

[00:00:00.000] - Lisa C. Qualls

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[00:00:08.820] - Melissa Corkum

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[00:00:31.140] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:00:39.500] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:45.680] - Lisa C. Qualls

Hi, friends. Welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast, episode 93. Today we are going to be talking about a really important topic about post-adoption depression. But before we do, Melissa, I would just love to hear a little update about one of your adult kids and his moving out, moving in. Yeah, tell us about it.

[00:01:07.170] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So we have kids in flux like you do, Lisa, in and out. Three of our kids are adults. Our oldest son works for Amtrak and has been living in DC in just like a rented space, but he recently decided that he wants to build a van house. And I wasn't exactly sure what that was, but it's basically like a tiny house inside a van. And in his case, we have sold him our 15 passenger van. And so he wants to be able to park it and it just to look like any other car. He didn't want an RV or an actual tiny house or a big trailer. He just wanted something that would be a little bit more inconspicuous. Yeah, so it's been a fun adventure thinking that through with him. And of course, I feel very stressed about anything extra in my life right now. So I'm having to be really intentional about not being the naysayer.

[00:02:10.940] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, that is both interesting and really kind of funny, right? But it is creative. We still have our 15 passenger van and we've debated about selling it for years, but maybe we should take inspiration and one of our kids should move into the van.

[00:02:25.810] - Melissa Corkum

Or maybe you should move your recording studio into a van like Jamie Ivey records in a tiny house in her backyard.

[00:02:32.900] - Lisa C. Qualls

That's a little more attractive, I think. I would love a little tiny house in my yard. But anyhow, I just think what he's doing is really interesting, and I'll be looking forward to hearing more. So speaking of Idaho, which we weren't, today our guest is almost a neighbor. She lives less than two hours from me. Her name is Amy Callahan. She lives in north Idaho, and she is the mom to four children through adoption, and they were all adopted at different ages from China. Amy and her husband, Kimmer, have been married for 16 years, and they entered the adoption world as their desired path for becoming a family. Before they met, Amy served as a missionary in the Philippines. She has been an elementary school teacher, karaoke master. She's a singer. She's a ministry leader and director of a conference for foster and adoptive parents. Iron Man athlete turned hot yoga girl, Amy savors time in the outdoors in God's creation with her family. She just released her first publication, *Depression: A Guide to Helping*.

[00:03:36.710] - Melissa Corkum

So this is a really important conversation for those of us who have struggled after our kids have come

home. So let's jump into your conversation with Amy.

[00:03:51.110] - Lisa C. Qualls

Hello, Amy, welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast.

[00:03:54.910] - Amy Callahan

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

[00:03:56.960] - Lisa C. Qualls

Can you just take a minute and introduce yourself to our listeners?

[00:04:01.730] - Amy Callahan

Yes. Hi, everybody. I'm Amy Callahan. I live in North Idaho and never imagined that I would live here. I grew up, I was born in Boston, raised in Florida. I ended up serving in the Philippines as a missionary, as a single woman for six years. I saw my life going in a very different trajectory. And then I met my husband when I came home and was reestablishing myself in the United States. It was within my time in the Philippines that I had made a conscious decision that I didn't want to have my own kids whenever I got married, and whenever that time was, and so I knew that my family was always going to be from adoption. So we got married in 2004 oh, my, 2004. It's been a few years. We started our family with our first daughter from China. She came home at two years old, and then our lives really changed after that. We had to jump into a lot of learning, as you know, and a lot of understanding. You would think that bringing a two-year-old home was going to be easy. We dealt with night terrors for a year and a half, and it was no sleep and a lot of draining time.

[00:05:32.640] - Amy Callahan

We lost a lot of friends during that time. I became very isolated, but crawled out of that. And then we got two more kiddos and another kiddo, sorry, Adopted our son. Life was honky dory and we thought we were done and full. And as in China, they told us, Oh, you have a boy and a girl and husband and wife. You're a perfect little family. We decided to adopt two more kiddos a few years ago. And so we're a family of six. I have been... Life has taken a big turn. It took a big turn when we brought home the last two because they came home at 14. Our son was aging out. So he was, they're both again from China. All four of our kids are from China. So our son turned 14 the day after we finalized his adoption in China. So his adoption was done in one day.

