

[00:00:01.270] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:00:09.050] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:14.390] - Melissa Corkum

Hi, friends, friends, welcome to episode 107 of the Adoption Connection Podcast. This week, we are going to talk about one of my favorite topics, which is the brain. And if you have been with us for a little bit of time, you have probably heard me talk about something about the brain and how behaviors start in the brain, and the brain is everything, and so I really enjoy helping parents find this brain-based perspective on behaviors. And so I'm really excited that Lisa is bringing us this interview with our guest, Jessica Sinarski.

[00:00:47.690] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, this was such a fun conversation. Like, the more I talk to her, the more you'll hear, the more kind of excited I got because we just share so many common interests, so it was a really delightful conversation. And Jessica is a dynamic presenter, she's a bilingual author, and clinical supervisor. She equips parents and professionals to be healers for hurting children, igniting both passion and knowhow in audiences. She's also been a certified adoption therapist since 2008. And one of the things we talk about a lot is her book that is coming out called Riley the Brave, a Book for Children and their Caregivers. So I hope you enjoy this interview as much as I did. Let's get right to it. Hello, Jessica. Welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:01:40.950] - Jessica Sinarski

Hi, Lisa. Thanks for having me.

[00:01:42.970] - Lisa Qualls

Well, I'm really glad you're here. And I know that our listeners are going to love hearing from you. You're kind of a special person to us because you are a trauma informed adoption therapist and you're kind of what everybody's looking for most of the time.

[00:01:58.230] - Jessica Sinarski

It's true, it's true. It's hard to find.

[00:02:01.000] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, there aren't enough of you to go around to be sure. But I invited you here today because you've created something really special for kids and families and professionals, too, that I wanted us to talk about. You've written a book called Riley the Brave. It is adorable. The illustrations are so, so sweet. But I was hoping you could start out by telling us what Riley the Brave is. Just briefly tell us what the book is, and then I'd love to hear the story of how you decided to write it.

[00:02:31.670] - Jessica Sinarski

So Riley the Brave is a book about a bear who has had a tough start in life. And the elephant parents, they're never named specifically because we know families come in all shapes and sizes. The elephant parents who are helping him learn a new way to be brave. And the gist is as I'm sure all of you listening can relate to that kids learned a way to survive when they've had hard experiences that can make it very difficult to be in a safe setting. I heard somebody talk about experiencing love in a foster home after you've experienced hardship as being freezing cold and then being thrust into a warm bath, a hot bath, and it's too much. It's system overload, and you've adapted to being cold and have ways to deal with being cold, and so the shock is too much. What I've seen play out again and again and again in my work is these kids whose brains adapted in the ways that they needed to are acting in exactly the natural way that they know to do. And that is terribly hurtful for the parents who are trying to love them. And so I found if we could celebrate the courage of survival while also encouraging and nurturing and fostering that shift toward trust. Oh, my gosh, it's a game changer. And so I couldn't find a resource that really put that into story form, and so I ended up writing it.

[00:04:11.010] - Lisa Qualls

Well, I absolutely love it. I think this is such an important message we talk about here at the Adoption Connection that our kids brains have been changed by trauma. Their brains, their bodies. They do have these skills that were so adaptive for them before they came to our families, but those skills can be very hard in a family setting. One of my daughters spent most of her life, ten years, well she spent well, probably about eight years in an orphanage, and she is such an amazing, courageous survivor. But the things that she learned, the way she learned to survive in the orphanage, did not translate well to our home and our family.

[00:04:53.140] - Jessica Sinarski

That's right. Family life is very different. Trusting a parent to provide, having that reciprocal attached relationship is very different than shift workers who come on for 8 hours and leave.

[00:05:06.750] - Lisa Qualls

Very different. In fact, she is 21 now, and she just told me the other day, she said, Mom, I think I'm realizing it might be okay for me to need you. It was terrifying to actually need us, to depend on us and to build that trust. And here we are. We'd like to think that we can accomplish all of this in a couple of years in our families, but I think it's a lifelong journey for some of our kids to just continue to heal and to build trust in relationships. It's a big deal. So tell me the story of how you decided to write the book.

