

[00:00:01.350] - 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.

[00:00:10.410] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:19.070] - Lisa Qualls

Hi, friends, welcome to Episode 141 of the adoption Connection podcast. We're currently in the midst of a short series during the month of August focusing on back to school. We want to help you be as prepared as you can be as we all move into what we hope is going to be a normal school year. I don't know if we really quite know what normal means, but hopefully it's going to be a whole lot better than last year.

[00:00:42.570] - Melissa Corkum

One where they all go in person and hopefully don't have to wear masks.

[00:00:46.110] - Lisa Qualls

That would that would be our dream school year, yes. Every episode this month has been focused on helping you move into this new school year. So if you've missed any of the episodes, be sure to go back and listen to them as we all prepare to go back to school. So this week, Melissa had a conversation with a middle school principal about how we can sort of understand and support our kids as the year begins.

[00:01:12.350] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I mean, this was a super fun conversation. I mean, wouldn't you all want to sit down and pick the brain of your child's middle school principal? Our guest this week, Nabil Zerizef, is an adoptive father, husband and co-author of A Kid's Book About Adoption. That book is a part of the "A Kid's Book About" series. And he wrote that with Leul Gurske, who is a former student of his. And as we mentioned, he is also a middle school principal in Portland, Oregon. So here's my conversation with Nabil.

[00:01:51.260] - Melissa Corkum

Nabil, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast, we are so glad you're here.

[00:01:56.060] - Nabil Zerizef

Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited about this.

[00:01:59.150] - Melissa Corkum

So can you just start by telling our audience how adoption became part of your family's story because you are an adoptive family?

[00:02:06.680] - Nabil Zerizef

Yeah, absolutely. So my wife and I started dating when we were about 16 years old.

[00:02:12.410] - Melissa Corkum

Love that.

[00:02:14.700] - Nabil Zerizef

So we've been together for a long time now. But at way too early of an age, we started talking about what a family could look like and if we were to get married. And part of that conversation, even back then, we talked about adoption being a possibility. Her father was adopted and so she'd heard a lot about his experience for better and for worse and just the complications and just kind of all the things that come along with it. So I think that there was a much better perspective that she had about what adoption means than what I did at the time. So it was just a conversation we had and we both agreed that we potentially would adopt one day. And then as we got older and got married and went through college and all that and started to talk about growing our family, we started trying to have biological

children and there were some complications along the way. And we just kind of were met at a time where we had to decide if we were going to pursue some sort of fertility treatments or to like do more investigation into what what options we had. And we decided at that point that we would take a look at adoption and that it just kind of made sense for us.

[00:03:29.450] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love how that was part of your conversation all along. Is your adoption, was it an international, a private, through foster care?

[00:03:39.710] - Nabil Zerizef

It kind of morphed. So we went through, we were looking at international adoption first and then kind of as we were learning more and doing research, there were some countries that were looking appealing at first. And then we had heard through our research or seen that there were more adoptions that were happening within the country itself. And so we decided that if that was going to be the case, that we would like step away from those programs because we would rather have people be able to to be adopted within their their birth country. Yes, we pursued that for a little while. And then as we were in the program, we actually got a call from our agency saying that I know this is not what you guys have been pursuing, but this there was a mother who was about to give birth domestically, but she lived internationally. And it was just a situation where it ended up being a domestic adoption who was born in Chicago. Yeah, it was kind of outside of the program that we were initially looking at.

[00:04:43.460] - Melissa Corkum

I know. Well, right. If there's one thing we can ever say about an adoption process is that it never goes quite the way that you expect. Even, you know, even if you get to kind of stay in the same program that you're hoping for. I mean, there's just so many twists and turns and the unknowns.

[00:04:57.470] - Nabil Zerizef

Oh, completely. And I think that I'm, I always saw myself as a pretty flexible person to begin with, but there is nothing like going through the adoption process to learn about how flexible you really are and being able to work through different twists and turns.

[00:05:13.850] - Melissa Corkum

Well, your guys are still pretty little, right, if I remember correctly.

[00:05:18.110] - Nabil Zerizef

Yeah.

[00:05:18.110] - Melissa Corkum

And so I think that just prepares us. We're a little bit further down the road, all of our kids are teens and young adults, like, flexibility is kind of the name of the game, because not only is the adoption process completely unpredictable, so is parenting.

