

[00:00:00.090] - Lisa Qualls

Hey, friends! Welcome to episode 200 of the Adoption Connection podcast. We are surprised and proud of ourselves to find that we're at Episode 200. It's really a delightful day for us. And just to celebrate, we invited four members of our community, and people that we have worked with to just share how they've been impacted by our work here at the Adoption Connection.

[00:00:27.460] - Melissa Corkum

John, we'll let you get started. Do you want to just give us a brief introduction to your family?

[00:00:31.990] - John Sloan

Yeah. So my wife and I, we have two daughters. Our oldest is 13. We adopted her through a kinship adoption when she was three and a half. And our youngest is four and a half, and she's our bio kid.

[00:00:48.390] - Melissa Corkum

Awesome, thanks. Let's see, our next guest is Britney.

[00:00:53.060] - Britney Shoemaker

Yes, I have three. Two of my kiddos are adults, and they came to me at 15 and 16. So I have my oldest daughter, she's now 21. My middle son is 20. And neither of them still live here under my roof. One lives here in town in her own place, and my middle son is back and forth from college. And then a year ago, I got my third kiddo. He's 16 just last week. And he's been with me, like I said, just for about a year.

[00:01:24.390] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And you're representing also all the single moms in our community?

[00:01:28.380] - Britney Shoemaker

Yes, yes.

[00:01:31.390] - Melissa Corkum

All of our superheroes.

[00:01:33.640] - Britney Shoemaker

That was one thing that I loved, is that I'm not the only single mom. There's lots of single moms.

[00:01:40.270] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, there definitely are.

[00:01:42.270] - Melissa Corkum

Hey, Sarah, will you introduce yourself to our listeners?

[00:01:46.160] - Sarah Weber

My husband and I have four kids. Our oldest are 16 year old twin daughters that came to our family through foster care when they were placed with us at 18 months. And then we have an almost 14 year old son, and an eight year old daughter that came to our family by birth.

[00:02:10.800] - Melissa Corkum

Awesome, thanks. And then last, but certainly not least, Alison.

[00:02:15.790] - Alison Struska

Yeah. I'm Alison, and my husband and I have been married for about 18 years. And we have one son who is ten years old. He was adopted internationally from Uganda. And we have another son who is five years old who is adopted domestically, and we have an open relationship with his first mother.

[00:02:39.180] - Melissa Corkum

Awesome. So I love how many different types of adoptions we have, too. We weren't really thinking about that when we brought you all together, but I heard some foster care, like, some of them just like

guardianship, and started informally kinship, and international and all the things.

[00:02:56.470] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, it's really wonderful. We exist, Melissa and I created the Adoption Connection, really to serve parents in their post adoption experience, like, after your kids come home. And that's really our passion. And so we would just love to hear from each of you about what led you to seek support from us here at the Adoption Connection. John, would you like to start us?

[00:03:21.110] - John Sloan

I mentioned that we adopted a daughter through a kinship adoption. We already had a relationship with her, and I think we had some grand ideas about kind of how wonderful it was all going to be. And it's been wonderful in a lot of ways, but it also has been really, really hard. There was a period of time where it was just like, Why? I feel like it's hit my head against a wall with some of it. And we started hearing about blocked care, and my wife mentioned to me about a blocked care workshop that was being done for dads specifically, and suggested I go check that out. So I went and checked that out, and it was great. And there were a lot of light bulb moments, and it was just nice to hear other people who were saying kind of the same things I was experiencing, they were experiencing. And then so the dad's group started right out of that, and so I just jumped right into the dad's group and have been pretty active in that since it got started.

[00:04:41.060] - Melissa Corkum

John's, an OG in the dad's group.

[00:04:43.110] - John Sloan

That's right.

[00:04:43.810] - Melissa Corkum

All the way to the beginning. So, John, since we're on the dad's group, which is for those of you who don't know what the dad's group is, it's a specific gathering that happens inside our support community called The Village. What has been the most valuable part of that for you, John? And then kind of like, why do you stick around? Because that's been, I think, a solid year now since we launched that group. I think you've seen some dads come and go, but you were at the very beginning and you're still an active part now. So what does it mean to you to be part of that group?

