

[00:00:01.135] - Melissa Corkum

This episode is sponsored by our new class, Exploring Grief, Trauma, and Rejection with the Enneagram. This is an Enneagram group for foster and adoptive moms.

[00:00:11.635] - Lisa Qualls

Melissa and I have both found the Enneagram to be helpful in understanding ourselves and the people we love. In 2020, we decided to become certified Enneagram coaches so we could better serve the foster and adoption community.

[00:00:23.785] - Melissa Corkum

While adoption can be beautifully redemptive, it does start with loss. A birth family loses a child, a child loses a family, and for some families, adoption comes after a long journey of infertility and possibly pregnancy loss. Sometimes parents find it difficult if their child seems to be rejecting them. This is another loss. Not to mention feeling like we lose what we dreamt our families might have been.

[00:00:47.365] - Lisa Qualls

The Enneagram is a powerful tool that helps us not just understand how we experience loss and rejection, but gives us simple practices to become healthier versions of ourselves despite hardship. So join us during the month of February to do some deep reflection and healing. This group is open to adoptive and foster moms. You must be able to join us live at all four sessions. There are two time slots and space is limited. To find out more or to sign up, go to [theadoptionconnection.com/enneagram](http://theadoptionconnection.com/enneagram).

[00:01:20.035] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:01:27.925] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:01:33.525] - Melissa Corkum

Hi, friends, welcome to episode 121 of the Adoption Connection Podcast. Lisa, how are you?

[00:01:41.665] - Lisa Qualls

I'm doing really well, thank you, how are you, Melissa?

[00:01:44.215] - Melissa Corkum

I'm good. So I am curious if, as you look back over your story, if there's something that kind of jumps out to you as significant in your healing journey.

[00:01:55.975] - Lisa Qualls

Well, when I look back, I mean, there's so many things over the years because, you know, I've been in this adoption/fostering journey since 2006, but more recently we were in this deep journey through grief. And one of the things that helped me the most, I mean, so many things helped, but one of the things that came immediately to mind when I thought about it was putting regular exercise back in my life and like, really intentional, like going to the gym and just doing things that have made me feel more regulated, but also stronger. It's probably been one of the most important things I've done.

[00:02:36.085] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love that. Well, I love, one, the simplicity of it in some senses, right? Like, you don't have to have a therapist or a trainer or like you can make yourself get out and walk every day or you can make yourself do pilates video every morning or something like that. But also that it's a physical thing that you mentioned that has had such a big impact on your emotional and mental journey through grief. I am really excited about this week's interview because if you've spent any extended period with me at some point in time, I have probably mentioned that a huge part of my journey towards really reconciling what my head knew that I should be doing or feeling and my heart coming along the way

has been a practice called TRE, or Trauma and Tension Release Exercise. My friend Christa, who's a new friend via the Internet, thank you for the virtual world, is a TRE practitioner and just this kind, compassionate, beautiful soul. She's also a mama, not an adoptive mama, but just someone who really understands a lot about brain science, which you all know I love, and is a TRE practitioner herself. So besides being a certified TRE provider and yoga instructor and mother, Christa's coaching practice helps to empower other mothers on a journey of breaking free from inherited family trauma. I shall share she comes to this work out of necessity, and she has seen really an incredible impact of trauma healing and how that can have, you know, just far reaching effects in her family and in your family. So here is my conversation with Christa.

[00:04:30.385] - Melissa Corkum  
Christa, welcome to the Adoption Connection Podcast.

[00:04:33.445] - Christa Bevan  
Thank you, Melissa. I'm excited to be here.

[00:04:35.245] - Melissa Corkum  
I'm so excited too. So I am a huge fan of TRE and if folks have been hanging around with me at any point in time, they've probably heard me mention it. But I know a lot of people have no idea what we're even talking about. So would you just tell us kind of a basic definition, we're going to jump into kind of like the benefits and all that stuff in a minute, but just like a definition, even what the letters stand for?

[00:04:59.905] - Christa Bevan  
Sure. Yeah, it gets confusing, sometimes people are like, "is it TREE? Is it TRÉ?" And it is T-R-E. So it stands for Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises. And what it is, is a series of physical exercises that you do to help initiate a natural shaking mechanism or in the TRE world, we call it tremoring in the body. And this shaking or tremoring mechanism is part of your nervous systems built in ability to complete a stress response.

[00:05:33.535] - Melissa Corkum  
I'm going to come back to that.

[00:05:34.945] - Christa Bevan  
Yeah, there's a lot there to unpack.

[00:05:36.565] - Melissa Corkum  
I know, but before I do that, let me just back up and ask, how did you, if you wouldn't mind sharing, come to TRE and why has it been so important for you?

