

[00:00:01.175] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:00:09.095] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:14.645] - Lisa Qualls

Hey, friends, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast, episode 114 and the very first episode of Twenty Twenty One. We have so many great guests and topics in store for you this year.

[00:00:26.615] - Melissa Corkum

So one new thing that we're really excited about adding this year is understanding adoption through the lens of the Enneagram. So we want to invite you to join us on a journey of gaining powerful insight into your experience as an adoptive or foster parent. Using the wisdom of the Enneagram as our guide, the Enneagram helps us make sense of our stories while also giving us insight and compassion for the people we love. If you're not familiar with the Enneagram, go ahead. Pause this episode and go back to Episode eighty five with Jeff and Beth McCord.

[00:00:57.795] - Lisa Qualls

Today, we've invited four of our good friends to share how understanding the Enneagram has influenced their experience as foster and adoptive moms. Each one represents a different Enneagram. We hope you find these short interviews as fascinating as we did.

[00:01:18.805] - Melissa Corkum

Well Ligia. Welcome back to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:01:21.985] - Ligia Cushman

Thank you for having me again. I'm so excited.

[00:01:24.775] - Melissa Corkum

All of the guests in today's episode are foster or adoptive moms, but you also have an additional role and contribution that you're making to the adoption world. So before we get started, can you just tell us a little bit about your family and your work?

[00:01:39.235] - Ligia Cushman

As you mentioned, an adoptive mom we adopted privately domestically as an infant. So our son is now 15. But I was in the delivery room when he was born, which I just love sharing that with folks because it's such a cool, neat perspective that I didn't think I would ever have the opportunity to experience. My husband and I have been married for twenty, almost twenty one years. He is what I like to call a white guy from Jersey and I am a daughter of immigrants, Hispanic immigrants from New York City. Professionally, I think what makes me a little bit different is that I am also in the work of adoptions through child welfare. So I am the director of adoptions for the city of Tampa, Florida, and I have been doing that a little over two years now and we finalize anywhere from three hundred or four hundred adoptions a year.

[00:02:38.005] - Melissa Corkum

Wow, it's so impressive. I'm really always curious about the work that you're doing and and your work and your voice in the world of trans racial adoption, I think has been really, really important. So thank you for all the work you're doing in the office and out of the office and with your family. Thank you. Yeah. So how did you first hear about the Enneagram?

[00:03:03.175] - Ligia Cushman

from you? Actually, one of my good friends, Allison Little, is huge into Enneagrams, and she told me about it probably two years ago. She was like, I'm so curious to know what you land on. Have you taken a quiz? I took a quiz back then. Couldn't remember it when you asked me. And I'm just being fully honest. I didn't it until I did it recently. You know, I didn't really know what I was. And so I'm kind

of borderline between the two and a three. I believe it's achiever and helper, and I wanted to lean more towards achiever, towards helper just because the cheaper one made me see it made me uncomfortable for a lot of reasons. One is I think for me it just felt like I was it pointed a picture to I want approval from others and that was a struggle for me. And then I started thinking about my son and anyway, it went it went deep. So I'm really excited that you guys are making time to kind of talk about how this connects to parenting, specifically parenting children who have been adopted.

[00:04:12.725] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, it's so interesting. It's funny. I think it was Ian Morgan Cron, who wrote *The Road Back to you*. He said one of the things that you can think about when you're reading the book, trying to identify your type is the type that makes you want to throw the book across the room. Might be your type.

[00:04:32.205] - Ligia Cushman

That was my type...the achiever. And when I look back on my life, yes. And I've always been in competition with myself, how can I do the last thing I did and how can I'll do the last thing I did. So much so that when I became an adoptive mom, I had to be the best adoptive mom. Now we know that. But that's how I felt initially, like I've got to get this right, especially because I had been in adoption professional. So how how am I going to get this wrong? But you get a really, really long a lot of the times, you know, with grace and forgiveness, you figure it out. And you you know, one of the things that I'm learning as an achiever, which I'll claim for this podcast, is that there are things that are way out of our control. And if 20, 20 has taught you that...I think I think out of all the moms in the world, adoptive moms were definitely a little bit more prepared for what 20, 20 did, which is it just blew all our plans out of the water. And as adoptive parents, we have to navigate that all the time. And so I think that for me, when you're an achiever, you want to control everything. You want to make sure the plan is what the plan is. And so this year, I have been definitely broken from all my plans, just kind of going with it and seeing as a mom seeing how it impacts parenting as well as the plans we have for our kids and other plans for themselves. So for me, I think that as an achiever, I wonder if I put some of those same expectations on my child, my marriage, my relationships. And so I'm learning a lot about myself this year and trying to navigate all those pieces.

