**EP-12-Master**

**Amy:** [00:00:00] early on, I was like, I want to adopt, or I'd love to foster do something like that. So it's always been on my heart so fast forward than five years, we were. You know, figuring out how we wanted to move forward. And I, at first I felt like you had to do a, to adopt, you had to find out you were in fertile and that is typically the path a lot of,

[00:00:48] families take.

[00:00:49] And,

[00:00:50] but I, you know, I was praying and I just felt like, why does that have to be the standard? And so we ended up going forward with both tracks. We stopped. Try not trying or whatever.

[00:01:04] and then we, we decided to ask a few friends about adoption and we went the private adoption first. We're also licensed foster care parents now, but we started with private adoption

[00:01:57] my name's Amy and I live in Kansas and we have two boys. They are, um, One's 18 months right now as of yesterday. And then other one will be 18 months and two weeks. So they're two weeks apart in age and we adopt, so they call us, uh, there's a term for this, which is so crazy.

[00:02:21] It's called virtual twins and. And so apparently I'm not the only one, there's like a Facebook group of like hundreds of us that have ironically virtual twins. And so, um, other people who have either biological kids or adopted kids and then take in a foster kid, um, or adopt another kid and, um, ended up having two kids at the same age.

[00:02:44] And so that was our situation was we adopted our son. Barrett, we call him bear for short. And then we foster our son. I can't say his name since he's still in foster care, but I'll call him Bubba for short, for, to, for these purposes. So bear Bubba, you know, they're two, yeah. Two weeks apart in 18 months and age and then yep.

[00:03:06] I'm pregnant. And so I'm 22 weeks a lot. And so we'll have another in the bunch, another boy in the bunch,

[00:03:14] **SARAH:** [00:03:14] Another boy. Oh

[00:03:15] **Amy:** [00:03:15] Yeah. Yeah. So three voice

[00:03:17] **SARAH:** [00:03:17] So that's incredible. And so your, um, the, the boys will be how old, when this baby's born.

[00:03:24] **Amy:** [00:03:24] 21 months.

[00:03:27] **SARAH:** [00:03:27] That I think that's what my mom, my son was 22 months when I had my daughter. It's it's um, I mean, I, you know, you're kind of living it anyway with, with, with essential twins, but it's just like, Whoa.

[00:03:39] I, when I, when we did our family planning, I probably should have like, taken into consideration that having a three year old versus a two year old with a newborn is much more manageable.

[00:03:50] **Amy:** [00:03:50] Yeah. Yeah.

[00:03:52] **SARAH:** [00:03:52] You can leave them in the other room and

[00:03:54] **Amy:** [00:03:54] yeah, especially early on it is, it is helpful having a bigger age gap, I think, early on, but we always wanted kids close in age. And so it does work out for us cause I always wanted them to be close in age so they could grow up together and be more friends. It does. It leaves us the ideal unit.

[00:04:11] It doesn't always play out that way, but

[00:04:13] **SARAH:** [00:04:13] Yeah, then that, that was literally the only thought we had when we were just like, let's just, we want them all really close in age and we want you to know it. But, but, um, it's like those little things you're like, Oh, I didn't take that into consideration.

[00:04:27] **Amy:** [00:04:27] it would be nice if you were out of diapers.

[00:04:28] **SARAH:** [00:04:28] like, exactly, exactly. So w I guess start by telling me a little bit about your journey to adopt your first son bear and, and how that, like how you guys came to that decision as a family.

[00:04:42] **Amy:** [00:04:42] Yeah, well, we are kind of unique in that. We also knew we always wanted to adopt. I had always had a heart, every member, my husband, like our first year of marriage, like we were. Casually talking about kids, kids weren't even on the picture yet. We got married very young. And so we wanted to wait, um, a good five years before we even put kids on the horizon.

[00:05:03] But even early on, I was like, I want to adopt, or I'd love to foster do something like that. So it's always been on my heart so fast forward than five years, we were. You know, figuring out how we wanted to move forward. And I, at first I felt like you had to do a, to adopt, you had to find out you were in fertile

[00:05:22] **SARAH:** [00:05:22] Right, right.

[00:05:24] **Amy:** [00:05:24] that is typically the path a lot of, uh, families take.

[00:05:28] And, um, but I, you know, I was praying and I just felt like, why does that have to be the standard? And so we ended up going forward with both tracks. We stopped. Try not trying or whatever. Um, and then we, we decided to ask a few friends about adoption and we went the private adoption first. We're also licensed foster care parents now, but we started with private adoption.

[00:05:55] And so we just reached out to some agencies and try to figure out what agency we wanted to be a part of. And. Go and connect with. And, um, eventually we found one that we loved and, um, we're on their waiting list. And so we kind of went both tracks and

[00:06:14] **SARAH:** [00:06:14] And now, so I'm just going to interrupt you with a question. So when you were choosing an adoption agency, like a, I guess, like, how did you like, uh, approach that research and how did you pick one? That was a great fit for your family.

[00:06:26] **Amy:** [00:06:26] Yeah. So we, um, in our town, we live in a small town in Kansas while it's small. It's, uh, I mean, it's Manhattan, Kansas. I don't know if you've ever heard of K state university, but that's where, where we live. And, um, and so it's a smaller town in Kansas and, uh, there's only, there's really actually not an adoption agency in our town.