[00:05:29.930] - Nabil Zerizef

Yeah, yeah. Our son's two and a half. He was born on Christmas Day, actually. We got a call at 5:00 in the morning saying, hey, you got to jump on a plane, here we go. So, yeah, so two and a half and he's full of energy and super fun and he keeps us on our toes. So it's it's great.

[00:05:48.890] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, when you reached out to me on Instagram, one of the other things that struck me is that you are also a middle school principal. Of course, immediately all of my questions flew to like I would love to pick the brain of a middle school principal who also is an adoptive father who kind of understands what maybe adoption informed looks like and and who has all this experience with kids. And so before I start to pick your brain about all those things, what, why in the world, Nabil? Why middle school? What do you love about middle school students?

[00:06:19.850] - Nabil Zerizef

It's so funny you ask. So I actually started out at elementary school. I was an elementary school teacher. I taught grades three, four and five at different times and then was an elementary school principal for four years. And so, that's kind of where my journey began. But I had spent a little bit of time while there was an assistant principal at a middle school who was on maternity leave. And so I filled in for her at the middle school. And when I was first asked to do that, I was like, no way, there's no way I'm going to take that job. I remembered what I was like in middle school, I think we all kind of have stories from middle school that are terrifying. At first I said no. And then as I was kind of going through the reasons in my head about why I was saying no, it was all fear based stuff that really wasn't very rational. And so I went back and said, you know what? Actually, I thought about it, let's do this. And then I loved it. I loved being at the middle school level because the kids are learning so much, they just want to be seen. They want to be understood, they want to feel a part of something and they can have some really great conversations. I mean, there are kids that are going through more than we will ever know. And the way that they're able to talk about it and help us understand the way that they see the world, at middle school, I feel like that, the door is wide open for those conversations. So I did that sort of interim work and was at the elementary school for a while and I just I felt a pull to be back in middle school full time. Last year was actually my first year as a middle school principal, and with all the challenges of covid and everything, it was kind of an interesting year. But I feel right at home because the kids are so genuinely themselves. I mean, they're just so real. They're just so trying to figure out who they are. And yeah, it's a ton of fun.

[00:08:08.000] - Melissa Corkum

Why do you think so many people are so afraid of middle schoolers? I mean, I know that sounds kind of extreme, but you mentioned like a fear response. I always tell parents we never do our best parenting out of fear. We know that our kids don't behave their best out of fear. You know, I love, like toddlers. I don't love parenting toddlers, but I love hanging out with toddlers. And I actually love teens, which I also know makes me a bit of an anomaly.

[00:08:32.570] - Melissa Corkum

But I've never loved the middle school age. I don't know what it is. So what is it? Is it like the, is there an awkward, is it like that, we're just not sure what to do with them? Like, are you, like do you have insight? Why are we so stressed out, especially about parenting middle schoolers?

[00:08:50.390] - Nabil Zerizef

Yeah, well, I can't tell you how many conversations I've had with parents that just feel this sense of helplessness almost where it's like, I don't know what to do anymore. I've tried. It's almost like through the elementary years, they've learned ways to work with their kid to help them learn, help them grow, help them be safe.

[00:09:14.200] - Melissa Corkum

Hey, friends, we are jumping into the middle of this interview to just make sure you know about the Village. We know that you are in a marathon of sorts when it comes to parenting and for the past almost two years, we've been doing it with a pandemic, but just doesn't seem to be going anywhere. So we want to let you know that if you're feeling at the end of your rope, burned out, like you just need some people who get it and you need some support, you will find that in the Village.

[00:09:48.310] - Lisa Qualls

So we have a special group just for adoptive moms, foster moms too are welcome and where we support one another and we learn together, we grow together, and we're very excited to now be offering a group specifically for dads. We know that they're not nearly as many resources for dads as there for moms. Well, we have that for you now and so you can get more information about both of these groups by going to theadoptionconnection.com/village.

[00:10:26.990] - Nabil Zerizef

Work with their kid, to help them learn, help them grow, help them be safe, and then as kids get older and start to test boundaries, start to have more independence, start to want more independence and freedoms, the the tools and the tricks that were used in elementary school just don't work anymore at middle school. And so I think parents sometimes feel this sense of hopelessness, of why isn't this

working? It's frustrating. Like, I've always been able to talk to them about this and now they don't want to talk to me. We've always loved to do this thing together and now they don't want to do it anymore. And so it's like just this feeling of not knowing what to do next. And I always talk to parents about how it's OK to just be in that moment and just recognize that frustration of like, OK, we used to do this thing that they loved and now they don't love it anymore. I just need to, like, be OK with that and figure out what what else. If I pay attention, if I really think about my kid right now, what is it that they're wanting or needing that I could help them with? And maybe it's time or space or things that I haven't traditionally given them. So it's just being in tune with with your kid.

