

[00:00:01.340] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast where we offer resources to equip you and stories to inspire you on your adoption journey. I'm Lisa Qualls.

[00:00:10.400] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:18.670] - Lisa Qualls

Hi, friends, welcome to Episode 139 of the Adoption Connection podcast. This week, we are launching a short series for the month of August, focusing on back to school. We want to help you be as prepared as you can be as we move into, hopefully, what will be a normal, whatever normal means, school year for all of us. So every episode this month we'll be serving you in terms of helping you move toward a new school year. And we're starting with this episode today focusing on the importance of de-cluttering and organizing for a successful, not just school year, but for life in general, but to help your family be as successful as possible.

[00:01:05.800] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, Lisa, and de-cluttering is near and dear to your heart. Like, there's nothing that brings you more to life than like a good de-clutter project, I feel like.

[00:01:13.900] - Lisa Qualls

There is truth in that.

[00:01:15.460] - Melissa Corkum

So our guest this week is Wendy Zanders. She is @yourdecluttercoach on social media and she is a professional organizer who is passionate about helping special needs families take their homes and papers from overwhelmed to simplify. She herself had undiagnosed ADD as a child, and now she has a special passion for helping special needs families get organized by helping them identify what has created the disorder in their life so they can get back in control of their possessions and homes. Wendy enjoys working with families like herself that are struggling with things like ADD, depression, PTSD, and anxiety. And we know that because of our kids and their past experiences, a lot of our families have a lot of the same things, so we really are looking forward to having Wendy here with her experience and expertise. So here's my conversation with Wendy. Wendy, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:02:20.450] - Wendy Zanders

Thank you so much for having me, Melissa. I cannot wait for this discussion, it's going to be so good.

[00:02:25.200] - Melissa Corkum

I know, and we kind of already started and I was like, wait, let's stop. We have to hit record before we go any further. So before we jump into some of the really, I guess it's all really fun, but why, Wendy, do we need to be concerned about clutter? And there's kind of a really shallow, obvious answer to this question, I think. But I think the question I'm really wondering is, tell us about the impact that our clutter is having on our nervous systems and our kids behaviors.

[00:02:54.140] - Wendy Zanders

De-cluttering or organizing was never really something that I was naturally good at. Going through life, I've always found that I struggle with anxiety, depression, PTSD. For me, I have found that when I am organized, my brain is clear and I'm able to function better. So for me, when we have clutter in our lives, everything is cluttered. Our hearts are cluttered, our brain is cluttered, our things are cluttered. So cluttering really gives us clarity. Sometimes if I'm working with a client and we're de-cluttering their kids like toy room or their bedrooms with all their toys are, they are overwhelmed, overstimulated because there's too many things there, right? So the same thing, like, if you're working at your desk and you have too many projects going at once on your desk, you're unfocused. So sometimes just cleaning up the room, resetting, it really helps a child like, say, OK, I'm a little overstimulated. What is that one toy I want to play with? And then they bring that out, put it back, and then take another toy. So if everything is out, if all the genres of the toys are out, you're overstimulated and sometimes they

throw tantrums. It shows up in ways maybe they're not able to communicate with you, but a lot of times it's just they're overstimulated and they're overwhelmed, so getting that clutter up and put away is just a really great place to start.

[00:04:17.930] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I noticed, so we have six kids. That's a decent amount of data points to kind of watch how everyone keeps their own space. And I have this interesting theory. I've no idea if there's like real research behind this, but my children who struggle the most, either cognitively or emotionally, so they really struggle to even organize their own brain space, absolutely need an organized, uncluttered space. And my children who are a little bit more naturally gifted in executive functioning and well-adjusted and have a good handle on their emotional state and they regulate well, they could literally be in mass chaos, like there could be a tornado going on around them and they would be nonplused. And so I just think it's so interesting that, you know, how much our external environment impacts our internal environment and vice versa, like how much our internal environment impacts our tolerance for chaos in our external environment.

