

[00:00:01.390] - Melissa Corkum

Before we jump into this episode, we are putting together something special for December. And so we need you to call into our listener hotline and tell us about the most memorable gift you've been given.

[00:00:13.380] - Lisa Qualls

It's really easy to do this, and we promise that this line does not ring anywhere at all. It just gives you a chance to record your message to us. So just call the number 208-741-3880, and tell us about your most memorable gift.

[00:00:31.030] - Melissa Corkum

We can't wait to hear your stories.

[00:00:33.650] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:00:41.580] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:47.090] - Lisa Qualls

Hi, friends. Welcome to episode 108 of the Adoption Connection Podcast. We know that holidays can be challenging and especially this year, things may not go quite the way we had expected them to go, and we want to help you have less stress and build more meaningful connections with the people you love. So today we had a fun interview. Melissa and I together interviewed our friend Marie Fiebach, who is an expert on organizational planning in particular with meals, but also for the holidays.

[00:01:23.090] - Melissa Corkum

Marie is a mother of four active teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 and founded Feed Your Family Tonight to help busy families eat dinner together at home and recapture a little bit of calm and the crazy. She is a cookbook author, podcaster, and has a weekly cooking segment on her local ABC affiliate in Kansas. So here's our conversation with Marie.

[00:01:49.710] - Melissa Corkum

Marie, welcome to the Adoption Connection podcast.

[00:01:53.910] - Marie Fiebach

Thanks so much for having me, Lisa and Melissa. I'm so excited to be here.

[00:01:58.650] - Lisa Qualls

Well, we're glad you're here, too.

[00:02:00.380] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, so we are here to talk about holiday planning. And if you've listened to the podcast for any length of time, you know that the holidays are an overwhelming time for our families. Lisa and I, in particular, are not really like geniuses at this. It catches us off guard every year, and neither of us are phenomenal gift givers. I think that adds an extra layer of stress. And so we thought it would be fun this year, we do something holiday every year, and we'll link those in the show notes. We've done Survive the Holiday, we did like a crowdsourcing thing where you'll called in. Last year, we shared just some really kind of funny and heartwarming holiday stories. So this year, we are bringing you an expert. So Marie, will you just tell us a little bit about you, your family, and then how you came to be such an expert at planning ahead for I know that you plan ahead for a lot of things, not just holidays.

[00:02:57.330] - Marie Fiebach

I'm married and I have four kids. My twins just turned 13. I have a 15 year old daughter and a 17 year old son. So I have a house full of teenagers right now. I am the founder of Feed Your Family Tonight, where my main goal is to help busy families plan and execute weeknight dinner, even when life is

crazy. And I have come up with a system for figuring out how you can feed a family when you have kids that are running in a hundred different directions and you're working and your spouse is working, it can be a little overwhelming. And that was kind of how I started. But last year, in 2019, I realized that I needed to get on top of the holidays myself. I have been a last minute person more times than I want to admit, and I kind of created my holiday planning guide for myself and started sharing it with the world because there are so many micro decisions that happen when you are planning for the holidays and you don't even realize it and they can creep up on you. But my holiday planning guide is 30 pages of an ebook that helps people look at what the decisions they have to make and make them intentionally rather than have them creep up on them. And then I have all sorts of bonuses because especially this year, it's 2020, and the holidays are going to look a little different for a lot of us, and so I have things to tackle that as well. And I live in Wichita, Kansas in a house that is a half a mile from my parents and a half a mile from the school and Church that I grew up going to. I swore I would never go back, and it's kind of funny that I ended up full circle, but I love it. I love where I'm at and family is so important to me.

[00:04:45.910] - Melissa Corkum

Yes, I love that. Lisa, you live in a pretty small town with that family feel as well.

[00:04:52.570] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah, we live in a smallish town, but we don't have any of our extended family near us. But now that my adult kids are growing up, one of my daughters lives a little less than 2 hours away, one of my adult kids, so that's nice. And we definitely are planning holidays around them being near and whoever else can make it. So we have a family tradition where now that everybody's sort of dispersed a little bit, that every odd year is our family's year, and every even year, if they have in-laws, they go to their in-laws or if they want to go to friends or something. So everybody goes on the even years they can be with us or they can be elsewhere, but then on the odd years, everybody comes home so that we have one holiday where we're all together. So that's the biggest, talking about decisions, this is simplifying things for everybody.