[00:05:15.410] - John Sloan

It's so nice to have a place where, like, just with other dads who understand, who get it, and who are willing to be vulnerable with the things that they're going through. And rarely tell me I'm crazy. You know, it's only been a time or two. There's just things that we all, and it's just kind of universally in that group people are like, man, it's nice to be able to just say what I think and what I'm experiencing and see, you know, heads nodding and, you know, just people. And Greg always like, you're a good dad, you're good. Your kid needs this, but you're learning. There's tools here to be able to kind of learn how to meet those needs that are kind of extra challenging kids have. So just having that place where people a place to be understood.

[00:06:18.860] - Lisa Qualls

John, you mentioned Greg, and he has just become such a valuable part of our team here at the Adoption Connection. Because when it was just me and Melissa, we realized we were lacking something really important, and that was someone who was an adopted dad, who had walked this challenging road and could really specifically support dads. So Greg is just a gift to all of us, and I know he is to all of you dads as well.

[00:06:45.240] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So it's really a dad's group. Lisa and I don't leave that. It's led by a dad. It's only dad's.

[00:06:52.160] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, we stay out of it.

[00:06:54.860] - John Sloan

Greg does such a good job, and it has bled out to everybody else in the group that sometimes it feels like my challenges aren't nearly as big as some, like objectively, other people have far more challenging kids than I do. But I still am, my challenges are still respected. I never feel like I shouldn't speak up about the things that are hard for me because they feel like they aren't as big for Greg or some of the other guys in there. And they'll talk about. And I went to this conference where I heard this other thing, and I felt the same way. There's such a spectrum to the number of challenges, the types of challenges. But they're all challenges, and they all kind of present with similar problems for us. And so it just is a very welcoming feeling.

[00:07:54.940] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, we're definitely not in a contest to have the most painful, challenging circumstances because any amount of struggle in our own families, it's painful and it's hard. And we want something better than that. So I appreciate you mentioning that because we have a range of experiences within our community and we're just so glad to have everybody. Britney, how about you? What led you to the Adoption Connection?

[00:08:24.040] - Britney Shoemaker

So I think that I first maybe heard the podcast, but then I had gotten really interested in the Enneagram. And so I don't even know if you guys remember, but way back before my third kiddo joined us, I had just popped in for a couple of the Enneagram, maybe small group kind of things. But my older two children were launched and things were really smooth and kind of thought I was done. Although I've since learned you never are done parenting, even adult children, you're still parenting.

[00:08:57.490] - Lisa Qualls

I witnessed. I can be a witness to that.

[00:09:00.030] - Britney Shoemaker

Yes. So I had kind of drifted away and then with the addition to our family, just changed things. And we were in a difficult season, and I was just realizing myself that I needed something. I wasn't even really sure what it was. I mean, I knew I needed Jesus, but other than that, I didn't know what other tangible things I could get my hands on. And I think in talking with my therapist, one of the things that she talked about was kind of a support group. And I have wonderful parents, I have wonderful church family, I have wonderful friends who would, my sister, they would listen and they would hear me and they would feel all the things. And they did the very best they could to support me, and they still support me, but they're not walking the same journey. It was helpful and it was great, but I just needed something else. And so at some point, I had gotten back to where I was following The Village things, and then I saw the Hope Circle, which was just for moms. It was online, all different times. So that got to just be kind of my hour of the week. And there's been so many times where I log on and I just think, like, my home is just kind of wild and crazy and out of control. And then I hear people share their stories and just like, oh, we're kind of normal after all. And so just having other moms to share their hearts, that has been so life giving for me.

[00:10:41.660] - Lisa Qualls

I'm so happy to hear that. Yeah, we talk about pretty much everything in that group because a lot of us are, we've got moms with littles, but we got lots of teens and young adults, and that leads us to some all kinds of interesting conversations, I would say. But that's wonderful. Thank you, Britney. Sarah, how about you? What led you to seek support at the Adoption Connection?