[00:05:32.240] - Wendy Zanders

It's so true. And sometimes kids can focus on that one task and they don't see the clutter and sometimes the clutter is there and they cannot even focus on the one task. So it's so important not to judge. And I know like with six kids, you have to parent each individually different. So that's six different ways of, you know, handling your kids. And then you still have to internalize your own stuff and how you learn how you intake information. So that's why I say grace, hashtag grace. I mean, this whole conversation, just to bottle up one word, "grace." So it's important in which each child individually as well as you're teaching one child, you teach another child how to do something in a different way as well. And I know we talk about minimalism and we we thrive on that here in our home as well, because if you have all those things, you have a toy room full of things, you're not able to play with all those toys at the same time. If you have all these different curriculums, you're not able to implement all these things at the same time. So sometimes just simplifying is so important as you're going through life.

[00:06:41.460] - Melissa Corkum

OK, so how do we have grace when we have so many different personalities. Like, so I'm hearing, I'm thinking in my head, like, have grace for my, I want to be a minimalist in my idealistic head, but if you were to come to my home, you would be like, really, Melissa? Like, you're not even, doesn't even look like you're trying. And how do we have grace but also not make excuses, like, move forward. Or how do we have grace or teach our kids to have grace when one of them legitimately has a special need or a sensory, I mean, this is like screen sensory processing all over it, right? Especially visual processing, we talk a lot about touch in the sensory world and auditory sensitivity, but I think we forget how much information our eyes take in and that our sensory system also has to organize that, and a lot of us do it without even thinking about it. So how do we have grace when there's so many different personalities and also move forward and not use grace as an excuse?

[00:07:55.370] - Melissa Corkum

Hey, friends, we're taking a quick break to make sure you know about our upcoming workshop, Overcoming Blocked Care for Dads. It's on Monday, August 16th, at 7:00 p.m. Eastern, 4:00 p.m. Pacific. We originally created resources for moms experiencing blocked care, but over and over, moms told us that dads needed support for blocked care, too.

[00:08:18.240] - Lisa Qualls

I just want to jump in and give a quick definition of blocked care in case you haven't heard of it before. 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. As a parent, you may begin to feel ineffective and experience a sense of apathy called block care. During this workshop, dads, you will learn the brain science to understand your feelings and make powerful changes, gain the motivation and endurance to pursue a relationship with your child, overcome feelings of shame and guilt, and learn step by step practices you need to reclaim the parent you know you can be.

[00:09:08.340] - Melissa Corkum

The suggested donation for this workshop is twenty dollars, but all are welcome regardless of ability to donate. Our hosts for this workshop are Greg Lombard Rea and Jay Derting. Both are adoptive dads and TBRI practitioners. For more information or to sign up, go to theadoptionconnection.com/dads. Now back to today's episode.

[00:09:37.270] - Melissa Corkum

So how do we have grace when there's so many different personalities and also move forward and not use grace as an excuse?

[00:09:45.160] - Wendy Zanders

Yeah, so for me, just to kind of give your audience a little bit about me, like I mentioned, I have my own special needs. And my son, he's 14, he has ADHD and my daughter, she's 7, she has ADHD and sensory processing disorder. And then we didn't realize that and I believe my son may have some sensory issues there as well, because when he was only at 18 months, he had to wear a uniform for school. So polo shirt with buttons, you know, the khaki pants with the zipper, and he cried. The entire time I was taking my shower, he cried at 18 months. And I'm like, why are you crying? It's just buttons and a t shirt. I don't like buttons, I don't like zippers. And I'm like, you're 18 months, you don't know. At this point, I didn't even have my diagnosis, so I didn't realize. But in hindsight, looking back, till this day, he does not like zippers and he's almost 15 and he does not like buttons. A lot of times my kids are picking out their own clothes. So if they don't like tags, if they don't like zippers, if they don't like skirts that's across the belly button, certain materials. I have found that my children, even at seven, my daughter was probably at five when I was like, I'm not buying you clothes anymore. Let's go to the store, you pick out what you want because that helps the clutter, right? It doesn't make sense bringing things into the home that they're not going to wear. So empower them to do that. So with my daughter, a lot of times it's all about what she needs. And you set the boundaries, of course, to say, well, this is my budget. So you go to the store, you pick some things out, and then that's a great way, clothing wise, how to help with that, with the clutter. Same thing with toys, electronics, curriculums, all of those different things. You can empower them to pick up what they need, maybe they can be at that point where they're able to articulate what they need and you can help them in that way. You give yourself grace and you give them grace as well. We cannot do all the things, we cannot look at other families and say, well, they have six kids as well. Maybe they maybe they may even have the same diagnosis. And it's still going to be very different for you and your family.

