

[00:00:00.000] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:00:09.990] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:18.440] - Lisa C. Qualls

Each month, we host a workshop where we invite a guest expert to share their knowledge and expertise. This week, we're bringing you a recording from a recent workshop. We hope you enjoy it.

[00:00:35.200] - Lisa C. Qualls

Welcome, everyone, to our workshop using the TBRI Nurture Group as a family. Our instructor today is Tristen McGhee, and I'm going to share a little introduction about her with you. Tristen is a certified Trust Based Relational Intervention practitioner, an adoptive mom, a foster adoptive parent trainer, as well as a trauma-wise parent coach. She has extensive experience working with vulnerable families to find a path of hope and healing. Her passion for helping families and advocating for children with early childhood trauma backgrounds has led to her current enrollment in a graduate program to receive her Master of Education in Trauma and Neuroscience. Welcome, Tristen.

[00:01:25.540] - Tristen McGhee

Hi, Lisa. Hi, everybody. Thanks so much for having me. I'm really excited about today. Nurture groups is one of my favorite things to talk about, so I'm glad to be doing this. And I just want you all to know that I have an adopted 15 year old son as well as a biological, and I only differentiate because of the group that we're in. I don't normally differentiate like that. But I just want you know, I'm in the thick of it, just like maybe some of you are. It's been a rough journey, and literally, this morning was a rough morning. So I'm a little bit fragile, I'm a little bit dysregulated, but I'm showing up and I'm here for you guys, and I'm going to bring my best. So we're in this together. I want to talk to you about family nurture groups. I didn't come up with this idea on my own. It's part of the TBRI framework. So I've been a practitioner since 2010, and then my husband and I adopted in 2011, a four and a half year old internationally. And TBRI just gave me a way to relate to my child that was different than the way that I was raised.

[00:02:46.150] - Tristen McGhee

And so it's been a lifesaver for me and for our family. It's no magic bullet, if you know, if you're familiar with TBRI, but it gives us a mindset and a lifestyle that's respectful of, like for me, for my son's trauma history. So I took the practitioner training again in 2018 with a group of people locally to help just our community. And that's when I really started to teach and train others on this paradigm. So before we talk about nurture groups, I just want to do a quick overview of TBRI so that we understand the context of where this idea comes from and how it fits in with that whole bigger picture of the TBRI framework. So it might be a review for most of you, but we're just going to go through it real quickly, and some of you might be like, what is TBRI? Sometimes we're all over. So basically TBRI, it stands for, it's the short version of trust based relational intervention. And it's exactly what it says it is. It's trust based and it's relational, because we know that kids who are harmed in relationship, they're going to be healed through relationship. That's a big key thing that I love to say and emphasize. So it's based in relationship. It came from the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development. That's a program out of Texas Christian University, part of their Department of Psychology. And it's designed to empower people with trauma informed strategies that help improve the outcome of children. It started initially with adoptive kiddos, and it's just blossomed and it's in judicial systems. It can be applied, it's a framework that can be applied anywhere. But what's important to know about it for us today is that it's holistic.

[00:04:50.570] - Tristen McGhee

So that's why we have nurture groups. It's holistic. So it meets the body, mind, soul of a child, and it's evidence based. So it means that there's research, peer reviewed research behind the methodologies, and it's been practiced now for over a decade. And it's attachment focused. So that's what I was talking about. Children harmed in relationship, they're going to be healed in relationship. So we talk a

lot about inattachment, and that's the foundational component of TBRI. And it's also trauma informed. So it's respectful and understanding of how trauma changes a person. So that's the basic overview. If you remember, there's three main principles, connecting principles that's designed to meet the relational needs and build that trust. Empowering Principles, they are designed to meet the physical needs of the child and provide felt safety. And then Correcting Principles, those are designed to help meet those behavioral needs. And in this little diagram, you see Connecting in the center because, like I said, connecting is the heart of what we do with TBRI. And so even the empowering and connecting principles are done through that lens of connecting. All right, that's my little blurb about the overview.