[00:11:37.700] - Melissa Corkum

We talk a lot about that in adoptive parenting is this attunement of trying to figure out where our kids are, how they need us, what needs they have that maybe they're not just coming out and saying to us, but maybe their behavior is showing. So that all makes a lot of sense. If you haven't read it, one of the best books on I think what happens to the pre-adolescent teenage brain is *Brainstorm* by Dan Siegel. For those of you listening, if you haven't read it, we'll put a link in the show notes. But he explains how the brain literally is kind of dismantling, like, changing all of this neural connections to rewire for adulthood and how that really does affect, like you were saying, like, well, he used to be this kind of kid and now it seems like he's a completely different kid or what happened to my sweet and loving kid or my helpful kid or how come we don't like to do the same things anymore? A lot of that has to do with those neuro connections. And they do come back, friends. We have young adults now and it does, it does turn around.

[00:12:38.090] - Nabil Zerizef

Yeah, I'll say too, though, that, you know, we all have our experience with middle school and kind of, that's our frame of reference. Like our context is what middle school looks like when we were there.

[00:12:50.150] - Melissa Corkum

And it was awful.

[00:12:52.250] - Nabil Zerizef

Yeah, for a lot of people it was. But middle schools look a little different now. I mean, I feel like there's a lot more support, there's a lot more focus on social emotional learning about really teaching the whole child and allowing kids to to be themselves and to show up every day as they are. And I don't know the the for many of us who went to middle school or whatever decade it was, I don't I don't think that the things were really quite that way. And then you add the layer of technology onto it. And I think the people do not feel super comfortable with technology in their kids using technology, especially if they don't really understand what all these apps are, what they do or who they're communicating with. And so I think that, again, back to that fear piece, middle school looks very different and then you throw technology on top of that and people, I think, just don't even really know what middle school looks like anymore.

[00:13:47.240] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, well, I mean, technology just by itself has, I think, completely morphed the landscape of school, especially for preteens and teens. So that brings me to a question. I didn't prep you for this beforehand, so feel free to pass on it. But what's the bullying situation like in middle school and what do parents need to know and what can we be doing to help our kids in all aspects of this?

[00:14:13.520] - Nabil Zerizef

I would definitely say that bullying exists. It's there. It happens. It's frustrating and it's hard to get a handle on at times. I will also say, though, that people's definitions of what bullying is varies wildly. I mean, there are some that if somebody says something mean to them that they now have been bullied. There's also definitions where people are taught or kids are taught, especially boys are taught that you need to tough it out and don't say anything and, you know, either need to fight back or, you know, so I think that there's just a lot of nuance that goes into who is doing the bullying, who's feeling bullied, and what their definition is. I will say, though, to counselors and social workers and teachers and really any staff at the school really have been working hard to understand the nuances of when there's conflict and conflict resolution. And I think that a lot of bullying that is continual, it comes from

a conflict not being resolved and we're never maybe going to get to a full resolution of it, but we're getting much better at finding ways to really get to the root of the issue of what's going on and what they're bullying about and why and what the impact is on the other person and digging into that in a way that before didn't really happen. It was more just like, oh, you did this thing to that person, now here's your punishment. Oh, you did this thing to that person, well, now here's your punishment. When we work in a system that's based on just that, we will continue to see bullying perpetuated.

[00:16:02.290] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I think that's really helpful. I mean, there's probably an entire conversation around that. But I think what you said in terms of a holistic perspective, trying to get to the root of the matter and not just this, you know, like parents, cause and effect, consequence, behavior modification, it just means that it'll keep coming. The behavior, the bullying, the whatever it is, keeps coming back again and again and again.

[00:16:23.410] - Nabil Zerizef

And we try to keep in mind, too, that the kids do the best they can with what they have, right. They're trying to do well. And so if a kid is doing bullying behaviors, it's often that's communication too. It's showing that they might not know or might not have the skills or the understanding or the perspective to be able to deal with the situation or to just to respond in a more typical and acceptable way.