[00:11:58.000] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, we are huge fans of the Enneagram here at the adoption connection, and it just informs us how differently we all experience and see the world. You know, even apart from our sensory processing issues, and our attention issues, and our anxiety, and our blocked care, all of those things. We come with a lens to the world, we come with the motivation, I love what you said about not worrying about what other families are doing, because I think that really does impact, like, we think everyone should have a pair of jeans or everyone needs X, Y or Z or grandma always gifts all the grandkids hoodies for Christmas or something, right. And and then it's been a gift and so I feel like we can't get rid of it. I mean, there's so many I think societal and mindset impacts that cause us to have more things rather than kind of thinking outside the box or giving ourselves permission to say like, it's OK if my kid only has two pairs of black leggings, one to wear and one to wash, and five different t shirts.

[00:13:02.560] - Wendy Zanders

Because you've simplified it. And a lot of times the clutter does come from external. So it's Christmas time, the grandparents are going to love on my children, love on the grandkids. They send a whole bunch of stuff that the kids are not going to play with. So sometimes as you are cluttering inside your home, you need to have these conversations of with loved ones as well. Same thing with the diagnosis. My parents, I mean, growing up in Trinidad and Tobago, didn't understand what ADHD was, as far as I can tell, out of my my six of the siblings, I believe I'm the only one that has special needs and my parents don't understand that. So sometimes I have to say to my siblings and my parents, this is how I'm feeling, this is what I'm struggling with, and I have to educate them. So now that our kids have their diagnosis, I have to educate my family on what that is as well because you want a support

system. Don't feel isolated like, well, I'm not going to tell my family what's going on with my with my small family here. Let them know and just say, hey, I know you sent all these things for Christmas, they're not going to play with these things. Here's a list. Their birthdays are coming up maybe a month or two. Send them a birthday list. Have your kids sit down and say, these are the things that I want. Maybe they want slime, maybe they want some sensory sensory things. That's the stuff they want to send. Don't just have them send you anything, because it becomes clutter in your home, you feel obligated to hold on to these things, like you mentioned. Some clothing issues, some clothing items, if they're not going to wear those kind of things, send a relative the list and say this is from Child A, this is what they would like. If you would like to send them something for birthday or for Christmas, here's a great list. If it's a Disney character or My Little Pony, put that brand name on it so they will know exactly what to get because it doesn't make sense them spending fifty bucks to send your child something for their birth year for Christmas and it's just clutter. It's wasted, money is wasted time, and feelings are going to get hurt. So why do it right? It doesn't have to be this big surprise. Oh, I need to think about it. I don't like shopping. So if I'm getting somebody something, it's tell me what you want. Tell me what page number in the magazine I need to go get it. Because I am not going to think about it. Don't think it's going to be some type of spontaneous thing. Tell me what you want and I go out and get it for you. A lot of times we have to be OK to say that. This is what I need, this is what I want, otherwise don't buy me anything. I know it can come off as rude, but put it in a softer way. Have that conversation, it really needs to be had.

[00:15:38.320] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Lisa and I talk a lot here on the podcast that neither one of us are great gift givers and literally the best gift you could give me is telling me exactly what you want. I'm happy to go get it for you, but I really don't want to have to think about it too much.