[00:06:24.575] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, and kudos to you, because we were talking before we hit record about how even just thinking about yourself through your core motivations, your dominant type is relatively new to you. And just like that, in the last three minutes, you really unpacked so much about what's important to type 3s and how it impacts all of the things. You're exactly right that threes love to have a plan to know how to be successful, whatever they deem successful. And it is a little different for every three. No. Two, three is look exactly alike. And so quickly already you're connecting the dots between being the best adoptive parent, the best adoption professional, how it impacts maybe the plans that you've had for your marriage and your and your son and. Yeah. So thank you so much for being vulnerable and just sharing a little piece of that. So I can you talk a little bit about just what it's like to kind of constantly have your eye on a goal, on whatever success looks like and having to be flexible as an adoptive mom?

[00:07:38.245] - Ligia Cushman

Yeah, so I guess I think the easiest way for me to kind of explain it would be through education. And so I think when our son was born, he had some complications and which impacted his ability to learn. A lot of adoptive parents experience that. So our son I was savvy in getting him an IEP. I knew the system. I knew which teachers to talk to and in which principals to talk to because I adopted in the same city town that I lived in. And so I had really great connections in the adoption community and in the education community where I think the challenge just came in for me was I really wanted him to read and to thrive at reading and to love it like I did. Even though I struggled with reading as a child, I didn't want that for him. And so that meant I was going to push and I was going to push really hard and I was going to have these really high expectations. And really, at the end of the day, I had to just stop and I had to get creative about ways that he could love reading and be OK if he never did. And I think that as as adoptive parents, a lot of us come into adoption because it's it's one of the only ways to grow our family. But when we step into that world, at least for myself, I had to all these preconceived notions of what I thought my fantasy child was going to be like, the same things I

trained all these hundreds of families on all the time I had to live out. And that meant saying goodbye to that vision of what I thought a child would be like and embracing the child my child actually is. And that's what flexibility for me in parenting has given me, and I'm still working on it. By no means am I. And I keep my teenager was sitting right here. He'd be like, she's got some work to do, you know? For sure, for sure, but that I, I, I acknowledge that about myself, I know that about myself, and I understand that because I am I want to achieve many things all at once. I think that I've also learned that it's OK if he just has one goal, not 17 plots, you know, cooking at the same time. And so for me, just learning that he's different, he's my son and I'm going to love him as he is. And I think that's where the flexibility comes in, letting go of all those ideas that we thought our kids should be kind of like our parents did to us. And none of that ever really works out. I just I just wanted to be a happy human. And so that's what we we focus on now. And and, you know, what happened over time academically. He came to be a great reader, a great student, and he came to that on his own merit. And I think that that definitely has been big for us, too, especially for him.

[00:10:47.505] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And I think that what the Enneagram gives us is that what makes one human happy is not what makes another human happy. Right. You probably can't imagine a world where you could be happy without a goal that you're reaching towards. Right.

[00:11:01.995] - Ligia Cushman

Always like what we doing. And my husband is the same way. He's a lot like my son and I'm good. I just mowed the yard. I'm good. So definitely learning a lot about how that impacts me as a mother has been beneficial for sure.

[00:11:21.255] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, thank you again, Ligia, for taking a minutes out of your busy life and sharing some insights about how the Enneagram has shaped you as an adoptive mom and an adoption professional. We really, really appreciate it.

[00:11:33.135] - Ligia Cushman

thank you so much.

[00:11:39.235] - Lisa Qualls

Well, hi, Jamie, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:11:43.385] - Jamie Finn

Hey, friend, I'm happy to be back and always happy to be talking to you.

[00:11:47.495] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, that is very, very mutual. So we are talking about the Enneagram today. Can you just give people tell everybody your name and what your role is in the adoption world personally and then a little bit about what you do for your work?