[00:06:47] There's um, and family planning, um, Resource center. And so they do facilitate some adoptions, but they're not an actual an adoption agency. So we had to kind of do some broader research for steady is nearby and like Topeka and Kansas city. Um, and so we just, uh, we did some Googling. We did a lot of friend asking, honestly, just word of mouth was a big one.

[00:07:11] Um, And we finally had heard from a friend about this one, our adoption agency in Kansas city, they were smaller, which we liked. And so there was less, um, People that we would, it would felt more personal because it was smaller. And, um, and the other thing we looked for was how many adoptions they do a year and how many were actually on their active waiting list.

[00:07:35] And so the ones, some of the ones that we had talked to had massive. Active waiting list. So many families that were looking to adopt. Um, and even though they did maybe more adoptions a year, the ratio was, um, just, it would've put you, it could have put you in getting adopted quickly, but it also could have put you waiting for years before you got a call or a match.

[00:07:59] And so we liked this agency cause it was small. They did. Didn't do a ton, but they also didn't have a ton on their active waiting list. So, um, so the ratio is a lot better of like chances of getting called. And then we just like the personal touch of just being a smaller company and having a better connection with a specific social worker that we would work with throughout the entire process.

[00:08:21] Um, and then they, we just really enjoyed how they. Um, handled their birth moms. Like we felt like they were very supportive for birth moms from the beginning when they got met the birth moms too, even after they gave birth, they did a lot of counseling sessions and coaching, um, and prepping before. Yeah.

[00:08:42] The birth mom. And so we really liked how they handled that and they, it seemed like they coached birth moms a lot on. What they were going to experience of, of giving up your child and, and, and, and choosing an adoption plan. You know, versus, you know, it's not giving up, it's choosing an adoption plan.

[00:09:02] There's a choice that they have and it just really empowered them. But then also work them through the grief that they were preparing them for the grief that they would have no matter what, no matter what their situation is and why they're making this plan, if there's still gonna be grief involved. And we felt like they did a really good job supporting them before and after the birth of what that looked like.

[00:09:23] And so we. And it showed in their matches. Their matches were very successful. They had very few matches that fell through. Um, and I think that's due to their coaching and counseling of the birth moms on their side. And

[00:09:38] **SARAH:** [00:09:38] when you say fell through like that, would that be on the birth mom's side or on the family side?

[00:09:44] **Amy:** [00:09:44] typically on the birth mom's side, um, it's the birth mom picked a family. There's a match, the. And then, um, sometime in either the situation of giving birth or after birth mom decides not to go through with yeah. Not to go through with the adoption. And so, um, their successes were very high. I think they only had one failed match, which is almost a precedent, honestly.

[00:10:12] **SARAH:** [00:10:12] That's incredible.

[00:10:13] **Amy:** [00:10:13] Yeah. And so we were like, okay, they have a lot of successes that was really encouraging for us. Not that, you know, we couldn't handle disappointment, but it's obviously something that you don't want to want to get experience. Yeah. And so we were really, um, really enjoyed them.

[00:10:28] **SARAH:** [00:10:28] now. When you were making, I'm curious, excuse my ignorance on language or terminology, but, um, I'm wondering if, as you were exploring adoption agencies, if. Like, uh, maybe open or close, like were, was like, is it different depending on the birth mom? Like when I say open and close, like your birth mom will, like your child can look up who their birth mom is and can get in touch or like summer.

[00:10:56] What is the terminology?

[00:10:58] **Amy:** [00:10:58] yeah. Open adoption and close to adoption are the terms. And, um, yeah, most, especially if you go through private adoption, like we did, um, They highly encourage open adoption. It's extremely healthy, even if it's, you know, and they, they kind of have terms also like semi-open, you know, they like, you may not see them in person all the time, uh, depending on distance and ability and health of the.

[00:11:25] Birth parents, um, and safety levels, you know, things like that, you know, come into play as well. But in general, they always encourage an open adoption of some sort. So, uh, depending on the, uh, the adoptive families level of comfort, um, you can either exchange phone numbers to setting up a private email account that.

[00:11:48] Has no link to like we set up a Logan and Amy family at Gmail. So didn't use our last names and, um, to initially get in contact with the birth mother that we were matched with and start a conversation that way. And once we got to know her and felt more comfortable and eventually of course met her in person, we exchanged phone numbers and now we text each other and.

[00:12:12] We're good friends. And so, um, but it depends on, yeah, the totally depends on the birth mom, but you can, most people should expect, I think going into a private adoption to have a relationship with the birth mom of some sort and. Oftentimes it is like to see them at least once a year in person. And sometimes it depends on the birth months, again, level of, you know, level of comfort and desire, but they highly encourage it.

[00:12:40] If you can manage it just, it's healthy for the kids. It's healthy for the birth parents as they grieve. And so it's, it's definitely something you want to go in expecting, or have open in your heart to do as you move into that.

[00:12:56] **SARAH:** [00:12:56] Okay. So you find an agency and you, I guess, like, walk me through the process of like finding your agency and then matching with, with your, um, birth mom.

[00:13:10] **Amy:** [00:13:10] Yeah, so I can't speak for each, uh, Each state, I know handles adoptions and, uh, differently. And so how Kansas operates is even different than how Missouri operates, which we were in Kansas city. So our adoption could have been either Missouri side or Kansas side. So we had to kind of prepare ourselves for whichever side.