[00:11:05.210] - Sarah Weber

Well, I was trying to remember how I came across the podcast, but somehow I kind of had given up on parenting and adoption podcast because I just hadn't really not staying negative on their podcast, but I just hadn't found one that felt like I was connecting with it or if it was really hitting me where I was in our family. And I came across the Adoption Connection podcast and it just felt like, yes, okay, I feel understood. I feel like, oh, maybe I haven't tried everything. Maybe there are still, like, different things to try, as well as somewhat of a perspective shift. I think maybe on a podcast I heard about the regulation rescue. Maybe I was looking on the website. I can't remember how I found it, but okay. To

focus on the question of what led me to seek support as, I mean, just parenting like, I had I still have two adopted teen daughters. I'm pretty sure that, like, twin teenage daughters, minus adoption, would probably still be really challenging. But then to add in the early childhood trauma, and still trying to build attachment and connection has, I was feeling like I was failing every day.

[00:12:39.040] - Sarah Weber

I think part of that is being an enneagram one, always wanting to find the right thing, and the best way, and there has to be the good way to do this. I think a sense of I'm not doing this right, I am failing. Listening to the podcast, feeling like, okay, I think this is actually a different, new thing that I haven't found or tried. So I did the regulation rescue, and that was so helpful. And I wouldn't even say necessarily that we've had major behavior shifts because of it, but it has made it has changed my focus to connection and to like, what is the need behind the behavior. And yeah, that feeling of constantly failing, it's still there a little bit, but I don't know if I'm ever going to lose that. But I feel more equipped for sure, and I feel like I have more of a focus and a goal that's less vague than being a good parent.

[00:13:58.690] - Lisa Qualls

Sarah, you mentioned the regulation rescue, and I wonder if you could take a minute, just explain for our listeners what it is and what's been helpful to you with it.

[00:14:09.710] - Sarah Weber

The regular rescue, it was, I guess, a course. There was some online, like, live classes, meetings, webinars, I don't know what the right word would be. And then there was homework to do in between each one. Just a lot of it was focused on, like, really just paying attention to, like, what is happening in my house and how these things that we're talking about and learning about in the regulation rescue classes, how do I see them and how can I shift things in the way that we're parenting in the household environment, all of those types of things. There was also along with that was SSP, the Safe and Sound protocol, which is a listening protocol. And that was really, really helpful. I feel like I only completed it. I completed it, and I completed it with one of my children. I still hope to complete it with the other three. I think it really helped create a little more capacity in myself for the chaos of four kids. And then the daughter that I did it with, it definitely created more capacity in her to just be downstairs when everyone else is downstairs. Before that was just too overwhelming, and it still is overwhelming, but she can handle it for a little while now. And then there was also a Voxer group where we could ask each other questions in between the meetings and kind of check in. Melissa would hop in there and answer questions and just provide support to each other throughout the process. I think it's eight weeks now. I don't know.

[00:16:19.780] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, we call it 60 days, but it's basically, like, two months. And then the folks who complete the regulation rescue or who participate have an opportunity to stick around in a Voxer group that we essentially call the alumni group. Again, there's kind of a narrow pathway to that group. But Sarah, do you want to talk a little bit about being in that group? Because you're pretty active. I'd say you're one of our, like, foundational members in that group.

[00:16:49.240] - Sarah Weber

Yeah, the Alumni group is, like, my lifeline. I talk about it constantly all the time. I don't share personal stories that other people share on there. But the alumni group is people who have gone through regulation rescue, and it's like an ongoing, I guess, support group where we can hop on there and share a challenge that we're having, like a behavioral challenge or just our own, some sort of shift we know we need to make, but we can't quite get there. And people, everyone understands. There's always somebody who's like, oh, yes, I can completely relate to that, even if it's not the same behavioral situation or whatever. All the people on the group, I think it's all moms at this point, but anyway, they all understand and come in with ideas, fresh perspectives, or even just sometimes I'll hop on there and be like, oh my gosh, I just have to vent. I just need to talk about what just happened. And there's so much empathy and compassion and understanding that, like Britney was saying, I have a great community and wonderful people in my life, but it's different when it's people who are walking the same road and they really understand. So I can't say enough wonderful things about the alumni

group. It is worth every dollar in my head. I always break things down into, like, how many I compare it to therapy. So this is like a third of one therapy session a month?