[00:16:51.780] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, you have this unique position of being able to forge relationships with middle schoolers during this relatively tumultuous time in development, but you're also not the parent which makes you be able to maybe approach them with less fear, because ultimately it might feel like it reflects on you, you know, what they go home and do or whatever it is. I think that's always a gift to have safe people our kids can trust that aren't their parents, because I think there's definitely a different relationship there when we're talking about adoption and there's attachment issues, we need people in our village so our kids can confide in who aren't us because sometimes we just can't play that role. On the same vein, I'm sure you probably have moments where you wish you could get on your soapbox and tell parents something about their kids that maybe they're not able to see because you sit in a different position. So if I could give you a soapbox right now and you could talk to middle school parents, like, what do you want them to know about middle schoolers? And you've shared some things that I think I could probably tease out already. But, you know, if you could be really clear and just give a couple of things that you really want parents of middle schoolers to really understand about this age.

[00:18:08.870] - Nabil Zerizef

I, I would say that, my advice to parents is to stay involved and to stay close with your kids and to communicate with the school. Do all the things that you naturally are inclined to do that like you're, I'm sure you're telling yourself, like, I would like to be more involved or I would like to know more about this or that, but maybe are being more reserved or not knowing how to go about it. And I would say to trust your instinct, if your instinct is telling you to call the school and ask a counselor about something that you're concerned about, do that. If your instinct is to, you know, I just need to know what's going on with this friend of my my kid is hanging out with now, call that parent or I think that it's OK to want to stay involved and to do the things that you, that you are maybe afraid of doing or feeling like I shouldn't do, you know, and just kind of see where that stuff takes you. And I'll say the other, the other thing, and I kind of talked about this earlier, is really allowing your kid to be themselves. Middle school kids, more than anything, they care about what's happening with them, like what is happening in their world with them right now. They feel things pretty deeply. And so I would just encourage you to let kids do what they're feeling and wanting to be and really just not passing judgment, just allowing them to show up as they are. And you can have conversations with them and talk to them about it, about the things that they're feeling or the way that they're expressing themselves. But I just think it's so important for kids to be allowed the space to kind of wrestle with who they are as they're developing.

[00:19:54.730] - Melissa Corkum

To bring it full circle to something you said earlier, you know, it's different than elementary school. And when we're parenting younger kids, there's this illusion, sometimes, that we have a little bit of

control. And I think as our kids get older, we realize how not true that is and it is very scary. And the process of having kids that are almost one hundred percent dependent on you and then, I think, middle school really highlights this transition where they're really moving from not mostly depended on you and some independent but mostly independent and less and less dependent. And that's that's a process for us as parents, right, to kind of own and figure out what's in that for us.

[00:20:40.350] - Nabil Zerizef

Yeah, absolutely. And I think that there's this feeling of safety, too, that comes with being seen and feeling understood. And I know that there are some kids who just may never feel safe being exactly who they are in different contexts. But I think that the more we can have home be a place that they feel safe and that they feel like they can really just let go and just relax and be the person they are, then then I think that that's we all need the respite. At school, there are kids from all walks of life, all belief systems, all backgrounds, and kids are really trying to figure out where they fit within that. And they spend a lot of energy. I mean, they are doing so much emotional work throughout the day that they really need to be able to go home and and not feel this discomfort and this burden when they're at home.

[00:21:37.260] - Melissa Corkum

Good words. And we will link we have a couple episodes on what we call felt safety in the podcast that talks a little bit more in depth about that, so we'll link to those in the show notes as well. You had an idea for a book. There's a series called "A Kid's Book About" and I don't know all the books that are in that series, but I imagine there's all kinds of topics that that series is covered. And you thought, rightly so, there should be a kids' book about adoption. Why did you think that this was so important?