[00:06:34.700] - Lisa C. Qualls

Let me ask something. When you said he was aging out, what is the age at which they're no longer eligible to be adopted in China?

[00:06:41.980] - Amy Callahan

14.

[00:06:42.660] - Lisa C. Qualls

So you did it with one day to spare?

[00:06:45.350] - Amy Callahan

Yes.

[00:06:45.880] - Lisa C. Qualls

Wow. So they came home really significantly older ages, especially your son. I mean, it's not very common that you hear of an adoption from China of a teen. I don't know if I know anybody now. I'm not in the China realm, but that's pretty remarkable that he came home as a teen.

[00:07:08.170] - Amy Callahan

I don't think I ever would have done it if I hadn't have known several other families who did it, and their stories were very different. Their kids are very different than our son. But having them to bounce things off of and as resources was key and we could certainly not have done it without them. And having them as a sounding board of what do we do? Where do we start? How do we handle this? How

do we talk to them? Thank God for Google translate.

[00:07:43.760] - Lisa C. Qualls

So tell me right now, what is the age range and what grades are they in?

[00:07:49.650] - Amy Callahan

So we have an 11-year-old that is in sixth grade. We have a 12-year-old that is in fifth grade. She's the one that came home three years ago. We have a 13 year old, so 11, 12, 13 in eighth grade, and then a 17 year old in the 10th grade.

[00:08:08.990] - Lisa C. Qualls

So you still got elementary, middle, and high school.

[00:08:12.090] - Amy Callahan

Yeah. Well, I don't know. Do you count homeschooling as a...?

[00:08:16.090] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yes. Now tell me, how many are you homeschooling? Well, I mean- All of them now. -normally?

[00:08:22.600] - Amy Callahan

Normally none.

[00:08:23.170] - Lisa C. Qualls

We are recording this during quarantine. I don't know when it's going to come out, but okay, so normally they're all in school and right now everybody's home.

[00:08:33.030] - Amy Callahan

It's a big change. My background is education, so it took me probably 10 years to finally realize, Oh, homeschool is not the classroom.

[00:08:45.220] - Lisa C. Qualls

Right. It's very different. So over how many years did you bring your kids home? From the first one who came home to the last, how many years?

[00:08:53.150] - Amy Callahan

That requires math.

[00:08:54.280] - Lisa C. Qualls

I'm sorry. What year did your first daughter come home from?

[00:08:58.480] - Amy Callahan

2008.

[00:08:58.930] - Lisa C. Qualls

2008 until?

[00:09:00.050] - Amy Callahan

Yeah, until three years ago.

[00:09:03.950] - Lisa C. Qualls

2017?

[00:09:05.000] - Amy Callahan

2017.

[00:09:05.880] - Lisa C. Qualls

Because this is 2016, technically. Okay, so eight years. Is that right? About eight years. You brought

home four children. One at one time, another one, and then two at once.

[00:09:17.450] - Amy Callahan

Yes.

[00:09:17.800] - Lisa C. Qualls

Which is also a very different experience. Not only were they older, but you brought home two at the same time, which is very different from bringing home one. Would you agree with that?

[00:09:27.020] - Amy Callahan

It's been interesting looking back and reflecting on it. They had no sense of a bond. And now, I think in the first year, they felt closer to each other because they had a similar situation. As time went on, they have grown in their relationship with their siblings, and now they have this more of a family relationship and dynamic, versus us versus them.

[00:09:58.730] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yes, I know exactly what you're talking about. And did that catch you by surprise that there was that dynamic at first? Did you expect that?

[00:10:08.460] - Amy Callahan

A little bit, and then I could identify a little bit with that, having lived abroad and then come home and not being able to identify with anyone, reentry when you've lived abroad is very difficult sometimes. You feel very isolated and alone and nobody understands you because you're trapped between cultures. So I had this sense that I felt a smidgen of what they were going through. I had truly no understanding to the depths of what they were dealing with, but that was the only comparison that I could give it.

[00:10:46.380] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, your story, I was going to say, is unique. And we've invited you on specifically to talk about your experience of post-adoption depression. But the truth is, I don't think it's as unusual as people might realize. Do you have a sense? I want to hear your whole story, but I'm curious, do you have a sense of how common it is?