[00:18:37.840] - Lisa Qualls

Yes. Okay, for those of you listening who've never heard of Voxer and don't know what it is, it's really a very simple app we use on our phones. And like, for this alumni group, it's a private group, and Voxer is just voice messaging back and forth, so it happens live. You get notifications on your phone, you can listen and respond as you're able or not. So it's just a way of interacting that's super simple, super fast. So that's what Voxer is. And then, Melissa, do you want to explain a little bit more about what the Safe and Sound protocol is for people who've never heard of it?

[00:19:13.870] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. And so we'll link to some episodes in the show notes because we did make an entire episode out of that. But basically you've heard us probably talk about felt safety, which is kind of a subconscious sense that we have in our bodies that we don't get to make a decision about. And without felt safety, it's really hard to have healthy attachment, let other people co-regulate. It's hard to access that upstairs thinking brain. And so the Safe and Sound protocol is a listening protocol, and it just helps to reset the nervous system to have a larger capacity, like Sarah was saying, for felt safety. And so I've been working with families for almost a decade. And I would get families that had read every book and been to every conference and knew everything. And they really were doing it all as right as we possibly can as human beings. And some of them were doing it more right than any human being should even have to do. And they were still just really feeling stuck. So I feel like Safe and Sound kind of helps bring some traction to that because all the things that we can do to provide a sense of felt safety for our kids are kind of I call it, like, drops in a really in a bucket, a really big bucket with a lot of holes. And so it doesn't matter how good you are at putting those little drops in. It's just a long, long road. And especially if we're struggling with something like blocked care, or struggling to stay in the game, SSP kind of like, gives us the ability to pour cupfuls into the bucket, I feel like. I'm an SSP practitioner and we do the SSP inside the regulation rescue that Sarah was talking about. That's kind of our wraparound intensive support program for families who really feel like they're in a tricky place.

[00:21:11.290] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. Thank you. Alison, how about you? What led you to seek support here at the Adoption Connection?

[00:21:18.210] - Alison Struska

Well, one thing about our family is that we are a military family, and so we have moved around a lot. That being said, we don't have a way to build up longstanding community. We move every couple of years, and so we have to start over from ground zero. We have no friends. We don't know anybody in the area. We don't know the local resources or support groups or doctors or dentists or grocery stores. We just have to start over. It can be really lonely. It can be really isolating, because you do feel like you're the only one that you know of going through some of these difficult things. And you don't know where to turn because you don't know if people are going to understand. Often we haven't lived close to family in a year, so we don't have a grandma to call, or aunt or a friend or anybody to come over and help. So I really needed that extra support. And I had been listening to the podcast. Well, I had read Lisa's blog way back in the day, and then I listened to the podcast and got support through that by listening each week and getting information and really seeking to understand more.

[00:22:50.800] - Alison Struska

But moving in itself is triggering for kids, and they were not very regulated. So once we got here, I think we started to see a lot more intense behaviors, and we got to the point where I wasn't sure how we were going to do for a lot of the school breaks where they'd be home. And we were dealing with safety issues as well. So I contacted Melissa. I said, can I do the safe and sound protocol? Just me by myself. I don't care, I want to start now and I don't want to wait for a group. And she did let me start it, so that was really great because then I could do, she does individual coaching, so you get to meet one on one and ask questions about behavior with your kid. And then I get opened up to this world of this alumni group that has been amazing afterwards. The other thing I would say is I'm in a lot of

Facebook groups, but when you start getting from a big group into a smaller group like The Village or the Hope Circle, people understand so much more, and then they're more willing to share their lives and their experience and their situations, that it doesn't seem as scary.

[00:24:18.990] - Alison Struska

I'm an enneagram Six, so I can be more prone to anxiety or scared to kind of even go out there and put myself out there. Even in the alumni group that is on the Voxer app, being able to hear the voices of other moms who are going through the exact same thing that I'm going through has been so valuable because it's so validating. It's like opening your eyes to seeing that you're not alone, you're not the only person. And it makes me feel safer to want to reach out and ask for help because I know that it's okay to have these feelings, it's okay to have these issues with kids at home. And it's okay that there are people out there that aren't going to judge you or constantly look at you like you just need to fix your parenting. You're a bad mom or a bad dad. So I'm thankful that the Adoption Connection exists to kind of encourage those of us who needed that extra encouragement, especially when you don't have that community around you.