[00:13:31] We ended up on ended up being Kansas side for us, but our agency respects both, uh, Rules, I guess. And so when you get matched, um, that can be at any time, our agency waits until the third trimester to do the matching. Uh, just so that way mom is further along. She's they've done more counseling. She's more sure some agencies don't do that.

[00:13:56] Um, and so if they don't do that, you might have a lot of, you might have a full eight months to. To know that you're getting potentially getting a baby. Um, for us though, a mom came in and was very far along. And so we only had three weeks before baby was born before bear was born. And so we got a call for the match and what our agency does.

[00:14:19] And I think what most agencies do is that when we get a call saying, there's a mom, we get an act. We get a profile of that mom, any risks that may have been involved. Um, you know, if she did drugs while being pregnant, you know, yada yada, yada, we get it, like all of that, as well as like, if she knows she, we knew she was having a boy and things like that.

[00:14:41] Cause there's some families that go in really looking for a girl or they're really looking for a boy. And so that didn't matter to us, but, um, you, you look through that and then once you agree to that, like, yes, I, we consent. They will show then show you and probably. Two or three other families to that birth mom.

[00:15:00] And then that birth mom, then we'll pick between three or four other families.

[00:15:04] **SARAH:** [00:15:04] And you have like a full profile that you've set up that kind of tells the birth mom, the story of you and your partner.

[00:15:10] **Amy:** [00:15:10] Yep. Yep. So you put together a profile book, it's just a fancy Shutterfly or, you know, chat book or whatever. They typically, the agency has some specific or requirements of size and they will typically ours, at least coached us through it, of like things they wanted us to, to address because they want, my birth is one to just know that you're going to take care of their son.

[00:15:35] They're there. Their daughter or son and, and what you, what your family is like, they want to see if it's a fit, you know, and they can see their son and your family. And so you talk about in that profile book, you know, anything from just activities you do as a family together at, to hopes and dreams for you have for the child, um, too, Um, family.

[00:15:59] You talk about your extended family a little bit, obviously within, um, healthy boundaries and stuff, but yeah, you did, uh, you know, you get her share your life a little bit. And um, so they showed that to the birth mom. They showed that and then normally three other families, which is, I really love that they give these birth moms.

[00:16:21] Every agency gives these birth moms choices because oftentimes they're coming to them and have not had good choices in there. Past. And so I love how empowering it is for these women or parents. Sometimes parents, you know, sometimes there there's a couple involved, adapts stays involved, but, um, either way, like they're, you're powering them, they're giving them a choice, a healthy choice.

[00:16:45] And, um, and so they typically pick through that. And then once they pick that call, uh, call the family called us, for instance, in our situation and said we have a match. And so that's called a match and. From there you wait for however long you have, whether it's eight months or for us. So it was three weeks.

[00:17:05] I've heard of some people who have stork drops, which is mom gets birth in the hospital and they have one day, they have less than a day's notice. Um, so every situation could be different, but for us it was three weeks. And then, um, and they there's a lot of paperwork involved.

[00:17:24] **SARAH:** [00:17:24] how long did it take from when your profile was finished to getting that, that notice that you are going to have a baby in three weeks.

[00:17:33] **Amy:** [00:17:33] I think the entire process for us was a year and, and which is actually kind of fast from what we've heard from a lot of other friends who have gone down the adoption road through the private adoption road. It. Typically takes two to three years is kind of what we've heard. But for some reason we just got lucky or God's timing or whatever.

[00:17:55] We, we, it was very unexpected. We were got the call after a year. We were like, what really awesome.

[00:18:05] **SARAH:** [00:18:05] incredible. Yeah.

[00:18:06] **Amy:** [00:18:06] So we were very excited and, um, Yeah, there's always, sometimes finances involved. Private adoption is very expensive. Um, and so for us, we, uh, we had to raise money and so we had three weeks to raise the large sum of money, um, and that time, and, but luckily family and friends and our community supported us beyond what we could've fathom and the money was raised.

[00:18:33] And, um,

[00:18:34] **SARAH:** [00:18:34] Oh, that's incredible.

[00:18:36] **Amy:** [00:18:36] yeah.

[00:18:37] **SARAH:** [00:18:37] are private adoption so expense? Like, what are the costs that you, is it like part of the medical expenses or like, yeah, just give me an idea of, of where these cops are coming from.

[00:18:49] **Amy:** [00:18:49] Big one is lawyers. You have to pay lawyers too. You have to pay for your lawyer. Cause there's a lawyer who's representing your family and the adoption. And then you have to pay for the birth mom because the birth mom and birth dad will have a lawyer.

[00:19:05] Typically their own lawyer or a one lawyer will represent both. If the dad is known or not known sometimes. Um, but. Yeah. And so they, they will deal with all of the legal requirements, the site, the, uh, the signing of releasing their rights to the child. They will deal with, um, all the court costs and court fees that go into it.

[00:19:28] So that's what lawyers are doing. The social workers are the other big half of that chunk of money. Is that the social? You have a social worker who's. With your family representing again, your family and coaching you through the adoption process. And then you normally have a social worker who's on the first side, the biological family side, and helping that mom or those parents through that process.

[00:19:53] And that's a very time intensive, you know, coaching counseling, um, working with them as well. And so that's just a lot of hours that you're. Paying to support somebody, you know, the social worker's income. And so, um, so yeah, that's, that's where most of the money that, you know, some of it goes to your court fees and, uh, like you said, medical costs are a big one.