[00:05:46.915] - Christa Bevan  
Sure. So I discovered TRE, I think it's been six years now, and I had a history of dealing with anxiety for most of my life. And I had a history of dealing with really crippling panic attacks. These started when I was 12 and they continued fast and furious for almost two decades after that. And I did sort of all of the things that you do to try to get those out of your life. Right, if you've ever experienced them, you know that they're no fun. And I kind of felt like I tried everything and I had done a lot of talk therapy, which was very helpful, but it didn't really eliminate them from my life. And it got to this place where I was like, you know what? I don't have anything else to say. There's nothing to talk about. Like it's not, I just sort of had the sense that the issue I was having, I was like, it's not in my brain, like it's not in my thinking brain. Well, then where is it? And it was like, well, it's in your body, Christa. And it made sense when I, you know, put that together because panic attacks are such a physical expression of anxiety. It was kind of like a hindsight's 2020 like, well, no kidding it's in your body. So you need to do something that treats and works with your body. And at that point, I kind of threw it out to the universe, I said, "OK, I'm ready. Help me find something that's going to work." And then it came across my path. I happened to live in a community with a wonderful skilled provider who also happens to be a teacher of teachers, right. And so I worked with him and the first time that I shook and tremored, I, I was, there was no looking back. It completely changed things. And ultimately, TRE removed panic attacks from my life. It's been six years now and I haven't had one. And I knew that with those results,

I needed to to train, to be a provider so that I could share that with other people. Right, when you experience this sort of difficulty in this struggle and you find something that works, you feel this obligation to want to share it with other people. And that's exactly what my story has been. So I trained to be a provider and now I work with individual clients, helping them get the same results.

[00:07:53.845] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love that. So talk to me about this connection between the mind and the body. You know, decades ago, I really thought of them in kind of different buckets. Our experience over the past maybe ten years has really challenged that. And I've come to really appreciate this interconnectedness that our mind and body have. And a lot of times when I describe what TRE is to someone, after they've expressed to me struggles with things like anxiety or PTSD, things that tend to, we think, be more in our minds. And then I mentioned something physical like TRE, there seems to be this disconnect and they're like, "wait, I thought we were talking about-" So can you talk a little bit about why this trauma response that our body has, why this natural response, like you said, it's a completion of a stress response, why that's so important when it comes to things that we typically think of, like in the mind?

[00:08:53.665] - Christa Bevan

You know, I used to think that they were sort of separate to, right, the mind and body. And I think that that's one of the downfalls of the way that we sort of view things in the Western world is that we compartmentalize everything. And I think what's encouraging is that we're starting to finally change that conversation because we're starting to understand that there is no distinction between your mind in your body and that they are intricately connected and that what happens in one happens in the other. And we know now, too, that, you know, things like emotions, you know, we can watch with with MRI scans, different emotions lighting up different parts of the brain and different parts of the body, and that they have different resonances. It's really the way that our body is wired to work that we feel these things on a physical level. And so much of what we experience as these sort of mental health problems like anxiety or PTSD, really so much of what's driving them is existing in a subconscious place and it's existing in our survival brain and that is so connected with our vagus nerve and the vagus nerve is connected to our entire body and how, how everything functions. And when we start to experience stress in our lives and we don't allow for that stress experience to be completed in some way, right, so either we all know fight or flight, and what fight or flight does is that, that uses up those stress hormones. Right, so when you feel that activation in your system, you feel that rush of cortisol, that something has to be done with that. And when we don't burn it off by fighting or flighting from a situation, our body still has it and it needs to burn it off, if you will, in a different way. And that's where the TRE comes in, because it's one of the ways that your body can do that, because if you don't, that stuff is still circling around in your tissues and it can ultimately sort of get trapped and stuck there and it turns into things that we don't think of as mental health problems. Right, it turns into things like insomnia or chronic pain. And so the reality is that these things are all connected when we don't allow ourselves to express and fully move through our entire range of emotional experience. And we really want to be able to do that to have vibrantly alive, healthy lives.

[00:11:21.725] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love that. It's so funny that you mention, like, stuckness in our body because I think a lot of times if we get to the core of it, PTSD and anxiety are a certain type of mental stuckness. Right, there's this kind of echoing from our mind to our body if our body feels stuck, a lot of times our thoughts are stuck and vice versa. And we all know that when we're feeling stressed, if we ask someone, where do you feel it in your body, they might not naturally think that way, but with a little bit of attention, everyone can kind of figure it out. Right? We feel it in our shoulders, like we get tense. We maybe we have stomach issues, you know, and butterflies in your stomach is a common way for us to talk about anxiety and anticipation and things like that. So I think there is this subconscious way that we do know that there are all these things connected. We just haven't been able to put all these pieces together to figure out how to use our body. So a lot of times we have more control of our physical body than it feels like we have control of our mind. And so is that part of why TRE can be so effective?

