

Our Blessed Hot Mess Adoption Journey

Jennifer Malcolm 00:10

Welcome to the Jennasis Speaks podcast the transformative power of women's stories, a platform that empowers women storytelling to promote collective vulnerability, acceptance and healing. I am your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. Welcome to the next episode of Jennasis Speaks podcast the transformative power of women stories where every woman has a story and every story matters. I'm Jennifer Malcolm founder and president of Jennasis and Associates and with me today is Miss Sara Bratt. Sara is an old friend of mine. I've known her for about 10 years. Previous elementary school teacher, she was a Jennasis and Associates team member for several years. And most importantly, adoptive mother of three beautiful Ethiopian daughters. Married lives in Virginia, I believe, and she's here to share her story with you. So welcome, Sarah.

Sara Bratt 01:07

Thank you Jenn um, you know, live in the quarantine dream.

Jennifer Malcolm 01:12

I'm in the quarantine journey. So I am going to preface this podcast by sharing I did say this in the pre story that there are two people on this for this earth that make me laugh like there's no tomorrow. I don't know what it is. But Sara is one of those. So I anticipate some laughter some tears. I brought my tissue. My friend Shiloh is the other one. I don't know what it is. But they just have the gift of giving me some deep laughter So,um,so do you remember how we met?

Sara Bratt 01:41

I don't think of that the other night. Somebody connected us, but I don't remember who it was.

Jennifer Malcolm 01:47

I think it was Aliyah.

Sara Bratt 01:49

Ah, that's right. It was Aliyah

Jennifer Malcolm 01:52

so so you might be a Leah. Yeah. And so she also does. adoptions? Yes. And Leah and I were in the same background at a church together. And I think you guys were in a community.

Sara Bratt 02:06

Yeah. Good call. I've totally forgotten that. I was trying to think about that last night. And at that point, you lived in Ohio. So then you left and you moved to Philly? I did. Yeah. I

02:15

found a new new tribe there. Yes. Yeah. And you actually were the person. We have numerous people on Jennasis Speaks now in Philly. And you were like the inception of that. So? Yep. Yep. You were the connector. I don't know what it is about you, but connecting and you're like, Oh, you two need to meet?

Sara Bratt 02:33

That's because I've never met a stranger. I'll talk to anybody.

Jennifer Malcolm 02:37

And my kids always make fun of me because they're like, Mom, you will talk to anyone. Yeah, my like, well wanted human kindness. Right. Like you never know, like the point of connection or just, you know, they think it's odd.

Sara Bratt 02:51

There's been many, many times where I'm like, Hey, we're gonna go have dinner at this family's house. And they're like, Well, how do you know that? I'm like, Well, I'm at the mama on Facebook. And they were like, Mom, you like, that's not safe. I had my like, you know, at the time, 12 year olds telling me, Mom, that's not safe. You can't just like meet strangers from the internet and go to their houses,

Jennifer Malcolm 03:11

Which is what we tell our kids all the time.

Sara Bratt 03:14

Exactly right. Like, oh, but this is different.

Jennifer Malcolm 03:18

I know, we were actually talking about the other day. Paige is just graduate from Qatar High School going to college this fall, which is crazy. And we were talking about how different because Camden's 19. And how she's got different roles, because she's a girl, she's not allowed to, you know, go on a road trip for three, four or five hours because she's a girl. And I think it is different. And so we were talking at my book club last week about you know, I said, you never know, like, you could you know, like, get your tire blown out, your car runs down. And you know, you might get like some stranger that stops by and the one person or book club goes, Okay, how likely is that going to happen? And I was like, I was 22. On my way to my bridal shower. I got my car broke down on 77 going south. And they didn't have cell phones weren't prevalent back then. Right? And some guy pulled over and said, Hey, I'll take you to the next exit. And I thought probably not a great idea. But I got in the car.

Sara Bratt 04:29

Oh my gosh. Right. Right.

Jennifer Malcolm 04:31

And I was like, so the chances are I'm smart. Like I was smart. And I know, like just smart. And I was like you just in your instinct make decision that could change soso yeah, I'm all he said. teasing because my kids are the same way. Like when you talk to strangers. That's weird,

Sara Bratt 04:46

Right. Exactly. Yes. Yes.

Jennifer Malcolm 04:49

So tell me what the point of this podcast is to talk about your journey with motherhood and adoption. How you guys chose this route. So share a little bit about the background of you and your husband and your journey and how you got here.

Sara Bratt 05:07

Okay. So I grew up with adopted family members and our extended family, my two aunts are adopted at birth. And so I remember being like 12, and talking to my aunt about it, and always being really fascinated by the whole concept and really liking the idea. Because I definitely felt very strongly that God put me on this earth to be a mother. But the idea of being pregnant and giving birth made me want to like jump off a bridge. Like I had no desire whatsoever to do any of that. And I had friends who were like, Oh, my gosh, I can't wait till I get pregnant. And I'm like, Oh, that's like, having an alien inside of you. That seems like not okay with me. So I didn't really know how to like, um, kind of come to terms with Why do I want to be a mom so bad, but why am I like grossed out at the idea of like growing a human inside of me, that's hilarious. So then, I ended up getting diagnosed with Crohn's disease. And my husband, his mom has Crohn's disease as well. So was it on both sides of the family, it was a 30% chance of passing that on to a biological child. And then my husband's father was diagnosed with Huntington's disease, which is extremely genetic and fatal. So Huntington's is 50%, genetic, and fatal. There's no treatments, no cures nothing. So as devastating as that was, to kind of realize that that was part of our family's story. It honestly gave me a get out of jail free card, because it would be knowing all of that genetic hot mess, it was, in my mind, it felt selfish, to decide to have a biological child, and risk all of that genetic awfulness potential. Yeah, yeah. So that's kind of how we decided on adoption. And then I, you know, how I love Excel. And so I, of course, made a spreadsheet of all of the countries, I went on the websites of kind of the big adoption agencies in our country, and just to see what countries were open for adoption at that point, because through our state department that changes all the time, whether it be our country shuts down our relationship with that country, as far as adoption, or that country decides that they're going to either end international adoption and gather.

Jennifer Malcolm 07:41

What made you choose international adoption versus domestic?

Sara Bratt 07:45

It's interesting, because I, when we started this, um, when we started this journey, I was 28. And I just thought for sure, I will could not handle an open adoption. So I didn't think that I could handle having a relationship with the birth family. It felt scary to me. And I just felt safer. Doing an international adoption, where the parent like some some random legal issue couldn't pop up, and the parents could come back. And so what's funny about that is, we hired an investigator a few years back, probably five years ago now to find our girls birth families in Ethiopia. And we're in contact with them while we're in contact with the twins birth mom, because there are more in a city and have access to the internet. We're Celia, my youngest mom lives very early. So we have pictures of her and she has pictures of Celia, but we haven't had contact with her since any investigator went out there. So I like to say I thought, you know,

the idea of open adoption was sort of scary. And now I just see what a blessing it is. And yeah, I would be totally open to it now. And I think a lot of that is just maturity and life experience. And I carry

Jennifer Malcolm 09:14

Yeah, and I think that idea of security, safety, reassurance, and every person is different. So even through this, you know, those who of you who are listening, all of us are going to respond differently, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually based on our past based on our potentially our partner or if we're alone, just the circumstances. And this is Sarah's story. And it's a powerful one. But this is her hers to share and doesn't mean that every situation or choice that she made through this journey is the choice so no, so keep going.

