

[00:00:01.175] - Lisa Qualls

Welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast where we share resources by and for adoptive and foster moms. I'm Lisa Qualls

[00:00:09.065] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:14.495] - Melissa Corkum

Hi, friends. Welcome to Episode 118 of the Adoption Connection podcast. Today we are talking about feeding our families. And I don't know about you, Lisa, but I literally feel like every time I turn around, someone wants to know what's for lunch, what's for dinner, what can I eat?

[00:00:30.875] - Lisa Qualls

Absolutely, I always think, "What?" I mean, really, dinner just keeps coming over and over and over and I've been doing it for so many years and yet I do like feeding my family.

[00:00:42.745] - Melissa Corkum

I have discovered that I actually love just the cooking part, I actually hate the meal planning. I hate deciding what people are going to eat and I absolutely, y'all know, hate cleaning it up. But recently, one of my kids surprised me and I was kind of meal planning on a Sunday morning and I was asking the kids, "What should I make?" Because again, like I don't mind doing it, I just don't have to make the decision. And he said, "Mom, you should just assign us all a day to cook. And between you and Dad and the three big kids, we could just have two nights of, like leftovers or fend for yourself." And this is my kid who typically, you know, these types of domesticated chores are not his strong suit. He'll do things like fix my washing machine and change the carburetor on our snowblower, but I was so surprised that he came up with this and so we're going to start this. By the time this episode airs, we will be well into our the kids are taking days to meal plan and just all I have to do is grocery shop for them and they'll execute.

[00:01:46.585] - Lisa Qualls

I love it. I love it. We've done that at various times in our family where all the dinners were divided up between different people. We don't have that right now, mostly because my boys are at sports late in the afternoon. Yeah, there just aren't as many people here to cook. However, my daughter Claire often comes home and cooks dinner on Sunday, which is really, really nice for me. So I our guest today was here to talk about how he has used, is using cooking to connect with his children and teaching other families how to do that too. His name is Chef Kibby and he's a professional chef and culinary instructor with over twenty five years in the food industry. He's also a biological foster and adoptive dad who seeks to use his brand Cooking with Kibby to show other parents how to use the shared act of cooking and eating with their kids as a way to build deeper relationships, stronger attachments and more resilient young people.

[00:02:45.745] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, this was a fascinating conversation. It included some brain science. I think you guys are going to love it.

[00:02:56.235] - Lisa Qualls

Hello, Kibby, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:02:59.565] - Chef Kibby

Lisa, thank you so much for having me. It is an absolute pleasure to be here.

[00:03:03.315] - Lisa Qualls

Well, I've had a lot of fun following you on Instagram. You're an Instagram guy and a YouTuber and when I first heard about you, I clicked into your Instagram and I thought, "OK, this guy is going to be a fun podcast guest."

[00:03:18.675] - Chef Kibby

I'd like to say I'm a fun guy. I mean, I do some silly faces, make some funny voices. I love to goof around. I guess that makes me a good dad and that makes me a good Instagramer as well.

[00:03:30.795] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, I think so. I think so. Well, there are some really unique things about you. The reason you are a guest today is that you are both a chef and you are a foster and adoptive dad, which is a really, and a YouTuber so really interesting meld of things. Well, tell me, how did you go from being this student and then becoming a chef? I'm assuming somewhere along the way you met your wife.

[00:03:58.395] - Chef Kibby

Yep. That is a very important part and I would say food is one of those things that brought the two of us together because I love to cook and she loves to eat. But she's also very involved in fitness, she's a massage therapist and a fitness instructor. So we make a very good team. We're both very health and wellness and taking care of ourselves. That's where our minds are oriented. But it was definitely a meal that attracted her to me and a meal that she made for me that attracted me to her, and the rest, as they say, is history. Even in our dating and in our engagement process, the talk of fostering and adoption had already begun. We had already begun to talk about what our goals and aspirations were for our family during our engagement process before we got married. And one of the things that was important, especially to my wife at that point, was adoption. And the reason for that being that she was a missionary kid. Her parents were missionaries overseas through the Southern Baptist Convention, spent many years in Spain, and that's where her sister was born when they were overseas in Spain, and then a couple of years during high school, they were in Venezuela. And being overseas, she was again exposed to a very different culture and exposed to food that I can only dream about and imagine. I mean, fresh canned tuna in true Spanish olive oil. I mean, I'm going to stop there because I don't want to distract our listeners at all. But being overseas and being into these other cultures, not only was she exposed to different forms of speech and of dress and of interaction, but also of the poverty and also of unadopted children and her heart really went out to them. And so then, on her heart, God had placed that on her many years before she ever met me. And so when we began talking about what our family was going to look like, adoption was a part of that. Now, years later, as we began to get more serious about starting our family, after we had our first biological child, we felt like financially we weren't in a place where we could go into looking at overseas adoption. And so we ended up looking into foster care and that's the route we ended up taking and ended up adopting out of foster care.