[00:12:29.685] - Christa Bevan

You know, I don't know that it's that we have control of our physical body because the thing about TRE

is that it's actually happening again from the subconscious place. So when you're practicing, right, if you're listening to this and you're like, "shaking and trembling? That doesn't sound like something I want to be doing." We're doing it in a very controlled and regulated environment. Right, so you being the person practicing, are completely in charge of starting and stopping your tremors. But that's one thing that you, a skill that you work with when you work with a provider is to learn how to be able to self regulate these things. But the actual tremors themselves happen on their own, right, so the sort of the course of them and where they go in your body and how they exhibit themselves, it doesn't take a conscious control for them to happen. There's an innate wisdom of the body that when you can sort of use your thinking brain to step aside and get out of your way, that the subconscious place can kind of take over and allow this to sort of flow through your body as it needs to. So, I don't know that it's conscious control that really makes it so powerful, I actually think it's the subconscious control because I think the subconscious is where we end up trapping things in our brains that sort of mental spaces subconsciously, and that when we don't become aware of them there, that's when they start to sort of loop and then turn into these things like anxiety. Does that make sense?

[00:13:53.625] - Melissa Corkum

It does. It does. I guess I'm thinking about the starting, like the exercises that get you to trembling. I know for me, it felt less intimidating to tackle kind of like the demons in my thoughts than to just say, like, "just do these exercises and get to trembling." It was kind of like, like the gateway I needed when I didn't want to maybe revisit something that felt traumatic, I was like, "well, maybe if we just do this body thing, then that will-" I think because I'm a person who avoids negative emotions, right, so this felt like kind of like a backdoor way to kind of like approach them and maybe release them without having to kind of like face them head on. Does that make sense?

[00:14:36.615] - Christa Bevan

It does, and now that I know that I know what you're saying, then, yes, absolutely, it is a way that you can use the body to sort of access this place and get into this, into some of these areas so that you can allow them to heal, essentially. And what's nice about this, though, is that we're using the physical body, but we're not having to relive or remember experiences that happened to us. Sometimes that comes up, but it isn't necessary. So if you've experienced a trauma that you're aware of, it isn't necessary for us to get into that trauma, to discuss it, to talk about it, to even name it. Right, that is completely separate from this physical process because you're right, we are doing these exercises and things like wall sits and and different stretches to stretch out different parts of your body and fatigue, certain muscle groups in your legs. It is sort of a backdoor way of getting at these things that have been held in the body and then allowing them to to be processed and moved through without having to consciously think about them.

[00:15:38.775] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, because a lot of folks listening, right. Are parenting kids who maybe have pre-verbal trauma or maybe their brain has, as a trauma response, shut out certain memories. And then for us as parents, right, we're not even sure. It's kind of this complex, ongoing trauma, right, it might not be one single trauma, it's just this, this kind of grief/trauma of relationship not being quite like our nervous system expects it to be. And so then we, you know, we call them like the difference between like little T and big T traumas. Like a big T trauma might be you're in a terrible car accident or you have a, you know, a really acute, aggressive experience, maybe you were robbed or jumped or whatever, right? And then there's like these little T traumas, things where micro aggressions add up over time or rejections of our kids because their nervous system isn't feeling safe. Our nervous system then starts not feeling safe. And so there's this pattern that over time we look back, you know, maybe over a couple months or even years and think, how did we get to this place? And we're experiencing a lot of symptoms and signs of chronic stress and trauma and but we're thinking like, but wait, like there wasn't one point in time, right, that we can name a quote unquote, trauma.

[00:17:05.725] - Christa Bevan

Yeah, and that's a really important point because, you know, trauma is this word that gets thrown around a lot and, you know, it really, what it is, is it's anything that happens to you that overwhelms your system's capacity to process it. Right? And so that it can be just daily living in the modern world, like living through a pandemic experience, right. That can be traumatic in and of itself. And and so

often there are these things that we don't think of as traumatic, right? We're used to thinking, like you said, of these big T traumas, things like war or natural disasters or somebody breaking into your house or like a car, you know, those things that you mentioned. But really, it can be these patterns of little things over time, and what can happen also is that we can have we sort of have a window of tolerance of of things that we can handle and we can handle so much. And then when the stress starts to pile up beyond that tolerance, we can we can sort of go one of two ways. We can become hyper aroused and we can kind of be stuck in this place of hyper arousal or sort of like a fight or flight space where you're kind of chronically activated. For me, it was being really super jumpy and on edge and sort of scared of of everything around me, or it can be in the opposite direction and it can be a hypoarousal state where you become frozen and sort of immobilized in your life. This is where depression usually shows up, where you cut, your energy is lethargic and, you know, you might be able to participate in everyday activities, but not with the, not with this kind of vibrancy and full participation. And so anything that sort of putting us into one of those two brackets and keeping us there when we're sort of out of our internal resources to to regulate back into that happy middle ground, you know, those are the places where this stuff starts to really get stuck, right? And that stuckness is what, is what the TRE can help address and can help move us out of those places and back into this area of regulation. And so much of what we experience is trauma, too, isn't, isn't conscious. There's such a subconscious component of it and it's so much of it is also pre-verbal, right? Like that's just the nature of what trauma is, is that it's affecting the parts of our brain that don't have access to speech. And that's why sometimes, too, we can't even remember what happened. And yet we're still experiencing symptoms. And so when we can address the issues with something that doesn't require a verbal solution, it it works with our body really effectively and works with our system in this really deep and profound way.