[00:12:04.875] - Jamie Finn

I am right now the mother of six children. I have two biological children, two adopted children and two through foster care. So I have my hands full. Well, I'm saying that to you, who put everyone to shame, but

[00:12:21.545] - Lisa Qualls

you have your hands full.

[00:12:24.365] - Jamie Finn

As for my role in the adoption community, I love to write. And so I write about anything that I'm experiencing. And for the past seven years, that's been my experiences as a foster mother and an adoptive mother. So I am the author of Foster the Family Blog and Social Media Platforms and the host of The Real Mom podcast.

[00:12:46.535] - Lisa Qualls

OK, so tell me about how or when did you first hear about the Enneagram? What was your first exposure?

[00:12:54.455] - Jamie Finn

Sure, I think it was probably on social media and seeing other people talking about their number and being a number that I'll reveal to you in a second. I don't like to be left out of anything. I want to be a part of everything. So I'm like, what is this thing? People like this, I have to get into this. I took a test, which I think we all know now isn't always the best way to find out your number, but I am such a strong number that I the test worked. It was it was so clear what I was and then to see myself so clearly in a test, I became just so intrigued and learning more and studying. And so I've read a number of books and just kind of jumped into this because I found so much help in it.

[00:13:45.575] - Lisa Qualls

So what is your number? What did you discover?

[00:13:48.185] - Jamie Finn

Yeah, so I am seven. If you know seven, you know that a FOMO mindset. We don't want to be left out of anything. And I am a seven I wing eight pretty strongly. So I have a personality that for me, I know a lot of people talk about the the fun, always fun and that's part of it for me. But the big thing for me is the drive for more, the drive for satisfaction, the drive for adventure and excitement. So that's the strong piece that I see. And then because I wing 8, it means that I'm I'm happy to speak my mind. I usually know what I think and I'm going to share it. And the seven parts of me, I think, can come out even stronger because I wing eight.

[00:14:36.065] - Lisa Qualls

Right. And that eight makes you really comfortable leading to I think, you know, like just speaking out, bringing people along, all those kinds of things.

[00:14:45.485] - Jamie Finn

So, yeah, that that excitement to just step out and do something and then come along with me. I've been that way since I was a kid. And in the work that I'm doing now in writing and speaking and then in the executive director of a nonprofit, it's just been the way that I function. This this is great. We should do something. Let's do it. Everyone come with me and we're going to change the world.

[00:15:09.155] - Lisa Qualls

I love it. I love it. On a personal level, how does knowing your number influence how you experience adoption and being an adoptive mom and foster mom?

[00:15:21.305] - Jamie Finn

So I think one piece of it is. I used to say that I thrive in chaos and I don't think anyone thrives in chaos. I certainly don't. But what I do is I crave a little bit of chaos. I crave stimuli. I crave excitement and adventure. And so probably the hardest part of motherhood for me is when I have this baby and I was sitting at home with it all day and I was like, is this really what it is? And I you know, I was bored honestly. I loved her to death. But the feelings of kind of is this all there is were really extreme. So I think that that has been a big piece in foster care. I see each piece as an adventure. And it's it's hard and it's messy and it's not always fun, but it's always something that I'm doing that's important and worthwhile and taking up my energy. And I go to sleep exhausted every night, feeling like I worked my butt off for the good of someone else. And so I definitely see that piece. In the foster care foster mom, part of me that it's just been this this drive to like take on the world, change the world and see each new step as an adventure. As for the part of me being an adoptive mom, I think sevens are pretty good at reframing. And so I have deep theological beliefs that for me. When things become hard, I spend a few minutes in my mind and I can pretty quickly switch into the what is good about this, where the hope is, where the call is, what the action is, instead of being just mired down and stuck in the emotion and the hard. So as an adoptive mom, whether it's processing my kids stories or dealing with the trauma in our home and the challenging behaviors or the loss that I experienced even as an adoptive mom, I can pretty quickly and easily reframe. And I rarely stay deep in an emotion or a

thought for longer than like a day. I can I can kind of, like, flip out of it by, oh, where's the good in this? Where's the the hope? What is there to do instead of just the feeling of it.