[00:15:51.760] - Wendy Zanders

That's right. I don't have time for that because you're thinking would they like this? Maybe they already have that. You know, don't buy me anything. Honestly, for parents that are that have special needs families, maybe they want a friend to come and say, hey, I got your kids, go take a bath, go, you have the afternoon off. That is perfect. The gift of time, can't go wrong with that.

[00:16:16.420] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, well, we talk a lot about love languages, kind of knowing because if we have a big family, right. We want to be efficient in the way that we're giving our resources to our family members, specifically our kids, like between Lisa and I think we have almost like twenty kids. Like, we don't have time to be loving on a kid in a way that they're not even going to receive. And so some of our kids do absolutely love tangible physical gifts. But, you know, there's also words of affirmation. You could write them a really sweet card. Quality time, we do, we do a lot of gifts in our house that were kind of like memberships to the zoo and or paying for an extra dance class, like all those types of things, and we just love that in our house because it doesn't take up room, our kids get to enjoy it all year long. It's fantastic.

[00:17:09.260] - Wendy Zanders

Mine is acts of service. So my family knows, or at least my my husband and kids know, acts of service. I love a clean house.

[00:17:18.070] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, clean my bathroom for me!

[00:17:21.670] - Wendy Zanders

If it's Mother's Day, a nice breakfast, and just pick up extra around the house. But let's do things where it's, and I'm not big on going out and spending hundreds of dollars on jewelry and purses. I don't, that's just not me. I like the simple life. I'm all about collecting memories, so how can we collect those memories? And I know that the love languages, there's a there's one for children as well, and it's so important to do those to see, OK, this child wants that tangible thing, but this child may want to say, hey, hey, mom, let's go do this volunteer activity, just you and me. So you get to love on each child individually in their way. So it's so important. I love that. Yeah, definitely doing that love language child

edition is so important so you get to know your child a little bit better there.

[00:18:11.710] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. For my kids who really are into tangible things, sometimes we do a lot of tangible things that are consumable. So like, I used to have a daughter who well, I mean we're a big family, we used to buy two bunches of bananas every week or whatever. But she had a habit of eating one every day. And I may have told the story before, but I used to get her her own bunch of bananas and actually put her name on it. And I would like make a big deal every week about presenting her her week's worth of bananas that no one else was going to touch. And and I mean, again, like, I was going to do that anyway, but letting her kind of have possession of them, gifting them to her and then they were gone the next week. And I got to do that ritual, like, I got to get her a gift every week. And we don't get our kids gifts, like we wouldn't, if it was a gift gift, like a, you know, an electronic thing or a toy or something, like I wouldn't be doing that every week, but I'm happy to get you a pack of gum every week or do something that's going to go away quickly. So there's ways to kind of skin these cats that don't create more physical clutter in our homes.

[00:19:18.670] - Wendy Zanders

Absolutely.

[00:19:20.290] - Melissa Corkum

We talked a little bit about the physical clutter. I think a lot of people think of that naturally when we think about de-cluttering your mind immediately goes to your overfull closet and your toy room that's a disaster. But what are other areas that are taking up mental space in our life that we don't typically think about as being cluttered?