Sara Bratt 09:48

Yeah, and I just think it's important for women especially to grant each other grace and, you know, if you feel strongly that you want to have a birth child and you go through it rounds of IVF. And, you know, I respect that journey because that's what you feel called to do. And that's like the desire of your heart. And I'd say the majority, vast majority, maybe 90% of the people that I know in my adoption community adapted out of infertility. So they had to really grieve the loss of that idea of having a birth child. Before they could move on to race where using the joy of adopting.

Jennifer Malcolm 10:29

Which you said, candidly, you got your get out of jail free card.

Sara Bratt 10:34

Exactly. So that's just a part of it, like the I don't relate to, and I feel blessed that I didn't have to go through that hard part of it, or, because that was the desire of my heart was always to adapt. Right? Um, but again, like God makes all of us different gives us all different desires. And we just have to follow that and not judge each other for our journeys that we go on.

Jennifer Malcolm 10:56

So tell me about your three girls, because I know they're very similar, very different, very unique, and then we'll get into how your adoption process kind of went down.

Sara Bratt 11:07

So I have 14 year old twin girls, so that in itself is a mask.

Jennifer Malcolm 11:13

How old were they when when they came due?

Sara Bratt 11:16

They were four. And when they came to me, they barely spoke any English. They basically knew how to say no, and that was their favorite thing to say. And they were like a hot mess. They while they're still hot mess, but the fact that they can like function in a school setting any kind of social setting is just like pretty amazing considering where they came from. Because when they came to us, they have a lot of

issues and a lot of trauma. I mean, there's reasons behind all of us. But um, yeah, it's been. It's been interesting, you know, teenagers, as you know, are interesting.

Jennifer Malcolm 11:57

They are hellions. Yeah.

Sara Bratt 12:00

I will say though, I feel like I like my kids more as they get older. I don't know what that is like. I remember when the twins went to kindergarten. And then they had this thing called a boohoo brunch for the moms who were like, so sad that their kids were going to kindergarten. And I was like, uh, you have a yahoo bar crawl, because that's what I want to join. Because I'm not crying at all. My kids here, take them please do not send them home for three hours.

Jennifer Malcolm 12:28

We're gonna pub crawl. Back at three.

Sara Bratt 12:31

I'll be drinking heavily.

Jennifer Malcolm 12:34

That's hilarious. And everyone is so different. Because I I remember having a hard time when Camden went to kindergarten, like that, you know, breech, but I still had at that point, you know, to toddlers. Yeah, I felt like it got easier with the girls like, okay, I can actually shower or I can get something accomplished without someone knocking on the door or asking for a snack or leaving their nose wiped or any of that stuff. So I did. Alright, so mom bar crawl for kindergarten. Keep telling me what that new that'd be the new trend.

Sara Bratt 13:06

Yeah, I think it would be a great idea. You know, you got it. You got a diverse I'm a teacher. You got to like diversify to meet everybody's needs.

Jennifer Malcolm 13:14

And especially all these moms over the last four months that had to homeschool around. Yeah, I feel like I am on there. And

Sara Bratt 13:21

yeah, yes. One school goes back to normal one day and the far future we should all just go and drink heavily. I'm not even a big drinker. You know that. I just like you. Yes. I like the old lady dreams. Yes, yes. I've been consuming about one Smirnoff Ice every night. There you go. Because it's not easy being home with your children all day. No, I my youngest is 10. Her name is Celia. And she is a lot.

Jennifer Malcolm 13:59

So she's a hot mess too?

Sara Bratt 14:01

She's maybe the hottest mess like you know like if you're thinking of peppers, like spicy pepper. She may be a ghost pepper hot mess. Maybe? Probably like a jalapeno. Like some people can palette me right? Like, people enjoy me. I'm not ever I'm not everyone's taste for sure. Like when I meet someone I give them like 10% of me, sir first because I don't want to like scare them. Right? Because I'm a lot and I'm not. I'm not everyone's taste. Ceilia I would put her in the ghost pepper. Ghost.

Jennifer Malcolm 14:32

So how old was she wigs? I do remember when she came but how old was she when she came to your home?

Sara Bratt 14:39

She was four as well. So that seems to be my well was my sweet spot. I'm way too old for that now. Like, I think if we we plan on fostering teenagers once our kids are out of the house, that's awesome. Because again, I just think we're more older kid. Kind of.

Jennifer Malcolm 14:56

So not the runny nose diapers. No No,

Sara Bratt 15:00

I intentionally opted out of the toddler phase. I love babies. I love other people's babies just like I love other people's puppies. Like that's a lot of work that I'm not interested in. I'm not a fan of toddlers of any kind, because they're basically little tyrants. And I just, they're like little terrorists. And I just can't, I can't

Jennifer Malcolm 15:25

So when you teach what age group do you teach? Don't tell me toddlers? No.

Sara Bratt 15:31

I've worked in many daycares. And they've always been like, I've always told them do not put me in the toddler room. No, because they will tie me up and tie me to a chair and it's just not going to be to look. So I have worked with preschool, kindergarten, and second grade. Okay. When I taught in schools, it was kindergarten and second grade.

Jennifer Malcolm 15:53

So that that middle age is fine. You're getting older is even more sufficient?

Sara Bratt 15:58

Yes. I like the independence. I like the conversations like about meaningful things. I enjoy that.

Jennifer Malcolm 16:06

I agree. I agree. And and having now almost 16, almost 18 and 19 year old. That same, that same thing, like having true conversations enjoying, I took Reagan thrifting yesterday. And she was like, we have to do this because I'm a child. And she was joking and bantering with me and other keywords,

anything but a child like I like almost 16 years old, and you are self sufficient to go talk to the stranger to get the key to the bathroom like

Sara Bratt 16:34

Exactly, yes, you can do that. So great. All right.

Jennifer Malcolm 16:38

So tell me how you got the girls. And what I mean, a lot of people are very familiar with international adoptions, and my sister and her husband adopted Marquis when he was little. But you didn't you and Mike do something very different. So describe what that is and how you guys even found out about it, because it's kind of something that was very rare the first person that I ever knew about it.

Sara Bratt 17:03

So Mike and I had started off from my spreadsheet to a top from Ethiopia, that the time in 2010, they had the least amount of red tape. And the kids it was being reported that the kids are coming out of the orphanage pretty healthy, emotionally and physically. And obviously, every Ethiopian I've ever seen from like zero to 100. It is stunningly gorgeous. So that didn't hurt. So we started the process with our agency just to do run of the mill Ethiopian adoption, okay. And we kept running into these weird, weird obstacles. So one of them was because of my Crohn's disease. I had my doctor for Cleveland Clinic, who was basically like a dad to me, he looked at me and he said, Sarah, you, you understand, you can't go to Ethiopia. And I said, Oh, but I am because my kids are there. So I'm gonna go to Ethiopia. And he's like, but you can't because you can't even get the required CDC immunizations to go there.