[00:05:47.310] - Jessica Sinarski

So my background, I guess, is it was trial by fire. I started right out of graduate school in the South Bronx in New York City, working in foster care. And I realized that everything I learned in grad school was not going to help me with the challenges that the families I was working with were facing the sort of generational trauma along with just like, how do we help? What do we do in this crazy situation? And it was really overwhelming, I'm not going to lie. But I just decided I needed to continue to learn. And so I got a certificate in adoption therapy at Hunter School of Social Work with some people who've had decades of experience in this area. And it started to open my eyes to the bigger picture of all of the components. And then when I moved to Delaware about ten years ago, I had the great good fortune of getting connected with John Baylin, who is just a delightful brain nerd.

[00:07:02.440] - Lisa Qualls

And did he write Brain Based Parenting with Dr. Daniel?

[00:07:06.630] - Jessica Sinarski

He sure did.

[00:07:06.630] - Lisa Qualls

He's like a hero!

[00:07:08.290] - Jessica Sinarski

Oh, yes, I adore him. I have clung on to him as his apprentice, and I actually had that conversation with him five or six years ago. I was like, I don't know if you realize this is what's happening, but this is what's happening. We have co-led, a study group for therapists and social workers around the brain science and how that impacts our work, how we can improve outcomes, what's actually going on in parent brains, which is fascinating, as in that book he lays out for us as we were having conversations, I am picturing us right now sitting around this table that we would sit around for the brain study group that we continue to run into and what do we do? And so we know there are some things we know TBRI can be very helpful. We know GDP, developmental psychotherapy. We know those things can be helpful. But as you mentioned at the beginning, it's hard to find a good therapist. And so while Riley the Brave does not replace therapy in any way, shape, or form, let me be real clear.

[00:08:16.110] - Lisa Qualls

A picture book and therapy aren't exactly the same, but they can work together.

[00:08:21.590] - Jessica Sinarski

They can, and I knew that I had some stories and knowledge inside me that I wanted to be able to give to a broader audience than just the few families that I could see in my private practice. And so I do supervision and I do training, but I knew there was more. And so John and I were talking about a book to write, and I was doing some research. It just kept sticking out to me these animal defenses, these sort of primal kids that sort of tuck into their turtle shell. Well, that doesn't feel good as a parent. When you're trying to connect and they're tucked in their shell or the Tiger swipes, just that big rage that comes up that's very primal. And so I was falling asleep one night, and faith is a big part of my life. So I just feel like Jesus was like, okay, here's this little picture of this bear in a red tape, an elephant parents. And I turned my light back on, and I wrote down Riley the Brave and turned my light back off. And in the next couple of weeks, I had written the first draft of the book with these animal defenses, but then also showing that he's learning new ways to be brave because I don't want to stop there. The brain is plastic. We don't have to stay stuck there. But it takes a long time and it's a lifelong journey. I was listening to Sharon Rosia, who wrote with Alison, they wrote The Seven Court Issues in Adoption. I'm probably not saying that book right, but hopefully you guys can link it in the Show Notes.

[00:10:24.690] - Lisa Qualls

Okay, great. We will definitely link that book in the Show Notes. And all of you listening, if you're driving, if you're washing the dishes, don't worry. We will have everything we mentioned here in the Show Notes, so no worries about that. Okay, go ahead. Tell us more about that.

[00:10:38.040] - Jessica Sinarski

Wonderful. Thanks, Lisa. So she has many children by adoption. She's in, I think, her 80s now. And she said she was talking with one of her daughters who's in her 50s, and her daughter was like, mom, it just never ends, does it? And her mom's, like, it just never ends. There's always going to be there's always adaptation. There's always these epiphanies of gosh, I think I'm learning that it's okay to need you, but that's still a cognitive thought. And your daughter's body is still going to have that feeling sometimes of wanting to be a chameleon or be a porcupine. One of my hopes with putting it well, I have a lot of hopes with putting it in story for him. But one of the hopes is that story hits a different part of our brain. Story hits the default mode network. It hits this front to back connection that is often very shut down in children who have experienced trauma. And part of what starts to happen for the parents and people who love those kiddos is the stories we tell ourselves about what kind of parent we are or how we're handling this, what kind of person we are, because we just blew up at our kid for the 47th time this week. That's not great, but it's human. And so if we can take some of the shame out of these very normal behaviors, we can start to shift to that upstairs brain functioning where connection and joy and play and love and health really happen.