[00:19:52.305] - Melissa Corkum

So can you talk to us, just kind of enumerate, what are some either signs or symptoms or what benefits can we expect to see if we start a practice like TRE?

[00:20:05.325] - Christa Bevan

Sure. So some of the things that people come to me for are things we've talked about, so anxiety. Sometimes it's depression, though I, I tend to see more anxiety than depression, but it can be either one. Another one that often comes up is chronic pain. And so again, we sort of talked about how we don't think of that as being something that may have been an issue caused by unresolved mental distress, but it really can be, again, because we're holding things and over time that, that locked up part of your body becomes inflamed and painful. So I see a lot of chronic pain. It can also be insomnia, trouble sleeping, and then it can also just sort of be this like overall sense that something's not right. Right. Sometimes we can't name what the problem is, but we know that something's there that's sort of keeping us from feeling fully alive and just feeling as good as we know is possible. And then it's also things like what I experienced, panic attacks. And so any of those things can be addressed with this modality and then the benefits are undoing all of those things, right? So it's taking the pain away, it's making it so that you can sleep, it's quieting the anxiety, it's removing the panic attacks, it's helping to over time restore that window of tolerance and actually help to lighten it so that you can handle more stress. That doesn't sound like it's a good thing, but stress is inevitable, right? We can't control the fact that stress happens in our life. What we can control is how we respond to it. And so TRE ends up being one of those things that over time helps us to deal with more of the stressors of life before we get into one of those states of hyper or hypo arousal. And so it works both sort of in the moment to help with things and then also helps on a long term basis, which is why I like it, that it sort of has this two fold approach that I find really useful for folks.

[00:22:01.305] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And for me, in hindsight, I got into it more because I was curious and I was actually coordinating a group of of adoptive parents to go through it. As I practiced, though, what I noticed is I knew where I wanted to be kind of emotionally and for my case, it was like forgiveness about a certain person and a certain series of events that had happened in my past. I knew that I wanted to be to a place where I could not have those past kind of interactions constantly come up whenever I thought about this person. I wanted to be able to be at peace with it all. But then, like, my emotions weren't keeping up, like my head was like, you need to be over this like it's OK. You know it wasn't about you,

all of these things. And my heart was kind of like, it was stuck. It was a little stuck. And so as I did TRE, in hindsight, I looked back and all of a sudden I realized that my heart had kind of caught up with my head, right? And I was like, "oh, that's interesting." And TRE was really the only thing that I had done, you know, significantly different. And that's what I attribute to that. And it's just allowed me so much, I think, freedom and healing from a lot of things in the past that, and then also like I had insomnia a couple of months ago and I hadn't done a whole lot of TRE, and then all of a sudden I was like, bing! You know, ding, ding, ding! Get back to that. So thanks for that. So are there situations where you would say, do something else first or you might not be ready for something like TRE? Or is it one of these kind of baseline things where this is the place to start?