Jennifer Malcolm 18:12

Because of chromes.

Sara Bratt 18:13

Yeah, yeah, because I have my weakened immune system. And one of them was the live vaccine, and I wasn't allowed to have that. So that was an obstacle. There was another obstacle with my name, as far as I changed my middle name to my maiden name when I got married, but apparently, you have to go to probate court for that. And the lady at the Social Security Office didn't tell me that.

Jennifer Malcolm 18:35

Now, you know, those of you note? Yes.

Sara Bratt 18:39

Now, you know, Yep. Yep. And honestly, like, if you're, if you're not doing anything with international adoption, it doesn't ever really come up. Right. So there was just all these obstacles that were coming up. So our agency had connected us with this other family, that was going to be the first family in that agency to go through their Ethiopia program. Okay, they've connected us on social media. And I wish at that point was just Facebook, and MySpace back then. I know right now, we're beyond MySpace, but not not much. Not too far. Not too far off. So I had kind of stopped this lady on Facebook and you know, kind of follow her journey. And I had seen that their trip to Ethiopia and all the pictures she was posting. And they came home, and they were posting a little bit of pictures, but not as many. Okay, so I got this

phone call and like April 30. Now, my name is started this journey in January. We were hoping to have kids home by the end of December. And the agency calls me April 30. And it's like, so what would you think about twin four year old girls? Because we had specified five and under we wanted a sibling group and we didn't specify Gender, okay. So they told us you'll probably get boys because most people specify girls, okay? And I said, Great. Yeah. And Mike said, wouldn't it be funny if we got twin girls? And I looked at him as I'm coming from a family of only boys. And I said, No, that would not be funny, but and you will now think it's funny when you are dealing with everyone's period sinking up. And paying for two prom dresses at the same time paying for two weddings. And all the attitude is going to come with

Jennifer Malcolm 20:32

all the emotions, right? Nobody? Nope.

Sara Bratt 20:35

So when we got that call, I looked at him, like, Alright, buckle your seatbelt, like, oh, put this out in the universe. And here it is. Here it is. See how funny you think it is?

Jennifer Malcolm 20:48

Exactly. It's all cute and fun now.

Sara Bratt 20:52

Right, right. So basically, what had happened is the family that brought them home, they had initially told the adoption agency, they wanted a three year old and under girl one. Okay. Our adoption agency was so in a hurry to get their first Ethiopian adoption under their belt that they rushed this placement through. And if you are wanting to adopt, and they put this placement in front of your face, even if it's not like the perfect fit, it's really hard to say no. Right? So the agency put them in an impossible position. They also the family had one child that was older than the twins that was special needs. And another child that was the same age as the twins, which in the adoption world. You don't do artificially they call it artificial twinning. But in this case, it would have been like an artificial triplet. Because these kids may compete with each other if they're the same age

Jennifer Malcolm 21:51

Are all four of the children, Ethiopian?

Sara Bratt 21:56

No, they were all biological. So there were three biological boys in the family. And then they brought the twins in. Okay. So they were with that family for four weeks in that family decided there were a lot of other factors, but they were kind of forced into a decision of disrupting the adoption. And they couldn't have been nicer. They happen to live in our hometown. And we kind of started going over there just to meet the girls. And then we would take them for a little bit. We're trying to like transition kind of oily.

Jennifer Malcolm 22:31

Because they literally came from Ethiopia to this house four weeks later, this family's like, I don't think this is an ideal fit for our family.

Sara Bratt 22:39

Exactly.

Jennifer Malcolm 22:40

stepping in to kind of bridge that relationship. Oh, yeah.

Sara Bratt 22:43

Yes. So I was around May 13, that we took over the adoption that they came to live with us, wow, full time. And so they hadn't been in the country at six weeks. And all the time that they had spent at that house was not very, they hadn't made much progress as far as language learning, because there was just a lot of trauma that they were kind of processing through. So when they came to us, they hardly spoke any English whatsoever. They had severe PTSD. So we had to learn. It was a weirdest God thing because I had interviewed for a part time position at a youth Crisis Center in Korea. And so I had gone through all of their training, I learned these holds to restrain kids who are, you know, kind of out of control just to help calm them down. I didn't end up finishing that job because I got a different job that was full time, it was a better fit, but that training was like invaluable when it came to our kids because they they needed that. That restraint to be just kind of like calm down and told you know, you're safe. It's

Jennifer Malcolm 23:59

okay. And even that I'm that and I'm no expert in this. So if I say this poorly to the audience or to you, but even that pressure like that, that that pressure that you're

Sara Bratt 24:09

exactly, you're okay. Yeah.

Jennifer Malcolm 24:12

And being you know, soothing words love all that is bringing a calmness factor to children.

Sara Bratt 24:18

So definitely because they they all three of my kids have been diagnosed with sensory integration disorder. So they need that that pressure is part of like, just like you said, calming them down. And they need that input that sensory input. So that was kind of our life for a year and a half. Wow, it was it was a lot.

Jennifer Malcolm 24:41

So you're going from no kids in the home. Yeah. New to four year olds that are now very much a don't speak English. Right. And be now dealing with post traumatic

Sara Bratt 24:55

so Right, right. Yeah, come on. So Of course, once they start kind of evening out at about seven years old, we decided just to renew our home study so that we could be ready in case something were to

come along. Now, during this time, we had realized that these disruptions, especially needs in international adoptions are pretty common.

Jennifer Malcolm 25:25

Oh, interesting.

Sara Bratt 25:26

So a lot of these kids go into foster care. Or are at that point, there were all these kind of underground read homing kind of things going on that we had no oversight, had no checks and balances, which is like terrifying, right? So they were like Yahoo groups where people were going in and basically listing their child like they were a puppy to find a new home for.

Jennifer Malcolm 25:52

Wow.

Sara Bratt 25:53

So

Jennifer Malcolm 25:54

this is in the US?

Sara Bratt 25:55

Yes.

Jennifer Malcolm 25:57

Wow.

Sara Bratt 25:57

So in the US, if you have a biological child that you relinquish to the state for state custody to place them in, in foster care, not like you're forced to, but you choose to do that. So you choose to place your child somewhere else. You face charges. So you face criminal charges of some sort of neglect. I don't remember exactly what the charges. Okay. It is not that way with adopted children. You can, yeah, you can play some of the new family play some in foster care. There's absolutely new, no repercussions legally. So it's very, very easy to I mean, not emotionally. But legally, it's very easy to say we can't do this anymore. Wow. Okay. So when we realize kind of what an epidemic that was, we decided that that was going to be our calling. And if something were to fall into our laps, then we would evaluate that. Absolutely. So I called an agency just to get our home study, updated, not the same agency we used before, because we found out some things about them. And we just didn't want to give them any more money, surely lost respect for them. So I called the small agency in Toledo that was recommended to me and they said, Oh, absolutely, we can help you update your home study. But just you know, we've never dealt with disrupted adoptions. And I said, no problem. I just need the home study updated. I don't need you know, placement or anything. Register. We just want to be ready. Right. So that was on. I want to say that was a Wednesday, and she calls me Friday morning. And she said, You're not gonna believe this. And I said, try me.