[00:20:16] If they are not under a Medicare, a lot of them are, and a lot of agencies should hopefully work with the mom to get them covered if they're not. Uh, so hopefully there's not a ton of medical fees. With yet, you know, birth there in any hospitalization there's there's of course going to be some fees that you, you will cover for the mom and then there's clothes and sometimes housing arrangements or gas cards, things that you're doing to support the birth mom now.

[00:20:42] So that way she is going to have the most healthy and, um, healthy baby for you and for, for the baby's sake. So then is you're providing yeah. Gas cards so they can get to work or, you know, Grocery cost so they can get a healthy diet going. And so depending on where they're at. And so there's a lot of that that goes into it.

[00:21:05] I, one of the things we loved about our specific agency was that they did work a lot with the birth parents on finding community support so that it wants. They gave birth. They weren't relying on us solely to be surviving. So they found ways to get the, either get them a job or set up a job for once.

[00:21:26] Baby was born after baby was born or they sought community help and got the bus passes, signed them up for medical, you know, insurance and all of that and worked with them on that. So there was less support from us that they were relying on.

[00:21:43] **SARAH:** [00:21:43] Right.

[00:21:44] **Amy:** [00:21:44] So that way it was longterm healthy situation. And so that was nice for us because then it made us less for us specifically, it made, um, less of a financial burden.

[00:21:54] And so it was a win win. And, and so, but yeah, but the biggest, most chunk of those men at the money always goes to lawyers and social workers.

[00:23:44] **SARAH:** [00:23:44] you, you get the news at three weeks that you're you're you have a match. So you have the next three weeks to essentially prepare your life, your house, your, your families raise the money and then you go to the house, like, I guess, like you just get word that she's in labor or I guess, and then yeah, walk me through that.

[00:24:06] **Amy:** [00:24:06] Yeah. You, at that point, it's a waiting game of. When she goes into labor and you get the call, some moms, they try to talk to the moms and birth, uh, the adoptive parents beforehand to kind of figure out a labor plan for what they want. Our adult or birth. Mom did not want us in. The labor room we had just met her, which so totally made sense.

[00:24:30] So sometimes parents are like, whatever I want them there. And, um, they've been, they've had months to form a relationship and so they have half more time for us. She wanted to obviously wait and she wanted to get into recovery. So we found out she was in labor. We're. Couple of hours from Kansas city. So we went to Kansas city immediately, and then we literally sat at a chapel while our, our son was born because we didn't know what else to do.

[00:24:58] And so, so it was very anticlimactic, honestly, but we waited. And when she got into recovery, we got to go in and meet, meet mom. We had actually not met mom in person yet, and then meet our son and. Uh, yeah, that was obviously the most amazing experience and we're all crying and it was, it was wonderful. And

[00:25:22] **SARAH:** [00:25:22] And so you're because I think about like a typical labor and delivery experience, like your mom is in the hospital for two or three days or whatever it is. Did you, did you, like, when does the handoff take place and like when did you go home with bear?

[00:25:40] **Amy:** [00:25:40] So that is up to every state. Our Kansas has a 24 hour policy from the time they give birth to the time they can sign a relinquish. Relinquish their rights and Missouri, I know it's 48 hours. And so our agency holds up to the 48 hours, which works out actually really nicely. Cause that's when moms are being discharged anyways.

[00:26:03] And once they relinquish their rights, the baby's not allowed to stay in their room, at least according to our hospital's standards, that was the case. And so, um, so we had to wait two days. So before she could sign any agreement, And

[00:26:18] **SARAH:** [00:26:18] God, that must've been the longest two days of your life.

[00:26:21] **Amy:** [00:26:21] absolutely because you just don't know you don't, you know, once they meet the baby, you know, sometimes their feelings change.

[00:26:28] And, uh, so we, yeah, we just had to sit and wait and pray. We went and talked with her every day. We visited her every day, multiple times. During the day we brought her lunch and brought her ice cream. Um, cause we wanted to also get to know her. And so, uh, so yeah, it was a long two days, but then at the end of the two days, when she's getting discharged, she, she signed the agreement and it, so it just depends.

[00:26:52] I know like some States I've heard are even longer, like even after, so you will take the baby home sometimes, but the moms still won't have, yeah, it hasn't relinquished her rights yet. And so, um, So, yeah, so I've heard some horror stories of course, of how that's gone. So terribly sad that mom, they dropped a family, takes the baby home and then mom changes her mind.

[00:27:16] And so, uh, luckily that's not how it ran for us. Um, and so it's just different per state. So you have to find out what your state's, you know, rules are. Yeah.

[00:27:28] **SARAH:** [00:27:28] So you go home with bear and it was around five months that you then got your F your foster kid, Bubba.

[00:27:39] **Amy:** [00:27:39] Yeah, we got, yeah, we got actually, it was eight months. So we had, so we had bear for eight months and, uh, which we had been foster parents for almost a year.

[00:27:51] **SARAH:** [00:27:51] Had you fostered kids before,

[00:27:54] **Amy:** [00:27:54] We had

[00:27:54] **SARAH:** [00:27:54] or you were just parents, like you were just, yeah. Sorry, go

[00:27:58] **Amy:** [00:27:58] Yeah, no, we were, we were licensed foster parents. We had never taken in a longterm pay placement. We had done what's called respite.