[00:06:19.380] - Tristen McGhee

So what is a TBRI Family nurture group? And it was inspired, nurture groups, they come from the TBRI framework, right? And it's inspired by theraplay. And basically what it is is a way that we can practice these new or emerging skills in a fun, playful way with our kiddos. And so a key component of TBRI is implementing these things, right? The proactive strategies. So we learn and kids learn through practice. And so the nurture group gives us a way that we can practice these with our kids in that safe, fun way. We know that play is the language of kiddos, so that's the way that they learn. That's the way that they love. And in TBRI we talk about balancing structure and nurture. So we place a high value on high structure and high nurture. And nurture group gives us a way to have that balance and have purposeful play. So there's a time for just child led play and letting them lead the way. I think someone might need to mute. And this is purposeful play. So we do want to play with our kiddos and let them lead the way. And we don't really have an agenda. But in nurture groups, we do. We have an agenda and we're playing on purpose because we know that play is the way that kiddos learn. That's the structure. And it's also the way that they feel loved is through that play. So we're balancing that structure and nurture in that way as well. So nurture group, it's a time when we focus on that fun and then practicing these new sets of skills. And the goal is to teach four skills for meaningful relationships. So that's the overarching goal that you're going to see come out of these different aspects of nurture group.

[00:08:47.230] - Tristen McGhee

And those four goals are the four essential relationship skills. So these skills came from Jude Cassidy, and they're the four skills of meaningful relationships that are essential for us to model and to also teach and practice. Because if our kiddos are coming from a trauma background, right, and now they're in our care, they didn't learn these foundational components of what it means to be in a safe, loving relationship. So we're going to break those down, and now we're going to teach and model and practice them so that they can become something that they now know how to do. So the first one is giving care. So that requires me, them, us to be emotionally present when we give care. Receiving care. So children sometimes can have a hard time receiving that care. Even us as adults, we can have a hard time asking for help. But that oftentimes because adults haven't been there in the past for them. So that can be hard for them to receive care through people. That's the key thing is we're getting that comfort from another person, another human being. And then autonomous self. So that just is that self efficacy part. I have my own likes and dislikes and I can be different and that's okay. Then negotiating needs, learning to use our words, learning to ask for choices, learning to ask for compromises, learning to ask for comfort.

[00:10:27.090] - Tristen McGhee

In nurture group, there are six parts, and each of these parts has these four overarching goals of teaching these attributes of basically what is a securely attached person. The six parts of a nurture group. Each nurture group, I like to call them a family nurture group. They just call them nurture groups because they can be implemented anywhere in any a setting. What you and I are going to do and talk about is how do we do this as a family. These are the six parts of a nurture group, and I'm going to go through with you each one of these. In the handout that I dropped into the chat, it has the details of this. This is the part where you don't need to necessarily memorize. It's all given to you. The first part, well, one caveat, one thing I do want to say is you can do this family nurture group, all six parts of these in one setting.

[00:11:35.920] - Tristen McGhee

So you can decide like, hey, let's have a family fun night. I just learned about this cool thing on this call today about nurture groups, and we can have a family fun night and you do all of these together on a Sunday night or Friday night or whatever. Or as I go through these things, you can deconstruct it. There's no rules here. You can just say, hey, we're going to take this aspect and do it at this time without the whole component because you know your family and your kids best. It could be too hard to go through all these with your kid. And maybe for you, it's just taking each of these parts and doing it at different times during the week rather than all at once. So I'm just going to tell you how it works, doing it all at once. And we'll try to throw in little tips of how you can use it outside of doing that all at once. And you can even do it with other families as well. Like, maybe in some support group setting, you can do it and you can all do it together as well. And that way, the kids see each other modeling it, each family modeling it. That's some of the fun ways that I've done it. It was with groups of families as well.

[00:12:58.410] - Tristen McGhee

All right, so the six parts. I'm just going to read it out loud for those who don't have a screen to see is the rules, check in, band aids, activity, feeding, and then a closing ritual. I'm going to just start with rules. So this is the first part, right? And no one likes rules, but rules are part of life. So we're going to start with rules. And these rules are taken from, TBRI has taken them from Theraplay. So we use them in our TBRI nurture groups. Like I said, we do this with groups of families as well as in our own home. And we also have done it in parts of TBRI camps that I'm part of. But I love these because not only are these three rules that I'm going to give you, you can feel free to make up your own rules, but the three I'm going to give you, they're great family rules. The reason I like them so much is they're great rules for life.

[00:14:03.480] - Tristen McGhee

So they transfer into life and they can become mottos that your child can then memorize and fall back on as we use them over and over. So for example, the three rules are stick together, no hurts and have fun. So stick together. Usually we do a hand gesture with that. So you can make that up in your family. A good simple one would just be putting your fingers together, back and forth, stick together. So you would say that together, stick together. And that means that we stick together in the group and participation and paying attention. And when someone else is talking, we're sticking with them, we're listening to them. But you can also use that rule outside of home. So if you're practicing it, we stick together when we go through Target or something like that. And then no hurts, that's the second rule. No physical hurts, no emotional hurts, so no hurts with actions, no hurts with words. And a hand gesture for that, you can just shake your hands side to side, like no hurts. And then have fun. That's a good rule. Some rules are for fun, too, for our safety. And so we can say, have fun and we could do jazz hands. So when we stick together and we don't hurt each other, we're going to have fun. Those are the rules. And like I said, you can repeat those out in life. If you're going to go on an outing somewhere, you can say, hey, member, what are our family rules? We stick together, there's no hurts, and we have fun.

