

[00:00:01.750] - Melissa Corkum

Hello friends, and welcome to Episode 197 of The Adoption Connection podcast. If you've been following The Adoption Connection for a while, you know that I'm always encouraging parents to follow their child's lead when it comes to how they process their adoption story. Some adoptees have really big feelings. They feel a lot of grief, they might feel anger about their story, and others go through life hardly even remembering that they are adopted. Or maybe they feel comfortable celebrating their adoption or telling lots of people about their adoption. The conversation we're bringing to you this week is a little bit different. It's a conversation I had with Jennifer Dyan Ghoston that was meant to be shared on both her podcast and my podcast. It's a little different than other interviews we've had here on the show. We cover a lot of ground and I think you're going to love it.

[00:01:00.870] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

I guess I'll start with how we met, which is through the book club I joined your Enneagram the Journey Toward Wholeness by Suzanne Stabile. And I think the main reason it piqued my interest is because I got a chance to meet Suzanne via Zoom Meeting, which was with the Adoptee Voices writing group created by Sarah Easterly, and that was earlier this year in February. And I just got really excited about this holistic way of living that we can all benefit from. So I'm just pleased that I met you and I'm really loving the Wednesday group.

[00:01:41.200] - Melissa Corkum

I'm an adoptee and an adoptive mom and learned the Enneagram probably four or five years ago. And at first it was just kind of like another personality test, kind of maybe like Myers Briggs or Strength Finders. But what I discovered is that it has so much more depth. It has kind of this spirituality and encouragement to go really deep in terms of your own personal awareness and growth. And interestingly for me was the tool that allowed me to make sense of so much of my adoption story. And the way I had processed it was a little bit different than other adoptees I had talked to, and in some ways it had created some shame around, am I a terrible adoptee and all of these things. And what the Enneagram helped me understand was that there are these nine different lenses of how we all filter our experiences through and that lens makes a difference. And so I think it has given me really good language to help myself and then help other adoptees kind of process questions they've had about their story.

[00:03:01.470] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yeah, I think to my knowledge, you are the second guest to be on my podcast that is an adoptee and an adoptive parent. I'm always interested in hearing from all members of the constellation. So that's why I'm so glad you agreed to be on. Because you are a seven, right? You're a dominant type of seven.

[00:03:23.850] - Speaker 2

Yeah. So as a seven, for those who know nothing about the Enneagram, what that just means is I filter through a lens of my core motivation is to not really live in the negative part of our emotional spectrum, right? I tend to want to reframe everything to a positive. I tend to process a lot with logic and thinking and not a lot of feelings. I could kind of work really hard to be in touch with feelings. It also means that my time orientation is to the future. I'm kind of always thinking about what's next, and I don't naturally spend a lot of time looking backwards.

[00:04:08.970] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

I think my dominant type is five, as I've told you. And at times I totally identified with seven. And so I'm just curious to know, as a five, what I go to in stress, which is seven, how you would describe that? I guess for the listener, maybe just start with what is a dominant five? What are the characteristics?

[00:04:37.950] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, well, maybe I'll flip it to you, Jennifer, and just ask, how did you land on five? Or what were the things that you know about five that resonate with who you are and how you kind of view the world?

[00:04:50.270] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yes. So one of the main things that stuck out for me was that I'm fiercely independent and that I tend to do deep dives with research and finding things out. And I realized that the reason why I do it, which

is why I like the Enneagram. It tells you kind of like why you do, you figure out why you do what you do. And it is about letting go of as much anxiety as I can. So I'm doing all this research and all this reading and studying and trying to find things out to decrease my level of anxiety. Those things stood out to me the most. And I guess the next thing would be that I tend to hoard information. And then we were talking one day and you said if you overheard someone with a question about something and you have the answer, you would interject, you would help them. And I would definitely not do that. That's not my go to. I would hear, I may know the answer, but I wouldn't say anything.

[00:05:53.910] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, it's so interesting, right? That's one of the most fun parts of a conversation we've had in this adoptee group that we've been working through this summer is kind of throwing out these scenarios and then asking people what they would have done or how they would have processed it in that instance. Did you identify as an anxious person before we had that conversation?

[00:06:16.830] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yeah, pretty much. I have been more in touch with the anxiety when it comes up since I've been in therapy. I think that I was not as aware of it in the past like I am now. And as I've been sitting with how I'm feeling in my head and also in my body, I'm like, yeah, I have quite a bit of anxiety. I'm learning more about that. And that's the other thing about a five that resonated with me is the thinking versus the feeling. And I am starting to get more in touch with my feelings instead of just thinking all the time.