[00:06:20.895] - Lisa Qualls

So when, how many years ago did you start your foster care journey? When did you start fostering?

[00:06:28.345] - Chef Kibby

Let's see, I would say it was probably about eight or nine years ago, if I'm correct, and we had fostered over a dozen children through our home. And when I say our home, that's not just my wife and I. We actually had a four generation household.

[00:06:44.815] - Lisa Qualls

Oh, tell me about that. That's what Melissa has as well. You know, my co-host, Melissa, they have four, is it four? One, two, three, maybe three, three generations.

[00:06:56.365] - Chef Kibby

So our four generations are my wife and I are biological foster and adoptive children. And then my wife's parents and her grandmother all share a house, share bills, share groceries, share cooking duties. We have about 12 acres of land where we have some some animals to take care of and a creek to walk by and a field where we can grow some fresh produce. And we're just out here living the dream and everything is always just, you know, sunflowers and rainbows and peachiness if it weren't for that whole thing called trauma.

[00:07:34.255] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, that changes everything, doesn't it? Well, as you were talking, I was calculating in my mind. Yes. Melissa also has a four generation household. So some time we need to get you guys together to just

talk about intergenerational households, because I find it really fascinating that would be a whole other episode to do, but I think it's really, really interesting. When you started fostering, did, were you already living in this household and did that mean that other adults in the household also had to go through not licensing necessarily, but some of the screening process?

[00:08:09.475] - Chef Kibby

Yes, you're absolutely correct. So the five adults here in this house all had to be screened and go through the background checks and do the home study and everything that comes along with it. And I'm sure for those who are listening, depending on which county and which state you're in, the regulations are probably a little bit different. But at least for our particular scenario, my wife and I were the only ones who were actually licensed and going through the trainings and things of that nature, although, of course, we were sharing much of that information with the rest of our family members as well, because it was a team effort. And that was one of the blessings that we had of having this four generation household, is that it provided us with the opportunity, not only financial, but having the space and having the manpower, I should say, womanpower, really, to be able to give, to open our doors to children outside of our biological family. And yeah, it's because of that that we were that we felt comfortable being able to have, again, the manpower, the resources to be able to to take more kiddos into our home. And it's again, it's been something that's always been on our hearts. It's something that I'm sure a lot of people who are listening have felt that that calling from from God, that feeling that I have love to give to children and they don't necessarily have to be my own. And we went into that with that feeling. And as with many other foster adoptive families, we've experienced a lot of hardship and frustration along the way. And we're still learning and growing in our understanding of why that is. And I feel very fortunate that because of everything that's happened in 2020, it's given me an opportunity to kind of reset myself and not only educate myself, but to to find some some ways to be better reactive and more proactive in how to take better care of not only my foster adoptive kiddos, but also my biological as well. And it's been during this this great reset that we've all experienced, that I've had the great blessing of seeing things a little bit differently from from the kitchen standpoint and also from the parenting standpoint.

[00:10:26.945] - Lisa Qualls

So tell me, prior to covid and all the changes that have come, what was your career like? What were you doing?

[00:10:37.175] - Chef Kibby

I was an adjunct instructor for Columbus State Community College, teaching culinary arts classes at the same program where I graduated many years ago. But I also had, well, we had a family business. It was part catering business. And so we were doing events for weddings, for corporate events, some of them as small as maybe 10 or 15, but upwards of one hundred and two hundred. And I think at one point we did an event for upwards of four hundred people as a family, didn't have any one that we had hired at that point. It was it was all us doing it together, mostly me, just because I'm young and able and have the skills, but from time to time asking other members of the family to to jump in to help with the production and service. At that point, we also had a small event space here in town that we were renting out for for small events and also utilizing for my hands on kitchen sessions. So I was doing cooking classes with upwards of 12 people working together in groups of four. Making anywhere from three to five dishes in about two and a half hours, and it was a great opportunity for me to get in front of people and to share my passion for food. And it was at the beginning of 2020 that I was already starting to make the connection between the ability to cook together as as a family and specifically parents with children as a way of bettering our relationships. But it wasn't until afterwards that that connection began to really, I really began to hone in on that and put some, some solid science behind that as well. And so when March of 2020 hits, and the covid outbreak happens, the the mandates for lockdowns came about, catering for groups of people and people, sharing a workstation, sharing kitchen utensils and eating off of the same dish, that went out the window very, very quickly. It was non-essential. And so we had to make the hard choice of shutting down the catering business and not doing any more hands on kitchen sessions until such time as we were allowed to. And so even as we were sitting here talking right now, the catering business is never going to come back. We've put that behind us. Eventually, I would like to get to a point when it's safe to do so, to start doing kitchen sessions, so cooking classes together with people. But for all intents and

purposes, that's, that has been put by the wayside as well.