[00:17:59.335] - Lisa Qualls

Well, one of my daughters is a seven who wings eight and so much like you in that she finds she has a ton of energy and enthusiasm and passion and her faith is so strong that she also will pretty quickly reframe everything.

[00:18:17.425] - Jamie Finn

Yeah,

[00:18:17.935] - Lisa Qualls

and and there's something wonderful about that, you know, but sometimes she does have to work hard to get to the the deeper feelings to let herself sometimes stay in the sadness or stay in the hard for a little bit, because we do need to do that, you know.

[00:18:33.325] - Jamie Finn

But when I started going to therapy, my therapist said, you put you spiritually bypass, you put on theological band-aids pretty quickly and go, well, God is good. So let's move on. Or like, well, that was meant to be so. And I think what I experienced because of that, we don't sometimes know how to manage our own energy. And so we just go, go, go. And then until our bodies make us stop. So your spirit might be go, but then your body eventually comes in. And that happened to me hard. I just my body shut me down because I had years of. Of grief and of overworking myself too hard because of the energy and enthusiasm that I had to work through, and so therapy has been super helpful. And I my therapist, I'm so grateful she's trauma informed. She's an adoptee and she's also really enneagram fluent and she's the best. But she would often say, like, yep, that is a very stubborn thing of you. You need to think this way. And it was really helpful.

[00:19:39.145] - Lisa Qualls

Oh, that's wonderful. I'm glad you mentioned that about therapy, because I am a fan of therapy. I think it helps all of us in different seasons. And we know that adoption and foster care bring a lot of emotions and they can bring up a lot of stuff even from our own childhoods. And it's complicated. There's just so much involved. And so therapy is a great, great thing. So anything else you want to add about the Enneagram?

[00:20:08.275] - Jamie Finn

I think that the Enneagram has helped me to love others better. It has put this thing deep in my heart that. God makes people to be who they are and that the expectations that I have for everyone to sort of think like me or be like me or it's really helped me, even though I you know, I know it can be dangerous to type your children. And I don't even know guesses for some of my kids types what it's put in me. And I think this is the benefit of it. Even if you're not a student of the Enneagram, the benefit of it is accepting that people are who they are and that they need to grow and their struggles, but that the core of who we are can be a celebration of our individual personalities. Because if we were all the same, if my husband wasn't a one, I would be in big trouble. And if I didn't have people around me who were to, then I took on too much all the time. I wouldn't have anyone to clean up my mess along with me when I was gone. So I think it's really put in me an appreciation for who people are and an acceptance of how God has made them to be, that they are perfectly who are they are meant to be, even when there are points that they need to grow in.

[00:21:28.395] - Lisa Qualls

Absolutely. I think it has increased my compassion for my husband, my kids, people around me, you know, because it's so clear, of course, as we all learn about the Enneagram, their nine basic types and then all of those types of variations. And so it really helps us to see, like you said, that God really has made us all so unique. And just because I see and think things in a certain way does not mean that my husband is going to my kids are going to is just different.

[00:22:02.845] - Jamie Finn

So and that's your unique gift to them and their unique gift to you and write and see each other in that capacity, the more in relationship we can grow to who we are meant to be.

[00:22:14.625] - Lisa Qualls

Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, thank you so much. I hope that we'll be talking with you more about the Enneagram as we move into twenty twenty one and the work that Melissa and I are going to be doing.

[00:22:25.575] - Jamie Finn

I love to talk Enneagram any time and I love to talk to you about. Thank.

[00:22:35.215] - Melissa Corkum

Whitney, welcome back to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:22:38.275] - Whitney Runyon

Thanks for having me.

[00:22:39.805] - Melissa Corkum

Yes, super excited. So just to review, will you refresh our memory in terms of kind of what role you play in the adoption world? You are an adoptive mom, as all of our guests are in this episode, but you also have some other pretty special contributions you're making.

[00:22:55.945] - Whitney Runyon

Yeah. So my husband and I have three adopted children. They're all biological siblings from the Republic of Congo. And in 2011, 2012 ish, we started a nonprofit to advocate for vulnerable children and family. And it's called the Archibald Project. We use storytelling to inspire people to care for vulnerable children. Yeah,

[00:23:19.585] - Melissa Corkum

and that came actually before your adoption?