[00:05:43.410] - Marie Fiebach

Well, I love that. And I love that their in-laws are buying into that with you as well. I am very lucky that my parents and my in-laws get along really well. We always do Christmas Eve at my parents house and Christmas Day, sometimes it is at my in-laws house, and sometimes we do it the day after Christmas, depending upon what's happening with my husband's siblings.

[00:06:08.070] - Melissa Corkum

Yes, the name of the game is flexibility.

[00:06:10.770] - Lisa Qualls

Yes, which I don't love when it comes to holidays. I actually am a definite holiday planner. My biggest stumbling block is the gifts. I don't like shopping. So Marie, how do you see COVID impacting families as we plan and prepare?

[00:06:29.130] - Marie Fiebach

There are so many things that are going to affect the holidays. Let's just start by your idea and talk about gifts because shopping is going to be a different beast this year. When we shop, usually, we kind of rely on shipping dates when we're online shopping. I have already done some research. Amazon prime is not guaranteeing two day delivery for all items. They have not done that since the pandemic started. There are so many items that they're not guaranteeing two day delivery. So if you're counting on that, you want to shop ahead. Ups and FedEx are having earlier shipping date requirements for the least expensive shipping options. Ups is as early as December 13. So if you are planning on online shopping and do not want to pay extra fees, anyone will get it to you the 24th, but you are going to be paying through the nose for your shipping. So if you want your shipping to be less expensive, then you are going to want to shop for gifts early. Another thing about COVID and 2020 holidays is there's going to be a lot of people that won't be able to come or you're not going to have as large a family gatherings. There are people that are going to be cooking their first Thanksgiving dinner, and that's going to be a big thing. I have a Thanksgiving 101. If you've never cooked

Thanksgiving dinner, I have all of the things that you want to look for to make sure that you're thawing your Turkey on time and make sure that you have enough space in your oven and on your stove so that you don't end up with things that aren't cooked at the same time and have a really late meal. So there's going to be people that are cooking for the first time. The other thing is and this is what's really important to me is that we still want to build connection with our family members even if we're not in person, and I have lots of tips for that. One of my biggest things is use the technology that we have. You've got FaceTime, you've got Zoom, consider making a recipe with a relative. Most of us have traditional holiday foods. Most families have something that is really important to them at the holidays. Make it with a loved one who is far away, over FaceTime or over Zoom and you can make it together or you can have someone coach you or you coach them. Maybe you're coaching your daughter or your son how to make your traditional family foods. Or maybe you're connecting with a grandkid and you're teaching them how to make one of your favorite family meals. But I really believe that even though we may not be physically together, it's so important to build connection.

[00:09:12.450] - Lisa Qualls

Well, there are a lot of fun ways to play games online together. I was just thinking, as you were talking about how, you know, on Thanksgiving, sometimes we'll break out games in the evening, maybe we won't be able to do that in the same way, but it could be fun if I got my kids to help plan sort of a game night of sorts. I don't know exactly, but something like that.

[00:09:34.220] - Marie Fiebach

I have a really fun idea for doing a video scavenger hunt or a photo scavenger hunt in your own town where everybody has a list of pictures that they need to take, and then you can post them to a shared album. Maybe you're taking a picture in front of a license plate that starts with the letter Q. So you've got to search through your community and find a license plate that starts with the letter Q. Or you've got to take a picture of a business that has a city's name in it that isn't the city you live in. So you take a picture in front of old Chicago or Denver mattress, and then you can see what different, so you're still connected. Even though you're doing your own thing in your own community, you're building that connection, and that can even work for a large family gathering. My mother is one of twelve, so I have oodles and oodles of cousins, and that's something that I could do with my greater family, not just my close immediate family.

[00:10:29.140] - Melissa Corkum

Oh, that's such a fun idea. Yeah, I love that.

[00:10:32.230] - Lisa Qualls

I like it, too. I think I might propose it to my family.

[00:10:36.110] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, Marie, I was just thinking that one of my favorite holiday things is one of my best friends usually does a great big cookie exchange where you have to make a bajillion dozens at the same kind of cookie, but you come home with all these different types of cookies that you also didn't have to bake. I don't think that's going to be happening this year, so do you have any fun ideas for virtual cookie exchanges?