[00:13:18.045] - Lisa Qualls

With your whole livelihood kind of coming down, I mean, having to close your business, that's huge. At the same time, you were probably spending a lot more time with your family and your kids. And so how did that kind of come together? You had sort of a light bulb moment that has now pivoted your really your career and also some of the ways you're doing life as a family.

[00:13:44.715] - Chef Kibby

Absolutely, Lisa. It definitely has. So you're right, I was spending a lot more time at home, which I was very, very grateful for that. A lot of what I was doing as a caterer was alone. I was doing it by myself. And when we shut down the event space, shut down the catering business, spending more time at home, I naturally do what comes naturally to me, and that's cook. And my kiddos were there, and so taking opportunities to either invite them into the kitchen or do that scary thing of when they ask to spend some time with me in the kitchen, to say "yes." And that's been, that's been hard. And that very much goes back into what we learn in TBRI. And also the other book that I've been working with right now, the Yes Brain by Tina Payne Bryson, loved her work, the The whole Brainchild of building some yesses. And that's we can get to that here in a second. The kitchen became a different place for me. I mean, first of all, it was therapeutic to be in the kitchen, in my home kitchen and being with my family to work through some of my own frustrations of having the rug pulled out from underneath me. But I quickly came to understand that we, what I experienced was trauma of having that change happen in my life and my kiddos when, you know, they were pulled from school. That is a type of trauma, and then my foster and adoptive kiddos, obviously, they have a trauma background as well, and that this shared act of cooking and eating with them was beneficial to all of us. And the more I did it, the more I realized it's more than just the food that we're benefiting from. It's the time that we have together. It's the things that they are learning in the process. And this is what's made me such an evangelist for the shared act of cooking and eating with our kiddos is that there's so much the kiddos can benefit from it and us parents can benefit from it as well. There's the obvious, knowing how to cook. It's such an important independent life skill, and when I talk to foster and adoptive agencies or with agencies that work with foster youth that have aged out of the system, many times one of the things that they're lacking is experience in the kitchen because oftentimes we have kind of trust issues with these kiddos and don't give them opportunities to to show what they're capable of doing. And so giving them those those tools, those skills of being able to slice and dice and chop and cook and crack eggs and all of those things are obviously beneficial. Then it carries over into other academic pursuits. When you're cooking, you're not just learning about food, you're learning about math and science and chemistry and biology and physics and even some foreign language and cultural awareness. There's just so much involved in cooking. But then, Lisa, I began to understand cooking with my kiddos from a neurobiological standpoint and from the perspective of connection, and I realized that when I am when I'm saying yes to them to to come into the kitchen with me, I'm giving them an opportunity to connect with me on a level that, you know, play activity is good and taking them to the park is good, but there's just something so unique about food because, and I've always believed this as a culinarian that preparing food for someone else is a sacred trust because when you prepare food for someone else, that person is trusting you that you know what you're doing with it, and not just that you're going to enjoy it, that it's going to taste good, but it's going to be beneficial for my body or it's not going to be harmful to me. And so to put that kind of trust, even if it's just something small in the hands of a of a biological, foster, and adoptive child, whether they can communicate that or not, they feel it. They feel mommy and daddy trust me. They want to be with me, they are trusting me, and they think that I'm capable of doing amazing things. And as as a parent and especially as a dad to all girls, to have this vocabulary of love and acceptance and importance and of agency and and self-worth, I'm just I'm so grateful for it, Lisa, and I just can't help but want to share that with other people.

[00:18:37.455] - Lisa Qualls

Do you have a story you could share about cooking with one or some of your kids and how that has been, giving you this opportunity to connect?