[00:25:36.560] - Lisa Qualls

Thank you, Alison, and that's really helpful. So I know you've all mentioned different things that have been valuable to you, but I want to go ahead and revisit this question about what is the most valuable part and why do you stay. John, do you feel like you could add some more to that?

[00:25:54.750] - John Sloan

Yeah, sure. The dad's group mostly is a zoom call. We do basically every other week, and sometimes we have double digit guys in there. I mean, there's a larger group, of course, that's kind of part of it, but each week we'll have five, eight guys in there, which is kind of nice when it's small. Because, again, you can feel more willing to talk. And usually what that looks like is Greg will ask us, okay, like, what's working and what's challenging? And we will just each kind of go around and share a little bit, and try not to dominate the air, which I have a hard time with sometimes. But then Greg often has something prepared that he wants to share with us. The poor guy often does not get an opportunity to talk about it because we all have a lot to talk about, but it always just comes up with really good discussion. So that's really nice. And then we just have a text thread that in between calls we talk on there. And actually, I just thought of a story a minute ago where there was one of the guys texted about this kind of disaster that was happening in his car, and he had to, I think, stop alongside the road. The kid was unbuckling from the car seat and all this, and I was actively in my car trying to get my little one to get into the car seat and stuff. I'm not driving down the road, but I get the car seat problems. And another guy, there were three of us, all at the same time, all dealing with difficult kids in car seats. And it was a nice way to just feel that connection right there. We're not doing, like, a Voxer thing. We talked about something like that, but just the text thread has worked out pretty well for us to be able to stay connected in between those Zoom calls.

[00:28:12.110] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, it's a pretty special thing for dads to be able to connect on that level. I don't think it comes naturally to a lot of men, but by having this really safe space, it just brings everybody together in such a beautiful way. And I feel like Greg is just dripping with wisdom. I mean, he is a wise, kind, wonderful dad and has so much to share. So that's great. I really appreciate that. And Britney. How about with the Hope Circle? Tell us a little more about that.

[00:28:44.940] - Britney Shoemaker

So there's a couple of components of the Hope Circle. We do our once a week Zoom calls, and those are usually about an hour, and we just give updates. I love that they kind of fluctuate in day and time. So it's like, if you can't make it for one week, there's probably some time in the month that will work for your schedule, but we just check in. Then there's a Facebook group for that as well. So just a smaller Hope Circle Facebook group. And so we do Friday check ins where you can comment with your high and your low and then prayer of the week. So that's just a great way to kind of keep up with everybody. And once again, kind of just be reminded that we're all in it together. And then also, as things come up, so special things or special needs or really hard circumstances. I know for me, I had a question. Sometimes you just need somebody in the same space to say, like, everybody else would

say, what you're doing is probably crazy, but it's okay, your decision, you're on the right track. And so just to post a question to the group here's what's going on. How would you guys handle it? And so that's really helpful. And I think I can find a lot of people who will tell me, like, oh, you're doing such a great job, or, yes, it's really hard, or if I'm describing something that goes on, I cannot believe that they would do that. That's not really what I need to hear. I need people to help me reframe. I need somebody to say, like, yes, I know it's hard, but why might that be how the behavior presented? What might actually be going on? And so one of the most valuable things, the Hope Circle has just been helping me shift my perspective towards being curious and trying to understand that underlying what I'm seeing, there's so much more underneath what I'm actually seeing.

[00:30:50.740] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. I would add, too, that there's a ton of wisdom in that group. And we've got a lot of older moms who have parented for decades, a lot of people who are super knowledgeable. So someone will come in with a question about FASD, and we've got people who really, really know about FASD who will answer. Or someone will come in with a question about addiction or autism or just like, I'm losing my mind, what should I do? And I absolutely love the community of support and the wisdom of the moms in that group. It's not just Melissa and me as the experts. I mean, there's just a ton of great support there.

[00:31:34.140] - Britney Shoemaker

Yes, for sure.

[00:31:35.890] - Melissa Corkum

So, Sarah, do you have anything to add around what's been helpful?

