



## Q & A with Kristen Richburg author of

### *Disrupting Grace*

#### *A Story of Relinquishment and Healing*

**Q. How was your marriage impacted by parenting an unattached child?**

A. I believe the reason why our marriage survived through the years of having Emma was due to the fact that my husband at the time and I were united in understanding Emma's issues, and we were on the same page regarding our efforts. Unfortunately, in many cases, because children with Reactive Attachment Disorder are so good at triangulation (pitting one parent against the other, in a lot cases, using the father to hurt the mother), marriages can be extremely vulnerable if both parents do not intentionally make the effort to be "single-minded" about the realities of children with RAD. While my husband did not see and experience a lot of Emma's behaviors directly, he was believing of my experience and supportive of my efforts.

I do believe the stress took its toll though on our marriage. There was an elevated level of exhaustion and stress present at all times. Because so much of our focus was directed toward helping Emma, we neglected to give attention to some of the relational needs we had. My then-husband and I value being parents. Having so much focus on the kids worked for a period of time for us. When the focus of that significantly diminished and much of that stress was gone, the light shone on the marriage highlighting the fact that aside from our roles as parents, he and I value different things. Relinquishment of Emma happened over two years ago, and I am sorry to say that my husband during that time has since left our family. I do not believe that having Emma contributed to the loss of my marriage, but rather perhaps prolonged an otherwise inevitable end.

**Q. What advice would you give to couples considering adoption?**

A. There are many resources available to help prepare you for considering adoption, or to educate yourself on the adoption process - what to expect, questions to consider, possible challenges. I'd recommend attending an informational meeting at your local adoption agency. A good agency will have a number of resources to refer you to. A book I would also recommend is *The*

*Whole Life Adoption Book*, by Jayne E. Schooler. In her book, Jayne covers a wide range of issues relating to adopting a child beginning with questions to consider before you adopt and tips to help you succeed as an adoptive parent. Also, take some time to connect up with other families who have adopted children. These people are living, present examples of what an adoption can look like, and each adoption story is unique.

**Q. What words do you have for parents who are living in similar circumstance?**

A. You are not alone. Parenting a child with special needs or severe issues of any kind can feel lonely and isolating. Do your best to stay connected with your outside world and by all means seek support. If you haven't already, find someone who can be an advocate for your child, and for your needs as well. Find a therapist, mentor, pastor, or good friend who can be your back up on your toughest days. Make sure you plan respite time for yourself or for you and your spouse to recharge. Above all, take good care of yourself. Your child's success depends largely on your own ability to help yourself be in the best state of emotional health as possible. The healthier we are as individuals, the better parents we will be able to be - more naturally, and with less effort.

**Q. What would you do differently in parenting your daughter?**

A. When we first relinquished Emma, I felt regretful that we had pushed her so hard to attach. We did so much intense work with her initially, she could only respond to our overwhelming efforts by pushing us away. At the same time, we didn't know what she'd been through and what she was capable of, and if we hadn't put forth the effort, I would have always questioned whether or not we did the right thing or did enough.

I would have been more forgiving of myself. I don't think it benefited anyone for me to be so hard on myself. Parenting a child with special needs requires an immense amount of energy, work, and drive. There isn't any way to do it perfectly, and certainly not day after day. I would have taken better care of my own needs - it was easy for me to become overwhelmed with and consumed by Emma's needs, allowing her to be an unhealthy focus, and therefore a drain on all of us. This is the challenge of almost any parent raising a child with special needs. It took me time to realize that taking care of me, meant taking care of her and everyone else.

**Q. How has your story impacted you being an adoptee yourself?**

A. I'm grateful. I'm grateful for the gift of adoption - I appreciate the gift more now than ever.

**Q. Do you still believe in adoption?**

A. Yes. As having been on the receiving end of adoption, how could I not? The life I have today is in part due to someone caring enough to adopt me into their family. Adoption is a gift. There are unique challenges and issues that adoptive families will inevitably face, but it can succeed, and it can be good. My own story as an adopted child is testament to that.

My story as an adoptive parent is also testament to the fact that in some cases, there are circumstances by which disrupting an adoption really is in the best interest of protecting and encouraging everyone's health. I don't believe anyone adopts with the intention to disrupt. I know we certainly didn't. Families who find themselves in situations like ours can feel ultimately like their adoption was a failure. Many of the parents who turn to disruption find themselves seeking that as a last resort after much heartache and struggle. I view our adoption story, not as a failure, but as a purposeful step in the process for all of us, Emma included, towards healing.

***Kristen Richburg is available for interviews by contacting Rhonda Funk at Bring It On! Communications.***

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Suggested interview questions for Kristen Richburg author of  
*Disrupting Grace*  
*A Story of Relinquishment and Healing*

1. How was your marriage impacted by parenting an unattached child?
2. What advice would you give to couples considering adoption?
3. What words do you have for parents who are living in similar circumstance?
4. What would you do differently in parenting your daughter?
5. How has your story impacted you being an adoptee yourself?
6. Do you still believe in adoption?

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