[00:15:59.250] - Tristen McGhee

All right, next, we have check in. So the purpose of check in is we're learning to use our voice and that our voice matters. What we say matters. So that self efficacy aspect of it, right? Some kids, we need to draw things out of them. Other kids are more extroverted, and they'll gladly share and talk a lot about this stuff. And so the idea is this is more like can be an ice breaker type thing to get things going. But as time goes on, as you do family nurture groups, the questions can start off superficial. You can have what's your favorite jelly bean color and why? Or if you could be any superhero, who would it be and why? To more deeper level things like just like, what was the high and low of today? Or when was the last time you were sad? You can start to develop a little bit more deeper conversation happening at the check in, but just keep it superficial at first. One aspect of this is you want to introduce a talking stick, or a lot of times in TBRI, they call it a magic feather. They just have a colored feather. You can create a magic stick, maybe as your first activity as a family. It could be anything. If they have a magic wand, they have a glitter stick, anything. And the idea is whoever's holding that, that's the person that gets to talk. And then when they're done, they'll pass it to the next person. And that just helps clarify that conversation, helps stick together, and we learn to take turns vocally as well. So that's check in.

[00:18:07.060] - Tristen McGhee

Band aids, so we're at our third thing. And band aids is giving and receiving care and helping kids just practice doing that. So what you're going to do, and it practice self autonomy as well, because what you're going to do is have a variety of bandaids. So you're going to plan this ahead of time. You're going to go to Walmart or Target or wherever, buy a variety of cheap band aids with different fun things on them, including some that are just plain. Then you're going to put them in a basket for the kiddo. And so you're going to pair up with your kiddo and you're going to introduce this idea. So it's best if you can get one on one with one of your kids. But if you have a lot of kiddos, it's okay. Just make sure each kid has a turn with the parent. So you're going to ask your kiddo if they have a hurt, and is it an inside or an outside hurt? And you might have to explain that to them, right? An outside hurt is just an ouchie or cut or something like that. And an inside hurt is when somebody maybe uses some words that hurt our feelings and makes us feel sad or mad or whatever. So you're going to ask, do you have a hurt, an inside or an outside hurt? Listen to their response. I'm sorry, you have a hurt. Would you like a bandaid? And then you offer them up the bandaid. They can pick out any bandaid they want. That's them negotiating their needs, their own self autonomy. And then you say, can I put this bandaid on you? And where would you like me to put it? So sometimes they want that you can suggest, maybe you want it over your heart because your heart hurts, or maybe you have a headache or you have a true boo boo. Maybe they don't want you to put it on them at all. And that's okay. There's no wrong answers here. Maybe they want to put it on themselves. Maybe they don't like the way bandaid feel. They want to put it on the top of their clothes. It's all okay. We're just practicing negotiating that giving and receiving care. And then you're going to reverse the role and they're going to do it to you. So they get a practice giving that care as well. So that's band aids.

[00:20:38.980] - Tristen McGhee

And then the key component is the skills practice. So this is where you're going to teach a kid a new skill that could be using the scripts from TBRI. It could be practicing dysregulation and regulation skills. So where they get to practice calming skills, you can maybe talk about emotions, teach them. Maybe there's a feeling chart that you have, any new skill that you want to teach them, and you do that in a fun, playful way. I have some suggestions in the handout I gave you, and we can go over that more in the Q&A as well.

[00:21:17.050] - Tristen McGhee

Then feeding. Feeding is similar to band aids. It's giving and receiving care. It's having fun in doing that. We're going to feed each other, again, pairing up one on one. You basically have some fun food, maybe a toothpick with little gummy bears at the end of it or something like that and having a variety. This is something, again, you're preparing in advance. And then you ask your child, May I please feed you? And you wait for their response. Again, it could be yes or no. Maybe they want to feed themselves. And you can say, What color gummy bear would you like? And let them pick, they get that say, and then you feed them, and then you switch roles. So it's pretty simple, right? But while you're doing it, you want to make sure that you're looking into their eyes. You have that soft voice, so you're really using that connection. If that's too intimate for them, which we've experienced that. You can even use pop corn and just doing it like throwing it in each other's mouths. That's a lot less intimate and a lot less vulnerable and scary. And you can work into the more intimate feeding.