[00:12:27.990] - Lisa Qualls

Well, you are speaking the language of the Adoption Connection because Melissa and I learned about blocked care from reading brain based parenting. And it was huge for us. And we now have developed we have a whole course for parents called From Apathy to Empathy. That's a 30 day course we teach where we send them a daily video and email. And that's one of the teachings that we're doing around the country for parents to help them understand that it is brain science. If they feel that they actually don't even really like their child anymore, if they feel like they just can't carry on, it's actually not a character flaw. It's something happening in their brain. And those caregiving systems of the brain can be reactivated. So what you're talking about is exactly one of the greatest passions of the work that Melissa and I are doing that we want to take to adoptive and foster parents all around the country. So I'm actually really excited about this conversation because really you're talking about exactly what is so very important to us. So can you tell us a little bit more about some of the animals? We can't see the book right now, but can you tell us just a little bit more about it?

[00:13:53.110] - Jessica Sinarski

They're not characters, but the five sort of defenses that we see Riley we go into. And I should mention, if you're intimidated by this, it's actually in this, as Lisa mentioned, it's brightly illustrated. I've seen therapeutic books that I would never want to read, let alone read to a child. And no child is going to want to read that again if they'll even get through it the first time. And that's not knocking anybody, but I just knew I wanted something different. So this is bright, it's few words because we know our kids can shut down if there's too many words, and that pulls you into your trying to cognitively

process as opposed to felt experience. So in this bright book, you see five ways that Riley has learned to be brave earlier in his life. There's no clear, his story isn't laid out, which the book industry was not thrilled about, but I was really committed to keeping because I know our kids need to be able to put themselves in it without being scared. So you'll see fight or flight in the form of Tiger and Porcupine. So Porcupine is that sort of prickly irritable, I think probably if you're listening right now, one of your kiddos is probably popping into your head.

[00:15:23.090] - Lisa Qualls
I was like, okay, yeah, I get that one.

[00:15:30.090] - Jessica Sinarski
So there's the Porcupine and then the Tiger, again, I think probably one of your kiddos is bobbing into your head with those big rage. It's that activated fight feeling. And then we drop into the sort of freeze or feign death, and that's the turtle or the Chameleon. So I've worked with so many kids who have a Chameleon moment when they can't hear other people say even good things about them, they just want to disappear. We talk about the parent brain and thinking, it must mean I'm a terrible parent. It must mean I'm a terrible person. And our kids are living that. If I have done these things, if people have done these things to me, that means I'm bad. And so I'm going to disappear or I'm going to tuck up in my shell and be safe and not need anyone I need to not need because needing is more painful.

[00:16:31.290] - Lisa Qualls
It's terrifying.

[00:16:33.150] - Jessica Sinarski
It's Horrible. It's horrible. And then one that I think is really important is the Squirrel. So having a Squirrel moment is that provisioning for yourself. That sort of self reliance. It's the sneaking and the hoarding and the lying and the stealing because that can be really adaptive. If you're in a setting where you don't have a safe big critter, as we call them in the Riley books, and you don't have a safety critter, then it feels really good to provide for yourself. So I think a lot of times we're sort of flummoxed by kids' emotional reactions when they steal or lie. And really, it's a brain thing. There is that sense of accomplishment. I've heard Anne Heffrin talk about this, that feeling of, she's an adult adoptee, and remembering what it felt like to lie and the power that that gave her. And really, as we look at some of the brain science that learning to lie, that a lot of our kids have learned to lie to themselves from in utero, pouring out, pumping out some opioids, some painkillers to fill in the gaps that I don't really need somebody. I'm just going to numb this because I can't need because there's no one here for me to need.

[00:18:01.330] - Lisa Qualls
Doctor Purvis say there's no safe adult on board.