Jennifer Malcolm 27:37

Try me. I already have two twins, right? You're

Sara Bratt 27:39

Try me. It's hard to shock me at this. Exactly. She said that that morning, they had got a call about a four year old. Well, at the time, she was three, a three year old Ethiopian girl who their family was looking to disrupt their adoption. Yeah. And I said, That doesn't surprise me at all. Like I just got out not to the universe. Exactly. Here comes God being like you're doing exactly what I told you to do. Right. So So that was my youngest Celia, and she had been with her first adoptive family for three years. So they brought her home at town. Wow. Um, so the mom had wanted to adopt because they couldn't they were having infertility issues. And then the mom ended up getting pregnant. So basically treated Celia like a second class citizen because she definitely favored her other children. And then so Celia was not treated well the entire time that she was living with them for three years and then was given away Wow. And they wanted no further caught like we're still in contact with the twins first family. They were with them for six weeks. Right? Like we're still we still talk to them now. It's it's kind of faded off over time, or, but Celia's family that she was there for three years wanted no further contact ever. They wanted us. She was four years old when she when we got her in court. But they wanted us to lie to her and say she had always lived with us.

Jennifer Malcolm 29:16

Sorry.

Sara Bratt 29:17

And so our lawyer was like, just tell her you'll do it so that we can just push the third she said he was like, there's no legal requirement for you to do that. Wow. Um, so they just, I mean, the dad seemed fine. He was like sobbing in court because he adored her. So when we went to court, they flew. They had to fly to Ohio. They lived in California. And in the courtroom, the dad was sobbing. He adored her. But the mom had zero effect whatsoever.

Jennifer Malcolm 29:48

Oh, and I remember part is because this at this point, you were working at Genesis. This was like 2000.

Sara Bratt 29:57

Yeah because I started in September, and then fell in my lap, like, a couple weeks after I started with you,

Jennifer Malcolm 30:03

Right. I remember.

Sara Bratt 30:04

I was like, um, that's like a surprise pregnancy or something like

Jennifer Malcolm 30:10

we've had numerous of those on the team, like, have a baby I'm not planning on.

Sara Bratt 30:15

Right, right.

Jennifer Malcolm 30:17

So the dad really sounds like had bonded and would have probably chosen to keep her. And the mom was driving the

Sara Bratt 30:25

zero aspect whatsoever. And she had said, apparently, she had sex with the dad. And if we don't disrupt her adoption, I'm leaving you and taking the voice.

Jennifer Malcolm 30:33

Wow. Wow.

Sara Bratt 30:35

So I've kind of like taking the data side in the courtroom and said, Listen, if you want to continue contact, like, I think it would be healthy for her to have continued contact with you if you have a good relationship with her. Because otherwise, it was like, they'll just died. Right? Because she never heard from them or never saw them again.

Jennifer Malcolm 30:54

Does she remember them? Because now? She has, I mean, four years old, you have memory,

Sara Bratt 31:01

Even when she was like six, when we were in Pennsylvania, she saw he flew a helicopter for the Coast Guard. Okay. And she saw a helicopter up in the sky and start crying and said, is that my is that my other dad coming to get taken me away from you?

Jennifer Malcolm 31:18

Wow. So absolutely.

Sara Bratt 31:21

Yes. Yes. She has a lot of memories from that. I'm unfortunately. So not many. Great, right. I'm so sorry. So her trauma was me. I mean, obviously, there's trauma and being separated from your birth mom. Absolutely. But then she had another whole nother layer of trauma in that. She has people telling her you're not good enough right. Now, people who agreed to love her forever. We are giving her away?

Jennifer Malcolm 31:49

Absolutely. Because they had their biological children.

Sara Bratt 31:52

Yeah, exactly. And, you know, just like, if you have a biological child, there's no guarantee that they were also saying that she had all these weird special needs that

Jennifer Malcolm 32:02

I remember that and you're like, Whoa, uh, no, and no.

Sara Bratt 32:06

Right? Like, because she probably was premature when she was born. And she probably had some delays. Because when he was in the orphanage, she her paperwork set starvation. So I think she had failure to thrive. And so it was developing things later. So she, they were taking her to OT and PT. But they would say weird things like, she's not strong enough to pick a strawberry off the vine. She's not strong enough to bite into a piece of pizza. And I'm thinking at the time she's three cutter pizza up for her. Exactly. Yeah, weirdo. Like, that's your thing to fault a child for?

Jennifer Malcolm 32:40

Yeah, because she can't take a bite of pizza.

Sara Bratt 32:43

And I remember the summer after we got her cuz we got her in November. And that following summer, we went strawberry picking took a picture of her taking a strawberry of mine.

Jennifer Malcolm 32:52

I believe my child can pick strawberries.

Sara Bratt 32:55

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Because that is the standard, of course.

Jennifer Malcolm 32:59

Sure. Sure. It's hilarious.

Sara Bratt 33:01

Yeah. But like when you have a biological child, there's zero guarantee that you're going to have a child with no special needs. Correct. And honestly, being a social worker and a teacher, I think every child has their own set of special needs. Absolutely.

Jennifer Malcolm 33:15

And and they're all different, whether it's physical, emotional, mental, trauma induced, you know, over every child. A needs to be loved and unconditional love is the foundation. I think as the audience and moms we all know that. It'd be like, my three kids, their friends, all of them have the little nuances of like, Okay, what is that? Whether it's, yeah, worry too much, or no OCD or different things, whether it's diagnosed or not their disease, that as parents, you just group them and guide and look through and, you know, work on them to overcome and empower and give them tick tips and tools to write that, but we're all we

Sara Bratt 34:02

all have our quirks, so, and we're all willing to do whatever we have to do for our child, no matter what we're willing to go to the ends of the earth to help our child really. And I thought it should be that way, no matter if they're biological or adopted. Absolutely. So now they're how old they're 14 1414 and 10. Wow, almost 11. And I always amazed Cecilia will be 11 in October. And when I used to teach, I taught second grade but I also was nannying for this family at the time that had an 11 year old daughter who had this like attitude. And so her name was Jordan. She's like in college now almost graduating. But I always be like, Oh my gosh, stop being 11. So it's like our joke right now. She just turned 22. So I sent her a text and said, Oh my gosh, your double 11 now awesome. And now they're giving me a hard time they're like, Oh my gosh, Sheila is almost 11 and I'm like, oh don't remind me. That's funny.