[00:19:43.650] - Wendy Zanders

Definitely the pantry. As a homeschooling family, one of the things that we try to do is empower the kids to not be asking "Mom can I have this? Mom can I have this?" My daughter is seven and my son is 14, so if they want to get a snack, it doesn't need to be all the way up on the top shelf where only I can get it. So at this point, as your kids get older, rearranging the pantry to say, OK, your kids are now seven is the youngest, you can bring it down, maybe even have a way for the kids to write, "OK, Mom, we're out of these items." Empowering them to say, this is what we're out of. So the pantry, rearranging it even to say, these two bins are for a Child A, Child B. Everybody have their own little space because it can get, it can get chaotic and the child is able to go in and organize their space. So that's one thing if the mom is saying, I am just so overwhelmed, sometimes every crack and crevice of the house is just cluttered. And how I approach it, when I'm working with my clients, I'm doing my free 20 minute consultation. I will say, what space did you want to work on? "My entire house!" Sometimes they laugh about it and it's true. Sometimes we have to just got the whole thing and start over and just make a list and just knock it all out. But if to move you forward, if you are completely overwhelmed, look at your spaces and just say, gosh, if I can just snap fingers and just get any space in this house de-cluttered where will I start? That's the space you start with. Maybe it's your pantry, maybe you you had a child that was really sick that took a lot of time to where the child was in the hospital. Dinners weren't being done but you love to cook for your family. I would say start in the kitchen, started cluttering the pantry, started cluttering the kitchen island that, the kitchen island is that one space where everything goes, right? Sometimes start with the countertop. And even if you say my kitchen, still break that down into small bite sized pieces. So the island, maybe the the utensil drawer, one of the cabinets, maybe you love coffee or tea, maybe you have like a cabinet with just coffee and tea. Start there de-cluttering that. And empowering your family to join in as a project. Don't take it all on yourself to say it is my responsibility to do this. If you have kids of age, get them involved and say, have a sit down with your family and say, look, I need a heart to heart with everybody. I need your help to keep this home organized and decluttered because I always say we're not raising, we're not just raising children. We're raising somebody's husband, raising somebody's wife. Nowadays, the wife isn't staying home and the husband's going out to work, right. Everybody is doing something. The husband knows how to raise the kids, cook, clean, everybody knows how to do everything because, I mean, we need everybody to pitch in to get those things done. So sometimes it's a physical space, but then also, if your calendar is out of control, you're running all over the place and you don't even have time to stop to declutter space in your home, sometimes it's your calendar. What are you doing? What

are you running around? OK, you have six kids, six different activities. Everybody's running all over the place. Maybe you have to stop and say, you know what, I cannot have six kids in six different activities every single season. So maybe if there's, maybe there's a fall sport and a summer sport. Maybe three kids get to do summer sport, the other three do nothing, and then they switch. So to give you some bandwidth, at least until you can get yourself out from under water and start to breathe again. Because you have to take these kids to these activities. They're not of age, so it's all on you. And then don't try to have three different calendars. There's one Wendy, there's one Melissa, there's one mom. So try to make sure all those activities are on one calendar. Don't try to have three and four calendars where you have to manage it. So sometimes have to start it with your calendar, so free up some time so you can tackle those spaces. Sometimes you have to start with the spaces to kind of get the family involved to free up that time as well.

[00:23:54.030] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. Those are all amazing tips. I know a lot of our families have kids with food insecurities or sneaking things, and so putting food at reachable level might not be the best idea, but I think the idea of having individual bins for kids, even if they have to, even if your child or even if you're putting it up so your child has to ask because that's a great attachment test, but it means that, like, Sally's not going to have 15 month old fruit snacks buried in the pantry somewhere that there's only a couple of things and I actually stopped buying things in bulk years ago because I thought it was the right thing to do, because we had a big family and I used to be a coupon, used to stack up seventy two thousand bars of soap because I could make ten dollars at CVS if I use my coupons, right. All of that stuff. But I realized that I didn't have a good system for managing all of that. And so food was going bad, I forget about things. And so I try as best as I can to just buy kind of what we need for that week. And I still have extra stuff in my pantry that probably needs to get thrown out, but as best as I can. I stopped buying twenty seven cans of tomato sauce at one time. I buy like one a week and if we use the one that I replace the one because otherwise we don't actually have a physical pantry in our house either. So the bulk having too much stuff in the kitchen, there's literally no yeah. There's no way I know where to put it.