[00:18:06.070] - Jessica Sinarski
Ding ding ding. It's not an option for me, so my brain is going to adapt. I'm going to shut down oxytocin receptors, I'm going to shut down that happy bonding chemical site, and I'm just going to put in painkillers. Well, then what happens when they get their first taste of chemical painkillers? You know, gosh, I had a grumpy numb, and now I get to have a happy numb? You bet, sign me up. I think that's the thing that working with John has been so eye opening for me is how much of human behavior is a brain thing. And when we can see it that way, it just takes the shame down. So it's not that you're a bad kid for trying to numb the pain, that was adaptive. Here, let's see if we can find some healthier ways to warm up your body so that that warm water of love doesn't feel so scary, that it doesn't burn you. We can do it. As I'm playing out this metaphor again, I think as you guys talk about at the Adoption Connection a lot, that sort of the playful methods of building attachment and how important that is because play lives in your upstairs brain. And so if you can light up some of those connections, some safe eye contact, safe touch, and so that's some of what I've tried to put in, you know, you'll see it in kind of picture book form, but that's also some of the free resources I've put up at rileythebrave.org are some things to help parents dig in a little bit more to what does playful attachment look like? I'm exhausted, I'm apathetic, right? It hurts for me to care at this point because that's adaptive for my brain as a parent. And I'm saying this, I have three boys. I have them by birth.

One of my boys has some special needs, and that has opened my eyes in a different way to some of the lived experience. Because I'll talk about this stuff all day long, and then I get home and he just has a special way of pushing my buttons.

[00:20:25.570] - Lisa Qualls

Yep.

[00:20:26.020] - Jessica Sinarski

And I have to do all the things that I'm talking about to get my upstairs brain engaged so that I can use playful ways to get obedience. I don't really love that word, but that's what we want. We want our kids to just trust us enough to obey.

[00:20:43.390] - Lisa Qualls

Right. You mentioned about the shame. That's something we talk with parents about a lot. Literally, when I read in Brain Based Parenting about blocked care, I cried. I was like, oh, I'm not a terrible person. I'm not a bad mom. Because I definitely went from a place, when I went into adoption, I felt like I love being a mom, and you know what? I'm really good at it. So I can parent more children. I can be a mom to more children. And then when things were so challenging, eventually I got to a point of thinking maybe, I don't feel like I'm a good mom at all and maybe I never was. I went to that dark place of shame.

[00:21:31.490] - Melissa Corkum

Hey friends, we want to pause the interview to make sure you know about our Free Compassion Challenge for the Discouraged Adoptive Parent. This is an OnDemand video training so you can rebuild your compassion for your child and enjoy parenting again.

[00:21:44.390] - Lisa Qualls

In this free video training, we'll introduce you to Blocked Trust and Blocked Care. We'll help you understand why your child pushes you away, why you're not a bad parent, because you're losing patience and shed the feelings of shame and guilt. There is hope. You can regain compassion for yourself and your child. To grab this free training, head to theadoptionconnection.com/compassion. Now let's hop back into our interview.

[00:22:14.310] - Lisa Qualls

I went to that dark place of shame. So when I first began to understand it was about my brain and not about my character or a spiritual feeling or whatever, that shame did really start to fall away. And what you're saying is that in Riley the Brave, for Children, that shame also begins to fall away when they see that these animals are actually doing things that help them be safe.

[00:22:42.150] - Jessica Sinarski

That's exactly right. And I think it's helpful. So part of why picture book format can be so helpful is you can sit down with your kiddo and read it together. And it reminds both your brain that it's a brain thing. Not in so many words. I don't use the word brain in the whole children's book story. There's an afterword that has some of that content for the parents or the teacher or other caring adults, but in the book itself, it's just story. And story helps us rewrite that identity piece that my story is now one of courage, not a failure. And so even as a parent, my story is one of like holding both, that both, I am a good mom, and I need to learn some new skills to help the kiddo that I have. That both can be true. Man, that is a tough, as John would say, that's some fancy brain work. It's hard. And so if it feels hard, it's because it is hard and it's not a failure. It's both. It is you're a great mom, and your kids need a different style of parenting, and you need a community that gets it and can support you along the way. Those things can all be true. But our brains start to shut down and just hear that negative story just like our kiddos.

[00:24:20.730] - Lisa Qualls

Well, and I think when we begin to understand really what our brains are going through in parenting children with such significant and unique needs, I think also we can begin to say to ourselves, okay, maybe this is going to require a lot of me, and I need to make some changes in my life to make room.