[00:23:22.735] - Whitney Runyon

It did. Yes. We were even in the orphan care world for about nine years. Through the work with our project, we actually met our children.

[00:23:33.505] - Melissa Corkum

And Whitney told her story in a previous episode of the podcast. So we will definitely link to that in the show notes. I actually don't know what episode it is off the top of my head, but it'll be there. So super fun. Well, thanks so much for joining us. Before we jump in, what is your dominant Enneagram type?

[00:23:54.115] - Whitney Runyon

I am a very proud Enneagram Four.

[00:23:58.615] - Melissa Corkum

I love how you said that. Do you feel like that's true? Was it always true for you or did you ever feel like you didn't want to be your number? I know some people have I relationships with their numbers.

[00:24:09.235] - Whitney Runyon

Yeah, no, totally. I didn't know I was there for I thought I was a seven because I'm very spontaneous and I like to do things that other people don't always do. So I thought I was like a fun creative seven that would start a nonprofit and move to Uganda and move to the Congo and do all these crazy things. And a few people throughout the years that are really close to me were like, you're not a seven year four. And I was like, I'm not a four. And I listen to Ian Cron's podcast. And every time you use it for a number of times, you would talk about being a I was like, that's interesting to know. And then I did one episode and I was like, Oh my goodness, that is me. And I came out and I told my husband I was like, I think I'm a four. And he was like, I've been telling you, you're a for for the past two years. I was like, OK, I'm a Four. And now it just makes sense so much.

[00:25:07.225] - Melissa Corkum

Well, Suzanne Stabile has often said that especially as children, sevens and fours are almost impossible to tell the difference, because there is something about newness and uniqueness that they really like, but for different reasons. Right. Because the of motivation is all the Enneagram, not behavior. And so I think fours and sevens share a lot of commonalities in some senses when it comes to, like you said, like unique and different and Sevens love new things. But Fours also don't want to be the same as everyone else. And so I think that drives them towards a different and new. And I think there's something interesting there. A lot of times we'll talk about how it's kind of a no no and the Enneagram world to type other people. And and you needed to come to that realization kind of on your own. But also those people who are really close to us can also be great mirrors for us as we're on our journey, if they're willing to be honest with us and if we're willing to hear it, of course, as a part of our journey. And I think the other lesson is typing is tricky and it's only something that is, I think Ian Morgan Cron talks about it as self confirming. Right. Like no one can tell you you're not in. No, if that's how you identify. And it is a really personal journey, but also it can have twists and turns. I mistyped as a type one for a long time before I realized I am actually a seven. So yeah, I think typing in the Enneagram world, yeah, it's it can be tricky and it's not the it's not the end all be all like there's a lot of the Enneagram can teach us even if we're not sure of our dominant type or the people around us.

[00:26:51.235] - Whitney Runyon

And we all are a bit of every no. Right. There's a bit of every bit thing.

[00:26:55.825] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. We all yeah. We all have, we all have behaviours from all the numbers for sure. It's a kind of like core motivation. The thing that really is driving the bus behind all those behaviors that I think tells us the most about our dominant type. So how did you first discover the Instagram?

[00:27:13.645] - Whitney Runyon

We listen to a podcast from a church in Portland, and years ago, the pastor was really into Enneagram and they were hosting an Enneagram conference is really interesting to us to just learn about it. And so we started then listening to different podcasts and following different social media accounts and reading different. Articles, and that's kind of the extent of it. We once we found our numbers and we were pretty solid in who we were type number. We started using it a lot in our marriage and in our jobs and in our relationships with people

[00:27:48.895] - Melissa Corkum

Like you alluded to, how does knowing your number, how has that influenced how you've processed your experience as an adoptive mom? How has it played into who you are as an adoptive mom?

[00:28:02.695] - Whitney Runyon

Well, I think I was actually thinking about this earlier today because I knew I was going to be talking to and I think that being a four is really hard. It's like really beautiful because I think as a Four, we feel everything. We feel everything very deeply and very heavily. But that that can be good and bad. So, like, when things are really hard and when trauma is like in your face and you're like lamenting this pain for your child. It's it can be a really dark and heavy space to live in, but then on the other side, you we get to experience all these beautiful feelings of healing and hope and joy. And so that can be really sweet as well. But I think that's something that's been really helpful for my husband and I is being able to recognize. If we're going in a down downward place, recognizing like, hey, maybe something's off and we need to address that within ourselves so that we can be better caregivers and moms like a mom and a dad to our children, because the signs that I'm displaying are showing that I'm not I'm not really healthy right now.