[00:06:57.840] - Melissa Corkum

And you're a lot like me. I'm curious, as an adoptee, how that played out. Do you identify with having big feelings about your adoption story?

[00:07:07.830] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Say that again?

[00:07:09.570] - Speaker 2

We kind of both identify as this kind of what we call the thinking triad in the enneagram, so that we tend to take in information with thinking and process it through often a more logical lens and maybe a less emotional lens. And so I'm wondering, there's kind of this, I think, assumption sometimes in the adoption world, that all adoptees kind of feel big feelings of maybe sadness or grief or shame over their adoption story, over maybe being abandoned or not being raised by their birth mom. And so I'm wondering, have you processed your story more with thinking, or do you identify with having big emotions around your adoption?

[00:07:54.090] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Oh, I definitely don't have big emotions. I would say I have more or I'm kind of looking at the feelings part of my story more now, but I have clearly been just thinking about it through the years, like in my twenty's and thirty's. And even as a little person, I was just thinking, not really sitting with feelings.

[00:08:19.290] - Speaker 2

Yeah. And that's how I kind of identify as well. I had lots of thoughts about my adoption, but had never really identified a lot of big feelings or big emotions around it.

[00:08:31.590] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

And one thing about seven, which made me pause to wonder if I possibly was a seven, is reframing. I know when you shared with me that sevens are big on reframing things to the positive, I'm really about that, and I've done that for years. So that also stuck out to me.

[00:08:53.330] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. I wonder if that's part of a coping mechanism. I wonder it would be interesting to do some more research and talk to more adoptees and wonder, even independent of number, if that's a coping mechanism of adoptees, is that reframing.

[00:09:12.280] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yeah. So as an adoptee and an adoptive parent, I would like you to share a part of your journey, whichever one you want to start with, and wherever you want to start, and however much you want to share. Is that okay?

[00:09:27.210] - Melissa Corkum

So I was adopted as an infant from Korea in the eighties, and it was really common then. At that time, the Korean adoption program was pretty well known. There were a lot of infants coming to the state through that program. I'm the oldest of three. We're all adopted from Korea. None of us are genetically related, and I've always been adopted. I think that's part of the transracial piece. It's hard to keep any secrets when you don't look like the people you're being raised by. And I kind of wore my adoption journey like a badge. We celebrated something called Airplane Day in our family, which was the day that we came on an airplane to meet our parents. Back then, it was less common for parents to travel to Korea, and what would happen is the agency in Korea would just put six to twelve kids on a plane and send them to the States. And so, I know, crazy, right? And so we celebrated Airplane Day, which is the day we landed. And in our family, it was like a second birthday. We got to pick a special dinner and we got a small gift.

[00:10:41.500] - Melissa Corkum

And my parents would also use that time to tell us our adoption story. And so I just remember as a kid kind of playing that up, like, kind of looks like nanny, nanny, boo boo. If you were adopted, you would get a second birthday too. And so this is, I think, just an illustration of how characteristic it is of someone who just can reframe anything that happens in real time to something positive. And it frankly never occurred to me until I was an adoptive mom and listening to the voices of other adoptees to stop and consider that the adoption experience for an adoptee could be filled with shame and grief and loss and really big feelings and really big, I guess, kind of what we call negative feelings. Not that I think they are categorically negative, but the things that we think about, like sadness and grief. So I was kind of taken aback by all of that. My two siblings have processed their stories very differently, and I think my sister in particular maybe falls more in where she's really kind of felt the grief of her adoption. And interestingly, it was my husband who always thought he'd adopt as a father, and told me that very early on in our relationship and didn't know I was an adoptee at the time. And so it just feels like it was kind of always destined to be part of our family. And so we had two kids by birth pretty early on in our marriage and then started an adoption process for a toddler from Korea who was on a minor special needs waiting list. So he came home in 2009. He's now almost 16. And then in 2012, it's a long story, but we ended up bringing home three unrelated older children from Ethiopia. They were 11, 13 and 14 at the time, and so they're all in their 20s now. We've just learned a lot. Now more of our family who lives in our house are adopted than not. And so there's just a lot of experiences to glean from.