Jennifer Malcolm 34:59

Now So obviously, Celia remembers her disruption. The twins don't because they were little.

Sara Bratt 35:11

They were the same age they remember they remember that other family too. But again, it's not there's no real negative feelings because we even got together with them. We saw them. Um, it was a couple of fourth of July's ago we were in Ohio. And I thought I saw one of the boys like walk by. And I texted her. We were at the slick Fourth of July, fireworks when we were allowed to be around people. I was like, I was always like, Oh, this is so people. I just, I don't like a lot of people. And now I'm just like, I just want to see people. I don't care if they're strangers. Okay. And I had texted the mom and said, it just it looks like I just saw Nicholas walking around. And she was like, Oh my gosh, you guys in Ohio. So they like came over and saw us and they're just they're good, good people. They still have pictures of the twins up in there. You know, I've been all their family pictures. They still have that picture them because they were they consider them part of their family. It was four weeks, six weeks. Right? So

Jennifer Malcolm 36:15

are the two the twins process it differently than Celia does the MTS because one's really trauma based. Right and one isn't.

Sara Bratt 36:25

Right and one was so short term. It was more like kind of like a foster care placement. A temporary placement. Okay, before I went to your forever. Oh, wow. Yeah, yeah. I mean, there was definitely trauma in that. They were told when they got there, you know, this is your mom and your dad and you're going to live with them forever. And then six weeks later, we're having a conversation. Like, just kidding. You're it was actually they came to the United States on April Fool's Day. So I always joke with them like, April Fool's you went to the wrong family? Mom, and you can't say that. That's terrible.

Jennifer Malcolm 37:03

Well, you can now Now, right? No, may not be as funny. How did you like family? Your friends, you know processes with you? Did they think that you guys are crazy, were they supportive? That's just,

Sara Bratt 37:17

I mean, they already knew

Jennifer Malcolm 37:18

jalapeno crazy.

Sara Bratt 37:20

jalapeno, pepper crazy, for sure. Go super crazy. Um, my mom, it took a lot for her to I don't know if she even still understands she adores them who are but my mom definitely had that longing to have biological grandchildren. That didn't understand my lack of longing to have biological children, she wanted me to try to at least give birth to one of my children. But with my health, you know how bad it is? I could die. Like that's how bad my Crohn's disease is, it would be really dangerous. I've had multiple surgeries in my abdomen area, it would be really bad, really bad situation. Sure. Um, so it was hard for her to process it. And it was also when she won't be listening to this. So I can say this. When I told her we had chosen Ethiopia, she said, why wouldn't you adopt from Russia? And I said, Well, that's interesting. I'll tell you why. Because I had to have reasons. There's a lot in Russia. It's socially acceptable in their culture to drink alcohol when you're pregnant. So they have a lot of physical fetal alcohol syndrome coming out of there.

Jennifer Malcolm 38:33

I have a whole spreadsheet and my whole list. spreadsheet.

Sara Bratt 38:36

Mom, it's on the spreadsheet

Jennifer Malcolm 38:41

There you go. Let me share that spreadsheet with you all.

Sara Bratt 38:43

Right. It was hard for her to picture having black grandchildren. Or I definitely think that was not that she would never admit that Oh, as ever, right. And actually, I was most concerned about my grandparents because they're of that generation. Absolutely. I was constantly correcting my grandmother when she would say color people or she would whisper. She'd say, did you see that black woman over there? I'm like, why are you whispering? That's not a bad word. What are you doing? That's so weird. You can't do that. So I was most concerned about them. For which it was amazing to watch my grandparents in their 80s grow as people. Nobody loved those loves my grandkids more than my grandparents. That's awesome. And my grandfather ended up paying because we were going to have to fundraise and all this stuff. And then everything started happening so fast, right? He just he paid for the whole adoption. He said we just need to get them here. We just need to take care of it. And then you guys, you know, don't give me back whatever you can whenever you can.

Jennifer Malcolm 39:51

That's amazing.

Sara Bratt 39:52

So, yeah, they ended up

Jennifer Malcolm 39:54

going back to like how your heart expands.

Sara Bratt 39:57

Yes.

Jennifer Malcolm 39:58

The thing at grandparents. It's such a You know grew up in an era with a lot of racism or things you know words that they were very prevalent Yes, all your heart can grow and love and kindness

Sara Bratt 40:13

learn like Maria never really known black people were they weren't came from a very white southern Ohio town there. So they they just realized that Oh, they're just people they're same as us just a little Tanner.

Jennifer Malcolm 40:31

Wow. Now Do you get comments now being obviously you and Mike are white and your writers are Ethiopian. So do you get the weird looks now as it as a family? Or do you feel like?

Sara Bratt 40:47

Well, we definitely still get the looks for sure. I don't get as many looks when I'm by myself with them. Okay, because people generally just assume I have a black husband. Okay. But what's funny is when Mike's with them, he says people always come up to him and be like, Oh, are they adopted? And Mike's? Like, Why doesn't anyone think I could have a black wife? He gets all offended.

Jennifer Malcolm 41:13

Though, that's very interesting. Right? Yeah. That's very interesting.

Sara Bratt 41:17

And you know, the most most of the people that give us weird looks is mostly the older generation. And it's just because, you know, they're past that age of having a filter and giving a crap about offending anybody, you know, no, I can't wait to be that age where you just don't have to lie. Just don't give a crap, you know?

Jennifer Malcolm 41:34

Exactly. So, so did your friends, your church family other like how did they help? or, or, you know, say that you are batshit crazy type scenario, right? Like, how did that fall through the A through the twins, first of a lot of people have never even heard of this type of adoption. And then be, you know, very soon thereafter, here you have with another adoption four year old. So how did that work with your family, church, friends.

Sara Bratt 42:05

So we were still going to my mom's my parents old church. They were really supportive. But it was in Seville, which is a very kind of old school, very white town. Not too far from Lodi, which is kind of the home of the some Grand Wizard of some KKK. I don't know if that's still true. But growing up, we knew that that was the case in Lodi. And so we ended up moving to a church that was in Medina, which I don't know, maybe had five black people. I mean, it's really not diverse at all, but a church that we felt a little more comfortable in. So I think they, the church itself wants to be supportive. I do think that there's good intentions there. Um, but you know, they did the same kind of thing that they would do if there was a new baby. So there was a meal train, which was great, honestly, that was very helpful. Um, but like, cooking was the least of our concerns.

Jennifer Malcolm 43:17

At that point, right. There wasn't grub hub, or, you know, Uber Eats back then. But that was like the low priority of

Sara Bratt 43:24

it was a low priority. Yes. And honestly, I don't know. Because our kids were such an extreme situation. I don't know if it would have to be a specialized person that I would trust to kind of sit with them be with them. Just to give Mike and I break. That's the difficult part because my mom would come over. Because at one point, I broke my foot because I was carrying Caroline down the stairs and she was starting to fit. And Mr. stair broke my foot. And Caroline looked at me and said, You make me eggs now. So not she was going to be a serial killer for sure. Um, now she's my easiest kid.