[00:18:49.995] - Chef Kibby

Absolutely, I like I said, I have a blend of children, all girls, biological, foster and adoptive, one of my girls in particular has sensory issues, dysfunction and brain dysfunction, neurochemistry changes can affect their ability to self regulate. And I know I'm preaching to the choir here now, but one of the things that we have found with our dear girl is that sensory input, vestibular input, sensory inputs can help her to calm and relax. And I've come to discover that there are a lot of sensory things that can be done in the kitchen. It could be scrubbing potatoes. It could be pounding out pieces of chicken or pork on the countertop. And frankly, I mean, I don't consider myself someone with sensory needs, but even I can get a lot of my own frustration out by taking a meat mallet to some chicken or pork on the countertop, breaking apart ahead of broccoli or cauliflower. Just having that the cracking sound and the crunch in your hands. There's so much that they can do. And the thing that's really got me the most, Lisa, is and I didn't even come up with this, my kid came up with this. She asked me to chop up my scraps, the scrap pieces from chopping up some vegetables. And my first gut reaction is, is no is why would you do that, kid? This is a waste product. This is going to go out to the chickens or out to the compost bin. But then when I got out of my own way and said, OK, how can I turn this this easy "no" into an easy "yes." And I just said, "sure, kid, here's a cutting board. Here's a plain old butter knife." Or in some case, I might use like a steak knife with a little bit of a serrated edge just so she's not putting a knife to a carrot or anything like that because there's nothing more dangerous in the kitchen than a dull knife. We can talk about that in another episode, perhaps, but that this gave her an opportunity to model behavior from me.

[00:21:02.575] - Lisa Qualls

We're interrupting this interview to ask you to do us a favor, really. It's not for us, but for adoptive and foster parents just like you.

[00:21:10.645] - Melissa Corkum

If you find our podcast helpful, pause this episode and revisit your podcast app where you can rate and review the show. Honestly, this isn't about making us feel good. This is about other parents finding confidence, hope and friends who understand.

[00:21:25.675] - Lisa Qualls

Thanks so much for helping us get the word out. We really appreciate you. Now back to the conversation.

[00:21:36.485] - Chef Kibby

This gave her an opportunity to model behavior from me, not only where we spending quality time together, but she's watching how I stand at the cutting board, she's watching how I'm holding my knife. She's watching how I'm holding the vegetables. And she is chopping them up, getting that sensory input, getting that quality time with me, having conversations, all things, asking me questions about food or just giving me an opportunity to ask her things about her day and about what or what she's thinking. And it may not be helpful in getting food on the table, but I have not regretted one moment that I've spent in the kitchen with my kids and that has been the shift for me. A lot of us who are parents and especially those of us who have a culinary background and take great pride in our food. You know, I take great pride in the way I produce my food. A lot of the temptation is to set the goal of creating something that's Instagram worthy or to create a recipe that I'm going to want to share on my blog or on Pinterest or on YouTube. But when I began to shift my focus, my attention, my goal toward connection, there's no disappointment in cooking. I could mess up the food royally and the worst that could happen is we have to order takeout. But we'll have had that experience together. The other another thing that I've learned in this is that when we talk about modeling behavior for them, modeling the way I stand, where I hold my knife, the way I'm treating the ingredients, being able to answer questions, but the ability to be vulnerable in front of my child and to model what it's like for an adult to experience frustration. That is huge, and that's that's something that's really hard for us dads in particular. We want to be strong for our wives, we want to be strong for our children, we want to to to show our kids the best of us. And I've realized that one of the best things I can do for my kids is to make mistakes in front of them. And when you're in the kitchen, you're bound to make mistakes. Even me. I've been a chef. I've been in the food industry for twenty five years. I still mess up. And that's such, such an important skill I can give to my kiddos to show them, daddy messes up. And this is how I'm going to mess up and here is how I'm going to show me working through those issues and

maybe even inviting them into the process saying, "hey, kiddo, I really mess this up. What do you think we should do? How do we get through this?" To give them a chance for empathy and agency and voice. It's it's building those little mental blocks inside of them, not a mental block, but building those neural pathways that are so important for their development, they're relational development, their emotional development to to know what they are capable of doing. And I get I get to do that for my kiddos. I'm not a I'm not a licensed therapist, Lisa, so I don't have a doctorate, I don't have a PhD behind my name, but I have cooking. And that has been such an important tool for me, and I want so badly for other parents to be able to experience that in their homes and their families, especially if, you know, depending on where you live and depending on when this podcast is coming out, could determine what sort of regulations are still in place. You know, some of your listeners may never go back to a normal life where kids are sitting in a classroom and parents are working in an office. And there are opportunities that we have as parents to create therapeutic and proactive practices in our home to create connection and attachment and communicating self-worth and confidence in these kiddos, and I want to share that with the world. And that's why I'm so honored and blessed that I get to to speak to you about it today.