[00:28:06] And which is where you watch other people who have foster care kids, other foster care parents, you watch their kids for a week or two weeks or forever. How long they need a break. Um, And so that it's, it's really nice. Respite is highly needed, but it is, it's a, it's a little bit easier cause you're watching normally friends or people in the communities, kids who have already been in foster care for a little while.

[00:28:33] Um, so we had done a few of that. So it was nice. Cause for us the three weeks notice wasn't as stressful because we already had a crib. We already had a changing table because we had been watching. Friends kids for a few months already. And so, um, so we, we took a break though from fostering, for sure, for a few months until to get our feet wet in with, uh, with Barrett.

[00:28:55] And then yeah, after, uh, nine months we, we got, or eight months we got, um, Bubba. And so, uh,

[00:29:03] **SARAH:** [00:29:03] So, yeah. So did you like, uh, did you, like you basically turn to your foster parent, like light back on and you're like, okay, we're available and you get notified that a child who is the same exact age for all intensive purposes is

[00:29:21] **Amy:** [00:29:21] Yes. Yes.

[00:29:22] **SARAH:** [00:29:22] a home. And at that point, was it a long term or was it just short term or did that matter?

[00:29:27] **Amy:** [00:29:27] Yeah. So we had turned technically the green light on for what's called PPC, please protective custody. And so that's very short term. It's when kids are. Taken straight out of the home from, in police custody. They're not even officially deemed need of care. And so you get them straight from wherever situation they've been in.

[00:29:49] Um, and you take them until court happens. And then, which is typically three to five days and at court, then they either look at the situation and say, okay, mom cleaned up. The apartment or did whatever she was supposed to do so he can go back or they deem no. Mom and dad still have a lot of work to do.

[00:30:10] He needs care. And so then they deem him in foster care and then he can go, he goes into placement. We, we decided after taking him for those days to go ahead and keep him, he was very, uh, without giving too much away. We, we, he was very sick and so we had to be hospitalized with him for a little while, uh, for three days.

[00:30:31] And so after being three days in the hospital with him, we were like, we're not going anywhere, but

[00:30:37] **SARAH:** [00:30:37] protect. This is deer with us. Yes.

[00:30:41] **Amy:** [00:30:41] we're, we're stuck already. So. Obviously hopelessly in love. And so we were like, okay, well we'll make this work. And so, um, so yeah, so it was at first the three, we had three hours notice to get him and I went for three days and then after three days we decided to keep him longterm and until either, so whatever happens.

[00:31:02] **SARAH:** [00:31:02] Got it. And so when you, like now, like he's been with you for eight months, almost as long, like, you know, obviously he was not with you for eight months and now he's been with you for eight months. Um, as you like throughout the last eight months, have you had to make appearances with his, with his birth parents?

[00:31:22] Like what, what does that process look like? And then I know that you said that you have not formally adopted him yet. Like what does that future look like? And.

[00:31:31] **Amy:** [00:31:31] Yeah. Great questions. Um, so when you take a kid into longterm care that. First goal is always re-integration. So if mom, if they are going to work with every kid and above his case, work with mom and dad, mom and dad are not together. They're individually trying to, um, earn their rights back to him. And so at this point for him in most kids cases, it's.

[00:31:57] The social agency, setting up a plan called a case plan and setting up steps for those parents to take, uh, like parenting classes, um, how appropriate housing, jobs, income statements, things like that, that help them show that they are responsible and are capable, have changed their ways or done whatever they need to do to show that they are going to be responsible parents to their son.

[00:32:23] And so that's kind of where we've been at for nine months is waiting to see how mom and dad progress. We definitely, our hearts have always been for birth and bio families, whether foster or, you know, through foster or adoptive private adoption. And so we've definitely have. More of a desire to get to know them than most.

[00:32:43] I think you do not have to, if you do fostering, you do not have to interact with the birth parents hardly at all. The social agency should be doing a lot of that, but we desired to. And so we went, when we would go to court, we went. See them and we would try to talk to them and get to know them. And, uh, especially now this is a unique situation with COVID.

[00:33:04] Um, it has put all visits for tool, so it actually has put us, um, in much more contact with the parents then, um, foster parents and birth parents, much more contact than they've ever had to cause normally, uh, visits depending on. The level of safety there, either at the social agencies office or they're, um, supervise typically.

[00:33:27] And so the agency comes and picks the child up for the visit and then takes them to the parents, whether it's at the agency or at the parents' home. And it brings them back. So. So you have very typically little interaction, but now the visits are over the phone. And so with a one-year-old, there's only so much interaction that a one year old will do, but they have to have, they have to be for a certain amount of time.

[00:33:51] And so for us, it's about 20 minutes with mom and then 20 minutes with dad. And so we have 20 minutes once a week getting to know them. And so it's been actually really good. Amazing experience for us. I don't think it has been for everyone for every foster parent, um, are, but we have gotten to know his birth parents very well now, and I've started to develop a relationship.

[00:34:16] And so, um, so that's been really a positive experience from it

[00:34:20] **SARAH:** [00:34:20] It is so it's it, you know, it's is it typical that there, I mean, it doesn't sound like it with your situation, but it must be really hard for birth parents. Who've had to relinquish. No. I mean, I guess not we're haven't relinquished total rights, but like there, no. Yeah. The temporary responsibility of their children to someone else, like there must be some resentment or like it did it start there and somehow you, you guys have been able to cultivate a relationship where it's, it's much more positive or I guess like, what is H how has that like, kind of evolved since the beginning?