Jennifer Malcolm 44:05

But I need to go the hospital

Sara Bratt 44:07

but right, like no, I'm not making you eggs you psycho. Oh, well, I remember I had to go to the orthopedist for my foot. So my mom came over and sat with the kids and she calls me Well, I don't want to I don't want to alarm you but Charlotte almost started a fire. She threw a lamp at me while it was plugged in. And there was a little some flames coming out of the outlet. I'm like, great. Yeah, that sounds about right. Yeah.

Jennifer Malcolm 44:32

Like that's like a normal day mom. Right.

Sara Bratt 44:35

Right. Exactly. Why

Jennifer Malcolm 44:36

This is my every day. Yeah. Yes. It's like mothering, you know, times four for you like yeah,

Sara Bratt 44:42

it was it was super intense. It was like being thrown in the deep end. Not knowing how to swim.

Jennifer Malcolm 44:47

No swimming. Yeah,

Sara Bratt 44:49

nothing, nothing. Wow. But we all survived. So I do think with the church, though there is a big push. You know, the James one. I think it's 127 says You know, part of being a Christian is caring for the orphan and the widow. So there's there's big pushes in the church of like wanting people to adopt, which is great, I think, I think that that's really a good message. However, then you have people who are going into this kind of with the wrong intentions short with this kind of savior complex, right. And then when it gets really hard, and you know, God's not coming in to like, save the day and make it easy, and the church doesn't know what to do to support you, then you're letting people you jumped ship, you know, and that's a lot of what these, these disruptions are from, wow. And another thing that, you know, the church pushes, there's this orphan Sunday in November. Now, I used to be super involved in orphan Sunday, I was like, you know, trying to get it in my church talking about it. But I've done some more readings since then, and more learning and educating myself. And the numbers that we're putting out to the church, whether it's like 140 7 million orphans around the world, what I've learned is that that's inaccurate. So what we would consider orphans or kids with zero parents that are still living, right, a lot of these countries, they consider orphans if they're a single parent. So if one parent leaves or one parent dies, it's really hard to be a single parent and a lot of these countries because they don't, you're not set up for that. You're not like you can drop your kid off at daycare. Right? Right, right. So that's what happened with all my girls, they their mothers are still living, what our fathers had left, and left the moms in a bad situation where they couldn't afford to take care of their children, or they're forced into that situation. So I think what the church needs to do is partner up with organizations that are in country already in all these countries, there are already people on the ground in the country doing the work of family preservation. So instead of, you know, white, mostly white Americans coming in to save the day, to save the children from destitute, destitute lives. We need to be supporting organizations on the ground to make it so these moms can keep their children giving them micro loans to start a small business coming in

Jennifer Malcolm 47:26

And keeping that family unit together. Right. A lot of these moms don't want to give up their children.

Sara Bratt 47:32

Absolutely, yes. So debate, I mean, your mom, you know, you, there's nothing in the world more important than your child. That's like being put in that situation where you're that desperate, you're in that desperate situation that you have to place your child for adoption. That's horrifying, it is horrifying.

Jennifer Malcolm 47:51

And all sorts of reasons for it. Right? You know, there's all sorts of reasons. And so there, there may be a time and a place where that is the best for the child where the child, you know,

Sara Bratt 48:06

you're the mother and for the mother. Yeah.

Jennifer Malcolm 48:09

I'm sure that that percentage compared to if the mom had the right resources, right, for parents and Father, father, mother, to have the right resources would have the financial means would have support would have that community aspect where that would be there. So maybe after this, you can send some of the reputable places that you know of that we can also share with the audience. And just educate so if you know her, this is just about gentle learning, compassionate learning, coming from a place of understanding and, and there may be things that I that I may not understand about your choices, or you may not understand about my choices, but it's about the compassionate listening and the non judgmental, we're all fast to judge. But we have to do something with that judgment, whether it's a bad judgment, and we say, you know what, okay, I can't help necessarily my judgment, but I'm gonna start training my mind. Right, think differently, and act differently and speak differently. And in that will go a long way in the world today and those pieces of again, you know, I grew up in the church, and that'll be a whole nother podcast of, of my church experience. But the church has so many good intentions and absolutely coming out of the gates but often don't have the infrastructure or long term solution to support families, and make that a really healthy reality for family. So I get that.

Sara Bratt 49:36

I'm gonna think like before, before George Floyd was more murdered right before that. There was a family that was apparently a famous YouTube family. I never heard of them, but I also don't really like spend time on YouTube. Why not? Yeah, I got all this free time on my hands to just like, hang out on YouTube. But apparently they were like a family that kind of put their whole life out there and She would do like cleaning tips. And I don't know, cook. I don't know what she did. But anyway, I know they talked about their youngest son was adopted special needs adopted from China. And she apparently had been a nurse in the past. I don't know if she still was a nurse. But anyway, that's why they pursued especially it's Chinese adoption. Okay, so apparently, they have him for a couple years, and then just recently disrupted his adoption. So they were being just really attacked by the public that had always kind of followed their videos because she essentially like, they were monetized videos. And people felt like she was exploiting him in order to get money for these videos. And so a lot of people reaching out to me just for my opinion on it. And I was like, you know, I'm gathering information on the story. And my plan was to kind of make a video on Facebook about it, or just like my thoughts on it. But then the whole George Floyd thing happened. But I just think like, I know, I'm friends with families that have had to disrupt adoptions. And obviously, I'm in a position and many friends of mine are in a position of raising children from disrupted adoptions, right. And I just think we need to give each other grace, we just need to understand that we never know, their journey, we never will never know the full extent of what was going on in that household. You know, what, why they made the choices they made, and it's really none of our business. And yet, I think as Americans, we're in this culture where we think, oh, you told me this about your life, then you I deserve to know everything else. Absolutely. And it's real easy to jump to judgment and be like, well, then why did you adopt this kid if you weren't willing to do whatever it took to? Well, we don't know the whole story, right. And I know, like for Celia, that really traumatized her, and it was terrible. But thank God, she's not with that family anymore. Right? So thank God that she is with us, and that she will continue to live her life in a loving supportive family,

Jennifer Malcolm 52:10

versus one where you're being pitted against biological children. A mom doesn't want you there. Right? And who does, but is now dealing with all of the emotionality of that family unit. So,

Sara Bratt 52:23

yeah. So I just think we need to as a society realize that we were never going to know the whole story. And all we need to do as women is to like, support one another, and be like, I'm sure that was really hard. And I'm really sorry that you're walking through that journey right now. What can I do? What can we do to help you?