[00:23:40.705] - Christa Bevan

Sure. And I just I want to, you reminded me of something else that one of my favorite pieces of feedback that I ever got from a client is after we wrapped up our session and she finished practicing, I checked in and asked her how she was feeling. And she said, "I just feel like I have greater self compassion right now." And I thought that was so beautiful because there are these sort of things that, like you said, sort of unexpected benefits that come up that are hard to name. And then and then you just sort of realize like, oh, that's gone now. Like, I didn't, I didn't go in expecting this thing to happen and now it's changed. And it's just, it's so beautiful when when that can happen. So to answer your question, yes, there are some contraindications. The big one, especially because we're talking with parents, is if someone's pregnant, than we don't want to tremor, we want to wait. The other thing is that if you're dealing with bigger mental illness, things like schizophrenia or bipolar, that kind of thing, and you're, you're, you're working with a therapist and you're being medicated for that, it's definitely the kind of thing that you would want to work with a provider who is trained specifically in that, you don't want to practice on your own because it can it can bring stuff up, right? So it's a profound and deeply transformative practice, but it also means that it's sort of, I like to think of it as shaking your snow globe a little bit, right? So sometimes the water gets a little fuzzy with the glitter until it settles back down. And that's normal. That's part of the process. But it does mean that in order to have the greatest benefit, we don't want to shake it too hard, right? And we don't want to shake your system up too much because too much too quickly is not a good thing. So we do want to take it slow. And so I do see that sometimes with people who will try practicing on their own for the first time and people have a tendency to think more is better. So we're like, oh, if I can shake for five minutes, then ten minutes would be better. And if I can shake for 10, then 20 minutes would be better. And the reality is that you really don't need that much and that you can actually overdo it. The best thing is to is to work with somebody to learn how to do it. And really what you're learning, too, from a provider are these tools for self-regulation, right? Because that's it's not just about the shaking, it's also, like I mentioned earlier, about being able to consciously start it and stop it and know when you've had enough. Because the thing is, is that so many of us are so disconnected from our body and from the signs and signals in the communication that our body gives to us, that if we're not used to listening to that feedback, we can often miss it when we're shaking. It's not like you start shaking and then all of a sudden you know how to listen. And so a provider helps you to tune into those signals and start to really be able to have a conversation with yourself to say, I'm done, I've had enough or know I need a little bit more. And that's really important because we don't want to overdo it. So if you have some type of self-regulation practice already, so things like yoga or breath work or taichi or, you know, there's other exercises and things that people can do, a meditation practice, if you have those sorts of skills where you can kind of ground yourself back to center and you feel confident that you can do that pretty comfortably, then I usually say it's OK for people to practice on their own. If you're not sure what I'm talking about, then that's when I say you definitely should work with a provider and ultimately working with a provider is just to get you set up for success, right? I see my job as a provider to facilitate you learning this process, and then ultimately, I don't want to have to see you anymore because your body, again, has that wisdom to do this on its own. So I just want to be there to make sure that you get set up the right way and then I want to teach you to trust yourself and know how to do this process on your own so that ultimately you don't need me because it is such a great tool to use on your own at home whenever you need it because it's always available to you.

[00:27:39.655] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, and that was one of the things, you know, in the midst of taking three to four kids to therapy every week, whether it be, you know, talk trauma therapy or speech therapy, OT, all the things, learning

this practice as something that I could eventually do on my own without, you know, the thirty minute drive out to somebody and the practice and all of that without the scheduling and all of that was really, really helpful. Some other just practical things. How long does it take for people to see the benefits that you've noticed? I know it's probably arranged, but what can people expect?

[00:28:16.275] - Christa Bevan

Yeah, so that's a great question. And often people want to know the answer to that. And unfortunately, I don't have a good answer because it depends. It's really, it depends on the person. I would say the folks that come in that sort of, again, have that background of having experienced regulating themselves before and have a little bit of body awareness. So this can also be people who are like massage therapists or dancers or, you know, people who are athletes who are used to using their body and having to listen to those those cues more than just sort of the average person, I find that they often can sort of practice on their own quicker than other folks. That's not to say that somebody who doesn't have that background can't get benefit after the first session. And I certainly have people that do that, that come to workshops that I teach and have like profound breakthroughs in whatever they're working on. But it really it really does depend on the person. In general, though, I would say within three sessions, most people are shaking, definitely shaking, noticing the effects of that and are starting to be able to do it completely on their own. So it doesn't, it doesn't take a lot.

[00:29:28.305] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And I would think also that body awareness probably affects whether or not we even notice the benefits, right? Like how tuned in are we to the little cues in our body? Are we looking for these huge breakthroughs? Are we noticing, you know, less tension in our body? I know slept a little bit better. I woke up a little bit more rested versus, you know, there's small things I think to notice too.

[00:29:52.095] - Christa Bevan

Absolutely.

[00:29:53.445] - Melissa Corkum

OK, so I think the other question that I can hear our audience wondering is "at what age?" Because a lot of us are parenting kids with trauma and stuckness and challenging behaviors and things like that. What age is this a good tool to introduce to a child?

[00:30:12.825] - Christa Bevan

You know, honestly, the thing is about this shaking response is that little kids can do it on their own. And you may have seen this in your own little kids that they will shake, right? After it, when they're frightened or after something has happened, right? There's this great video that you can find on YouTube of this little girl who has gone out hunting with her father. And she can't be off the top of my head, she's maybe eight years old. They're hunting deer and she kills a deer and she's standing there with the deer. And the video is so beautiful, it shows her, and I mean, she's like in full body tremors because this was just a huge event that happened, right? And it's a lot of survival energy that's wound up when you're hunting an animal. And then after that got discharged from her body as the shaking. And she she's so cute in the video. She says, "Dad, I'm not cold." Right? And he's like, "I know, honey." And he reassures her. And and so the thing is, is that our kids actually know how to do this and we end up training ourselves out of it. So we see shaking as weakness and vulnerability. And we we end up sort of becoming socially conditioned to not do those things. So that's a long way of saying you can really start this any time. I've worked with kids as young as six who have shook and shaken, right? And you have to change the approach of how you deal with it, right? We're not like going in and doing exercises the same way it looks more like play that has the effect of doing what the exercises are with an adult. And then we, we have fun and we get down and we shake our sillies out right when I'm working with little kids. But really, it can be done with, at any age as long as they're willing, right? So there's always that component that sometimes with teenagers, they're not, or preteens are not necessarily willing to try things, but that's not to say that it's not safe for them to do it if they're willing.