[00:34:58] **Amy:** [00:34:58] Yeah. Luckily for us, they didn't see to have tons. We didn't perceive a lot of resentment from them, but I think like any, anybody that they don't know us well, and they purposely, aren't given a ton of information about us. Um, and so. We wanted to make sure, like, from their perspective, so they know their care kids are being taken care of, but then by taking care of by strangers and they don't know anything, unlike, you know, the private adoption, you know, they get a profile, they get a book about your family that doesn't happen in the foster care side.

[00:35:33] So there you are strangers to them. And so we definitely wanted to introduce ourselves and try to. Start with just what Bob has been doing. Like what we've been doing with Bubba. We go on walks with Bubba. We put, we, you know, we took him to the park the other day and he's swaying, you know, for hours and love day, you know, and we, we have a son his same age and, you know, bear and Bubba are just best friends and they just crawl around everywhere together, you know, things that any parent would want to hear about their kid.

[00:36:03] So. We've started with that, of building that, like, here's what he's been doing this week. Here's what we've noticed here are the milestones he hit. And, um, he had a doctor's appointment and he grew, you know, this much on the percentile. And so things like that, that, you know, they just want to hear that he's happy and healthy.

[00:36:22] And so we always try to encourage that with them. And, and then answer questions, say like, do you have any questions or want to know anything about him or, you know, And so, you know, they'll ask like what his favorite food is. They don't know that anymore. And so we get to tell him like, Oh, he loves sausage.

[00:36:38] He eats that stuff up, like crazy. You know, it's just things like that, that, you know, help build that relationship.

[00:36:44] **SARAH:** [00:36:44] now, like, are you. Are you terrified of the day? Like, it's like you, like, you want, you obviously want his, his birth parents, him to be with his birth parents. Right? Like that that's obviously, I mean, that must be just such the internal struggle that you must have with it, with the unknown of, of what could transpire.

[00:37:05] Cause at the end of the day, like you don't want to wish or not wish one way or the

[00:37:10] **Amy:** [00:37:10] Yeah, it is you're you hit it on the nail. Like it's, it is weird, like, cause you definitely want to be for mom and dad, like. Yeah, who wouldn't, you know, like kids should be like, ideally kids should be with their birth parents. Um, and so we definitely want that. We, you know, that the system so far, we've been really encouraged by, you know, like they, they have very good steps that the parents have to take.

[00:37:37] And if a parent is capable of doing those, we know that he's going to go to a home that will. Start taking care of him again, um, the way he he needs. And so, uh, there's a lot of hope I think for us in that, if that, if mom and dad one or the other, both do accomplish the steps we know. And then now, especially that we felt this relationship, the transition we know will be either even easier for him.

[00:38:04] Uh, so we, we definitely obviously want that, but yeah, it's be crazy. We've had our son now knows. Having a twin brother much longer than he knows not. And so, you know, our hearts would definitely be sad or in grieved over it, but we trust that, you know, we trust in God that he either way, whatever happens, you know, that.

[00:38:28] And at least above us being taken care of, and that's the most important thing.

[00:38:31] **SARAH:** [00:38:31] Right,

[00:38:32] **Amy:** [00:38:32] And, and so, and if it ends up being us, if you know, mom and dad, you know, again, so with the adoption side of things, to, for Bubba to stay with us forever, um, either two things have to happen with mom and dad's rights are looking to be terminated by the court.

[00:38:48] We can approach mom and dad and see if they want to relinquish their rights instead and let us adopt. So. That's the most ideal situation, because then it's like private adoption. There's this. Great relationship being built. It's very much empowering the parents, but some parents birth parents are like, no, I'm going to fight tooth and nail.

[00:39:07] And if, and if it's not going to be me, then I want my sister or I want my aunt, um, whoever. And so that is where once, if rights are terminated by the court, then he goes into the adoption court case side and then us, and then any other family member or. A friend who knows of him and would like to adopt him.

[00:39:31] Basically, we all go into a pool to try to adopt him and they put together as what's called best interest staffing. And that's. Uh, social workers, lawyers, County attorneys, typically, uh, sometimes, uh, district, uh, the D uh, DFC is involved. Um, district of family and children, I think is the term. Um, anyways, they, there's a different people involved in the staffing, uh, and.

[00:40:00] They meet and basically look at everyone who's applied to adopt and has done a home study and they will look at what they think is the best interest of the child. And so sometimes that means they will go to aunt Susi later and then sometimes they will pick the adoption, the foster family. It just depends on what they've deemed is best for the child.

[00:40:25] And so, um, So, yeah, so there's a, so there's a lot of to adopt out of the foster system is there's a lot more steps and a lot less, lot more unknowns like you were saying. And so, um, we just have to have open hands and, you know, love them. We obviously are going to love him, like he's ours until whatever happens and okay.

[00:40:48] No, that the system is doing its best to give the best for him. And so it doesn't always, your system is sometimes broken, just like any, anything. And so, uh, you know, you definitely want to be a part of it and be involved and ask questions and do what you can. Um, and, and then at the end of the day, I want to trust that our system will have the best interest of our kids and, and, and hope that that's what happens.