[00:13:02.550] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

I had an opportunity to listen to Episode 186 and you share on there a little bit about your husband being a type One, going back to the Enneagram and you being a seven and how you all came up with the whole idea of adopting. Do you want to share a little bit about that?

[00:13:23.670] - Melissa Corkum

So kind of just revised to edit to say he's kind of jumped around on the enneagram and is less motivated to land on a dominant type than I am. And so he hasn't quite narrowed it down, but he has a lot of behaviors that strike us as a one, and so one really just want to be good. And one of the things when Lisa and I work with parents is we do use the enneagram to kind of help parents tease out why they chose to adopt and kind of really dig into it. And that helps us put words to what were our expectations going into adoption. And if those expectations don't meet our reality of how it actually turns out, what does that look like? There's a lot of grief work to be done there on that part of the adoption, on that side of the adoption triad. And so for him, it kind of made sense. He kind of felt like it was the right thing to do. He sold shoes in high school, at a shoe store in the mall, and sold shoes to a lot of children in foster care. And he just remembers thinking, wow, there are so many kids that don't have permanent families. Why do we keep bringing more kids into the world when there's so many that need families? And so he wanted a big family, we wanted a big family. And so we had our two

kids by birth and then felt just really drawn to the adoption world. And so that's how we ended up with four more kids, but all through adoption.

[00:15:06.030] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

What do you think has been the most challenging thing about being an adoptive parent?

[00:15:14.490] - Melissa Corkum

I think adoptive parenting is trickier, more complex than parenting kids who we make from scratch, I sometimes call them. And I think it's the best way in some ways to reveal all the cracks in our own personalities. And it really has forced me to understand past hurts, things that I carry from my own childhood, both as an adoptee and just a kid growing up and insecurities. And I think the biggest thing is, I love control. I love, you know, that's part of being able to stay on the positive side of the emotional spectrum, is not entering into things that knowingly are going to be hard and painful. And of course, adoption is all of those things. And it's such an integral part of our family's story now that I've really had no option other than to work some of those out in my own personal life and like, in my marriage, and figuring out different ways to parent and see behavior and relate to my kids that don't involve control. And for me personally, I think that's been the trickiest.

[00:16:47.400] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Do you think being an adoptee gives you an advantage as an adoptive parent?

[00:16:55.410] - Speaker 2

I do in some ways. And I don't in others. I think the advantage is, even though I had not strongly identified with fear of abandonment, I think it is deeply seated in my body. And I think it comes potentially a little bit easier to me to have compassion for kids and their behaviors. I mean, whenever it's happening in your own family, in your own household, it's always trickier. So I'll just caveat with that. I'm not a perfect parent by any stretch of the imagination. But I remember I didn't have words for it at the time, and of course, what is available to help parents understand trauma was not available then. But I remember huge periods of dysregulation. I was a rager, and I just remember the feelings of overwhelm, and I was a thumbsucker, and no one knew about sensory processing or self soothing back then. I can empathize with a lot of kids and how they're using their behaviors. And then on the flip side, because I'm a parent to kids with really big behaviors as well, I can also empathize with the parents that it's hard even when you know that behaviors aren't willful or your kids just being jerks, that it's like this deep seated lack of self safety.

[00:18:17.220] - Melissa Corkum

It's still tricky. I think the downside of it is, I think adoptees, often more than children with complex trauma, have a lot more stability in terms of attachment and their own nervous systems. And so I think as an adoptee, parenting kids also with complex trauma is it makes me more susceptible to be triggered or to struggle with this regulation, because that's also in my body and in my history.

[00:18:57.270] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Now, going back to the Enneagram for a moment, what would you tell a listener is the best way for them to determine or kind of get close to knowing their dominant type? Should they take a test or should they read?

[00:19:14.850] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I am a pretty huge proponent of what we call, like, narrative teaching of the Enneagram, just because that's the way that it started. It goes back, definitely centuries, perhaps thousands of years. We see evidence of it in a lot of ancient cultures, and it was just this oral tradition that was passed down and it was part of the culture. And of course, it's trendy right now. And so we see it on Instagram, and we see it summarized in these cute pippy memes. And there are tests now, but I think it's almost impossible for a test to really tease out why we do what we do. And really, that's what the Enneagram is asking us to consider is our motivation behind the behavior. And, yeah, it's really easy for a test to kind of help us see a pattern of behaviors, but it's really hard. You were talking about reframing the positive, and so we could even talk about, like, have you ever thought about why you do that? Are there reasons that you do that different than the reasons I do that since we identify as