[00:11:09.690] - Amy Callahan

So in researching about it, I found that it was far more common than is talked about in our circles. Clinically, it's more common. Then when you start to talk to people about it, they're like, Oh, my goodness, I've had all of those symptoms, or I've definitely dealt with this. There's a sadness or a post-adoption blues that you can go through that can lead to a serious depression, especially if you're predisposed for it genetically. I feel like it's not talked about because we didn't give birth to the kids, therefore we're not going to have any issues. In reality, our issues are compounded because of the things that we bring into the home, the isolation that we find ourselves in, which exasperates the depression and the depressed feelings. I definitely see that it's more prevalent than we talk about. The first time I even heard about it was a year and a half after, or I guess it was a year after bringing home our first child. I sat in a seminar and just cried and bawled. And it was only, I think, there were three of us in there. And the speaker was like, See, there's denial that this is happening.

[00:12:46.340] - Lisa C. Qualls

Okay. You said something in the very beginning about how after you brought your daughter home, you lost a lot of friends. And just in this part of the conversation, you were talking about isolation. Can you talk about that a little bit? What your life was like before, and then how that changed and how it felt?

[00:13:06.350] - Amy Callahan

We had a good group of friends through church and community. But when we brought home our daughter and it wasn't as smooth as we had hoped and we needed help, people were there for the first week or so, a couple of weeks, and then they just dropped off when I wasn't showing up to things. There weren't the follow-up phone calls or, Are you doing okay? Soon enough, nobody was calling us. Nobody was coming by. Nobody was seeing us. And we realized we need to find some

different friends. We're walking a different journey than our peers were. And we did feel very isolated and alone. And it was sad because so many of our friends were in our home group, and they just stopped asking about us even when we would go. It was sad for me, having grown up in the church too, to see, and let's not be fickle people, but stand by each other. That was hard for me spiritually too. It was a challenge. It was in China, actually, that we met someone, and we were on a boat and the facilitators said, Oh, you guys need to connect. You don't live that far away. And we're like, really? And they were from Spokane.

[00:14:35.240] - Lisa C. Qualls

Oh, really? I thought you were going to say they were from Georgia.

[00:14:37.560] - Amy Callahan

We really met somebody.

[00:14:39.800] - Lisa C. Qualls

You actually met somebody who lived near you. Wow.

[00:14:43.070] - Amy Callahan

Yes. And we were adopting our daughters at the same time.

[00:14:47.210] - Lisa C. Qualls

And just for clarification, that's like 30 minutes from you?

[00:14:50.950] - Amy Callahan

It is. Yes. And it was probably the best connection ever because we would have, I guess it was about six months after we came home, we started texting each other, maybe even less than that. We started texting each other and calling, and then we got together, and we were seeing the same things happening with our kids. And we were like, Oh, and we're looking up information like, Oh, this is this. Oh, is your kid doing this? Oh, yes, this is this. And so we would help each other through everything. And now we're best of friends. Our families do things together all the time. We celebrate Chinese New Year. We have family vacation sometimes together. They are like, they're our family, how friends and family. So it's been a really big godsend because not only did they adopt that girl, that daughter at the same time as us. We were in China two years later at the same time adopting our boys.

[00:15:51.410] - Lisa C. Qualls

Oh, wow.

[00:15:52.340] - Amy Callahan

And they were one of the families that were significant in influencing us with adopting an older adoptee because they also adopted a boy that was aging out as well. So he was 14 when he came home.

[00:16:08.630] - Lisa C. Qualls

So they've really walked a similar path, which is a gift, right? Because having someone who understands is just so, so, so important. So important. So when you brought your first daughter home and you experienced isolation, and at that point, did you know it was depression?

[00:16:29.510] - Amy Callahan

I did not. My husband, though, in all of his wisdom, saw some signs of it, and he started just kicking me out. He would come home from work, and he would literally say, Okay, Amy, I want you to go out. I just want you to go do something. And that was probably the best thing because although I spent a lot of time roaming Target aisles aimlessly and TJ Maxx. And I'm thinking, okay, I don't need anything. I just needed to get out and see people and be away from what was suffocating me and to breathe air. And so at that time, I was training for a triathlon, too. And so I did a triathlon in that time. And that really helped, too, to regulate the hormones and regulate my brain chemistry helped me to get out of the fog, so to speak.

[00:17:35.350] - Lisa C. Qualls

So when you went to adopt your next child, were you thinking ahead to how you might feel again, or did you think that was like a one time thing?