[00:41:13] And I think it will.

[00:41:15] **SARAH:** [00:41:15] Yeah, it's it's um, I think it's a little, it's encouraging for me to hear that you've had a very good experience with the foster system. Cause I feel like that isn't always the case. Um, and so it's nice to know that in stuff like that, there are instances in which, uh, You like the best interest for the kid is always at, at the forefront.

[00:41:40] **Amy:** [00:41:40] Yeah. Yeah. And, and yeah, again, it's, it's sad. Cause there are, there are not that, that doesn't always happen. We have had friends who have had sad stories. Uh, they went through best inter staffing and they weren't picked and they went to a family member that they felt like would not do well with having a child or was maybe.

[00:41:59] Wanting a paycheck because there is some, it's not a ton of money. I honestly don't know why anybody would foster for a paycheck. It's not, not much. It's more, they call it a, um, Oh, a reimbursement for a reason. It's, it's, it's not income. It's not labeled as income. And so, uh, so, but even after you adopt out of the foster care system, they, sometimes you do sometimes get.

[00:42:26] Money provided by the state for a little while. And so I think there's some people who move forward for adoption for nefarious reasons, which is of course heartbreaking. Um, and so we've seen some sad cases happen of just. And then in bio, parents or family is typically, always valued over a foster family.

[00:42:45] Even if the foster family has been family to that child, for most of that child's life, they will pick biological family, oftentimes over the foster family. Um, just based off of what they feel like has shown there. There has to be a reason behind it. I don't sure, honestly, a lot of the case, if there's much case studies to prove that that's been best, but.

[00:43:08] Um, family is always, um, the number one goal. And so if they're safe and. They're safe and there's risk. And so that's kind of what you see a lot with foster care systems, you know, is there still a really risky the parent, even if kids go back to the bio parents that might still be a risky situation, but they've still deemed it safe, if that makes sense.

[00:43:32] And so that's, what's, I think really hard for foster families to see and process is like, well, We have no risk in our brain. And so, um, and so that's, that's, uh, a hard line to, you know, process in your brain, I think to understand.

[00:43:50] **SARAH:** [00:43:50] Well it's. Yeah, it's also, you know, you're like, there's, I mean, if I were a foster family, I'd be looking at this, like there's, I'm, I'm zero risk. And the life that I would provide is, is not the bare minimum, which is safe. Right. Like, um, what am I missing here? Like if the criteria is safe, which by the way is I, you know, I want to think about, and your obvious to 18 months old with months old, which is, I feel like when it starts to get.

[00:44:23] At least with both of my kids. Like that was when they got, um, challenging. It's just like the like tantrum kind of start. And like my daughter's almost two and it's like, it's just like the defiance. And so you're kind of like getting into these, into these ages where like, Keeping your kids safe is actually much more challenging.

[00:44:47] So you're not up for the challenge. Like all of a sudden the kid's safety becomes much riskier. And I like, I wonder how much that's weighed in. It's like the amount of patients you need to have with a two year old is endless.

[00:45:04] **Amy:** [00:45:04] Yes, I lose my cool sometimes and I have, and I'm financially, like we're not, you know, in financial scarcity and so throw in. Yeah. If you have, you know, arrests. Yeah. If you've been arrested, if you've been, you know, living in scarcity of any kind for any length of time. Yeah, the stress is already high and then throw in yeah, an 18 month old or a two year old or whatever age.

[00:45:32] Yeah, I, I hope they take it into, I hope courts take into consideration, but yeah, again, like it's between the County, like I've found even here in Kansas, each County runs it so different. Some counties move very fast. Some County attorneys are very involved. Other counties are very slow. They give a lot of leniency.

[00:45:53] They drag out cases for years. Um, And so it just depends. I, our County is sadly overrun, but on the flip side, it means they move through cases. They they're very quick to get a child permanency one way or the other. So, yeah. So it's nice. Cause after every, I think for us state laws, permanency must be, is supposed to be sought for within a year.

[00:46:20] Um, does not always happen sometimes. There's obviously extremely, um, circumstances that can delay that. But for a, it sounds like from our County, it does move fairly quickly and, um, And which in our cases, I think good, like, especially Bubba, he's so little. And so the attachment is so key right now for him.

[00:46:42] And so luckily we've been able to form an attached, to seen attachment, um, signs with him, with us. And that's been really encouraging. Cause we didn't know, we didn't know if he had had an attachment at all. At that point. Once we got him, he. And so it was very likely he hadn't informed any attachment up until then.

[00:47:01] And so, uh, so we were very glad we got him when we did. Um, so we had nine months, we've had nine months to start building that attachment and we'll continue to, and that will only help him further if he does go back to his parents or to another family member.

[00:47:18] **SARAH:** [00:47:18] Right. So throughout these two, like I'll call. A D I'll call them both adoption experiences, but obviously different. Um, is there anything that you like, anything that was unexpected that you experienced like that you were just like, Oh, I did not know this was going to happen or like that you would want to draw attention to

[00:47:40] **Amy:** [00:47:40] Yeah. Um, I think for fostering, I think the biggest surprise was how. Case by case, it just can vary so significantly, not just even within our County and within our state, but within just each case, the agency's level of case loads is just sadly insane. And the amount of what. Is required and happens. It's it's just, it's just not since.