[00:32:07.275] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And I've talked to families, am I correct in remembering that there's a history that athletes have used this? You talked about chronic pain. I think at some point in time the NFL was using this for

injury recovery. And so I've also talked to parents about present it to their child as something that a practice that an athlete could do to help keep their body healthy for sports and things. And so we're kind of back to in our way into also knowing that they will have an emotional benefit as well, but also knowing that it can, like you said, release some of that inflammation, some pain, like, stored tension in the body.

[00:32:41.355] - Christa Bevan

Yeah, I mean, the other place that it gets used a lot is with Army vets and also with like first line responders. So with EMTs and police officers and, and people, I can't think of what they're called, firefighters. That's the word firefighters. And because they're dealing with these traumatic situations and need a way to deal with it. And so it's it's been studied with the Veterans Association as a tool for something that does treat PTSD really well. So it can be used again for in sports injury and then also for these, you know, if you're dealing with kids and you present it like, you know, firefighters are a big thing, you know, especially for little kids that like even firefighters do it.

[00:33:20.835] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Yeah. You know, it's funny you mention that because I've been doing a lot of research and reading and learning about polyvagal theory and, and I use the safe and sound protocol in my practice. And just this idea of even looking at things like tantrums differently, right? We tend to want to squash them, calm them down. But if we think about them, like kind of this expression of completing a stress response, like getting all this pent up anger, big emotion, frustration out, right? And there's an appropriate and an inappropriate way to do that. We don't want to let our kids beat us or destroy our property, right? But I think thinking about kind of redirecting or giving them opportunities before they self explode, right? To have these really big behaviors, right? And it could be big appropriate behaviors, but we tend to, you know, quiet facilities in our house. We don't want things to get broken. We tend to quiet rough and tumble play because we don't want someone to get hurt, right? But a lot of times these are kids ways of, it might not look like shaking, but ways of physically releasing all this kind of pent up emotional energy.

[00:34:27.495] - Christa Bevan

Absolutely. That is such a great point. Yes, I agree with all of that so much. And it's it's funny that you say that because my son is twenty months old and we are right in tantrum season. And it's interesting because it's still, I will say this with everything that I know and everything that I teach professionally, it's still really, really hard to stand there through the tantrum. It is not an easy place to be, but that being said, since I do know what I know about this, like you were saying, that is absolutely what's happening. And there's actually a lot that we can learn from our kids in this way. They're always the best teachers, that they don't stifle these things. When he's mad and he gets upset and activated, he doesn't he doesn't repress that. He doesn't hold it in. He explodes all over the floor and he rides around and he flops his body around and he tantrums it out. And then he gets up and he runs off and he plays and he doesn't know the difference. Like he doesn't know that that's not what he's supposed to do. And like you said, as long as he's not hurting me or himself or hurting something in my house, for the most part, whenever I can, I just allow him to sort of have that expression because it's exactly what it is. He's just moving through those emotions. He's feeling these big feelings and learning the edges of what those things feel like in his tiny little body, right, as he is growing and developing and learning his place in the world. And the more as parents that we can encourage that to happen, the better we're setting them up later in life. You know, the other thing this reminds me of is, so crying is another expression that another way that your body can complete stress responses. That's why we know as adults that you feel so much better after a good cry, right? It literally, stress hormones are excreted in certain types of tears. Not all tears are created equally. But when you're having those sort of cathartic cries, stress hormones are actually being released and it's been studied in babies and it's, it's true for them as well. And think about how often we hear in our society, you know, parents telling boys not to cry. And how much we tell our little boys, don't do that. Boys don't cry. And we sort of reinforce that narrative of having them repress these emotions. And really, it's setting them up to have to repress them later on, too. And it's it's it's doing them a disservice rather than saying you're crying something, you're letting it out. Good job letting it out of your body. And so you can sort of start to see how these things become set up in childhood that then later manifest as adults in the way that we respond to situations and then ultimately how that ends up getting sort of represented again in our

body.

[00:37:14.735] - Melissa Corkum

You know, boys and girls alike, right, there's, in our adult minds there's appropriate times to cry. Crying over the wrong color popsicle feels really ridiculous to us. And so someone might have big crocodile tears about getting red instead of blue. And we're like, why are you crying about that? Don't cry about that. There are bigger things in life to cry about. Well, you know, when you're three, maybe not. Right?