different, as having different core motivations, and that's tricky on a test. And so I think the dialogue, the relationship, it's why this group that we're in the summer together, I think has been so powerful, because we get to have this dialogue, we get to hear other people's experiences and see where we're alike and where we're different, and it's not a rush. I think we're in a society that's so results oriented, but I think there's value in the process of figuring out what your dominant type is. There are a couple of folks in our group who don't know, and they've just been kind of learning as we go. And I don't think the experience is any less valuable when you're in that spot. And so I think just, again, appreciating that it's the process that's powerful. Not landing on your type is not the end be all.

[00:21:21.800] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Right, I just love this group. This book club group is just wonderful. And I know when we do share experiences that we've had and apply the enneagram, it definitely is so insightful for me. And I think I don't know if it was this week, but you mentioned something about as a seven being considered bossy. Was that the word you used?

[00:21:48.510] - Melissa Corkum

Probably. I think we were talking about words that described us as children or words that we remember, like common themes of feedback we were given as children. And it was not uncommon for an adult in my life to tell me I was bossy.

[00:22:07.830] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

And so how did being bossy, we'll just use that word, as a seven affect your learning?

[00:22:15.390] - Melissa Corkum

Well, that's a great question. I think I've probably missed opportunities to learn over the years because it took me way too long into my adulthood to really value other people's experiences. And I think part of being bossy is sometimes overconfidence. And I, in my teens and early twenty's, and this is kind of cliché, but I kind of thought I knew it all. I mean, I didn't think I knew everything, but I thought I was right most of the time and I thought my perspective was right. I think the enneagram has been so helpful because it's been so gentle in helping me realize that there are these other ways that people see the world. And it sounds so silly whenever I talk about it to people. I'm like people, people see the world differently. And everyone's like duh. But I think what we don't realize is that we cognitively will admit that everyone sees the world differently, and yet we're probably still holding on to something that we believe is a universal truth that isn't just from parenting young adults. Even the discussions we've had this summer, people will say, yeah, we're all different, but surely everyone sees this, right?

[00:23:43.530] - Melissa Corkum

So we parented or had lived with us a young man who had aged out of Baltimore City's foster care system. And I think one of the things that parents like to think is more or less universal is, like, the idea of respect. We all have different perspectives, but yet there's kind of this morality code that we kind of think is universal. And there was a point in time when he was living here that it was pretty frequent that he would wake up the entire house with loud music playing on a speaker. And, you know, 2, 3 o'clock in the morning, and at the time, there were 13 people living here, and that's a lot of people to wake up or disrupt their sleep. And I just remember saying multiple times, like, dude, I don't care if you're sleeping and you can listen to music, but it has to be on headphones or earbuds or something. Like, it just can't be blaring on speakers. And I kind of felt like I don't know why I have to say this out loud. And I said at one point, like, night time is for quiet. The house needs to be quiet. People need to sleep. And he just kind of looked at me, and he cocked his head, and he was like, oh, like, nighttime were never quiet where I grew up. Like, he lived in the inner city. No one ever had respected his sleep or his quiet. And that's not a specific enneagram example. It's just a cultural example. But it just, I think, goes to illustrate that there's really just nothing universal in the world.

[00:25:21.290] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Right. Yeah, that's interesting. And I got to go back and say I didn't come up with that question. Someone else did. And so I also thought, yeah, that's a great question. How did being bossy as a seven effect your learning, so I can't take credit for that question, but thank you for answering it.

[00:25:42.970] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. Maybe turn the question back to you in terms of how do you think being a five, who just values information, shaped how you learned things in school, other things, but do you think it also affected how you learned about your adoption? Were you adopted as an infant? Did you have to hear it secondhand from other people, or do you remember it?

[00:26:12.550] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

So, from birth I was placed into foster care for two years, and then permanently placed by the age of two and same race domestic adoptee. And when I think of my type, my dominant type, five, I was a kid that would always be, like, in the back, wanted to be always in the back of the classroom and observe and listen and gather all this information before I would even consider raising my hand. Right? Like, I wasn't the one that was interested in speaking up, because I wanted to make sure I knew all that I needed to know before I responded. I did not want to be wrong. I think I shared in the book club. Well, I know I did that. I also heard growing up that you always want your way. You always want things to go your way. And I learned somewhere that maybe that's not a good thing, to want your way. Yeah. But yeah, as a five, I think that I did a lot, of course, more thinking than feeling, and it was important. It lowered my anxiety to read, to be a reader. Now, I will say there are a lot of things that contributed to that. Like, my mother was a librarian, so books were everywhere, and I carried a book everywhere I went. As time went on, as I became an adult, you got to carry more than one book. I may have two or three books when I leave out the door, I keep a book, at least a book with me wherever I go. And I am always reading and looking things up and just trying to be well informed. So I hope that answered your question.