I think a lot of times we try to just keep on plowing through our lives while also parenting at this super high level of intensity. But our brains are working hard and we can only do so much, so I think maybe it gives some parents permission to say, you know what? I'm going to say no to volunteering. I don't need to do what some other parents are doing because the work I'm doing of parenting is taxing on my brain, it's taxing on my kids, and I need to be okay with that.

[00:25:15.350] - Jessica Sinarski

Really important, Lisa, that message that our brains are not these super machines that can just go forever. I felt that as the pandemic hit, as we were all hitting quarantine, that I just had less capacity and I needed to be really concrete with what I could let go so that I could still be present for myself and for my kids. And being present for yourself is not selfish. I'm just going to say that really loud.

[00:25:46.430] - Lisa Qualls

It's actually important for our brains.

[00:25:48.710] - Jessica Sinarski

Oh, my gosh. Yes, exactly. It's an oxygen mask principle. If you run out of oxygen, you're no good for anybody else. So it is not selfish to pour into yourself and to fill yourself up because it's a brain thing. You need your upstairs brain to be lit up. You need some play in your life if you're going to muster some play for your kiddo.

[00:26:17.930] - Lisa Qualls

So when a child reads this book with their parent or on their own and they see these animals who have been brave in different ways, they've been protective, of course, a child's not going to say adaptive. So then the hope is that any shame they have begins to fall away, too. And they begin to see and that's what I want you to tell us about next is they begin to understand that some of those behaviors those animals had were actually brave for that time.

[00:26:47.870] - Jessica Sinarski

Yeah, so a picture book is not going to replace therapy, but I will say those are the stories that have come back to me that keep me going because I heard from one parent who said somebody had given her the book. And the first night they tried to read it, they only got maybe a couple pages in. And then their kiddo sort of had a really big reaction. And so they sort of closed it up. And I think the parent was using PACE and sort of walking with their kiddo through those big feelings.

[00:27:25.730] - Lisa Qualls

Can you tell our listeners what PACE is?

[00:27:28.540] - Jessica Sinarski

Oh, sorry. Yes, so PACE is from Dan Hughes. It's Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathic, although I would put the empathy with compassion because sometimes empathy hurts too much as a parent. And so sometimes we need to just hold compassion and know, like, hold the knowledge of the feeling without actually holding the feeling, because we might want to shut down that feeling. So playful, accepting, curious, and empathic. And actually, the second book with Riley, The Brave, which is coming out in June of 2021, is sort of a picture book version of seeing PACE play out because it's complicated. This therapeutic parenting, whatever you want to call it, it is complicated and it's hard, and it's very much an upstairs brain thing for us as parents. So what I've seen happen, so even in this story with this kiddo who was reading the book kind of shut down, the mom said they would come back to it, and they kind of look at Riley and they talk about what was going on for Riley. They might imagine what the backstory was on different pages at this point when she was writing, she said, now he goes through it and he's like, I'm brave like that. I'm brave like a turtle. That it was a sense of pride in how he had done it. And then he could also do the second half of the book, which is showing the bear and the elephants and relate to that as well, that you can hold both. I think, again, that complicated fancy brain work is there sort of laid out in picture book form. It's just kids can see themselves and that it's not the end of the story. I think that's the other piece that can be so sort of paralyzing is that so many kids that I've worked with and teens and even adults that I've worked with feel like those things will always sort of have control. And how empowering is that when you

recognize that those things were adaptive? I mean, I've heard stories from people who are bringing it, adults who can identify. Like, that was me. That was me. I was that Porcupine, and it's not because I was a jerk. I did a workshop in a women's prison with a group of moms who are all there because they had big Squirrel moments or big Tiger moments, and it landed them in prison, and that's not great. But they're also trying to figure out how to break that cycle because they love their kids and they don't want to keep having those interactions. So I found, too, that it can give some playful language even amongst adults, like, I'm having a Squirrel moment, I want all the chocolate. It does two things. It takes the shame out of it, but it's not you're a bad impulsive person because you want chocolate, but that you and lets you reach your upstairs brain with a little bit of play, like Karen Purvis would talk about or like in PACE, you can light up that upstairs brain a little bit with a playful way of approaching things that are really not playful stealing and rage episodes and destroy throwing stuff across the house like that is not playful. That sends us all into our defense brains. And that's only natural, you know.