[00:25:51.115] - Lisa Qualls

Well, the thing about cooking with our kids is we all have to cook. I mean, we all have to eat. We all have to cook. This is not require us to spend huge amounts of special money on therapeutic things we're doing with our kids. This is about doing life together side by side and I think it's really important what you talked about is, being willing to let them in. And I think as moms, you know, I do the vast majority of the cooking in my family and I often, I'm not a chef, I often want to get it done quickly because I have so many other things I want to do and or need to do. But when we say yes and we bring our children in to work side by side with us, really beautiful things happen. And it's I was reminded of a number of things while you were talking, but in particular I was thinking of my daughter, Kalkidan, who came to us with just such severe food challenges from just so much deprivation in her history, so much food trauma like serious malnutrition, starvation, being denied food. And food was a, hunger was a massive trigger for her, like when she began to feel hungry, she went from "I'm feeling hungry" to in her brain to "I am going to die" in just a flash. And one of the things I learned was that when I brought her into the kitchen and let her prepare food with me and even gave her I gave her a lot of freedom to be creative with what she prepared, like I give her the ingredients and eventually she she became pretty competent and she would cook these things and they mostly involved a lot of olive oil and spices, lots and lots of spices, like so much spice that the kitchen, being in the kitchen would burn your eyes, you know, but lots of berbere, you know, from Ethiopia. And so but cooking was a way where I could a place where I could connect with her, but also we would prepare food and then store it like in packages for her. And so there was a season where we would cook large quantities of sort of spicy chicken and rice and then put it in individual packages and that was her breakfast every single morning. So it did so many positive things. It eliminated all the "what am I going to eat?" fears because she knew exactly what she could eat. She knew she had made it. She knew where it was. It was a really life-giving thing for us and a place of connection for us, too. So that is one instance where I was able to slow myself down and say, "yes, you can be in the kitchen with me. Yes, we're going to prepare this food." And to give her choices, we talk a lot about the importance of choices. Do you want this? Do want this? You know, do you want potatoes or do you want rice that you're going to cook? Do you want chicken? Do you want beef? You know, just simple things, but they gave her some sense of control in areas that were safe to let her control, you know.

[00:28:56.365]

Good for you for having the bravery to to do that, because I'm sure that there's a lot of people listening who are thinking, "there's no way I'm giving my kid that sort of control or saying things." But again, you're, I'm surprised and I'm glad that you had the opportunity to allow yourself to be that vulnerable and to surprise yourself at what your child is capable of doing. And, yeah, sometimes they're going to pick some some weird combinations. But again, are they getting food? Yes. Or are they getting nutrition and things that we can look back upon and laugh at? Absolutely. And all of that creates connection, all of that. It gives them a sense of agency and control. And I I've had similar experiences with one of my kiddos who had food issues and deprivation issues growing up, and to this day still eats as though this is the first meal that they've had in weeks. And that is something that's been really hard for me as a chef to get over the fact that I've worked this hard and created this this wonderful

tasting dish and they're not really even tasting it. And to get past my own pride and to see that I am still meeting her needs, I am still giving her what what she needs, even if she is right, wrong, or indifferent, not giving me what I think I need in this moment of the affirmation of of creating delicious food for her. That's not what matters. And so much of our frustration as parents could be avoided or shifted if we just shift our mindset a little bit. And that's what I'm so grateful for with the connected parent has allowed me to do, when I'm applying it obviously, is to just shift my mindset away from the behavior and more towards the needs that are behind the behavior and creating scenarios where we could be proactive in meeting her needs and putting her into a place where she is going to eventually feel more confident and more competent and aware that that she is loved and she is cared for as she no longer has to live in fear and building that that neurological base that is necessary for her to to grow not only emotionally balanced, but also resilient in the times when things are going to continue to be hard. It's hard for all of us to give her a better neurological footing to be able to be resilient when changes do happen in her life 5, 10, 15, 20 years down the road.