[00:31:42.040] - Sarah Weber

I would just add with the alumni group... Well, I guess it started in regulation rescue, is that one of the very first I think the first assignment was Points of joy. So I also did the blocked care class, and I think it was the first thing in that class too. But to make a list of 50 points of joy, just it could be really small and specific things that just give you a little boost of joy or happiness. That, to me was so helpful because you hear constantly, like, oh, you've got to practice selfcare and you need to.. And a lot of times people will say, selfcare doesn't have to be a massage every week or whatever, but there's never been some real practical like, here's what you actually can do. And the points of joy has been so helpful because it's not like you do this exact thing, this is how you practice self care. But it gave me a way to think through these are ways I can bring a little bit of extra joy into my life. Drinking my morning cup of coffee if I sit outside gets me three points because I like the feeling of the cup in my hand. I like the act of drinking the coffee and sitting outside in the morning sun when it's sunny in the morning. And I always drink my coffee every morning. But when I remember to be mindful of it, it does actually really help throughout the day to go through the day focused on points of joy. This morning and yesterday. Well, last night I was thinking, gosh, I've been so irritable the last few days. And I was like, oh, okay, tomorrow I'm going to make sure I get in, like, some extra points of joy. That's been really, really helpful for me. It's such a simple thing. But in the alumni group, every Wednesday we share, Wednesday wins. That's been really life giving. Even if I can't think of something to hear other. People that can share wins that they've had throughout the week. And it also has helped me try to reframe some situation into a win. Like, oh, actually, I realized I needed more points of joy. That in itself could be a win. I think that reframing of, the reframing things into this could be a win, or this could be especially, I think, as the enneagram one is really helpful, making it really a clear, almost like, method of self care, even though it's going to vary from person to person, but it gives a really clear framework that has helped me tremendously.

[00:34:54.410] - Lisa Qualls

I love to hear that. Points of joy has been a big part of my healing journey, too, so makes us happy when we hear that.

[00:35:01.560] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, we make everyone do it. Like you said, the Overcoming Blocked care groups do it. We do it the regulation rescue, we do it all the Blocked care stuff.

[00:35:12.210] - Lisa Qualls

So I probably need to do it in the Hope Circle, too. We need to spread the love, spread the joy. We need to bring it to all of our people because it is powerful. And honestly, I learned it from Deborah Gray, who was our therapist, and she talks about it in her first book, *Attaching in Adoption*. She called it something different, but I kind of modified it for myself, and then we've developed it further. So I'm so happy to hear that.

[00:35:39.040] - Sarah Weber

I'll just add to that, Melissa and Lisa. I've only come to a couple of times to the Hope Circle, but you guys being in it and having some expertise, but also, you don't have all the answers. Like, you have not mastered all of this, and somehow that is just so validating. Like Alison said, it is. You've been doing it for a long time. You're representing all the three parts of the Triad, and you've done so much research, and yet you're still in it with us. And so I think, and then the Voxer group, Melissa is in there giving ideas and answers, but also like, yes, I am there, too. I understand. And Lisa, when I've gone to the Hope Circle, same thing there. So I think that's really been helpful for me to see that, like, people that to me are the experts are also, like, have not totally mastered that. You're still in it.

[00:36:45.260] - Lisa Qualls

You know, I think that is... I appreciate you saying that, and I think that is one of our strengths, is that we are experts in a sense that we've done a lot of research and a lot of learning. We have a lot of experience, but we are truly walking the road with you. So sort of theory meets practice. Like, it's the real deal. I mean, we both still have teenagers and wow. I mean, it's intense. It's not easy parenting teenagers, especially teens who had early adversity and trauma, and so, yeah, we're right there with you. So I'm glad you liked that and don't see that as a detriment at all. Alison, was there anything you wanted to add about what's valuable and why you stay in The Village? And with the Adoption Connection?