[00:31:25.930] - Lisa Qualls

So what's the transformation that happens in the book? What does Riley, so Riley sees different animals.

[00:31:34.690] - Jessica Sinarski

He sort of becomes the different animals. So what you'll see in the story is and the illustrator, Zachary Klein, did just a fantastic job of doing it so great.

[00:31:47.180] - Lisa Qualls

The illustrations are wonderful.

[00:31:50.050] - Jessica Sinarski

You'll see Riley with porcupine quills. You'll see Riley in his turtle shell in the second book, we're trying to keep that imagery because pictures are so powerful with the brain. So seeing that we sort of take on these animal characteristics, but then we can also that doesn't have to be all of us. So as I'm training parents and professionals, I talk about and I split up, too. But it's never that a kid is a porcupine, it's that a kid had a porcupine moment.

[00:32:26.500] - Lisa Qualls

Right.

[00:32:26.970] - Jessica Sinarski

So I'll talk about your brave cubs who are pretty prickly or who have lots of porcupine moments, because that identity piece, just like you were talking about feeling as a mom, like, oh, gosh, I am a failure. That identity piece of being a porcupine as opposed to being a brave cub. That's an important distinction that I want to help kids and the adults in their lives recognize that you are always that brave cub. Sometimes you're brave in these ways, and sometimes you have, like, quote, unquote, misplaced brave moments. You have these downstairs brave moments that sort of linger, right. And so when you punch your sister in the face, that's not a brave moment, but that is a Tiger moment. That is a Tiger moment. And let's call it what it is. And let's see how we can Robin Global, who you had on the show, she talks a lot about that regulation. Let's see how we can get that body regulation so that you're not escalating into these Tiger episodes as much. And when we take the shame out of it and when we make it a little bit playful. Right. So it's animals. And I've had therapists and some of my own clients working with teenagers and families with teens who are like, okay, I know this is a silly children's book. It looks ridiculous that I would be reading this to you, but hang with me for a second, because when your 17 year old son has a Tiger moment, you might have a turtle moment or you might have a porcupine moment. And that has given language for parents and kids to be able to talk about their defense brain automatic reactions without shame. It's not because you're a jerk. It's not because you're a bad mom.

[00:34:25.870] - Lisa Qualls

Right. So do the elephant grown ups help Riley?

[00:34:31.510] - Jessica Sinarski

They do. So what we see in the second half of the book is that the theme of Riley's learning new ways to be brave. He's learning which critters are safe to be around without being prickly like a porcupine. One of the elephants is helping him, talking him through that. We see that it's okay to play and laugh and be a super cool cub instead of being a chameleon. Right. So we see all these things we also see, and this is actually one of the changes in the, I self published the book, and now it's coming out with JKP. Jessica Kingsley publisher. And one of the changes I made is to identify in the second half of the book, Bradley breaks the lamp. We see it in the picture, and what I always said when I was reading it loud is it looks like Riley had a Tiger moment, but that wasn't in the book. Well, it's going to be now because I think it's important for parents to be able to pull that through, that he was brave like a Tiger in these tough circumstances early on, and he's still going to have Tiger moments. And so what you see is the elephants coming in and getting down on his level. So all that body based stuff, that doesn't necessarily come naturally because our little defense brain kicks in as parents. So we see the elephants embody this coming together and seeing the need behind the behavior, which is just so challenging. And so we see the elephant saying, it must be so hard to watch me leave for work each morning, but I'll come back. Let's get this, clean this up, and we can try to fix it together tonight. So that connected language, that connected parenting, that shows that Riley is not alone in this. And I think that's also empowering her parents because they can try it on. Now are you going to do it perfectly every time? Of course not. That's actually my hope for the third book is to show the elephants blowing it and showing that repair.

