

[00:00:01.140] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:00:09.060] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:14.670] - Lisa Qualls

Today is a Mentor Moments episode where we answer a listener question. These episodes give you a chance to join the conversation and guarantee we're providing the most helpful tools and resources for exactly where you are. This week's question is from Vanessa.

[00:00:29.760] - Vanessa

My name is Vanessa and my question is about having multiple adopted children with differing relationships with their birth family. I have two girls, sisters, that have an open and close relationship with their birth family that involves visits, gifts, phone calls, and two boys who have, one has none, and one has very little relationship with their birth family. The one that has none is the same age as one of the girls. He is incredibly jealous. Attention from his sisters' birth family encompass rage and grief that lasts for weeks and no matter what compensation I try to provide, it is not his birth family and therefore never enough, so I would love ideas as to how to help him grieve well and manage his emotions as I see this being an ongoing struggle, thanks.

[00:01:19.050] - Melissa Corkum

My heart is just breaking for these little guys because this is hard. I mean, I think there's no easy way around it. Even for the couple of practical tips that we have to share, at the end of the day, this is a tough situation for any child, especially a child with so much loss and trauma at the beginning of their life, and so I think also there's no easy fix for this. I think this will probably be challenging for a while.

[00:01:56.220] - Lisa Qualls

I agree. There's, there's just a lot of grief in adoption and I think some people experience it more deeply than others. Like Melissa, you, you've talked about how, you know, probably due just to the way you're wired and your primary Enneagram number of being a seven, that you didn't think about your birth family a lot, you didn't grieve over your birth family, but another person might be wired in a way that they feel it is a profound and deep loss. It's always kind of present. And so, like you're saying, it's hard to know, you know, as some of the the jealousy and the grief he's experiencing and the behaviors that come from that, is that partly due to the way he's wired or is it only due to this imbalance? You know, I think it could be both would be my guess, and it's not surprising that, you know, a lot of times we can keep our grief kind of press down and then something happens and it comes flooding back, you know, so he's a child and he's got maybe this deep sense of loss and grief over losing his first family and he's kind of plugging along and then, boom, it's right in front of him again. And then he maybe settles and then it's right in front of him again. And I think because there is no fix, there's no way to fix this, really, all we can do as parents is really help our kids acknowledge their grief. Acknowledge, "yeah, I would feel really mad, too," or "I would feel like kicking a wall too," or whatever it is, and acknowledge that these feelings are valid, but all you can really do is just help him process his grief, and there there are resources for helping children with grief work, and I think digging into some of those would be a good, good start anyhow.

[00:03:47.010] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, and I think also just be aware as a parent how you're experiencing the situation because I don't really like big hard feelings, and so my initial response before I was a little bit more self aware would be to fix it, to put a Band-Aid on it, to distract, to satiate, to compensate, to help them not feel so horrible about it, and I think sometimes our kids don't need us to try to fix it so much as they need us to be stable enough to weather their own storm with them.

[00:04:26.010] - Lisa Qualls

Right, that we can handle their big feelings because I know for me, I'm a really sensitive person and because I'm so highly empathetic, it's easy for me to begin to feel all the feelings and that does not

really help. You know, we need to be the solid, secure base that can handle our kids big feelings without getting pulled into it too much so that we can be, oh, I don't know, just the the presence that's solid and, and strong enough to handle it whatever it is that they're feeling that their big feelings don't scare us. We can handle it and it's OK for them to have big feelings because this is, I mean, we know we talk about this, this is the primal wound. This is a very significant wound to lose your first family.

[00:05:14.490] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I would say also, Lisa, you alluded to this a little bit, you know, kind of based on the way our kids are wired, how they experience the world. I know in our family we have a daughter who kind of just always felt like she didn't belong and she would say things like, "you love all the other kids more" or, you know, "I wish there was just someone in this family who looked like me" or "I wish I" you know, "you don't get it because I don't look like you" and all of these things and, you know, the ironic thing is, is that she was, just happened to be adopted into a family where a lot of us actually had similar experiences. You know, she has two siblings who were also born in Ethiopia. She has a mother and an aunt and an uncle who were all born in different countries who don't look like their adoptive parents, you know, half of us don't know our actual birthdays.