[00:11:00.750] - Marie Fiebach

I am thinking more socially distant than virtual. So if you have your local group, you could still do a cookie exchange. And how I anticipate doing this socially distanced is instead of having everything out on platters, everybody individually packages nine or ten or however many invites there are of their specific cookie, and then you can have it on your porch and everybody can come and drop off their cookies and then pick up the other cookies. I feel like it doesn't have to go away, it just has to be a little bit different, and I think you can do it socially distanced.

[00:11:36.090] - Melissa Corkum

That's a great idea. I like that. So yeah, everyone would bring their stuff, like prepackaged in ziplock bags. Normally, we do this, like walk around the house and pick up our cookies kind of thing, but obviously that's not going to be happening this year.

[00:11:47.810] - Marie Fiebach

Exactly, but you can bring it all pre packaged, and then everybody can pick up their cookies. And what I would recommend is have people drop them off earlier in the day, have a scheduled time for that, and then have a pickup later in the day. That's a scheduled time so that people aren't necessarily passing at the same time, but everybody still gets the fun. You can run an errand in between, have a drop off for an hour, have a little break, and then have another drop off pick up. I think it could be really fun. I think, thinking outside the box is what we're going to have to do this year, and that can mean lots of different things. But the key still is don't let the connections go just because things look different.

[00:12:29.380] - Lisa Qualls

What are some other things? So we could still do a cookie exchange, we can do some virtual games, which now I'm getting kind of excited about, what are some other ways that you see families doing things a little different that might also still be rewarding connection wise?

[00:12:48.090] - Marie Fiebach

I have a friend whose family does this for birthdays since the pandemic hit, where they all have each person get their own cake, or they go to a restaurant and buy a single piece of cake, and they all get together on Zoom and they sing Happy Birthday and everyone eats their cake together. We're talking a lot about baked goods, but food is my thing, and so I have lots of ideas for food. I think it's going to be really important to think about shipping some of your traditional family foods to family members that are far away. My mother is Queen of this. She has been shipping cookies and candy for years, and there are definite tips for shipping baked goods. And the biggest key for shipping baked goods is to make sure that everything is packed very tightly without any wiggle room. So you want to have lots of paper towels or cloth napkins and have it surrounding each individual cookie that is wrapped in its own plastic wrap and making sure that there isn't any wiggle room. And that's the same with candy. That's the same with cookies. But I think making sure that you're still getting those tastes of what your traditions are like. I think that's going to be really important for keeping lasting memories. The other thing is now is the time to create new memories. And that's been one of the biggest blessings of the pandemic for my family is that because so many things shut down, we were able to let go of some of our old routines and our old habits, and it gave us space to create new memories. And so now is the time to think about, is there something that you've always wanted to do but the hustle and bustle of the holidays just seemed to be too much? Maybe you wanted to go see a Christmas tree lighting, or maybe you wanted to chop down your own Christmas tree for the first time, but you usually just got one at the big box store. Now is the time to think about what's something that we've wanted to do and create new memories, because the thing is, for your children, no matter what, this holiday season is going to be memorable. And as a parent, it is our opportunity to make it a good memory and make it a positive memory. And so now is the time to try something new. Do something different that you haven't done before. And that, I think, is one of the biggest blessings of the pandemic.

[00:15:10.660] - Melissa Corkum

Well, I'm thinking for us adoptive and foster families for years we've had to make excuses about why we couldn't come to the cookie exchange because we were afraid our child was either going to steal all the cookies or have a meltdown at the cookie exchange. I know holiday Church services, a lot of our families probably traditionally would attend a Christmas Eve service, and that usually is a perfect recipe for a big meltdown because they're usually late at night or kids are already overstimulated. I think you're right, Marie, this year we have permission to say no to a lot of things, and some of these things are not going to be happening regardless. And so we don't have to feel this guilt or do all this extra explaining to our kids about why our family is the only one who's not X, Y and Z. Sometimes we call it cocooning. We can use the pandemic as an excuse or a valid reason, whatever we're thinking, but you're right. This is an opportunity to do something a little bit smaller, a little bit quieter, really creative, way outside the box. Maybe even you ditch the traditional holiday foods, which I think most of my kids would probably be happy to do and do Mexican or Korean or Ethiopian or something different that maybe you don't have to thaw a 30 pound turkey for, and then, you'll never know, maybe you'll have a really fun time, and it's something that will continue past pandemic life.

