkum (13:34)

Yeah. You said a couple of things that we hear often. One, I think, is in our heads, in our logical heads, we know how ridiculous we may sound to people who don't know this journey. You started with the

story of the little girl who is two. And if you've never parented a child with deep, deep trauma and a lack of felt safety, and you think, Two. They're still little.

Kayla North (14:06)

Yes.

Melissa Corkum (14:08)

And in your case, we came in into our later adoptions, having training in TBRI, trust-based relational intervention, having training in trust-based parenting, having some knowledge of the impact of trauma. And we didn't have that at the beginning. So there was this switch that was like, Oh, well, but this time around, we know better. We've got all the tools.

Kayla North (14:38)

Yes. I know exactly what I'm doing.

Melissa Corkum (14:40)

Yeah. And so to have that blindside you. And, this additional layer of... At the point we were in our deepest crisis, we weren't doing this work at the level that we're doing it now, in terms of almost full-time supporting families. But because we were Empowered To Connect parent-trainers, and because we were in our community supporting local families, there was this idea of we must really, really be awful people if we're supposed to be the one supporting other people, and we can't figure this out. Before I hit Blocked Care, I hit the point of, I just don't know what else to do, like you were talking about. I've pulled every piece of knowledge, everything. And blocked care, again, to review for those of you who are new to this, is this self-protective mechanism that happens in our nervous system when there's excessive stress. And Kayla, you mentioned going through a miscarriage in the midst of also hard parenting. It can be stress from all kinds of things. It doesn't have to be parenting stress, although it often is. And if we think about the way our nervous system is designed to protect ourselves, when you're in a relationship that's hard, every time you have an interaction with that person, your nervous system starts to go, That wasn't really fun. That didn't feel great. I didn't like that, right? And we know that that emotional pain that we feel in relationship is similar to physical pain in the brain. And so if we think about, we don't blame anyone for not going back to touch the hot stove.

Kayla North (16:47)

You're like, just try it again. Maybe it'll be better next time.

Melissa Corkum (16:51)

We all know that that's not getting better. And so when we start to see that, I think that's when I started to understand and start to have more kindness for myself. Like, of course, my nervous system is starting to shut down and feel protective when human relationship starts getting really messy. There's also this balance of, as caregivers of people with developing nervous systems, it's also our job to do what we can to be able to keep showing up. Especially -

Kayla North (17:27)

Right- Even when we don't want to.

Melissa Corkum (17:31)

Even when we don't want to. And there's all kinds of things we could talk about in terms of boundaries, especially with our older kids. But for those littles, it doesn't make it any less hard. I think, at least in our experience of Blocked Care, I also didn't have the tools to know where to go from there. So I felt guilty that I didn't want to go on, but I also didn't really know what to do with that. So part of what you're doing with families, what we're doing here at Adoption Wise, is trying to help families know that even in those really hard moments where it really feels like there's no margin, there's no place to turn, there's nothing else that can help. There are little things that we can do to help our nervous system recover after hard interactions. There's little things that we can do in the tiniest spaces of the day that start to chip away and increase that margin just a tiny little bit. What are some of the practical things, now that you've been there and you've been back, and you've been there again?

You've been back. And what have you learned about your particular nervous system? What works for you to help reground yourself outside of prayer and just relinquishing how much little control we have?

Kayla North (18:59)

How little control we really have, right?

Lisa C. Qualls (19:03)

Is your adoption journey turning out differently than you imagined? You had so much love to give, but now you feel ashamed and bewildered by your lack of compassion. You may be experiencing blocked care, a self-protective mechanism in your nervous system that makes it difficult to connect with your child and maintain compassion. When this happens, it's like your heart seems to have left the relationship. But the good news is you are not a bad parent. You can heal from blocked care, and compassion can be rekindled in your heart.

Melissa Corkum (19:34)

This episode is sponsored by our book, *Reclaim Compassion: the Adoptive Parents Guide to Overcoming Blocked Care with Neuroscience and Faith*. This practical and powerful guide offers a simple step-by-step process for reclaiming compassion for your child and yourself. Included in the book is a blocked care assessment, which is now free to you, our listeners. You can take the assessment at reclaimcompassion.com/assessment.