[00:25:23.950] - Wendy Zanders

And then each family is so different. I have one client where the kids were, the food insecurities you mentioned, or sensitivities and things like that. Then the kid, so what we what we end up doing and each home is very different, each client is very different, each pantry is very different. So if there are kids where you're sneaking food and things like that, yes, then it goes up higher, it gets locked up. Maybe it gets knocked up in mom's bedroom closet. All the food doesn't have to be in a pantry. Sometimes you have to put it in different areas of the home. I've learned that during covid things are, now outside of covid things are very different now. One thing I've helped a client do is have a pantry, an active pantry, but then a storage. So if you run out of toilet paper, right, you have another case over here that you can pull from and then you go to the grocery store and refill that pantry so you have a storage and then you have your active pantry, because if you're waiting until you're out of something, you go to the grocery store, it's out. It's on back order. So you want to have a little bit of an overflow, but not so much where food is going to waste. So having that happy medium is definitely, and it's very individualized as well. So if you know, your kids are not able to, doesn't matter what age your kid is, if you're a 15 year old who can't be trusted with certain foods and it has to be up higher and you need to ask mom, then definitely do that. So not by age is just that, for me it's responsibility.

[00:26:57.600] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, we talk a lot about developmental age or brain task age.

[00:27:03.520] - Wendy Zanders

Yeah.

[00:27:04.270] - Melissa Corkum

OK, Wendy, we are headed into the school year and I feel like every time a new season in the year turns over, there's a way probably that we could be setting ourselves up for success to not take on more or lose our momentum or lose the progress we've made, because, good gracious, if you have multiple, if you're listening and you have multiple children and they actually go to school, that first

week, it's like school supplies, textbooks, book covers, paperwork out the wazoo. Like, you know, if we're not, if we don't have a plan, you know, that's the end of our clean kitchen counter or whatever the thing is. Right, I mean, backpacks for all the people, lunch boxes for all the people, so what are some practical tips about just school clutter for our families?

[00:27:54.210] - Wendy Zanders

Yeah, so with the school year coming back into full swing and this could also be a tip for the end of the school year as well as the kids are getting ready for summer break. This is a great way to get you set up for the school year as well. With the new school year, just making sure that everything from last year is organized, put away, so you're getting very fresh and clean. De-cluttered, brain space is available for all the new things that's coming in. Having a tote depends on the age of your children. It is so important to look at your school papers and just say, as we're going through, if your daughter is going from kindergarten to first grade, do you really need to keep the first time she drew a line or first time she colored something that you have no idea what it looks like. This is a great, great time to start de-cluttering that. Having a space for those backpacks and lunchboxes, if the kids are of age, a great time to say you can be packing your own lunches this year. That's going to free up in time. Also having a dedicated space to see if things come home from school and you need me to sign them. It needs to go into this bin on the kitchen island or in the living room, in the home school room, wherever that space is dedicate. Because if it's not there, I will not be filling it out, I'm not going into a backpack to get it. We have to be able to teach these kids life skills to know and then set those boundaries, because if you set the boundaries, the kids are going to set boundaries as well. So I would say definitely set a dedicated space. You pick that space with a bin when the kids come home, the things that you need to sign, it goes in there and then say maybe on a Thursday night that you will fill it back out instead of back up on Friday unless it's really time sensitive. But having those dedicated spaces are so important to get you set up for the school year.

[00:29:46.680] - Melissa Corkum

So, Wendy, there are lots of people that are talking about de-cluttering, there's research minimalist on a podcast app, you can find all kinds of fun things to listen to. What makes you different? Because we connected over some similar special needs that our kids had and being and being home school families. And I just love the way that you think and the way that you take into account all the kind of neurodiversity of of families. And so you have a process that's a little bit different than anything I've ever experienced before. So will you tell everyone a little bit about what that looks like and why people, when they work with you, don't lose steam.