[00:17:45.100] - Amy Callahan

It felt like it was a one time thing at that time.

[00:17:46.800] - Lisa C. Qualls

Because now you were experienced, right?

[00:17:48.990] - Amy Callahan

Oh, yeah. I was a pro. Yeah. And then my son came home, and he's my buddy. But he literally slept on top of me for, I would say, six months. I felt myself start to spiral again because I felt like, Oh, my goodness, I never get a break from him. But he was a very different personality from my daughter, and so it was an interesting dynamic bringing them in. What was interesting, too, was seeing them bond and how that gave me a little bit of a reprieve when you have siblings that they can play together. So that gave me a little bit of light in there, too, where I wasn't completely consumed. As adoptive parents, sometimes we find ourselves consumed with OT, PT, speech, and we had a lot of that going on. But about that time, my daughter had graduated out of some of that stuff, and then we brought in my son. I didn't see myself spiral into things as much, but I think once again, I think my husband did. He helped. It's really hard to recognize your own faults and your own shortcomings and what to try and find and get the help that you need is hard when you don't even see yourself in that position.

[00:19:25.250] - Lisa C. Qualls

So your husband was recognizing the signs of depression again after your son came home. Did you see it once he began to point it out to you?

[00:19:36.200] - Amy Callahan

I did. And I took some steps to alleviate it. Probably not clinically the best steps, I would say. In hindsight, I would have done things differently. I got a happy light. I recognized also having lived all of my life near the equator, growing up in Florida, sun was everything. Then I lived in the Philippines. And then I came to Idaho, and I thought, There are seasons here, and there's darkness here. And the darkness was probably the hardest impact on me. Compounding that or piling that up with the other things that were going on made it extremely difficult for me. And so I got a happy light. I upped my vitamin D. I did some things that other people had recommended for this area where we live, in this latitude. And I saw some difference, but started exercising more. But it was not, I would say, a dramatic difference, but things had regulated, I would say. And in hindsight, I wish I had done, like I said, a few things differently than I did. But at that time, I piled myself into work and was busy with that, busy with the kids, and so focused that I still didn't address my own issues like I should have.

[00:21:19.870] - Lisa C. Qualls

So then how much time passed after you brought your son home before you began to think about and decide to adopt again? Was there a gap of time in there?

[00:21:31.220] - Amy Callahan

I had asked the kids a couple of times. Those in the adoption circles know that organizations and adoption agencies will send out information about kids that are available, that are waiting. I would occasionally ask the kids, and they would be like, No, no. And finally, I had... It was probably about five years afterwards, and I said, I just need to stop and stop bringing it up, stop asking. Everybody has shut this down. I need to accept that. Yeah, I took a step back and realized our family is good. Our family is fine. And then one morning, one of our kids was like, No, we need to have more siblings. I was like, No, we're done.

[00:22:17.950] - Lisa C. Qualls

Because by then, you'd shifted your life.

[00:22:20.660] - Amy Callahan

I had shifted. Right. And so we looked at the options, and Kimmer and I both said, You know what? We can do this. We have the knowledge base. We have the resources financially. We have the people that we know for help that we can get if we need whatever. We felt like we were in a place where we should. So we did. And it was literally less than six months from start to finish.

[00:22:56.040] - Lisa C. Qualls

Okay, wow. Now I'm curious, when you decided to adopt again, was there any part of you, like inside where you're thinking, Oh, I don't want to go through that depression again. I don't want to experience that again. Or were you like, Oh, that probably wouldn't happen again?

[00:23:14.570] - Amy Callahan

Honestly, I didn't think about it at the time. But as soon as we had our travel date, I made an appointment with my physician and went in and said, We're bringing home two kids. I have dealt with depression in the past. This is where the kids are. I need medication.

[00:23:38.700] - Lisa C. Qualls

So you knew you were pre- I know, pre-emptive.

[00:23:42.110] - Amy Callahan

I was a pre-emptive striking.

[00:23:43.700] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yes. Okay. All right. That seems smart.

[00:23:46.010] - Amy Callahan

It was also November when they came home. So it was the beginning of the season.

[00:23:50.360] - Lisa C. Qualls

I was going to ask you. Yes. And we live near each other, less than two hours apart. So I know exactly what you're talking about.

[00:23:56.880] - Amy Callahan

November is the bleak month.