Kayla North (20:03)

I think with the younger kids that I still need to parent and have to be there and available for them, when I start to feel that sense of, I don't want to do this anymore. I'm just done. I don't think I'm quite at blocked care, but I'm getting close. I find that finding something that brings me joy is really helpful for me. One thing that I love to do is I just love to read fiction books. I read a ton of parenting books and a ton of, How do you have a great marriage? And how do you parent kids who've had experienced trauma? But just to sit down and read like a... I love just romantic books, like romance novels, but I also love-

Melissa Corkum (20:52)

Things that have happy endings?

Kayla North (20:53)

Yes. They always turn out. They always end up together, and everything is wonderful. I love historical fiction books that I already know the ending, right? Like, this already happened. I know what happened, but I can at least experience some of it. And it's not my trauma. It's somebody else's drama, you know?

Melissa Corkum (21:12)

Well, that's even better than me. Sometimes I feel like I can't... If it's a hard place in history. I'm not even sure I want to go there. Like, literally just give me the Hallmark channel. Yeah.

Kayla North (21:21)

Yes. That's another one, too. Just like those sappy Christmas movies.

Melissa Corkum (21:26)

Yeah. Two hours. You can be in and out in two hours and feel You feel so good about yourself.

Kayla North (21:31)

Everything is wonderful at the end, right? But if I can find something that brings me joy or something that gives me just a few minutes of downtime, it doesn't even have to be hours and hours. There have been times where... I remember one time, I think it was actually for Mother's Day, my husband was like, Hey, I got you a hotel room. You can check in at two o'clock, and then you don't have to check out until whatever, noon on Sunday. And he goes, Enjoy. And I was like, This is so amazing. But then I got there and I was like, Okay, I've read a book. I've watched a movie. It was like I almost didn't know what

to do anymore because it had been so long since I had had that alone time. But what I found, really, is for me, if I can just have 10 minutes, if I can just go sit on my bed and be like, Hey, I'm going to go and read. I'll be back downstairs and 20 minutes, go upstairs, take my cup of coffee, sit on my bed, read a book, or even just at night, getting the kids in bed a little earlier, or while they're doing something, getting ready for bed, I'm sitting and reading. I just find that that really helps me to feel grounded and to feel like, Okay, I got to do something for me, something that I enjoy. With my older kids, who maybe don't need me to parent them as much, and I'm starting to feel that with them.

Kayla North (22:45)

sometimes I do have to set up, like you said, boundaries. I had two with one who was out of the house, and every text message was just not kind. It just felt like an attack every time I got a message, I just silenced the alerts from that particular kid. It was on a thread with my husband, so I was like, Hey, if there's anything I need to know, you just tell me. But I can't. Every time I get an alert, I can just feel the stress my whole body. For me, I just had to set that boundary of, I can't look at my phone every time this kid has something they want to tell me because I never knew if it was going to be, Hey, Mom, do you have blah, blah, blah, blah, or if it was going to be, Hey, I can't believe you didn't blah, blah, blah.

Kayla North (23:50)

It was like, I didn't know which one it was going to be. Sometimes it was just too much. I did have to set a boundary, and that was really helpful. It was really helpful in that time period. I even told him, I was like, Hey, just so you know, if you really need something, call dad, because right now I need a break from some of this. I need to, I'll be there for you. I'll show up. But I can't have it all day long, every day. I can't have these constant messages back and forth. It's just too much. And so that boundary really helped me be able to then breathe and not feel that stress. For me, when I feel the stress, I feel it in my chest. I'm just like, I was feeling it all day long because I was like, When's the next message going to come through? When am I going to get a call? Or when am I going to... Whatever. And so that just helped setting that boundary.