[00:29:18.545] - Melissa Corkum

And I think that's been really huge for those who are newer to the Enneagram. One of the beauties of the Enneagram is it's not really this personality box that kind of boxes you in, but it's there's a lot of movement. And I think, like you said, Whitney, one of the beautiful pieces that it gives us is it tells us what our tendencies are based on our personality, how we look when we're stressed out, when we're not doing well, when we're not super healthy, when we aren't feeling very secure, when we're feeling

stressed and knowing those things ahead of time. Beth McCord talks about them as these like rumble strips right on the road, like these behaviors start to rumble and kind of give us a clue or even for those who have people close to us that we trust close to our spouses or our friend, close friends. Right. So I don't always recognize my stress behaviors right away, but my husband certainly does. And years, right. Four years, they would trigger him and he would escalate. He'd be like, why are you being why are you being so critical of why? What did I do? Like what's your problem? Now he's able to say, like, hey, like are you stressed about something or do you need a break or a lot more compassion about what those behaviors mean.

[00:30:33.845] - Whitney Runyon

Totally. Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's really helped me. I know you're not supposed to type your kids, but we have some ideas about our kids and that can help us also to identify signs of health or on health.

[00:30:47.315] - Melissa Corkum

Well, and I think our curious human beings and I think obviously we can't keep our brains from going to some of those places. I think the biggest part of the not taking other people is kind of keeping it close to us, not walking around and telling our kids, you're such an eight to one.

[00:31:04.085] - Whitney Runyon

No, they don't even know about the Enneagram. Yeah, yeah.

[00:31:07.025] - Melissa Corkum

But you're right, it does inform. And I think it gives us a lot of compassion also. Right. To know that behaviors we talk a lot about this in therapeutic parenting anyway. The behaviors do have things that they're communicating. And so the Enneagram just gives us another lens to help us be a detective about those behaviors. We ask for information. Is there anything else that you would want adoptive families to know about the Enneagram?

[00:31:31.925] - Whitney Runyon

OK, I just I love it. And I think that it can be really helpful, especially with dealing with harder subjects like trauma and pain. I think the Enneagram can be really helpful. So it's just another tool in your toolbox.

[00:31:46.785] - Melissa Corkum

I know you're busy, Lady Whitney. Thank you so much for taking a couple of minutes and sharing a little bit more of your journey with us. Absolutely. Thank you.

[00:32:00.265] - Lisa Qualls

Well, hello Amber! Welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:32:03.745] - Amber Reynolds

Hello, I'm excited to be here. Well, I'm excited to have you here today.

[00:32:08.185] - Lisa Qualls

We are talking about the Enneagram. So before we get into that, will you just tell our listeners a little bit about who you are?

[00:32:16.255] - Amber Reynolds

I am Amber Reynolds, and we my husband and I, we live in northern Illinois on a farm. We have pigs and chickens and lots of space for our kiddos to run around. We have been foster parents for a little over four years. We currently have four foster kids in our house under the age of five. So we have a lot of little people running around. Our house is very loud. Anybody that ever comes over is astonished by how loud our house is. But yes, our kids are five, four, three and five months right now. So I'm very tired. But we are currently in the process of adopting our big three who are biological siblings out of foster care.

[00:33:00.175] - Lisa Qualls

Wonderful. OK, so tell me, before we get into what your number is, tell me how you first heard about the Enneagram. What was your first exposure?

[00:33:09.775] - Amber Reynolds

I first heard about the Enneagram because my sister actually sent me something on Instagram that was about how it was about the Enneagram. It was an Instagram account about how if you were called bossy as a kid, you were probably on the and and so she said, this is like you have to know about this. You have to learn about this. And I was a public relations communication major in college. I graduated with a degree in public relations and marketing. And through that we always were doing my spring personality tests and color tests and all of that. So once the Enneagram came on the scene a couple of years ago when it got real popular, I was all about it. So I started doing the research and reading books. And yeah, so my sisters and I are real into all things Enneagram now.