[00:36:45.690] - Lisa Qualls

Doing repair, that's so great. That's so great. I can't wait for that. This sounds just like such an amazing resource. I'm really excited to get it in my hands. I don't have my copy yet, but I'm really excited to get it and share it because I think it's going to speak to kids. It's going to speak to parents, educators. So many people will benefit from watching Riley learn all of this because we get to learn along with him, right? Which is so great. So what is your dream for Riley the Brave? Obviously, there's going to be more books.

[00:37:22.150] - Jessica Sinarski

So my hope is always to be a support to the foster and adoption community. It's been helpful in other settings, but my North Star is I've seen the pain that early childhood trauma and sort of the generational stuff that can just carry on. And so my commitment is to this community. And my dream is to see lots more Riley books that sort of play out what we're trying to do. So that it's just a little bit easier. Shouldn't it just be just a little bit easier to do this hard work?

[00:38:08.070] - Lisa Qualls

We would like that.

[00:38:08.960] - Jessica Sinarski

Yes, and to make the brain science accessible, not just to parents, but also to teachers and Casa and just all the people in kids' lives. And so one of the umbrellas that now Riley is under is I founded an organization called Brave Brains to get user friendly brain science out into the world. The resources for school counselors and librarians, even like, just I want people to understand our kids. I want people to understand us and the challenge. And I say us because I feel like a member of this community, even though I don't have my strength as an adoptive parent. So I say that with a tremendous amount of humility and respect. But that's my dream. That's my dream. It's just a little bit easier. It's a little bit brighter. I'm committed to keeping not watering down the brain science, but making it digestible. That's part of why the books are in picture book form. And then there's just five or six pages at the end for the adults. I think obviously, I've learned a tremendous amount from the therapist, scholars who have done the research and put things in a much more comprehensive form. So, again, I am not downplaying that, but also that's my dream for Riley is to fill that gap as a nugget and have some videos and just things that make it easier. Anything that makes it easier for adoptive and foster and can ship families.

[00:39:56.270] - Lisa Qualls

Well, it is a gift. It's really a gift. And for all of you listening, of course, we will have links for where you

can find Riley the Brave, and it's Rileythebrave.org, correct? Okay, and then you also have Bravebrainson.org or.com?

[00:40:11.240] - Jessica Sinarski
That is.com just keep you guys a little more confused.

[00:40:17.030] - Lisa Qualls
Domain names and Web addresses is complicated stuff. I know that full well. But we will have all of that in the show notes. And Jessica, thank you so much for being with us. I absolutely loved our conversation. And I look forward to getting to know you and your work even more.

[00:40:33.650] - Jessica Sinarski
Thanks, Lisa. It really means a lot. It's been a pleasure.

[00:40:40.710] - Melissa Corkum
Well, as I expected, that was a fantastic interview with Jessica. I have to admit, I'm a little bit jealous that she gets to hang out with John Baylin and the likes of Dan Hughes. I'm sure there's a connection there too. And honestly, I was at an Empowered to Connect conference a couple of years ago and there's a whole table of Riley the Brave books and now I'm kind of sad I didn't pick one up. I think I flipped through it, but I don't think I understood the power behind the story because like she said, not a lot of words, but such a huge tool.

[00:41:12.090] - Lisa Qualls
Huge. I have had the honor of getting to see an early copy of the new book, Riley the Brave. Now she did release this book a couple of years ago, but this is the new updated edition and I'm telling you all, it is truly phenomenal. It is an incredible tool and it's not only a great tool for children, but there's also a whole section in the back for caregivers and the illustrations are good, like really good. Sometimes books are great. They have great content, but the illustrations are kind of but the illustrations are really, really good. It's a fantastic tool and I'm very excited to tell you that the new addition of the book came out just last week so you can be one of the first people to have it in your hands. You can find out on Amazon, I'm sure there's also a link to it from her website, which is Rileythebrave.org. She also is Riley the Brave on Instagram. And lastly, she has a website called Bravebrains.com, so all of that will be in the show notes for you. Do not worry if you are driving or washing the dishes or whatever you're doing, you can find those at theadoptionconnection.com/107. Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as @postadoptionresources.

[00:42:32.280] - 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.

[00:42:42.390] - Lisa Qualls
And remember until next week, you're a good mom doing good work and we're here for you.

[00:42:49.530] - Melissa Corkum
The music for the podcast is called New Day and was created by Lee Rosevere.