[00:31:35.175] - Lisa Qualls

Right. Well, you know, normally the lesson of the first year of life is I can trust. But so many of our kids did not have that, they couldn't trust. There was nobody caring for them, keeping them safe, meeting their needs. And so when we let them in the kitchen with us, that is a trust building exercise. It's like, OK, in your case, "dad not only is going to feed me, he's going to teach me how to feed myself to," you know, like he's going to teach me and we're going to feed the family together. It's like this beautiful competency that happens to, you know, we had a foster daughter who came to us as a teenager. She was 15 when she came to us and somehow, very naturally, we ended up in the kitchen together. And she did not know how to cook. She didn't know how to set a table. She didn't she wasn't familiar with sitting down at a table as a family and eating together. And she was really eager learner. We created a little notebook for her and she would find recipes that she wanted to make and we would make them together. And she made her own binder of recipes that when she left, she took that with her. And I feel like, it it almost chokes me up, but I feel like that time we spent in the kitchen was very sweet because, of course, you got tons of praise at the dinner table. It's like, "wow, you made this? This is so good!" And secondly, I feel like I gave her skills that she'll now have for her life, you know? And I'm and she had the experience of what it's like to be in a family and sit at the family dinner table. So let's talk about that. Do you think family dinner? I'm guessing you think family dinner is important, but I want to hear your thoughts on that.

[00:33:15.675] - Chef Kibby

Well, you don't have to ask me, Lisa, you can ask the experts in child psychology and they will tell you that last year, as a result of, what was it last year? It might have been last year, maybe the year before it was it was before the whole covid-19 thing happened. But we in our community, small town, central Ohio community, had a number of young people who we've lost to suicide. And our community was trying to come to grips with what's going on with our young people? What's going on with our preteens and adolescents that's driving them to lose all hope for life? And one of the things that the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Union County did was they brought in a speaker. They brought in Dr. Leonard Sax. I'm not sure if you're familiar with any of his work, but he is a practicing family doctor and world renowned speaker. He's had several books on taking care of young men and young women, specifically geared towards the issues with technology and some of the other things that are having an effect neobiologically on these young people and making it harder for them to be resilient in these changing times. And he was giving this talk. They actually brought him in physically to a middle school auditorium here in our small town, and which was a tremendous blessing. We're so glad that we were able to get him in, especially before all of this happened. And he gave a talk on kind of the the the whys and the hows and whats of what's going on with these these preteens and adolescents that is making them lose hope, lose connection, lose resilience? And then when he began to transition to, "OK, what can we do for these kiddos?" The first thing he said, I kid you not I nearly fell out of my chair was "family meal time." I was in the second row of the auditorium and I almost whooped. It's like I had to..."preach!" And he pointed to research showing the mental health outcomes of preteens and adolescents with regards to the number of times they had family meal time throughout seven days a week. And it showed that with the increasing number, with the increasing count of family meal times per week, positive mental health and social outcomes increased and the negative ones decreased. And to me, that's, you know, that's some pretty solid proof. And there was another study that that Dr.

Sax shared more recently with regards to mental health with teens and adolescents as a result of covid, as a result of the lockdowns and all the changes that they experienced. And the surprising numbers came in that many young people are actually doing slightly better than they were doing two years ago. And I look at that like, "what? How can that possibly be?" And it goes back to some of the things that you had mentioned already in our conversation. Parents are home more, kids are home more. They're having dinner more together. They're talking more than they used to. They're spending time together more than they used to. And all of those things increased their their likelihood of positive mental health outcomes and decreased their likeliness of depression. And I look at all these numbers and I say, well, what is the one thing the parents can do to ensure not only that they're having more family meal time together, but also that they're communicating more and spending time together more having more conversations. And that's taking it to that other that further step, not just having meal time together, but actually cooking and eating together. To me, I feel like that's the that's the secret sauce to all of this, taking it one step further. Having family meal time is a good first step. Obviously, the evidence is there. The science shows that that is a good thing because it is an opportunity to be together, to remove distractions and to have conversations. But to take it that one step further and allow them to be with you in the kitchen, for all the reasons that we've already described and then some, I think is so critical. And in fact, I might offend some people by saying this, but I feel like it is something that we need to be doing for our kids and with our kids. Not something we should or ought to, I think we need to be doing this for our kids. And I know that there are a lot of families out there, moms and dads, who are listening to this that are going to feel very intimidated by that. They're going to say, "Chef Kibby, yeah, that's that's easy for you to say because you're a chef, but but we're not." And I want people to know that it doesn't have to be hard. The memories that you were talking about with your your kiddo of sitting down at the table and looking around at the faces of their family members and knowing that they had a part in that meal, it doesn't have to be a big part. I mean, I don't know if this has been your experience, but if my kid peeled the carrots or scrubbed the potatoes or even set the table, they will take they will take ownership of that entire meal and say, "I did this." It doesn't have to be much. It doesn't have to be fancy. It doesn't have to be complicated. It doesn't have to involve sharp objects. It's just finding some way that you can involve them. And if they begin to take a liking to the kitchen and you want to teach them more, that's where I want to be able to come in and be a resource to parents who don't feel like they don't have the adequate techniques or terminology or maybe even the the the equipment, the things that they need to be able to continue to build off the momentum that they're creating. To be able to provide things like YouTube videos and online courses and group coaching and things like that, that I can walk them through the process so that they could take advantage of this incredible opportunity that they have right under their noses, quite literally.