[00:23:59.350] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yeah, November and February. Although at least in February we usually have tons of snow, which we don't appreciate all the time, but at least we get some of that reflected light off of it. But yes November can be -

[00:24:09.790] - Amy Callahan

By February, I'm finished with it. So November, I'm usually okay because of the Christmas lights. I literally put my Christmas tree up early every year because the extra light.

[00:24:21.630] - Lisa C. Qualls

That's smart.

[00:24:22.710] - Amy Callahan

I don't decorate it. I just put it up for light. I have realized that just feeds my soul because everybody's starting to put up Christmas decorations. I absolutely love Christmas. In the Philippines, it's a -ber month, so I could put it up in September and be fine with it. Ber months for those who don't know September, October, November, December. I put my lights up early, but then at the same time, to back up a bit, when we brought our last two home, we had started our home remodel to update our home a little bit. We were just breaking ground when we decided to adopt our kiddos. I went to the builder and the architect and said, Wait, we've got to change just one thing. I need you to add a truss to the laundry room and make that a bedroom and put the laundry room on the back of the house and we'll just keep it there. He was like, Okay. I said, And he was like, okay. And I said, and don't charge us for it because we're bringing two kids home and it's going to cost a lot of money.

[00:25:40.000] - Lisa C. Qualls

So we can't pay you any extra, but please change the plan.

[00:25:43.610] - Amy Callahan

Yeah, please change the plan. They were very gracious.

[00:25:48.720] - Lisa C. Qualls

But you probably didn't realize how quickly your kids were going to come home. Did you have any idea? I mean, six months.

[00:25:55.800] - Amy Callahan

We knew we had to have our son by November for his birthday. So we did know and we knew we were on a time crunch. So it was a marathon of getting all the paperwork done.

[00:26:08.530] - Lisa C. Qualls

So you preemptively started taking some medication, and you had some intentional thought even before you left for China, before you brought the kids home. What other things did you do to prepare in terms of your mental health and wellbeing?

[00:26:27.960] - Amy Callahan

So in preparing, I made sure that I had my happy light ready for when I came back, which that's a seasonal light. For those of you who don't know, you can google happy light, but it's-

[00:26:42.520] - Lisa C. Qualls

We can put it in the show notes, too.

[00:26:44.080] - Amy Callahan

It's definitely made a huge difference for me in this area where we live. And I upped my vitamin D. I started walking more. Those were some basic things that I put into place, but then also emotionally preparing for adoptions, you don't know what is coming down the pike. I think that was probably those unknowns are what caused you to pause. I think I went into the adoptions as prepared as we could be and as prepared as I could be for what I was emotionally going to deal with. But I certainly needed more support for this time around. And it was truly a blessing to have people that have walked a very difficult road, including yourself, pop in and check in on me to see how I was doing because it was a very different journey than we thought.

[00:27:45.180] - Lisa C. Qualls

So let's talk about that. So you did some things in preparation. You went and got your kids. How was the experience of depression? What happened this time after bringing home the two? Was it different?

[00:27:59.050] - Amy Callahan

It was very different experience because they were older and we were dealing with different behaviors and emotions, a whole lot of learning, especially with language. What I found for myself is that I knew I needed boundaries. Kimmer and I talked about that. My husband and I talked about that. We charted out basically days that I would take off, and I would not necessarily have any responsibilities to give myself a break. Because it becomes inundating and just overwhelming when you're twenty-four-seven on call, doctors get three days on, two days off or so. Moms don't. So what I decided when the last two came home is that I needed to start doing some things differently. I started getting up earlier. I started just having quiet time by myself. We realized right away we had a very... One of our kiddos that came home was extremely, and the word is not coming to my brain right now, but...

[00:29:14.160] - Lisa C. Qualls

Hypervigilant?

[00:29:15.340] - Amy Callahan

Yes, that's it.

[00:29:16.260] - Lisa C. Qualls

Okay, I had a feeling that's what you were about to say.