[00:28:11.410] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. I'm wondering, did you have any siblings?

[00:28:13.790] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Jennifer I was an only child.

[00:28:17.170] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Because I'm wondering, you talked about, like, there was an environmental piece with your mom being a librarian and probably a culture of learning and reading and books in your family. And so it always makes me wonder when kids grow up in similar situations, like how much that nature versus nurture plays in it sounds like that meshed really well with your personality, and so it's probably really natural for you to take on that reading, especially reading for knowledge. Are you a fiction reader, or do you really love nonfiction for the information gathering?

[00:28:54.930] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Nonfiction, for sure, is my go to. But I have been leaning into reading more fiction because I want to balance life, right? And so I'm being more intentional about what comes natural and then what is kind of stepping out of my comfort zone because I want to lean into, as you say, a holistic way of living.

[00:29:23.030] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. One of the things Suzanne Stabile talks about... So on the enneagram, if you're listening and you're not familiar with it, if you google, all the pictures that come up, will connect all the different nine types to another two types. There's these lines, it kind of creates a star looking figure. We call one of the lines a stress line and one a security line. And you kind of alluded to this earlier, Jennifer, but you're connected to seven, which is it doesn't change your core motivation, but it kind of gives you some behaviors to kind of lean into. And Suzanne teaches that we can't really find holistic healing for ourselves and, like, really true integration without reaching for the really healthy behaviors of our security number. And we can't take care of ourselves well without reaching for the healthy behaviors of our, what we call our stress number. And so your stress move is to seven. And so the healthy side of that. I wonder if you relate to using fiction as a way to kind of care for yourself. Give your brain a break, find some balance in your life, because that would definitely fiction feels like a move to seven in that healthy space when you choose to kind of use fiction to balance out all that other nonfiction and all that information you have.

[00:30:59.510] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Exactly. I consider it like being so serious. Because the nonfiction I usually pick up is pretty serious. It can sometimes be heavy, but I'm just naturally inclined to want to know as much as I can know. Like, that's so important to me. And yeah, fiction kind of gives me a break, maybe a break from thinking.

[00:31:28.130] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, what did that look like as a child? Were you a child that asked a lot of questions, that needed to know what was for dinner or where you were going, what the schedule is going to be?

[00:31:37.500] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yeah, absolutely. And I think I've always been a pretty big planner. I'm not that spontaneous person, and that's something else that I'm leaning into being intentional about. Spontaneity, for sure.

[00:31:56.690] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. I think this is one of the pieces, when people ask about how can this be helpful in life and helpful in parenting, sometimes if we're a type that is a little bit more spontaneous, and doesn't really care about all the details. Who isn't collecting knowledge as part of their way to manage their anxiety. And you're parenting a child who's asking all those questions, it can be really easy to dismiss. Don't worry about that, I've got it, trust me. Why are you asking all those questions? Don't worry about it. That's just annoying, all those things. And I think specifically, also as adoptees, right, we're already kind of super sensitive to being dismissed because abandonment is kind of like the ultimate dismissal. And so I think it's good for us to know as parents when that happens with our kids, I think, again, if we don't resonate with it, like, if it's not something that we get because we're not that tight, then we have a tendency to just automatically think, like, what's wrong with my kids? Why do they want to know all these things? And the enneagram gives us better questions and more compassion.

[00:33:04.110] - Melissa Corkum

Like, it gives us this pause and this curiosity where we can be like, I wonder if that information is helpful. I wonder if that's part of how they're processing the world. I wonder if that decreases their anxiety. I think if you're not a five, what you don't understand is that information is life. It literally feels like if you don't have all that information, that something terrible could happen. And so I think it gives us just more compassion for that, and so where we can understand they're not just being annoying, like, this really matters to how they operate in the world.