[00:06:19.040] - Melissa Corkum

Hey there, we're jumping into the middle of this episode to make sure that you know about our new interactive workshop that's coming up, it's on overcoming blocked care. You see, when our children experience early adversity, it activates a premature defense mechanism that may put them in a chronic state of survival. This results in something called blocked trust. As a result, some children do not respond to our efforts of caregiving. You may begin to feel ineffective and experience a sense of apathy called blocked care.

[00:06:51.390] - Lisa Qualls

In this interactive workshop, you will learn the brain science to understand your feelings and make powerful changes, you'll gain the motivation and endurance to pursue a relationship with your child, you will overcome feelings of shame and guilt, and you'll learn step by step practices you need to reclaim the parent you know you can be. For more information or to sign up, go to the adoptionconnection.com/blockedcare.

[00:07:20.300] - Melissa Corkum

This will be a great refresher for those of you who have already done some blocked care work with us or a great introduction if you've never even heard of blocked care. We hope you can join us on Tuesday, May 25th at 1:00 p.m. Eastern, 10:00 a.m. Pacific. Now back to the episode.

[00:07:42.080] - Melissa Corkum

Half of us don't know our actual birthdays, so I would say also, you know, this situation of having a different level of openness in adoption, especially if you have a child who's feeling a deep sense of loss, this is a very convenient point where all of that grief can kind of shower out, like Lisa was mentioning. But I think with the help of a really good mental health provider like Brian Post talks about like ignore the behavior not the child. And not that this isn't a significant reason to feel loss, but don't get maybe too distracted by this particular situation. There might be a lot of other foundational pieces to help your child with that from the foundation up may, you know, help not just this situation in terms of coping and feelings and processing, but also a lot of other, you know, maybe sticky points or tricky points in your family's experience.

[00:08:45.770] - Lisa Qualls

And in this question, I don't think Vanessa mentioned the age of her kids, but if this child, if your child's having really big feelings in the moment, you can't do this, but when things are calm, you can say to your child, hey, I know it feels, it seems to be really hard for you when your sister has a visit with her family or something and ask him, you know, what do you think would help? What do you think would make this better for you? Because we can't change it, but I want to help help you with the feelings and who knows what a child might come up with. Like, well, I'd feel better if you jumped on the trampoline with me or, you know, it might not be something huge and profound. It just might be a way that he feels like he can manage some of his own feelings with your support.

[00:09:35.400] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I think the other thing that strikes me is, I think when kids are really struggling, it's really helpful to know their love language and to know in what ways we can do the best that we can to help them know that they are loved in the situation that they're in and of course it's not going to fix it, but if their love language is gifts and we're constantly using words to say, you know, I love you, you're still part of this family, then there's going to be this like criss cross crossing of wires, and so if you're not familiar with love languages, we'll put a link in the show notes to today's episode. I think knowing our kids love languages is, you know, there's only five, and it's so helpful because it helps us be the most efficient with the way that we interact with our kids, you know, helping them kind of fill up their buckets.

[00:10:29.640] - Lisa Qualls

Right, because truthfully, our time and our energy is limited, so we want to be as sort of laser focused with our efforts as we can be, so if your child is a child who experiences love through words of affirmation, you know, and you know that, then you can speak those words, you can write those words, you can make a little sign with those words, whatever it is that speaks to him but if that doesn't speak to them at all, all the sweet words in the world are not going to really help them feel as loved as whatever it is that is his love language.

[00:11:05.340] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. So if you have a question that you'd like us to answer here on a mentor moment, we'd love for you to leave a message on our listener hotline. The number is 208-741-3880.

[00:11:22.920] - 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.

[00:11:30.510] - 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.

[00:11:40.680] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:11:47.880] - Melissa Corkum

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