[00:34:00.505] - Lisa Qualls

So you just mentioned the number that your sister thought you were doing that turned out to be correct.

[00:34:05.845] - Amber Reynolds

One hundred percent. A hundred percent. Yep. So I'm an eight. I have a strong seven wing. I always say I seek justice and want a party everywhere I go. So those are my things. And I would say that very rarely do Eight's mistype because of our strong personalities. It's pretty easy to to spot an Eight.

[00:34:27.385] - Lisa Qualls

Did you ever in the process of learning about the Enneagram, did you ever wonder if you were different? No. Yeah.

[00:34:33.445] - Amber Reynolds

And and sometimes people do say, oh, you must be a seven because I have a lot of interests, a lot of hobbies. I get real excited about things really fast. So I think that sometimes the more that I think about my true self and what where I am when I'm in my center, I definitely am a strong, strong eight.

[00:34:54.115] - Lisa Qualls

So we call the eight the protective challenger. So you're right, you are very much about justice. They tend to be strong, which I see in you, just knowing you through Instagram, really. But you do have that really fun side and that that that definitely shines through. So how does knowing your number influence your experience as a foster mom and now becoming an adoptive mom?

[00:35:24.445] - Amber Reynolds

Yeah, so, I mean, having a strong personality is a blessing and a curse. Right. Like that challenge or piece that the eight on the Enneagram is sometimes I have to take a step back and back off, but it has helped me in the foster care world be able to see and have these reactions to what is right and what is wrong. Pretty quickly, I can discern, OK, this is this is not right. This is not wrong or this is wrong. And then I'm able to confront a caseworker or stand before a judge and speak truth and justice for the kids that are in my care. We've had nine kids total in our care. And through all of those cases, through all of the court dates and the back and forth with the family, I'm able to advocate real strongly because I don't mind the conflict or the confrontation when it comes to advocating for their best needs. I don't I often struggle more with the mercy and the empathy piece of it. And so I have to really work harder on there. I love Micah 6:8 where it says to seek justice and love mercy and walk humbly because I always feel like the Lord is saying, like, seek justice. OK, I got that one. That one's easy. But these commands I give to you to love mercy and to walk humbly. And so those those are kind of my that's my guiding verse, as are working through this. And so the justice piece, advocating that come super easy to me because I don't avoid that conflict.

[00:36:55.735] - Lisa Qualls

That is so interesting. Do you? Find that that justice, peace in you makes you feel more frustrated with the system, the whole foster care system, like, I'm just thinking that must just make you feel like

steam's coming out of your sometimes

[00:37:13.475] - Amber Reynolds

a hundred percent. I always say it's not that hard. It would not be that hard to make the system different if I could just be in charge of all of it. I keep threatening to run for some sort of government seat because I'm like, oh my goodness, people, this is not that hard. If I were in charge of everything, it would be perfect

[00:37:33.655] - Lisa Qualls

if I were running the world.

[00:37:35.575] - Amber Reynolds

Yes, I that I get a real righteous anger like this because I that just I just get so angry. And so I really have had to work, especially over the last four years of being working in the system. I've really had to work on turning that real anger and taking a breath, taking a step back, talking through it with my sister, who is also a parent or my husband, talking you through it with them and then saying, like, OK, now I can go to the people I need to with a righteous anger and advocate.

[00:38:08.515] - Lisa Qualls

You know, when we became foster parents, we became foster parents really unexpectedly. We were asked to take in this teen girl who ended up being a real joy and blessing for us. But I remember my friend telling me he's a very involved in foster care and adoption. He's an attorney. And he said to me, Lisa, just remember, you can't fix the roller coaster while you're writing it. So as a foster parent, you're going to be riding that roller coaster. Don't try to fix it at the same time. And I'm not an eight, but I do get really frustrated when things are just. Yeah, ridiculous, you know. And so, yes, yeah. Control controls a bit of an issue. I suppose that when you were a child being an eight, what was that like? How do you think your mom experienced you?