[00:39:32.265] - Lisa Qualls

Well, you know, I think it is important. Two things I want to say. One is a lot of people did not grow up in homes where someone was really cooking dinner very much. And so the the intimidating thing may be that a parent might be thinking, "honestly, I don't really know how to cook. How am I going to bring my child into the kitchen when I don't really know how to cook? I'm mostly just sort of heating things up." And so parents will gain confidence as they learn to cook, but they especially if their kids are older, some of that can happen side by side. The other thing I want to say is that the dinner table can be a really hard place with some of our kids. I mean, I have stuck with family dinner through it all, but I will say there have been many, many hard, hard meals. And so for those parents listening, thinking, "well, yeah, dinner must be really nice at your house, you're all sitting around chatting." No, we have had many, many, many very difficult family dinners. And yet I think it's worth sticking with it. And I have one child right now who really can hardly tolerate being at the table. And so I've had to set my bar low enough that this child can eat dinner. And I, I ask one thing and I just say, tell us one interesting thing about your day. I don't say to tell us the best thing because there will be usually nothing. If I say, "OK, what was the..." I've had this happen, I said, "OK, what was the worst thing that happened today?" And my child said, "this right now, eating dinner with you." So it may be hard, but I just think we can't give up on this because I think it is an anchor in our children's days. And for me, family dinner is like this is the anchor. This closes out, for the most part, the the busy of the day, and now we're going to have dinner and then we're going to clean up and we move toward the evening. Even with coming teens, we move sort of in the direction of bedtime, course I'm a big advocate of early to bed. But anyhow, I think we just can't give up. We can't give up even when it seems hard. And

if it means excusing a child who's making the whole family miserable. Maybe you excuse them, but I say hold them as long as you can and then excuse me if you need to, you know, but it's worth it. It really is worth it because my kids have hundreds, thousands of memories at dinner at the table because I've been making family dinner for almost thirty-four years. And I'm really, really glad that we've stuck with it and we haven't given up. And again, parents of teens, this gets more complicated when everybody's playing sports and they have jobs. But if they know that dinner's basically going to be at six o'clock every night, maybe they'll miss it several nights because they're at football practice or whatever. But they still know that when they're home it's happening. And I also find that my young teen boys now bring their friends home for dinner because there are a lot of kids who aren't having dinner with their families. They might have a single parent who's working a lot. And so they're not eating dinner at a table with the family. So I try to just make my dinner table a welcoming space as much as I can.

[00:42:45.305] - Chef Kibby

There's a part of it that goes back to trust, right, where it's the trust that when we say that we're going to have family meal time at this time every night, that we mean it. And if someone is putting up a screaming, fussing fit, we're still going to have family meal time if you're not here for it because of dance or because of band practice or this activity or that it's still going to happen. And in a strange way, especially those kids that are coming from hard places are looking for chinks in our armor to say, when you say that I can trust you, do you really mean it? Are you going to stay consistent? Are you going to stick with it even if this happens or that happens? And that's the hard work that we have to put in to taking care of these kiddos. And it's not glamorous. It's sometimes it's not fun and it's not pretty. It's not the kind of things that you typically post on Instagram or to Pinterest or anything like that. But it's building trust and it's looking past the behavior and seeing the true needs that are behind them. And one of the most essential needs that these kiddos have, like you had mentioned already, is in many cases food insecurity. And it's a basic need that all of us need to be fed. And if we can make that time of feeding a consistent thing and continue to feed them physically, the mental and emotional and social feeding that will give them will become more and more receptive by them the more that we build that trust. And that's a beautiful thing that I'm able to give to my kiddos in perhaps a much more natural way than others, like you said. Especially folks, parents who weren't raised in a home where cooking was something that they learned how to do. It is a language. It is a dance. It is a practice that isn't really taught in schools that much anymore. And so if you're not learning at school and you're not learning at home, all you've got are those 60 second hack videos on your Facebook feed. And they're not going to teach you anything about how to actually cook. They might show you a little trick or a hack or you may even learn a recipe. But it's not kind of even from a neurological standpoint, it's not helping you to connect the dots and see, "we'll I'm doing this step and then this step because this builds off of this." And that's where I really see myself in the future because of my background in culinary education and having taught things like knife skills to hundreds, if not thousands of people all the way from grown adults in their 60s to all the way down to middle schoolers and younger, to be able to communicate things in a way that is that is easy to understand and fun and practical so that people can get past the whole technique and terminology block that standing in their way and get to the mental and emotional and relational benefits that they really want for their families.