[00:37:38.165] - Christa Bevan

And we, yeah. And so, so often too, we invalidate. I find myself doing that sometimes and I have to kind of catch myself and say it isn't a big deal to me that I grabbed a fork instead of a spoon, but to him it does matter. And so me telling him like, oh, stop crying or you know, it doesn't matter, just take it again, it's this invalidation when instead we can sort of stop and check ourselves and say, wait a minute, it doesn't matter to me that I had then go and grab the other thing that he wanted instead of giving in all the time. But depending on what it is, if it truly doesn't matter, but it matters to him, I don't know. I just I think it's I think when we can validate their experiences and their emotions, we're setting them up to allow that to happen later. I really, truly believe that.

[00:38:23.285] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. We talk a lot here about what we call high structure, high nurture parenting. And so in that example that you talk about, you know, it's this idea of validating the big response, then helping them regulate it, regulate it. Right. It's a valid response, but we also can't necessarily have that response for hours or days, right? We need to help them put parameters around it and understand kind of what are big things and little things because some of our kids haven't had that guidance to know like this isn't actually going to kill you, but we can regulate knowing that your voice matters, right? So not, we're not saying quit it because it's not OK, we're saying can we get regulated enough because I'm here to help you. And so I would love to give you, if I can, maybe the other color Popsicle or the fork instead of the, fork instead of the spoon or whatever, but I need you to use your words, right? So we'll validate that emotion, we'll ride it out for as long as we need to, but at the end of the day, it's using words, which is what we call like high structure, right? We're not just giving in to anything. The nurture is we validate and then the structure is I know this is really hard for you and I would love to give you a spoon, but having a meltdown all over the kitchen floor is not the way that will change for you, right? I would love to do that for you, but will you please use the words?

[00:39:45.065] - Christa Bevan

You bring up two really interesting points there, one about regulation. And so that's that's so important because the thing is that the way our nervous system is wired is that we are designed to co regulate our self to the people around us, right? And we are designed to be scanning our environment for cues of safety and cues of danger and then meeting that perception. And that's what it is, because it's not always, like you said, a red popsicle versus a blue popsicle isn't a life or death matter, but to your child, they might not know that because they're still learning that difference. And so when we as parents can show up in a sort of grounded, regulated place ourself, it helps mirror that to our child so that they can match us more quickly. And you've probably, I mean, any parent who has dealt with a tantrum for two minutes knows when I'm hungry and I'm tired and I'm trying to get something done and my son has a tantrum and I'm not in a place where I can sort of deal with it from this grounded, regulated space, his tantrum is worse and I can't get him to stop faster. If I can sort of take a breath and center myself and then try to meet him where he's at to move him out of it, we go through it so much quicker. The other thing, though, that's interesting about, about the choice and the, and the phrasing of use your words, is I think that that's I think that's really great, except that if they are stuck and I don't mean stuck now, like we were talking about earlier with things being stuck in your body, but just sort of in that place in the moment of really being activated, what happens, though, in their brain is that it's turning off. The brain is redirecting energy from the thinking brain where that verbal area is and where they have access to words and it's shifting it into their survival brain. And so sometimes we expect them to be able to speak and reason something to us when they don't actually have access to that part. And so it's it's good for people to understand that because it means if you can help regulate them back into safety and out of their survival brain, into their thinking brain, then they have access to be able to use their words. But what I see oftentimes with parents is that the kid

is like melting down and the parent saying, use your words right now and then getting frustrated that that's not working. And really, it's because they they literally can't they don't have access to their words in that moment. And I know I've experienced this as an adult when I'm in an argument with loved ones before and I sort of shut down and freeze and then I try to speak and I can't. And it's because my body has been activated into a freeze state and then I don't have access to being able to talk and I have to be able to take a breath, remove myself for a moment, get back into place of regulation and then come back and talk. And it's the same for our kids. And when we can recognize that about the way that they work, we can make it easier for ourselves ultimately to not be met with such frustration and and feel like they're being defiant of us, because I know that often it can feel like they're they're just trying to exert control and be defiant. And really it's that they can't get there. And so when we understand all that sort of back end work, we can help them regulate, move out of that place and then say, OK, let's use your words and process that. So it's, you can kind of come at it from both from both directions.

[00:43:15.035] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. We have a parenting principle that we talk about here at The Adoption Connection that comes from TBRI or trust based relational intervention talks about connecting before correcting, right?

[00:43:25.295] - Christa Bevan

Yes.

[00:43:25.295]

So we have to, that's that co regulation piece. We use Dan Siegel's Hand Brain model a lot, right? It talks about flipping, flipping their lid. Are kids need to, we need to help them reconnect their lid first before we can expect them to ask for compromise, use their words, all of those kind of upstairs brain.

[00:43:43.805] - Christa Bevan

Yes. I love the upstairs brain.