[00:33:43.430] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

What's coming up for me now is I've always been a very curious person, and I tend to think, adoptees, we may be a little bit more curious than nonadopted people because there's so many questions that are unanswered about our beginnings. And then you throw the type five in there, it's like, yeah, it makes sense to me that I would have, like, a heightened curiosity, we'll say, or heightened desire to plan on top of the type you throw the adoptee piece on. Would you say that that heightens whatever we're naturally inclined to be like? I don't know if that question makes sense.

[00:34:37.180] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. No, I do. I think possibly because adoption really does throw so many new layers onto things. And if we think about even though you were an infant when you were adopted, as Bessel van der Kolk has so beautifully told us, the body keeps the score. And so I wonder if there's kind of that natural tendency in fives to need information as part of their survival. And the stakes probably feel higher for an adopted person because there's this underlying thing. For me knowledge goes back probably a little bit to control, like I was talking about for seven, we probably use control in different ways. Knowledge maybe helps you feel like you're in control, and that helps us subconsciously kind of protect ourselves from something catastrophic happening again, like a separation or an abandonment. And so I can see where maybe that would really kind of heighten that curiosity.

[00:35:45.710] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

I would agree with that. Yeah. So as a certified Enneagram coach, I was hoping we could just take a little time for the listener to kind of give a pithy explanation of each type, like a pithy description. Is it possible to do that?

[00:36:08.350] - Melissa Corkum

It is, along with the caveat of knowing that it's like the tip of an iceberg. So just a caveat of saying that hearing me give the pithy tour, as we'll say, is not a replacement. You probably won't be able to figure out your type from that. You might be able to be like, I'm for sure not that one.

[00:36:33.860] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

But I just really want to peak people's interests because I think there'll be some listeners that are like, well, let me look into this because I just think it's so fascinating.

[00:36:44.530] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So what I'll do is I will talk about each type based on kind of what their fear is, their core fear. And again, sometimes some people are like, that's not mine, but sometimes we've repressed what our deepest fears are. I'm just going to say try to listen with an open mind to everything with a grain of salt. And then I'll also include, what we call sometimes like, the lost childhood message. I call it the message that every child longs to hear. And I think it's important when we're talking about adoptees, we don't know... It's not proper enneagram etiquette to type children. But there's these nine core messages that we know kids are dying to hear, and they're dying to hear one of them in particular, but there's only nine. And so when I speak to adoptive parents on the enneagram, we talk a lot about these nine messages and kind of ways that we can sprinkle them throughout our family culture because that way they'll be there for your child to pick up regardless of what type they are. Because again, there's not 4092, there's only nine. Okay, so here we go.

[00:37:54.190] - Melissa Corkum

Actually, I know it sounds weird, but I'm going to start at type eight and work my way around a type Seven. So type Eight, their biggest fear is being weak, powerless, harmed, controlled, vulnerable, manipulated, or left at the mercy of injustice. And what they long to hear is you will not be betrayed. And betrayal for an eight is kind of prejudgment without really getting to know them. It's not kind of the deep betrayal, but the dramatic betrayal that we sometimes think of. Although that counts too, but it's kind of a more simplistic definition of betrayal. They often feel misunderstood.

[00:38:34.810] - Melissa Corkum

Type Nine fear being in conflict, tension or discord. They fear being shut out or overlooked. And they need to hear that their presence matters.

[00:38:47.230] - Melissa Corkum

Type One fear being wrong, bad, evil and appropriate, unredeemable or corruptible. And the message they need to hear is you are good.

[00:38:59.110] - Melissa Corkum

Type Two fear being rejected and unwanted, being thoughtless, worthless, needy, inconsequential or dispensable. And they need to hear and know that they are wanted and loved.

[00:39:15.730] - Melissa Corkum

Type Three fear being exposed as or thought of, incompetent, inefficient, worthless, or as a failure. And they need to know that they are loved for simply being themselves.

[00:39:28.870] - Melissa Corkum

Type Four fear being inadequate, emotionally cut off, too plain or mundane. They feel defective and flawed and insignificant. And they need to hear, you are seen and love for exactly who you are, special and unique. You're not too much and you're not not enough.

[00:39:49.990] - Melissa Corkum

Type Five fear being annihilated and baited or not existing. They fear being incapable or ignorant, and fear obligations being placed upon them without notice where their energy might be depleted. And they need to hear the message, your needs are not a problem.