[00:38:59.035] - Amber Reynolds

Oh, I was so bossy, so bossy. And I'm the oldest of four siblings. We are very spaced out. So I have a sister who is two years younger than me. We're we're best friends. We were college roommates. We did everything together. And then I have a sister is eight years younger and my brother is almost 16 years. And so I was I was a second mom in the house, so I was bossy. But my mom used that to her advantage. And let me kind of mother my my siblings a little bit be in charge of things I was in charge of man at a really young age. I was in charge of making lunches. I was in charge of you know, I started babysitting often when I was twelve. I was I was homeschooled. So I'd watch other school kids during the day. And and the leadership just came super naturally to me.

[00:39:47.245] - Lisa Qualls

Well, I imagine with that seven wing, it also brings a lot of energy, so you could probably get a stinking lot done.

[00:39:54.355] - Amber Reynolds

I did. I could get a lot. I could get a lot done. And I was I just had a very magnetic personality as far as like especially like in junior high. I just remember, like, I could I could get people to do what I what I wanted them to do. It was because I was a lot of fun. Whatever we're going to do was going to be a lot of fun.

[00:40:11.525] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, I love that. I love it. Well, is there anything else that you want to share about how the Enneagram has impacted your life? You know, we're we're getting ready to go deep with the Enneagram for adoptive and foster parents in twenty twenty one. So how what other ways has it impacted your life? How do you think it could help other adoptive and foster parents?

[00:40:33.175] - Amber Reynolds

Yeah, I know that we aren't supposed to project numbers onto other people, but learning more about the Enneagram and learning more about myself and my true self and where I go when I'm when I'm

hurt or angry and where I go, like understanding who I am has helped me better regulate my emotions for when I when we are going through all of these trials. I mean, our our pending adoption with our oldest three has been an insane, wild ride. They've been placed with us for over three years and it's just been up and back and forth. And and I feel that the integration has really helped center who I am and understand how my husband is walking through this. He's a five on the Enneagram and him and I together, I mean, we process zero things the same. Everything that is thrown at us is processed differently. But because we know each other's numbers and have really gone deep into what that means for us and like how he's processing, I know that I need to leave him alone for at least two days to get through processing what's going to happen where I would be and the word vomit of processing everything and want to take action right away. And so because we've been able to dive into the Enneagram, we've been where our marriage is stronger and better because we know how to better love each other through that. I think my relationship with my children is better in our caseworkers because I can better identify with what's going on because we are all so different. We're also different. Going even deeper than the Instagram God made us so unique is that that these numbers just help us, helped me and helped my husband better identify the things that are happening within us when we are emotional, when there are big life changes or big life decisions going on in our life

[00:42:22.405] - Lisa Qualls

that is so good, so helpful. I hope we'll get a chance to talk more about this with you, because we're just starting we're at the very beginning of this. But I would love to have a deeper conversation with you about this, and I think it'd be wonderful. I would love that. Thank you so much for spending all the time with me today. Thank you, Lisa.

[00:42:49.765] - Melissa Corkum

We hope these interviews piqued your curiosity about how the Enneagram can help us as adoptive and foster parents, as certified Enneagram coaches, Lisa and I will be introducing more opportunities to learn about the Enneagram throughout this year.

[00:43:02.785] - Lisa Qualls

Our first Enneagram group for adoptive moms is already full, but head to [theadoptionconnection.com/enneagram](http://theadoptionconnection.com/enneagram) to be the first to know about new opportunities as we roll them out.

[00:43:15.115] - Melissa Corkum

As an example, we have an upcoming Enneagram Typing session for adoptive and foster moms. If you are brand new to the Enneagram or just need some help figuring out what your dominant type is. This will happen live on Tuesday, January 26, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern, 10:00 a.m. Pacific. Again, to find out more, head to [theadoptionconnection.com/enneagram](http://theadoptionconnection.com/enneagram). Enter your email after you enter your email. You'll have access to the information for this upcoming typing session. Hurry spots are limited.

[00:43:46.615] - Lisa Qualls

If you want to connect with any of the guests in this episode, head to the show notes at [www.theadoptionconnection.com/114](http://www.theadoptionconnection.com/114). Before you go, We'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as [theadoptionconnection](https://www.facebook.com/theadoptionconnection).

[00:44:02.875] - Melissa Corkum

Thanks so much for listening. We love having you. If you enjoy this episode, please leave a quick review over on iTunes that will help us reach more moms who may be feeling alone.

[00:44:13.015] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:44:20.215] - Melissa Corkum

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