[00:43:45.575] - Melissa Corkum

Well, I could probably talk all day about the brain and behaviors, but I know everyone's time is limited. So, Christa, how can folks either connect with you or what are ways that folks can get started in TRE? And I guess I'll also say kinda to full circle this. If you're thinking my child will never do this or whatever, this co regulation piece means that we only have control really of ourselves. And so even you as a parent deciding to kind of dip your toe into this world of TRE can help us, like you said, be more aware of our body, be more grounded ourselves, which the cascading effect that that has to our kids, even if they're losing their ever loving mind, is huge. And I can say that from experience to that I didn't fully understand how much that co regulation piece and all of the nonverbal signals that my nervous system was admitting to my child's nervous system, even if I was trying to stay calm and stay regulated, that there were probably a ton of things firing off in my nervous system. I wasn't really, all the things that I was trying to say externally that I, that I was. So how can folks kind of dip the toe into TRE?

[00:45:00.335] - Christa Bevan

Sure. That's a great question. Yeah. And exactly what you said that, you can't always get your kids to do this, but if you can start working on yourself to provide that regulation and the grounding, then it does, it does do such a huge service for yourself and then also for the rest of your family. So you can find more information from me on my website, which is [christagowen.com](http://christagowen.com). And there's links there where we can get connected and then discuss working together. I do work via Zoom these days in the age of corona, so we can meet virtually. You can also find providers in your area by going to the TRE website, which is [traumaprevention.com](http://traumaprevention.com). And there's a search feature on there where you can look for folks in your area. The nice thing about TRE is that it's a global community of people all over the world. I don't know, you know, different places are under different, at different points in our covid experience right now, I guess I'll say. So I am not working with folks in person, which is why I'm still offering Zoom sessions. I know most providers right now are at least doing them online. So even if you can't find someone in your area, you can still have access to this work.

[00:46:12.575] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, which is great. I guess that's one of the silver linings, right, of covid is so many great things that maybe were only available to us locally six months ago are now starting to be more widely available for better, for worse. But I am super thankful that TRE is able to kind of get its reach to more families through this virtual experience. So thank you for the work that you're doing, for sharing your story and for spending some time with us here at The Adoption Connection.

[00:46:37.445] - Christa Bevan

Well, thank you so much, Melissa. It was my pleasure.

[00:46:44.075] - Lisa Qualls

Well, that was such an interesting conversation, Melissa. I enjoyed it. I had heard a tiny bit about TRE from you, but had never really explored it. And honestly, it sounds a little strange. I mean, you know, let's be honest, it does. But the truth is, that's what I thought about EMDR. The first time I heard about EMDR, I thought, that is weird. And then once I learned about EMDR, I was like, oh, that makes all the sense in the world and I am a real believer in EMDR. So it definitely piqued my curiosity and made me wonder if it was something that I might want to explore.

[00:47:18.605] - Melissa Corkum

So it's funny. When I first heard about it, I think I saw some kind of video and I was like, yeah, no, not doing that. Like, that's weird. And I kind of shut it down right away just because it is kind of a different experience. It's outside a kind of our normal. But then I met someone who I trusted, who practiced it, who taught me about it. And this whole world opened up and it made so much sense once I learned the science, of which, of course, you know, like I said, I'm a huge fan of. So don't knock it before you try it. And I think, again, thinking about it as finishing a stress response, she talked a lot about the science and even tears. Gosh, like all the different ways we can complete a stress response in our body, you know, but if you just think about that shaky feeling you get, if you do a chair sit for a, or a wall sit, if you're exercising for too long, like that's the experience more or less of TRE. So it's something that you actually probably have experienced already. And so being able to teach your body how to use this to release some of this tension and trauma that we're holding in our bodies is so powerful. And guys like I, I really have to do this like three or four times a month. And it literally makes me a better person in so many ways.

[00:48:38.385] - Lisa Qualls

Well, and it's another tool to try, you know, there are a lot of wonderful things out there that we just have to try and see what works for us and for our families. So I think if it interests you, you should go for it. Yeah. And we know that you guys, as an audience in general, are tool seekers. You know, you're the up to midnight Internet searchers, as Lisa and I have both been. So voila. Here we have another tool for you to research and go down the rabbit hole. So if you would like to connect with Christa, ask her some more questions or schedule a free consult with her, you can reach out to her on her website at [christagowen.com](http://christagowen.com). And that's G O W E N. Of course we'll have all the links to the ways to connect with her in the show notes with more information to the official TRE website and all of those things. You can find the show notes at [theadoptionconnection.com/121](http://theadoptionconnection.com/121).

[00:49:39.945] - Lisa Qualls

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.instagram.com/theadoptionconnection).

[00:49:47.565] - 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.

[00:49:57.735] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:50:04.905] - Melissa Corkum

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