[00:22:12.660] - Nabil Zerizef

So I didn't originally think the that I would be writing with "A Kids Book About." They're a fantastic company and like you said, there's different titles and even things like bullying that we just talked about and identity, that sort of thing. But I, I got the idea to write a book about adoption, really, for my niece, who was seven at the time, and my wife and I, once we found out that we were going to be adopting and we were ready to have a conversation with her, that she was going to have a little cousin, we sat down and had this moment that my wife and I were really expecting to be this very special thing. And so we talked to her about how we would be adopting a son and he would be born in just a few months. And she immediately started crying and she said, why would you do that? You should be taking a kid from his parents and was just had this this idea of what adoption was that was built upon what she'd seen on TV shows or maybe what she'd heard from other people. Her perspective was just like that adoption was like just this sad, tragic thing that like we, and that we were going to steal a kid from his parents. When she responded in that way, I mean, I love her so much. I knew that this was like something that, if she's experiencing, many kids are experiencing, right. They probably have those same thoughts, those same ways of seeing adoption. And so I wanted to be able to write a book that would help the conversation get started about what adoption is, what adoption isn't, and then all the different things that come with it, because there are a lot of emotions that come with adoption and there is oftentimes a lot of trauma that's there. And so I think it's good for kids to recognize that those things exist. But I wanted to have it in book form so that they could, you know, so they could just have some sort of a resource to look at. So, yeah, I talked to A Kids Book About and just proposed the idea of doing A Kid's Book About Adoption. And I also knew at the time, though, that, you know, coming from just my perspective wouldn't really be appropriate and wouldn't honestly help kids understand adoption in the best way. So I had a former student that I connected with, Leul Gurske, who is phenomenal. He was 14 at the time. And just the thought of a 14 year old being OK with writing a book with this principal, like, it should tell you a lot about this kid. Yeah, he's just amazing and so, you know, worked it out with his parents and we set up a time to really dig in and talk about adoption and he was super vulnerable. And ultimately, I hope it's going to help a lot of kids.

[00:25:01.380] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I think that dual perspective, you as an adoptive dad will as an international adoptee, I've had a chance to preview the book. It's, first of all, it's beautiful. It's it's pleasing to the eyes, it's bright and colorful and it really does a great job of covering almost everything you can think of that a kid might

ask about adoption, but in a really simple but truthful way, I mean, it's not, for sure, like you mentioned, is not like an all butterflies and roses book. It's also not a doom and gloom. I think it really does a beautiful job of starting a conversation and presenting some things that are just facts about adoption. And so kudos to you, I think you guys did a great job.

[00:25:49.440] - Nabil Zerizef

Thank you. And, you know, the hope is that the book can kind of provide the whole windows and mirrors metaphor that, there are some kids who are going to read this and see a reflection of their own lives or their own experience with adoption. And then there are some kids that are going to read this book and it's going to be a window into a whole new world. And so we tried to make it kind of meet both purposes so that kids who may not even know or think they know anybody who's adopted can at least understand what adoption is and hopefully have some empathy, too, in the questions that they ask and the approach that they take when, you know, when talking about adoption.

[00:26:26.730] - Melissa Corkum

As a principle, how do you help your school, if you do, what are some ways that you've helped your students or your staff become more adoption informed?

[00:26:36.870] - Nabil Zerizef

That's a goal that I still have. And I'm very open with my staff about the fact that I'm an adoptive parent and and just I don't know that I've shared even that I've written this book, I don't, but I will definitely make that known at some point.

[00:26:54.030] - Melissa Corkum

That's your homework, Nabil, tell all the people.

[00:26:57.990] - Nabil Zerizef

I know, I always feel a little weird when it's with my staff or with people that I know closely. It's easier, I feel like, to talk to people who I don't know about it. But one of the big things in in this whole conversation is just, you know, we've talked about identity and being seen. And I think that sometimes people can hear the kid has been adopted and that becomes who they are or what they are in a person's mind. And so my goal would be really to help people understand that that's one part of their story. That's one piece of who they are, but it's not what defines them. And so I think that my goal, as a principal too, is to help kids feel like they can share pieces of their story or whatever it is that they're needing to have heard, whether it's with a counselor or trusted adult in the school and know that when the person hears that it's not going to become the definition of who they are, that that's just going to be taken as one piece of information that is a part of them.

[00:28:01.770] - Melissa Corkum

I know that there are parents listening, parents who have kids in school of all ages, really not just middle school students who are wishing that their teachers, maybe their administrators, the people that are interacting with their kids day in and day out, we're just a little bit more adoption informed. And and that is to be informed about adoption language, the know, the, "who's your real mom" kind of stuff. And then also, I think it also encompasses a piece of the trauma informed. Like you mentioned, a lot of kids who have behaviors that are concerning to us, if we aren't aware of a child's history or what's going on. And this isn't just for adopted kids either, obviously, that we would want our teachers to ask more informed questions, like you mentioned, with bullying, not like, oh, man, this kid's really a bad kid, but like, what's this kid not getting? What need isn't being met that causes him or her to act in this way or what skills or resources do they still need? So what advice would you give parents as an administrator? Like, what are the best ways, like how do you wish parents would approach you about changes that they want, that they would like to see in the schools where their kids attend?