[00:30:31.670] - Wendy Zanders

You know, when I first started my business in 2017, I had shame around, who am I to help other people de-clutter their home? I battled, I had a couple episodes of depression where my health was a complete mess. I used to be a federal government employee, used to be an executive assistant. So I was an organized person at that point, but when you're battling depression and you're functioning at work and you're dragging yourself into bed at night and your house is just a mess and you're living with people products and you're eating fast food and all those things, the last thing on your mind is the de-cluttering your home. You're trying to survive at this point. So my husband was really great, he was able to grab food, all those things. I was barely eating, but I had to get myself out of this depression before I could even help my family. So when I'm working with clients, when I'm talking to people about my process, when I was working with my therapist, she was my accountability coach/therapist at this point. And she says, what are you going to do? Because she knew where I was and where I wanted to get back to. So she was the one that was kind of helping me along this journey. She said, what are you going to do by the next time we have our next session? And I said, I want to I want to declare my kitchen. I used to love to cook meals and you open up every cabinet and it was just a mess in there. So I was able, I went home and I made a list of every crack and crevice in my home and I started in my kitchen. So I was there, I was de-cluttering my kitchen. The way how I work, if you're on a steam, it is OK to stop, mark where you are, because I also have ADHD, or pivot to another space. So don't leave, if you're cluttering your kitchen and I'm saying, what is the stock doing on the island? Right? I'm pretty sure every family is like, yup, I got kitchen and I got I got clothes in my kitchen. Don't take the clothes and take it to the laundry room or take it and put it away in the kids room. Because what's going to happen? You're not going to come back to the kitchen, you're going to

be in the bedroom and I'm going to do something else before you know, it is going to be three hours. And you're like, what did I get done? Right. So for me, when I'm working with my clients, I stay in the room that we're working with. I'm also a military veteran, so I'm able to do one wall at a time, one at a time, because if you run out of steam or you're like, oh, wow, it's been an hour, I got this much done, you're able to visually see how much you got done. So just create piles right there in the room that you're working in. When you get done, then you can take it. You can even call your children and say, hey, grab that pile and take this here, and this is a great way to invite the kids to be part of the process. So that's how I do it. I'm able to walk my clients because I've lived that journey. I had that shame around that, who am I to help other people? And I know you and I were talking about this before that book knowledge, to me personally, it doesn't do anything for me. But if you tell me I've been where you've been and I can help you, that's the person that I'm like, please tell me the way, because there's more to just book information. If you have experience, if you have firsthand knowledge or something, that's the person I'm going to gravitate towards to help me because they've been there. To now I'm able to walk this journey being proud, and I talk about my disabilities, I talk about my family and the struggles that we have had. It's not a way to to to be ashamed of it, I found that there's power in opening up our mouths and saying I've been there. What if you never open up your mouth and talk about your troubles? They are people waiting for the answers and you have the answer for them because we are able to open up our mouths and say, I've been where you've been. I'm not looking to be that perfect person. If people are looking for Pinterest organizing, I am not the person for them. I am the person who are saying I keep losing my keys, my kids, my kids have special needs, I have my own special needs, I am struggling, I am drowning, and I've read Wendy's story and I love the way how she approaches clutter. She's the person I need. I don't need somebody that's doing Pinterest organizing and talking about containers and all those things. I am a minimalist at heart. I like to simplify. So for me, I say I take my clients from overwhelmed to simplified. That's what we're trying to get to. And minimalist minimalism is not a bad word. It's just that's simplicity. What what is simple living look like for you, for your neighbor, for your friend. Everybody's level of minimalism in simplicity is so, so different. So that is how I work with my clients. And I always say I'm compassionate and nonjudgmental because I've been there and it's OK. I can take you by the hand and show you the process and walk you through.

[00:35:40.000] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And she'll make you do it. We were on a webinar together. We're in a community and Wendy was giving a presentation and it lasted like twenty minutes of the hour. And then she looked at all of us and she was like, OK, so what? In the next forty minutes, what are you going to go de-clutter? Go do it. We're all like, what? So I love that there's just that, like co-working, hold our feet to the fire, have us go do something, even just fifteen minutes of something. I think that's a brilliant not a, here's why you should do it or how you can help your what your spice rack could look like, now go do it and come back next week and I'll teach you another lesson. It's a, go get your kitchen counter clear now. Because people already know I don't need a presentation for a whole hour on the importance of the de-cluttering. Everybody knows they need to the de-clutter. What people struggle with, those in my membership, what I'm working with a client in person or virtually de-cluttering or in my membership, the accountability is where they have a hard time. Maybe they've bought a course, maybe they've listened to people, they've bought books on the topic. We're busy. But if I can say that for 60 Minutes, I have a program for the next 60 minutes, let's focus on that space that you want to de-clutter. Then you show up and you have me for accountability. You can take yourself off mute, you can put yourself on camera and ask a question to help move you forward in your home. So, yes, the books are great, but if we don't have the time to do that, then we don't need to. Don't don't don't waste your money with the courses. And unless there's accountability attached to it, we're special needs family. We need accountability. We need the energy from other people that's going through the same struggle. That's when you make massive movement and progress in your home.