[00:29:19.980] - Amy Callahan

And would bolt awake at the sound of anything. And so I would literally just tiptoe out, have my coffee premade. So I'd make it set it for the night before it would be made. I'd pour my cup of coffee and go sit by the fireplace, put my happy light on, and read. And that was just my time of rejuvenation, my solace, it would feed my soul, it would feed my eyes with the light, my brain. But then also something I started when they came home is I realized I needed to be better organized. I started doing bullet journaling. Some people are meant to do it and some people aren't. You can do a calendar, you can do just a basic journal, you can do whatever. But I started color coding my calendar for the kids on the refrigerator. That helped the nonverbal ones that weren't English speaking yet so they could see their color and they could see what it was. And then I would write it and have a picture for what they were doing. I also laid out my things, and I would set aside time for myself. I also got a sign for my door, and when I put it out, I trained the kids they couldn't come in. So at least one night a week, I would put the sign out and go back to my room.

[00:30:43.200] - Lisa C. Qualls

Okay, on your bedroom door. I was thinking front door.

[00:30:46.360] - Amy Callahan

I could do it on my front door and everybody would come in.

[00:30:49.040] - Lisa C. Qualls

You guys all stay outside. Kids, stay outside. I have been known to say that many, many times.

[00:30:54.070] - Amy Callahan

Yes, I have too.

[00:30:55.520] - Lisa C. Qualls

So you put a sign on your bedroom door that meant that it was your time and they couldn't interrupt. Okay.

[00:31:02.690] - Amy Callahan

Yeah. Then I also started taking a quarterly night away. I would literally... I felt like funds were tight, but at the same time, I was like, I need to get away. I need to literally be removed from the situation and be alone. I used to always thrive being around people. As a mom, I shifted to being rejuvenated by myself. I would check into a local hotel and spend a night. I was 10 minutes from my house, but it felt like I was miles away, literally. I would check in as soon as I could. I would have food delivered to my room. I would not leave, and I would sleep in. It was so amazing. I think the first time I did it, I slept the entire time. I was so exhausted, and I didn't realize how exhausted I was. But then I came back and I was a completely different person. Now I do that every quarter because I need it. Mom vacation, but I don't call it that. I call it my mom retreat and my business trip as a mom. This year, I did something extremely different, and people were like, How did you do that? I went to Mexico by myself. I know. It sounds lovely, but I had miles and I used the miles and my entire trip was less about \$200.

[00:32:43.500] - Lisa C. Qualls

Wow! Where did you actually go in Mexico?

[00:32:45.330] - Lisa C. Qualls

I went to Puerto Vallarta and got an Airbnb. Now I live very simply when I go abroad. It was perfect for me. I had air conditioning. It was quiet. It was very simple and ate meals out and sometimes brought meals back to the room and just ate them there. I brought my sketch pad, and I brought a book and, I brought two books and left one there because I finished it. It was three days. It was a long weekend and it was amazing. I thought when I met some other parents there, and there were a lot of Canadians

there that talked to me, and a couple of the grandparents were like, I wish my kids would do that. And one of them has adopted grandchildren. She says, I'm totally sending my daughter on a trip like this because you're doing the right thing. I wish I had done it when I was younger.

[00:33:45.170] - Lisa C. Qualls

That's so good. What other things have been most helpful to you in terms of helping you recover from the depression or just alleviate some of it?

[00:33:59.800] - Amy Callahan

Medication was a game-changer for me, I'll be honest. It was - once I started the medication, I couldn't believe, and the doctor was like, You're not going to see a difference for a little while, probably 2-3 weeks. It was immediate difference for me. And the doctor said, Obviously, you had some major chemical imbalances. And so then I started looking up chemical imbalance, and so I made more appointments with other doctors and got hormone levels checked and got a battery of tests run. I decided to be more proactive in taking care of my health and being on that. And so that's one of the things that I put in my bullet journal is I keep track of what appointments I've made when I've done that, so that I can be diligent in taking care of me. Thing that I did is I realized I needed to create my own space. Our kids tend to have stuff everywhere and doing things, and our time gets consumed with whether it's their sports or their school activities. I needed to create my own space, and so I created space in my own room. It's a little reading area where I can sit down.

[00:35:16.690] - Amy Callahan

I bought chairs and revamped my room to make it look this is my place that I can control, and that's my little haven, is my room. That was key to have that little nook and cranny. I started writing. I went back, I said, You know what? I need to get back to who I am, not just be mom. I can be mom and do something else. I started writing more, and I started my first novel. I'm still working on that, but I've always loved writing, and so I knew that I wanted to write a book someday. I've been working on that novel for about a year, and now with all the changes, it's been a little bit less, but I'll get back to it after life gets back to normal. I think also just finding those things that bring you joy and keeping track of those, and those might change over time. I find that for me, it was writing and drawing, going back to the things that creative side, it feeds your brain. My garden feeds me a lot, not just food, but brings me a lot of joy to work out my garden.