[00:22:37.660] - Tristen McGhee

And then lastly, the closing ritual. So a ritual is different than a routine in that there's just simply a personal component. When you have a routine, it's like, this is what I do. And when I do, the ritual is just adding that personal aspect to it. So we're going to close with a ritual and you get to make that up with your family. Maybe you end by saying, families are safe and you all put your hands in and you say super families, or you do a high five or a group hug. Everyone huddles in and smooches together and you can say, we're better together or something like that, you get to make that up. But that's the ritual and the way that you end things every time. And that ritual can be then used outside of that moment and maybe during drop off or maybe you just had a rupture and now it's a repair. You can use that then again to remind you that, hey, we're a family and we're sticking together.

[00:23:42.060] - Tristen McGhee

And then I just want to wrap it up by saying, and then notice and praise. So when you see your kiddo or kiddos doing these new aspects, you want to make sure that you as a parent are really noticing and praising that. In TBRI, they call it marking the behavior. Because there's something in the brain when someone tells you something that feels good, you like, inside your brain goes, oh, I like that. I'm more likely to do that again now because I like the way it felt when someone gave me that verbal praise and made me feel good. And so, yeah, you can just say something like, that was great how you asked, I have on the screen, how you asked for a compromise, because maybe in the activity you talk about compromise and you role played that with some stuffed animals or acted it out or whatever your family is into. And so you can say, Wow, that's a good job. Asking for a compromise and you just high five. So just a quick like, I see you, and that was amazing.

[00:24:48.150] - Tristen McGhee

A few tips. This is my last slide is just to make sure things are more successful if you're going to do it all at once, as like a family fun night, is that one, make sure that you have everything ahead of time. That's number one. Get everything together. And then before you start, get them excited. Tell them that, hey, I was on this call today and I heard this really fun way that we can do a family fun night. And you guys are going to love it. And you can get them excited about it. We're going to have some fun food, we get to play with band aids. We're going to do a craft if that's what you want to do in your activity, like if it's related to some skill you're trying to teach them. So get them excited about it before you actually do it and focus on that fun stuff. Whatever is fun to them, I suggest during that activity, focus on in the beginning, like the way they like to have fun. So they like to do role playing, if they like to do crafts, whatever that is. And then just making sure lastly, that everybody's content before you start. So we know that their blood sugars can affect their mood. If they have an exercise that's going to affect their mood. So you're setting them up for success. So you've had snacks or been fed, you've had water or you have it. They've gotten some movement around, that kind of a thing. So you're just being mindful of some of those things. It may seem obvious, but sometimes we can overlook that when we're trying new things for ourselves. So just a few tips for you for making sure things are successful.

[00:26:45.140] - Lisa C. Qualls

Thank you, Tristen. That was like this run through nurture groups, but it was so good. I just enjoyed it so much. And for those of you who are listening on the podcast, we will have a link to the handout that Tristen shared with us that contains really all of this information, and it will be in the show notes for this episode. So if you would like to get that handout, that is available to you. Tristen, where can people find you or find resources that might be helpful?

[00:27:14.990] - Tristen McGhee

Well, where you can find TBRI is through the Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development. They also have a podcast. They have a book, *The Connected Parent*. Lisa's book is an amazing one on if you want to learn more about TBRI and nurture groups. I suggest trying to find a TBRI for Caregiver training that will really pack some of these aspects. And then you can find me, I've been using tristenmcghee.com, also safepreciousheard.com. They all go to the same place. And that's where you can find me on Instagram as well. And you can email me through either of those avenues. But like I said, I'm in the thick of it, and so I'm not the most active on these things. I train locally. That's my main sweet spot is I provide TBI training locally, but I'm happy to do it for groups that get together or just even answer questions and interact one on one.

[00:28:23.310] - Lisa C. Qualls

Thank you so much, Tristen.

[00:28:29.440] - Melissa Corkum

We are so thankful for the amazing guests who share their wisdom and expertise with us. Adoptive Parenting gives us both the challenge and the opportunity to keep learning new tools and perspectives.

[00:28:41.350] - Lisa C. Qualls

If you'd like to hear more from our guests and get support on this topic, all of our workshops,

including the Q&A's, are available to folks inside our group coaching program called Reclaim Compassion. To learn more, go to reclaimcompassion.com.

[00:28:57.030] - Melissa Corkum

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. Our new Instagram handle is @postadoptionresources. Or better yet, join our free Facebook community at theadoptionconnection.com\Facebook.

[00:29:12.680] - Lisa C. Qualls

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

[00:29:21.250] - Melissa Corkum

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