[00:29:17.430] - Nabil Zerizef

I think that most principals are very open to partnership and and just really having that conversation. So I would say that writing an email or placing a phone call and saying, hey, can we chat for just 15 minutes? I'd love to just talk to you about adoption and what it means in our family and what we feel like, you know, how we feel like being adoption informed could help the school and the community.

There are things I think, that become blind spots for all of us and adoption tends to be one of them where people don't really have conversations about it. They're often not trained. I can't think of a single professional development where adoption has been the topic of conversation or has come up. We have been very intentional about inclusively and talking about, you know, whether it's gender, any other identities that kids come with, but adoption isn't talked about often. And so I think the case could be made to administrators and counselors pretty easily that that this is an important thing and there is a large percentage of students who don't know how to talk about adoption and have never had that conversation.

[00:30:30.500] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I think that's great. I love what you said about when you think about all the different continuing ed, the different trainings and services that teachers get, you, you don't think much about adoption. And really the reality is that physically, all of our teachers and administrators are going to have kids who have been touched by adoption in one form or the other, either their current kids in the foster care system, they have a sibling who's adopted, they themselves are adopted. I mean, it's really almost everywhere.

[00:31:02.020] - Nabil Zerizef

If I can even speak to that with at the elementary level, before we had gone through the adoption process. I mean, I've worked with many kids, like you are saying, who have been adopted or brothers or sisters or whatever, whatever the situation was, I thought that I knew enough to be able to understand what was kind of what was going on and visitations and different things like that, but I've learned so much since then about what was really happening, and I feel like I was very ill equipped at the time to to really be working with some of those situations. And so now I feel like the more education that I can give myself or different perspectives that I can learn from, the better I am able to connect with kids and to really help families in the way that a principal should be able to.

[00:31:53.420] - Melissa Corkum

Well, I super appreciate your teachers ability, your openness, the book that you wrote, moving towards an idea, because I'm sure you're probably not the first parent to think, man, it would be really great if there was a kid's book that could explain this really well. And I mean, there are lots of kid friendly adoption books out there, but nothing quite like the one that you've written. And so, again, kudos to you. Thanks for all you're doing in your community to help people become more adoption informed and for the greater universe with this book that obviously can reach pretty far.

[00:32:29.450] - Nabil Zerizef

Well, I appreciate and I always throw out the qualifier of I don't see myself as any sort of an expert about adoption, but I do hope that through stories and through different people's perspectives and through conversation that we can all grow. So that's that's my whole goal here.

[00:32:54.210] - Lisa Qualls

I have to say, I enjoyed this conversation so much, Nabil is a really remarkable man, and if you were all listening and thinking, I wish he was my kid's principal, I understand that. We actually finished middle school for the very last time last year. The baby of our family is going to high school. And I am really grateful. We have a wonderful principal at our middle school as well and it makes such a big difference. I don't know, I thought some of his insights into the kids were so great. Like in particular, he talked about how middle schoolers both think and feel things very deeply. They're not shallow, like, they're processing a lot. Middle school is a very, they transform a lot from sixth grade to the end of eighth grade is like a huge transformation.

[00:33:44.760] - Melissa Corkum

It's such a big deal, right?

[00:33:47.100] - Lisa Qualls

It is.

[00:33:49.350] - Melissa Corkum

Because they can be goofy and they kind of lose themselves a little bit. Like, I think we do maybe underestimate them or attribute some of that transformation that's happening in terms of their brain, you know, gaining and losing connection as a fact that maybe they are maybe a little bit shallow, but, you know, we might be missing. You know, we talk so much about what's behind the behavior, we might really be missing what like the deepest longing that they have, which might be to be understood and seen at a much deeper level than maybe what their crazy middle school selves are presenting. If you'd like to hear more from Nabil, you can connect with him on Instagram @zerizefn and you can get his book, A Kid's Book About Adoption at akidsbookabout.com. We'll have links to all of those things if you need help spelling things or if you want to go directly to that book. We'll have all those links at the show notes at theadoptionconnection.com/141. 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

[00:35:09.400] - Lisa Qualls

Thanks so much for listening. We love having you, and remember, you're a good parent doing good work.

[00:35:17.750] - Melissa Corkum

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