[00:48:10] So, um, I think that has been surprising overall, just being in the foster care process. There's just so many different ways things can plan out and you really just have to have open hands as you enter into it. For whatever happens. Um, but we, uh, we have been very surprised in a good way of how our County and how our agency has handled, um, our case.

[00:48:35] And so that's been really encouraging.

[00:48:38] **SARAH:** [00:48:38] Yeah.

[00:48:39] **Amy:** [00:48:39] and

[00:48:40] **SARAH:** [00:48:40] And now you're 22 weeks pregnant with another boy.

[00:48:44] **Amy:** [00:48:44] another boy.

[00:48:45] **SARAH:** [00:48:45] Um, did you guys kind of pause as you took in Baba as well on, on the like desire to have another immediately? Or were you guys just like, no, we're, we'll keep trying and it will be what it will be.

[00:49:00] **Amy:** [00:49:00] I think at that point, we had tried so long with obviously no success that we were kind of like, well, and we had, you know, full disclosure, we had done like testing to see if there was anything, health, medical reasons, and there weren't any, and so we're like, well, for us, you know, we believe in God and a higher power and we're like, it just seems he has, he has deemed it, not a good timing yet.

[00:49:26] And so we trust that at this point. Whenever it does happen. It will be his perfect timing. And so, uh, so yeah, we didn't, we didn't really ever yeah. Take a pause by any means. Definitely was stressful the first few months, especially, you know, having to be hospitalized with a nine a nine month old for a few days, you know, definitely puts a kink in your family dynamics for, for a while and just learning how to handle twins, all of, yeah.

[00:49:54] Handle twins, all of a sudden, um, and letting. Our son get used to having a brother. All of a sudden that was, you know, he was nine months. I would pick up Bubba and he just kind of gave me this look like you pick me up. What are you doing? So, so, you know, like there's definitely a couple of months. It can't say like, um, we're super focused, but, but it was definitely never something.

[00:50:18] We, we just kind of always like, well, it'll happen when it happens. We're in a dead end. We were very, very surprised, but very excited of course. And so,

[00:50:28] **SARAH:** [00:50:28] Yeah, no. Well, congratulations. Um, I'm excited for you to join the ranks of three, three young kids. It is,

[00:50:39] **Amy:** [00:50:39] 302.

[00:50:41] **SARAH:** [00:50:41] you are going to have your hands full, but in such a wonderful way.

[00:50:45] **Amy:** [00:50:45] Yeah. Thank you.

[00:50:48] **SARAH:** [00:50:48] I, that is all I have. Um, is there anything else that you would, that I like you think I missed or did we, were we pretty thorough?

[00:50:56] **Amy:** [00:50:56] I think we were pretty thorough. I thought, you know, one thing I did think of was like, when you get licensed as a foster care, you like, we went ahead and jumped in and got licensed as foster parents. And we, like I said, we did respite for a while, which is where you just help give other people who are actually fostering breaks.

[00:51:20] You're still technically foster parents by name, but you're just babysitting honestly for a couple, from a couple of days to a couple of weeks. It just depends on what that foster parent needs and that's a massive need. And, and you, and then there's also what we had originally said yes to was, which is please protective custody.

[00:51:39] Um, and that's only a few days. At most it's three to five days. And then after that, either the kid, the child can go to a longterm foster care placement, um, or can stay with you if you choose like we did too. But there's a lot of different ways you can foster. It's not just, um, two, and there's not just one way.

[00:51:59] And then if somebody, I will say, if somebody does want to adopt through the foster care system, you don't have to take it a child. And from day one, One like we have, you can jump in once a child. There are some foster parents who only foster and do not want to adopt, and that's just not. And their cards for whatever reason.

[00:52:20] And so you can choose to get licensed as a foster parent, and then only taking kids who are adoptable. So you can kind of cut out a lot of the unknown that we're sitting through, um, and, and jump in. So it's not necessarily, you have to sit through this unknown for years. Uh, Cause if you, if you do what we're doing, where we take a child in from day one to, if we ever do adopt Bubba, the average is two to three years to adopt out of the foster system.

[00:52:50] And so, uh, but if you are going in solely to adopt, you can cut those years in half at least and take in when a child is ready to be adopted and, uh, have a. Similar experience to, uh, the private adoption where you have just a month or few months notice and, um, to take it in the kids. And so, so there's a lot of different ways.

[00:53:13] Yeah, you can foster and so not just the way we're doing it. So I thought I would mention that.

[00:53:18] **SARAH:** [00:53:18] Yeah, no, thank you. That's a, that's a great point. Um, especially for anyone who's interested in getting involved in any way to know that there's a lot of different options for them.

[00:53:28] **Amy:** [00:53:28] Absolutely.

[00:53:29] **SARAH:** [00:53:29] Well, Amy, thank you so much for,

[00:53:32] giving me your time today. This was super enlightening and I like that, you know, when you were saying you should, if you want to talk to a social worker, I'm like, I kind of want to talk about the personal side of it too, cause that is so much of it.

[00:53:45] so thank you for, for being so forthcoming.

[00:53:48] **Amy:** [00:53:48] Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for asking me. This was fun.

[00:53:51] **SARAH:** [00:53:51] best of luck with the rest of your pregnancy.

[00:53:54] **Amy:** [00:53:54] Thank you and yeah. Best of luck to you and juggling the third,

[00:53:59] **SARAH:** [00:53:59] Thank you and we