[00:40:12.070] - Melissa Corkum

Type Six is fear kind of fear itself, need security and guidance. They fear being blamed, targeted, alone or physically abandoned. And they need to hear the message, you are safe and secure.

[00:40:25.870] - Melissa Corkum

And lastly, type Seven fear being deprived, trapped in emotional pain, limited or bored, or missing out on something fun. And they need to hear the message, you will be taken care of.

[00:40:39.670] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Thank you so much for that. That was nicely done.

[00:40:44.530] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And I think as we think about those through the adoptee lens, right, you can kind of hear how some people have asked our adoptees, like does adoption being abandoned make you a certain type? And I don't think that's the way it is. I think we're born a type and our lens changes how we interpret our adoption. But if you listen to all of those as how adoptees through these different lenses, you can think how one is already prone to thinking they're not good enough and then they go through this abandonment and how deeply that could impact that self talk, that inner critic. Type three, maybe I didn't do enough. What could I have done better to not have been abandoned? I think the questions just change for every number on the Enneagram. And I think it's really easy for me to see now that I've been in the Enneagram world, in the adoption world, how each type and how an abandonment could really drive home this, kind of prey on their biggest fear and how they would really need extra support around that lost message.

[00:41:58.990] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Right. Wow. I just think you're making major contributions to the community with this work. And what would you say has been the most rewarding thing about being connected to the adoption community?

[00:42:14.350] - Melissa Corkum

I think the adoption community, more than any other subgroup of the population, has just proven itself to be incredibly teachable and vulnerable, open to community and really open to self-reflection. I mean, I see that both in the adoptees that I work with, and the adoptive parents, I think adoptive parents are some of the most teachable parents I've ever worked with. The stories can be really hard, because there's obviously a lot of hard things in adoption land. Adoption doesn't happen for all sunshine and rainbows, but I think the redemptive part of that is how everyone comes to the table wanting to be better and do better.

[00:43:05.470] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yeah, I get that. And so I know you've got a lot of ideas, like great ideas, projects, upcoming projects. And so this book club, it doesn't stop here. I know you're going to be doing this for a while. What projects are you working on now?

[00:43:24.730] - Melissa Corkum

Well, we have an ongoing community that serves adoptive parents and we do a lot of Enneagram work in that community. So if you're an adoptive parent listening and are curious about how the Enneagram can kind of serve your family, then you can for sure check out The Village, which you can find on our website. And then I'm in the process of opening a new group in the fall for adoptees. It will be, in some ways, a continuation of the work that we started this summer. But it will also be self-contained enough that if you didn't join our group this summer, you'll be able to jump into the fall group even with little or no Enneagram experience.

[00:44:06.970] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

So the best way for anyone to find you is through your website and social media?

[00:44:13.450] - Melissa Corkum

On Instagram. Our handles actually @postadoptionresources, but if you search for The Adoption Connection we'll come up.

[00:44:19.970] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

That's great. I'll put all that in the show notes as well. And I guess we can wrap things up. Is there anything I didn't ask you that you wish to share?

[00:44:31.030] - Melissa Corkum

I think that's it it's been really a huge blessing this summer to interact with adoptees. It is kind of a new part of the work that I do in the adoption community. I've been working mostly with adoptive parents, and so, Jennifer, thanks to you and the other ladies in the group and other adoptees who have agreed to be on our podcast and share their stories. Because it's helped me so much, learn and develop. And Suzanne's tagline is, it's individual work that cannot be done alone. So it's great to be in community with you all.

[00:45:10.690] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yes. It's great to be in that book club. I didn't know what to really expect, and it just exceeded my expectations, and I highly recommend it, and I look forward to signing up to that. I think it's a nine week that may be coming up in the fall. Is it a nine week book club?

[00:45:28.990] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. We kind of put it out to the group to vote on what comes next. So if you're listening to this but by the time this comes out, we probably will have decided. And you can always shoot me a message if you like to be added to the list for future groups.

[00:45:43.300] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yeah. And you do individual coaching, correct?

[00:45:47.650] - Speaker 2

I do. So if adoptees or adoptive parents are curious and want more information about identifying their dominant type or applying what they know to their situation, you can shoot me a message about that as well.

[00:45:59.930] - Jennifer Dyan Ghoston

Yeah. Thank you so much for having this conversation. It's been great, and for creating the time because I know you have a lot on your plate. So I really appreciate that.

[00:46:10.930] - Speaker 2

Well, thank you. It's been such a fun conversation.