Kayla North (25:00)

And then I guess the third thing I would say is just creating margins so that my day didn't feel so overwhelming. Because I've got to be a mom, so I've got to do all the mom things. But I work, so I've got to do stuff for our business. I've got to send emails, I've got to do all those kinds of things. I also homeschool my kids, so I've got to make sure they're on track with their school, and they're turning in things for our co-op, and all of these kinds of things. I couldn't say yes to more things. I had these, these were my areas that I've got to take care I have. And so in those times, I'm like, Hey, you want to volunteer in Sunday school? We need people. Normally, I want to do those things. I want to say yes. I want to say, Sure, I'll do this or I'll do that. But I was like, I can't. I can't I've got to add anything more. I've got to create the margin. I've got to have extra time so that I don't feel rushed and I can do those things that bring me joy. And that seems to really help me not get back to a point of blocked care, or if I'm in that state of where I'm feeling like I'm close to being at blocked care, just backing off from things and saying, Hey, right now, I can't commit to one more thing, or volunteering here, or doing this, or whatever. So that's really helped.

Melissa Corkum (26:20)

Yeah. It's like that white space on the calendar. I used to think, Well, if there's white space, I could probably say yes to it. I'm usually overly optimistic about what I can get done in a day or whatever. I have become more realistic with myself in the last couple of years. Because I have found myself in these situations where I've scheduled myself back to back to back. I'm like, What are you? I don't like... I'm not young. Maybe it's an age thing, maybe it's a block care thing. I don't know. But I'm like, I can't do this anymore. And so now I started my My go-to is to be like, Oh, there's white space. Let's do that. And then I've been stepping back and being like, Melissa, is your future self going to want to do the way you've stacked your calendar? We both travel and speak a lot, and I tend to, especially if we're going to be in a city where I'm not there often, I want to see things or I want to catch up with people that I'm not with normally. And people will ask, and I'm like, Oh, it's white space on the calendar. Surely that's a yes. And then- Yes. And then I'm half I'm going to sleep in a hotel room thinking like, Oh, gosh, man, what was that all about?

Kayla North (27:33)

I should not have said yes to that. I should have just taken the extra sleep with nobody else needing me to take care of them tonight.

Melissa Corkum (27:41)

Yeah. So I can appreciate all of that. You were gracious enough to lead some other... Were they all women?

Kayla North (27:52)

Yeah, it was all moms. So we have a ministry, and we do a summer book club. Every summer we pick a book and we read through it together. And so I said, You know what? I'm going to lead a book study on *Reclaim Compassion*. And the moms were like, What is that? Tell me more. And so I had about, I want to say I had about 10 moms in-person, and then more than that online. So I had two groups running at the same time. The in-person one, we met every week. I think we did nine. There's 10 chapters to the book, right?

Melissa Corkum (28:34)

I think there's 10 chapters. I should know since I wrote the book, but you get to the point where you forget these things.

Kayla North (28:39)

I think we did nine weeks in the summer, and we met every week. Some moms would miss a week here or there. But we also had then an online, and we just met once a month for the online group, and we would read three or four chapters and then come back and discuss. It was lots of fun going through it and having people have those aha moments where they were like, Oh, that's what I'm experiencing, or, That's what I was experiencing last year, and I didn't know what it was. I didn't understand. We had a good mix of moms that were either currently feeling like they were in a place of blocked care or had recently experienced it. Everybody in the group could relate on some level, whether they were there had been there or were on the verge. They were like, I don't know if I'm quite there yet, but I'm so glad I read this because it gave me some sense.

Melissa Corkum (29:39)

You can imagine, right? Even if you're not deep into blocked care, usually people aren't like, What are you talking about? We've never met anyone who's like, I have no idea what you're talking about.

Kayla North (29:48)

I've never experienced any of those.

Melissa Corkum (29:50)

Yeah, except maybe like brand new moms with like newborns. And to your point, it is easier to prevent it's not to prevent block care than it is to overcome it. I know we named the book, *Overcoming Blocked Care*, but as it turns out-

Kayla North (30:08)

For sure. Well, anything, right? What is it? An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, right? If you can recognize it before you're like, Oh, man, I'm experiencing a couple of these signs right now. Okay, what can we do so that you don't just keep going down the hill? It was great just to be able to talk about these things and just having these moms that were just willing to open up and be like, I've never said it before that I just really don't like being around my kid. I just want them to go to bed at night. I don't want to tuck them in and read them a story. I just want to go to bed. Other moms go, Oh, I've been there. I've felt that before, or I'm feeling that, too. It was a great group, and I really enjoyed going through it because one of the things I like about the book is that it's not a hard read. It's not like you have to set aside an hour to read this chapter. It's a pretty easy read, but it's not easy content, if that makes sense.