Jennifer Malcolm 52:41

And that is the heart of this podcast. And this movement is, I am not in your shoes. And who am I to say this is how you should do it. I've had friends who have had abortions, who have gone through divorces who have had affairs, who have gone through life things and all I show is love, like love, they've people feel judgment all over the place, people shame all over the place, we put it on ourselves. And for that human compassion, of love, and understanding and showing up empathy. And years ago, I put a tattoo in Hebrew on my foot, and it says unconditional love. And for me, that was a constant reminder that I want my feet and my essence to be a foundation of unconditional love. And first for myself if I can walk in unforgiveness, unforgiveness toward myself, and unconditional love toward myself, that I can allow it to flow to others. And I think that piece of work quick to say, Well, I knew this about you. You said like I knew this about you. So why did you do X, Y or Z? And we're not in people's hearts, mind emotions. We're not in their homes. We don't know what happens when the doors close when we leave. And empathy can go a long way. So I think you said it really well. Definitely. What's a piece of advice that you would give to families who are considering disrupted adoption?

Sara Bratt 54:11

So I definitely would not do a disruptive adoption if you've never adopted before. Oh, interesting. Because it's like,

Jennifer Malcolm 54:20

don't do what you did.

Sara Bratt 54:21

Yeah, don't do it. I did. Yeah. Do as I say not as I do. Unless you know, you have a background in working with troubled youth or you have a background and developmental psych. You definitely need to form a team because it takes a village for any kid, especially a kid that's come from trauma. You need to have a psychiatrist or therapist, you know, in Ohio, you guys have to have amazing resources. There's something called the posted options subsidy. I don't know it's, it's called pass.

Jennifer Malcolm 54:54

Well. Yeah, we'll get them out as well.

Sara Bratt 54:57

Sure. So that provides 10 thousand dollars per child per year for therapeutic services that aren't otherwise covered under your insurance, as with a lot of these services are so specialized that

insurance companies haven't quite caught up yet with mental health service systems. So I would definitely, if you're in Ohio, look into that, if you're in another state in the United States, I would Google post adoption support, and then your state and see what there is out there. We cannot do it by yourself, you cannot do it alone, you're going to need helpers in your village to help you. And if you're looking for a disrupted adoption, I suggest starting, there's a reputable agency out there. I think they're based in Utah. And if you go on Facebook and search, Second Chance adoptions, it is just a part of their business that they do through their adoption agencies. So they charge the first adoptive family a fee and the new adoptive family fee. They vet everybody say you have lawyers involved, make sure everybody's following the rules following the laws. Again, it's not ideal for the child involved. But if there needs to be another placement, you need to go through an agency, you need to have an attorney involved. You need to do everything on the up and up so that you're completely covered legally, when it comes to the paperwork and the documentation.

Jennifer Malcolm 56:30

Now, how did you feel? Because I know that you guys went from the Cleveland, Ohio area to Philadelphia to Virginia, how was that transition with your community? Because you're saying it takes a village. So you are leaving your family? I think your mom is still in Ohio. So how did that transition go for you guys, as you move from state to state,

Sara Bratt 56:53

it was really difficult moving to Philly. The first time I ever my husband and I had ever really been living out of Ohio without a family support system. So that was tricky. We were lucky to find a good church for a little while. And I was lucky to get involved in a Facebook group that was a regional Philly area adoptive moms group. So that was a huge blessing. That's where I met Kristine, who's on your team. And so I got connected with a lot of really great friends through that. I'm at the point in my life where I don't have time to be us with people. So I found the best friends for me personally are other adoptive parents.

Jennifer Malcolm 57:38

Awesome. Because they already get that. Yeah, real life. Right? Right. Yes, yes, they

Sara Bratt 57:42

get the hard stuff. They're not going to judge you when you're like, Hey, I know we were going to come over, but so and so just pee themselves. And you know, they're not going to judge you and something crazy. Right. And so I actually had an amazing group of friends and Philly, that was a huge support group. But I will say the mental health services were terrible. There's just wasn't any access to anything. Okay, that was good. I think if we lived in Philly, it would have been better, but we were like an hour and a half north of it. So we're pretty rural. You're, um, and then in Virginia, we've met some great friends. Um, but and I would say the mental health is definitely better here in Virginia. What we don't have is, we've never ever found this past grant, something like that, with the money that support that. Right. Right. Right. Yeah. Well, that would be really, we didn't realize how good we had it in Ohio, as far as back, right. I know. I know. Trust me, every time there's a job transition. I'm always like to find anything in Ohio.

Jennifer Malcolm 58:46

You're gonna think you're on the lam like you're going you know, just run out here.

Sara Bratt 58:50

Well, there's so many military here where we live because we're close to Quantico. And so people just assume we're a military. We're like, oh, we're from Ohio. But we moved here from Philly. They're like, Oh, you're military? And I'm like, No, no, we're not like this crazy.

Jennifer Malcolm 59:02

Crazy word is a hot mess. And that I and for those of listening. Sara's like hashtag for years has been hot mess. Yo, like, I think he had a blog about it. You

Sara Bratt 59:13

are blessed hot mess.

Jennifer Malcolm 59:14

Yeah. When I met Chad, he was just like, you are a hot mess. He always got my hot train. Yeah, I don't like a hot mess. And he's so like, methodical and organized. And linear thinking, ative, and entrepreneur and my mind's all over and squirrel brain and I have seventeen things out at once. And he's just like, You are such a hot mess every time he called me and I thought of you. So, but I do want to share a little bit of a fun story between you and I have some zip lining that you and if

Sara Bratt 59:49

you see this bruise on my arm right here. It's so reminiscent of our time together at the vine. This happened when trying we were spent an hour trying to catch these three feral cats that I was fostering that I ended up having to get rabies shots because of Oh Lord, again, like

Jennifer Malcolm 1:00:07

there's never a dull moment. So anyone in Sarah's life it is never a dull dull moment in Sarah's life. So I went to Philadelphia and Christine, on my team and Sarah, we decided that we're going to do some team bonding and go zip lining, you want to do want to share a little bit of those experiences?

Sara Bratt 1:00:24

Well, let's just start with this. You and Christine are in better physical shape than I am. And at that time, especially, because I had, I think I was only six months out from like, major abdominal surgery that like I almost died from it was really intense. And so I have basically been on a couch for six weeks. And so I had no muscle mass whatsoever. Like everything had deteriorated. No core strength, nothing but I was like yes, zipline a great idea. Because I forget how old I am. I forget that I'm like in my late 30s so

Jennifer Malcolm 1:00:56

for clarity was deplaning and high ropes course. So it was

Sara Bratt 1:01:00

like, that's where we got in trouble is the high ropes necessarily the free falling? it Yeah, it was the the other stuff. So you guys were doing really good at it. But like they I remember right away knowing it was a problem because they like strapped me in. And I went up to like the first thing and I was I knew that the strap was like put on wrong. And my lady business was like, not comfortable whatsoever. And I remember telling you that I was like going to injure my vagina like this just was not gonna end well. This was not going to be a good thing. Oh, we survived. As we like walked around, like walked across you and Christine. We're doing really well. But I was in the front.