[00:37:36.100] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Thanks for that. Wendy, thanks so much for being here. It's just so great. The theme of simplicity is so important because if you're listening to our podcast, you're probably parenting kids with a lot of challenges. You you've already figured out or you're starting to figure out that the type of parenting that our kids need requires a lot from us. And that requires, in order for us to give our best in those spaces, we need simplicity in pretty much every other space. There's just not enough hours in

the day or enough energy from our tired bodies to do anything else. And so I really appreciate you sharing so many practical tips along the way for being gracious and kind to us as tired moms and for being realistic and vulnerable. So thank you so much for your time.

[00:38:24.450] - Wendy Zanders

Thank you so much for having me. And just remember that we cannot pour into other people if we don't pour ourselves so we can't pull from an empty vessel. So let's make sure that we're filling up our cups as well in order to take care of our families. Thank you so much for having me.

[00:38:43.230] - Lisa Qualls

I really enjoyed that conversation, Melissa. I greatly appreciate cleared surfaces and, you know, that's hard when you have a lot of kids you're managing and especially we're looking at the upcoming school year and there's a lot of paperwork and things. And honestly, so I homeschooled my kids for many, many years. And then when my kids went to school, I remember being stunned at the amount of paperwork they brought home at the beginning of the school year. And I didn't know what to do with it all. And I had to find a whole new system for myself. And so I love what Wendy talks about, about just the need to create simplified systems, because if we make it too complicated, there's no way we can sustain it. So I, I do really love that idea. And I think for all of our families, you know, it's easy for us to be overwhelmed and the more stuff we have around us, I think that can increase the stress. So anyhow, I just love what she does.

[00:39:49.760] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I just appreciated her kindness towards us.

[00:39:53.330] - Lisa Qualls

It's the compassion.

[00:39:54.860] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, the compassion of like, it's hard, but also, I think challenging us that, this is important. I think it's easy to sometimes think, I can get to that later. It's not like, there seems so many other urgent things, especially as we go back to school in terms of making sure everyone's IEPs are in order and, you know, trying to figure out if they have a teacher that's going to understand their behaviors and trauma and all of these other things. And it's easy to think de-cluttering is for people who have more time, you know, more margin. But there is so much power and having clear space around us, the trickle down effect to how it takes the load off of us mentally, how less overwhelmed our kids are, that trickles down into their ability to focus and their behavior. I mean, so it's kind of a backdoor way of coming about some of the things that our families are struggling with, but important nonetheless.

[00:40:56.710] - Lisa Qualls

Right, because you and I both know that when a child is heading out the door and they remember that they were supposed to have a signed slip for something or they're supposed to be returning something, if nobody knows where it is and it just increases the stress, and then we end up with everybody dysregulated, which is the last thing we want.

[00:41:15.580] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, you can't get out the door because someone can't find the other shoe or their favorite, you know, comfort item that they want to leave with. Right. So it really does eliminate so many of these other little things that trip us up throughout the day. So if you want to connect with Wendy or if you want to connect with her so that she can kind of be over your shoulder and walking you through a mini clutter project, you can find her on Facebook and Instagram as @yourdecluttercoach. We'll have links to also her LinkedIn and her YouTube at the show notes which you can find at the adoptionconnection.com/139. Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Instagram as @theadoptionconnection. Or better yet, join our free Facebook community at theadoptionconnection.com/facebook.

[00:42:09.520] - Lisa Qualls

Thanks so much for listening, we love having you. And remember, you're a good parent doing good

work.

[00:42:17.860] - Melissa Corkum

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