Melissa Corkum (31:15)

So simple and not easy.

Kayla North (31:18)

Yes. That is what I really appreciated about it, because I didn't have people showing up going, Oh, I didn't read this week. Which every time I do a book club, I have people that are like, Oh, I didn't get a chance to read, blah, blah, blah. I didn't have that at all with this group. Everybody showed up having read because they knew, even if they only read it the night before or the morning of, they knew they could read it. Then in the coming weeks, we did challenges. I would challenge them and be like, Okay, this week, I want you to try this, or, I want you to think about this. I would take some of those questions from the back of each chapter, and I would just think that this week, and we'd put it out there in an online forum, and everybody could discuss. So my in-person and my online group melded together in this online forum. So it was fun.

Melissa Corkum (32:12)

I love... We just love stories of people doing that in all the different formats it's taken on. The idea was that you could go through the book and do it on your own. Truthfully, that's not really what we would recommend. It's fully doable. But we did imagine a neighborhood of moms or a church ministry being able to put a book together, or a Zoom group to be able to go through it. Because it's one thing to know that you're not alone, but to be in a room of people and really experience that. Oh, yeah. I've had that experience, too. Oh, my gosh. I'm so glad you I've never said that. I've thought it, but I didn't think-

Kayla North (33:03)

I've never said it out loud.

Melissa Corkum (33:05)

I didn't think we were allowed to say it out loud. I must have said something from a stage recently, and someone came up to me and she was like, You said that from the stage, and all I could think of was, Doesn't she know you're not supposed to say those things out loud? And I was like, Well, that's my job.

Kayla North (33:19)

That's right.

Melissa Corkum (33:20)

That's what I've become known for is saying all the things- yeah, all the things out loud. I have no shame. What did you notice about the moms coming into the group versus nine weeks later?

Kayla North (33:31)

I think what I... I would have to say that I noticed more small things. I didn't see any huge transformations, but I saw moms who initially came into the group talking about their kids' behaviors and things that they were frustrated with. Then somebody would say, Well, have you tried this? They're like, I've tried everything. They were in that place of like, whatever, nothing you're going to say is going to help me. By the end of it, they were like, willing to try some things, or they were willing to listen to some gentle correction or gentle advice and not be at the point of, nothing's going to work with this kid. I saw some of that, which I thought was good. Just seeing some of just being willing to listen, because I know that's one of the signs is just not even being able to... No advice is good advice. It's all bad. Everything's horrible.

Melissa Corkum (34:30)

You're so cynical. Yeah, you're so cynical not at all.

Kayla North (34:33)

Yes. It's like, does not matter. I have a coaching client that I said, I was like, I need you to get this book. And I said, because what I'm hearing from you is sounds like blocked care. I really feel like that's where you're at. I think this would be really helpful just to give you some really practical tools as you walk through this. And we just started talking about some of the different points, and she's like, Oh, gosh. Yeah, that's me. Yeah. I was like, I know. I can hear it. I can hear it in your voice. You're not

alone. I think just... I think it was lots of little things. Mom's just feeling a little more seen. Some moms who I think had never... I don't think they even realized what the Book Club was about. They just thought it was a night away from the kids. And by the end, we're like, I'm really glad I signed up for this. I had no idea that I was experiencing this. When you said the term... Because I prefaced it in my emails and stuff that I was sending out about it, what it was. I don't think they were paying attention, and they just showed up for a book club.

Melissa Corkum (35:50)

Yeah, they just stopped at Mom's Night Out Book Club.

Kayla North (35:53)

That's exactly right. But I think by the end, I could see them even processing like, that's where I'm at, or that's what I'm experiencing, and being willing to talk about it, and being willing to even consider making some changes or doing some things to help get them out of that. Because I know it can be really hard if you don't recognize it, then it can really easily turn to, My kid's just a bad kid, and nothing's ever going to change, and this is just the way it is. So I'm either going to just try and hold out until they're 18, or I'm going to find some other place for them to stay because I can't do this anymore. But if they don't have a name for it, if they don't realize what they're experiencing, nothing is going to change because they're just going to keep down the road thinking that it's hopeless. I think that's the point I've seen families at, is that they get hopeless because they think there's nothing. Nothing's ever going to change. I'm like, No, if you can recognize what's happening and that it is a protection mechanism. It is our body's way of saying, I can't handle this, whatever this is anymore. It's too much.