Jennifer Malcolm 1:01:40

I think I think each one I think there was three major things and we voted like each of us would do and I think they got progressively harder. Yes. And we each of us were supposed to be the leader on on one of those. One of those I think you might get stuck with the hardest

Sara Bratt 1:01:56

leading No, I did the first one which was supposed to be the hardest because you guys went on to the harder ones. And I was like peace I'm not doing that. Like I'm scarred for life already. So I'm one of the ropes things I fell and I had to I caught myself with my like armpits and ended up bruising my arm up really bad. And then, at one point, I had a full on panic attack because I was like,

Jennifer Malcolm 1:02:21

I remember

Sara Bratt 1:02:22

I was like crying and you can't just like get down because you're like on this thing and that you have to finish it like you're screwed. If so one of the workers was like trying to talk me down and call me down and you guys are like you're doing great. And there were like, two kids behind our group that were like Jesus. Are you stupid old people? Like why do you think that you can do these things? You can do things NEEMO you think you can?

Jennifer Malcolm 1:02:47

It was one of the best afternoons that girlfriends out? just laughing and I'm afraid of heights. So I struggle with some of it. Ah, Christine was a rock star. I think she was like part monkey going through everything and like swinging from the trees type scenario. Yeah, but I just remember laughing so hard. And your your candor, your your intonations, your tears, you're going to break my vagina on this. Whereas what Yeah,

Sara Bratt 1:03:17

yeah. permanent damage. But yeah.

Jennifer Malcolm 1:03:23

So I also have a note here that you are very passionate. And I wanted to close with this about social social justice. I'm active in many groups and wanted you to kind of share some of those that you are passionate about and involved in.

Sara Bratt 1:03:40

So of course, you know, when I adopted my children, I was so naive about race issues. And the past 10 years have been a major learning journey for me. I've seen a lot I've experienced a lot through their eyes. And I've just I've been in a posture of sitting back listening and learning for 10 years, right. And now, it's just such an amazing time in our society where there's so much information and so many resources out there. So many great black voices are talking to us and teaching us and telling us things that we need to be learning. And there's so many great books out there that we can educate ourselves on. I'm reading one right now called white fragility. That's really, really good. And that is written by a white person for white people. Wow. So that one is just a neat, interesting perspective about like, why is it so hard for us as white people to look introspectively and in our life experience, and see how our experience is so different than other people's experience? Why are we so defensive,

Jennifer Malcolm 1:04:53

egocentric?

Sara Bratt 1:04:54

Yes, totally, totally. And why are we not willing to listen to other voices and listen Other people's perspectives and their experiences and be willing to learn from that. And then I'm also something that it's just kind of been a God thing. God laid on my heart, my husband's heart simultaneously. But we didn't know that we were kind of like on our own personal journey separately about the LGBTQ community. And so both of us were kind of like separately doing some research online and reading and really praying about it. And then at one point, I brought it up to him. And he was like, that's really weird, because I've been feeling the same pole to really learn about this. Now, I knew at that time, we had nobody in our lives. That was gay, we didn't know anybody. Um, it was either right before or right after we adopted the twins, the kids. And, um, so we just we, we learned and we became allies, and we learn how to get involved. I have been involved with a group called free mom hugs, where we go to different pride events. And we have shirts to say free mom hugs, and we hug people love it. And it is the most spiritual experience I've ever had in my life. I feel closer to Jesus doing that, than I do doing anything else. Wow. I feel like it's such a, I just feel so blessed to be able to do that. Because I hug these people. And I tell them, I love you. Right? Because that's what a mom would say, right? I love you, you are enough, you are perfect. You are made perfectly. And these. I mean, you have kids up to 40 year old men sobbing in your arms, saying, I my mom hasn't talked to me for years, my parents have disowned me. My parents said accept me, but don't accept my lifestyle choices. There's always it's a conditional, always not unconditional. So it's just it's been one of the greatest joys of my life to be able to do that. And it's interesting looking back on it. Because now you know, 10 years later, I can see why God put this on my heart. There's been so many experiences in my life. People that are best friends of ours, things that have happened, we have a best friend, couple, the husband and wife are going through a divorce because he is gay. He grew up in a very extreme, fundamental Baptist Church, right. And he knew he would go to hell. That's what he was always told. And he thought he could pray it away. And at 40 years old, kind of just about four years old can realize this isn't going away, like. So it's been neat, kind of like we were already in advocacy work. And so he knew Mike and I were safe, he knew that we were always going to love him no matter what. So it's just been such a cool thing to look back and be like, okay, God, I see. I see why you were late. I'm glad I listened. You know,

Jennifer Malcolm 1:08:07

I love it. No. And that, again, is the essence of this podcast, this movement is to love is to share love, to not judge to you. And it's not about giving up beliefs. It's not about a Unitarian society, or we often believe it's just being so kind and accepting of other people's beliefs, their choices. And, you know, I talked about this on another podcast where, you know, if your choices harm me or your choices, or my children or the safety issue, obviously, those boundaries are healthy and needed. Beyond that, just there is not there's so much judgment. You and I have been in in the church of do's and don'ts. You know, I've been in my entire life. Yes. I'm passionate about my faith. I'm passionate about my walk. I'm not passionate about the judgment. The you have to do this or the lack of understanding the lack of compassion, the lack of how Jesus moved and talked and loved and spoke and just accepted and that he's of. We need more of that. So I might get a mom. Mom love. I'll go hug a mom shirt.

Sara Bratt 1:09:23

Yeah, free mom hugs man. Each state has their own regional group now. So you can go on Facebook and get involved with that. The girl the woman who is in charge kind of started the movement. Her name is Sarah Cunningham. She is from Oklahoma City. And her son came out as gay and she was very involved in the church and just really kind of battled what that means for her what that means for her faith and her son, and came to the conclusion of I love my son and God doesn't make mistakes. And this isn't a choice that my son is making and I love him. I'm going to do whatever I can to learn And support him. So she started doing this on her own. And it's just exploded. And now, Jamie Lee Curtis is involved and she's bought the movie rights and she's going to be making a movie about this is going to be a documentary coming out about it.

Jennifer Malcolm 1:10:15

And I will make sure I know that Sara touch on a lot of different resources about the adoption issues about learning and education, about race, about the movement in the LBGT queue way as well. So we'll make sure that we make all those resources available as well. And do you have any other final thoughts before we wrap this up?

Sara Bratt 1:10:39

No, I'm just I'm proud of you. And I'm so happy that you're doing this and I'm just thrilled that we got the opportunity to virtually hang

Jennifer Malcolm 1:10:48

it's only a minute ago especially during COVID separation time, so it

Sara Bratt 1:10:52

wasn't 11am I would have had an amoreto sour

Jennifer Malcolm 1:10:55

and that that would be always welcome. So with you. You always say I'm gonna get my old lady.

Sara Bratt 1:11:02

Yeah, sour so

Jennifer Malcolm 1:11:04

well, I want to say thanks for coming. Thanks to her the listeners for being here today. And this is Jennasis Speaks where every woman has a story and every story matters. We are very passionate about this and we want to spread the love and the joy and and the acceptance for all women all walks of life, and we can't wait to touch base with you next time. Thanks. Subscribe to the Jennasis Movement to empower women's voices and reclaim the power over your own narrative.