[00:37:35.910] - Alison Struska

One thing that surprised me about being part of The Village, being part of the closer knit group was the amount of opportunities that I had access to. And so that's where I see the value of the monthly membership is amazing because I was thinking actually at first that it was something where there might be a support group meeting maybe once a month, maybe once a quarter. And the first week I saw all these opportunities on the calendar and I was like, oh great, I'm gonna make it to every one of them. And then they announced that they're doing the same thing the next week and I was like, what? Again? So I was so pleasantly surprised that I could essentially create a community, a regular community, by attending almost - let's go to Hope Circle here. Let's go to enneagram book group here. Let's go to Blocked Care. Behavioral Question and Answers, all these opportunities, webinars, things that we can do throughout the month. And I don't know how you guys do it, but I am amazed that on top of that we get to listen to the podcast, and ask questions in the group, and you're available to bring answers there.

[00:39:01.690] - Alison Struska

It is very valuable. It brings so much more value than I expected for maybe just a monthly get together group. And the other thing I wanted to say, was something that I really appreciate about this is that it is Christian. And there is an emphasis on Christ. And I don't know everybody believes the same. But I do know that I appreciate when at the end of Hope Circle, Maybe Lisa will pray for us. And having prayer as part of the group instead of just, well, good luck guys, I hope you do well. It makes a big difference because you know that there's power behind those prayers. There's power behind these people wanting things to go well for you. And it knits the community together because you're all kind of trying to seek help at the same time and we're all going to that same source.

[00:39:58.760] - Melissa Corkum

We've talked so much about the different programs and the different gatherings that folks are enjoying, and so I just wanted to give you a quick rundown and lay the land. So The Village is our main community. And within The Village we have the Dad's Only group that John was talking about. We have the Hope Circle that a couple of the moms have talked about. So those are just like special

names for different gatherings that happen within The Village. We also do Behavior Q&A's. We have a couple of group coaching calls about the enneagram and how it applies to us as adopted parents, and perhaps our kids as adoptees. And we have ongoing support for overcoming blocked care. So if you're new to the Adoption Connection, The Village is the main place of where all the different things are happening. Now we have two other individual programs that are timebound, so they're groups with beginnings and ends, and those are groups specifically on overcoming blocked care. And then our 60 day intensive for families that are kind of really struggling and/or want to take advantage of the Safe and Sound Protocol. So if you're new, we invite you to check out The Village.

[00:41:20.850] - Melissa Corkum

And then from there, if you need additional support, we can kind of point you in the right direction, but The Village is the best place to start. We'll give you information at the end about how to join that. Or you can check out the show notes. We wanted to end with just some last messages from our friends here what has been valuable about The Village and our other groups. And then also just some special messages for you guys if you're feeling isolated and alone.

[00:41:52.010] - Britney Shoemaker

So I would just say to parents that you're not alone, and that it is okay to take care of yourself, because sometimes we're so focused on everybody else that we forget that. And then specifically to single moms, it is so encouraging to me that I'm not the only single mom. And so there are several single moms. And so just to... Even though I love the advice from married, foster and adoptive moms, it is so wonderful to have another single mom say this is how I'm doing it by myself. And so that is awesome. So for single moms, any moms, but single moms especially, I would just say join in because there would be a great community and great support for you too.

[00:42:41.970] - John Sloan

One thing I was thinking about with this last question was that maybe you feel isolated and alone because you are. Having a group like this, where there are people that get it and you can plug into the community to whatever depth you have the time to, is really wonderful.

[00:43:05.360] - Alison Struska

I love the tagline that you always use at the end. I keep saying that it was very encouraging. That's what I needed to hear.

[00:43:13.590] - Lisa Qualls

Why don't you go ahead and say it first, Alison?

[00:43:15.930] - Alison Struska

Yes, you're a good parent doing good work and you're going to finish it. And that you're there. It's so nice, so validating to hear somebody else say, you're a good parent, you're doing good work. If you're not getting anywhere else, at least you can hear it from here.

[00:43:33.190] - Melissa Corkum

We are so thankful for our friends who came and joined us for episode 200. Thank you for all of you who listen every week, if you come back week after week. If you're new here, welcome to our community. We invite you to hit subscribe on your favorite podcast app so the new episodes that drop every week can just automatically show up on your phone or your device. If you would like to join these folks and Lisa and me in The Village and the rest of our team, you can go to theAdoptionConnection.com/village and use the code podcast to get half off of your first month. We're really excited to meet you.