Melissa Corkum (37:10)

Stress makes our nervous system feel closed, protective. And I think what's so interesting is I'm forever seeing these parallels... Because we're all humans. Our kids are humans, we're humans. And so when we start to understand just what stress does to a nervous system, a kid or parents, stress makes us feel protective. It makes us feel defensive. It colors the truth. It colors the narrative of what we're telling ourselves. And I think we see it in our kids because they have the stress of carrying their histories and potentially really hard things in their past. And we experience that as them telling us we're the worst parents in the world. Their narrative, and I don't know about your kids, but my kids don't love my suggestions. They're pretty cynical about my helpful advice, too, right? So they have that very closed, protective nervous system posture going on because of the stresses they're carrying. And as parents, we're doing the same thing. That stress shuts us down, and we're not receptive to advice. We're grumpy, we're irritable. Everything you can imagine a closed-down, shut-down person would be... Yeah, we're just all humans doing our best.

Kayla North (38:41)

Well, and I think as you recognize it in yourself it really has helped me have more compassion for my kids once I can get through it myself and go, that really is what's happening to them. They are in such a protection mode that no wonder they're grumpy. No wonder they don't want to listen to what I have to say, no wonder they just want to hide away in their room. They're so stressed out that I think that it has helped me have more compassion for my kids, just recognizing what it is and just going, They can be stressed out, too. It's not just me that's stressed out trying to do all the things. They're stressed out just navigating life and the unexpected things that happen in life. Their window of tolerance for things is very low when they're stressed out, just like my window of tolerance for things is really low when I'm stressed out. I'm like, people will be like, You must be the most patient person in the whole world. I'm like, I mean, I can be, but not usually.

Melissa Corkum (39:52)

I have my shining moments sometimes.

Kayla North (39:56)

I have my moments when I have lots of patience and lots of compassion. Then I have moments where my cup is completely full. I mean, it's completely empty, and I have nothing to give. I'm like, I don't want to deal with this anymore. And so I can have compassion for my kids when they get to that place, too.

Melissa Corkum (40:20)

Yeah. No, I hear that. We're recording this on Ash Wednesday, and I haven't always recognized the church calendar, but I literally felt like as I was driving around today, I was like, I think maybe I should commit to giving up yelling at my kid for this year.

Kayla North (40:38)

Let me know how that goes.

Melissa Corkum (40:40)

Yeah. By the time this airs, we will be well toward Easter or even past it. So I'll do a social media update for how that went.

Kayla North (40:48)

Yeah. Let us know. Let us know how that giving up yelling goes. Maybe you could give up yelling on Wednesdays or something. Yeah. It's a little more practical.

Melissa Corkum (40:59)

That's probably a good day. That's my therapy day. So I'll get my therapy in the morning, and then I'll give it up for the day.

Kayla North (41:06)

That's right. See, I'm going to be patient the rest of Wednesday, and then all bets are off the rest of the week. Oh, yeah.

Melissa Corkum (41:15)

That's so great. Well, Kayla, thanks so much for vulnerably sharing. I mean, you did share some things about your story that not all parents would be willing to admit to thousands of people. And for leading parents and women well, and for recognizing the importance of having compassion for ourselves and what that means for the kids that we're loving and caring for who we have in our homes. So thanks for your time despite not feeling the best.

Kayla North (41:53)

Oh, man.

Melissa Corkum (41:54)

Super, super appreciate you.

Kayla North (41:56)

My voice is all raspy and weird sounding, but I didn't have any coughing fits, so that's a plus. We'll call it a win.

Melissa Corkum (42:07)

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. Our Instagram handle is @adoptionwise. Or better yet, join our free Facebook community @adoptionwise.org/facebook.

Lisa C. Qualls (42:21)

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

Melissa Corkum (42:30)

Music for the podcast is composed by Oleksandr Oleksandrov.