[00:45:57.535] - Lisa Qualls

Well, I couldn't love this more, we didn't even get to touch on this, but I do want to say for all of you parents out there like me, who have a hard time being playful, like sitting down and playing a board game is really hard for me. But being in the kitchen together is kind of a form of play. It's a way of connecting. It's it can be playful engagement. So I just want to encourage you all I do want you to check out Chef Kibby's work. Kibby, where can they find you?

[00:46:25.335] - Chef Kibby

You can find me at cookinwithkibby.com. That's cookin with Kibby, I had to leave off the g because it was too many letters for Twitter. True story. So cookinwithkibby.com, @cookinwithkibby at Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. I also have a YouTube channel. Just look up Cookin with Kibby. You'll see my goofy looking face there on the screen as soon as you pull it up. I do have a podcast as well. I'm hoping in the very near future to begin recording and posting things on that as well. And when you go

to my website, you can find my email list. I also have a course that I've created for families to learn how to safely and effectively handle knives. It's called Knife Skills for Busy Families. So,

[00:47:05.085] - Lisa Qualls
Oh, I like that.

[00:47:05.085] - Chef Kibby
If you're looking to take that, if you're looking to take that first step at being a little bit more confident and competent in the kitchen, I can think of no better place than learning how to safely and effectively handle knives. And you're going to see my kiddos in a lot of those videos there as well. So it's it's fun for the whole family. I think you'll get a lot out of it. That's just great. Well, thank you so much for being on the podcast. This has been a really fun conversation and my brain is going in so many directions. Will probably need to do this again because I think there is a lot to be said for building trust by feeding our children and teaching them and connecting in that way. So, I love it. Thank you for being with us.

[00:47:44.505] - Chef Kibby
Thank you, Lisa.

[00:47:49.905] - Melissa Corkum
OK, super fun interview, he sounds like a fantastic dad. I wish I had someone who was so passionate about providing food for my people.

[00:47:58.935] - Chef Kibby
He's a lot of fun. He's fun to follow on Instagram, too. So if you're interested, you should check out the show notes where you can find his Instagram and Facebook. But he's just a really intentional dad and learning a lot about TBRI, which, of course, makes us happy. And he has some great things going.

[00:48:18.795] - Melissa Corkum
Yeah. One thing I would say is because we know a lot of you are parenting and really crazy situations, and I remember back when it was the hardest for our family cooking and meal times were the first thing to go. And for a couple of reasons. One, often when I should have been cooking, I was helping a child who was severely dysregulated. And second, it just became harder and harder for our entire family to gather. I think it was hard for our child who struggled the most with attachment and it was hard for everyone else because they had to endure her behaviors. And so I just want to say that there's something powerful about food, but it doesn't have to be necessarily our entire family together every night. You guys talked a little bit about it in the interview. It doesn't have to be dinner. I think there's a lot of creative ways that we can be intentional at doing what dinnertime gives us, which is uninterrupted time to connect with our kids, have conversation. And so maybe it's right before bedtime or maybe it's car drives, but there are other options if you feel like I just can't go here right now with my family in this season, and so I just wanted to give you all permission if cooking and meal time and all of those things feels so overwhelming or to be so consistent, to do it every single night or even three nights a week, we get it. We've been there. And it doesn't mean that you can't provide what your family needs to connect and feel safe and feel heard and all of those things.

[00:50:03.185] - Lisa Qualls
Right, and I know I shared the story about Kalkidan and cooking with her and, you know, dinner time actually with her was extremely hard, but we were able to connect over cooking special food for her that then we packaged up for her breakfasts. And so there were ways for me to connect with her over cooking that didn't involve the dinner table so much. So I think we just all are doing the best we can and apply whatever you can from this great interview for your family. And again, if you want to connect with Kibby or find some of the great things he's doing, you can find information about Cookin with Kibby in the show notes. Just go to theadoptionconnection.com/118. Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram as @theadoptionconnection.

[00:50:54.695] - Melissa Corkum

Thanks so much for listening. We love having you. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a quick review over on iTunes that will help us reach more moms who may be feeling alone.

[00:51:04.865] - Lisa Qualls

And remember, until next week, you're a good mom, doing good work and we're here for you.

[00:51:12.035]

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