[00:36:41.660] - Lisa C. Qualls

That's wonderful. Now, not only are you working on a novel, but you've written something to help other adoptive parents. Do you want to share a little bit about that?

[00:36:52.350] - Amy Callahan

Yeah. I wrote a book. It's called *Depression: A Guide to Helping*. It's really small. It's not big because this all started last November, which is a month of sadness for a lot of people. And I decided to just start writing posts to encourage people. And several people, my former youth pastor, Scott Inen and several other people like, You need to... I think you were also one of them, said, You need to write a book about this. I thought, Well, I don't really have time to write a book about that, and I don't want to necessarily be defined by that, how we don't want to label our kids. But I feel like you know what? It's not talked about as much. It's talked about more and more these days in general society, but it's still something that's so taboo in our circle that we don't talk about it. I set out to do this, and I want to give a shout out to two moms that helped initiate this years ago and help identify my own is Liván and Wendy. They helped me see my own depression and helped me see that there's a way out. I decided to put the posts together, and then I made it into a book. I'm currently working on creating it into a journal. Yeah, and that will have scriptures, and quotes and places for people to put their own thoughts in.

[00:38:38.410] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, it's great. One of the things that's wonderful about it is I have also experienced some depression. And when I was going through that, it was very hard for my brain to focus. And so you've written these in very short bits, like someone could read one each day. Are there 30? Is it 30 days? If they did one every day, do you remember how many there are? Yes. Okay.

[00:39:03.050] - Amy Callahan
I think there are about 30.

[00:39:05.160] - Lisa C. Qualls

Yeah. So if someone wanted to read one every day, they could do that. And just think about it. It's easy to take in, I think, in small bits. But there are also really practical action steps. It's not just thinking. There are things that you recommend people actually do. And I think that that's helpful, too, because when you're in a depression, it's very hard to think of what's my next step. And I think you've given people a lot of simple things. I'm looking at it right now: maintain routines. Yes. Make goals. Yes. Therapists are good. Yes, yes, yes. So there are a lot of wonderful things in here. We will have your book is on Amazon. We will have it in the show notes of this episode so people can find it really easily. And I think it's a gift. I really think it's a gift because there aren't many people talking about post-adoption depression. And I think it's more common than we realize it's a huge life shift for many people. And we need to support one another. And while you don't want to be defined by this, I think God has given you a voice in this topic, and you're a blessing to a lot of people. So thank you so much, Amy. I appreciate you being on the podcast, and I'm excited to see your next adventure with turning this into more of a journal. I think it's going to be very helpful.

[00:40:38.860] - Amy Callahan
Thank you so much. Thanks for having me.

[00:40:46.320] - Melissa Corkum

I'm really thankful that Amy was brave enough to share her story, because I think it's when we start talking about some of these things that I think can feel shameful or like we're the only ones, that we really start to find more hope and more healing. I love how she also recognizes this connection between mind, body, wellness, which is something that I have become really passionate about over the past couple of years. And even just sometimes it's the simple things, right? It's not necessarily having to go to hours and hours of counseling, which can be really helpful, but might feel overwhelming when maybe your kids are already doing that or we're in COVID and everyone's not as accessible. But little things like buying yourself a happy light or getting out in nature more. So I just thought she had a really well rounded perspective, and I just really appreciate her story because. We both had this experience where adoption was not what we thought it was, and to know that there's words to an experience and that there's different ways that we experience our stories is really helpful.

[00:42:01.520] - Lisa C. Qualls

Well, and I appreciate too that she talked openly about choosing to use medication, and certainly not all of us need that. But I appreciate her talking about it because I think there is a stigma about taking antidepressants and medication. So I'm glad she went there in the episode, and I think she has a lot to say. You can find her book, *Depression: A Guide to Helping* on Amazon. We'll have a link to it in our show notes. You can also find Amy on Instagram @authorAmyJCallaghan. So I hope you enjoyed hearing from Amy. You can find all of these things in our show notes at theadoptionconnection.com/93. 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.

[00:42:51.190] - 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.

[00:43:01.330] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:43:08.940] - Melissa Corkum

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