[00:16:38.950] - Marie Fiebach

Well, Melissa, I totally agree with that. And my sister adopted two kids out of the foster system, and I know that cocooning. I know when you have a child that takes so much energy and you're just trying to keep them from creating too much of a disruption. You know they're going to create some kind of a disruption, but you're trying to make sure that it's not too much. And this is a chance to have a clean slate and say we're out this year, and we're going to take care of our family and we're going to celebrate our way, and so I love that. I totally get that.

[00:17:13.230] - Lisa Qualls

So there are always so many details involved in holidays, which you already mentioned, and I know for me I start to get this feeling like I should get on top of this, I should get on top of this. But I would love to hear from you how we can actually get on top of it. How can we be sure we're going to have what we need either for people coming or for shipping, like thinking ahead about shipping supplies and all of that. How would you suggest we do that because we're recording this in almost late October. So like, it's time it's time to get on this, right?

[00:17:50.770] - Marie Fiebach

It's totally time to get on this. In my countdown to Christmas, I have an October start for these early birds that are really on top of it. And then a November start for people that are kind of on top of it. And then if you hit December and you haven't started, I've got tips for you on that, but one of my biggest things is to do a pre holiday shopping trip, and this shopping trip will take me a good long, four hour morning sometimes. But you want to stock up on all of your basics early in the season. I recommend doing this on a weekday morning in December. If you can't do it on a weekday morning, try it on a Sunday morning, but don't try it on a Friday or a Saturday because you're going to set yourself up to fail. But I actually have worksheets where you list all of the basic things that you need to buy, and I'm talking shampoo, deodorant, toilet paper. You're stocking up on all of those basic items and then your basic food items. Most families have kind of a core ingredient list of most of the foods that they make. And I'm not talking special holiday foods, I'm talking Tuesday night dinners. So I stock up on pasta and I stock up on canned tomatoes and cereal and basic canned goods, basic things that will keep in my pantry from December through the middle of January. So I'm doing six weeks of basic shopping, and you know what this does is this helps when you're trying to do all of the extra shopping that the holidays have, you're buying gifts and you're doing all sorts of other shopping. You don't have to buy anything but fresh meat, fresh fruits and vegetables. All of your pantry is stocked with the things that you need. It's going to get you in and out of the store faster, and it's going to give you so much brain space, because when you've done that pre holiday shopping, then you kind of have an idea of the meals that you're going to have too. It's going to help you with meal planning and it's going to lift the stress of shopping, so that when you're in the grocery store, you're not having to think about buying the toothpaste and the deodorant. All you have to do is go get your fresh fruits and vegetables, your fresh meats, get in and get out. Or when you're going to the big box store and you're buying a couple of gifts, all you're getting is the gifts. You don't have to think about all of the other things to stock up on.

[00:20:17.610] - Lisa Qualls

And it seems like if you wanted to, you could do a lot of that basics, like in a Walmart grocery order or something like that. So it might take a long time at home to get that whole order organized, but you're doing it at home, and then all you have to do is go and pick it up.

[00:20:34.020] - Marie Fiebach

Well. And here's the other thing is, when you are doing the shopping trip, now, I live in Wichita, Kansas, so everything is 20 minutes from me. It's not hard, but if you are in a larger Metropolitan area, I would have your first pickup or your first shopping trip the farthest away from your house. And you do that one first, you might have to put a cooler in your car. If you're going to, like, Costco or Sam's, and you're buying frozen vegetables and frozen meats, it is worth it to put a cooler in your car. Then you drive to the next one that's closest to you and then the next one. So you work your way out and in that way, if you run out of time, the errands you have to do is the one that's closest to home.

[00:21:12.690] - Lisa Qualls  
That's smart. I like that.

[00:21:14.960] - Melissa Corkum  
So smart. And I was kind of against, like, I kind of wait for the the last minute because it's overwhelming, and so I kind of put it off. But I'm getting this new vision for, like, man, if I started now, maybe I could be done by Thanksgiving and then imagine what the payoff would be. Then I really could forget about it in the craziest part of the holiday season. And instead of trying to forget about it yet it's still having it hang over my head, I could literally forget about it because it would be done.

[00:21:45.730] - Marie Fiebach  
Well, and here's the thing is, you don't want to forget about it too much because you want to remember where you've put everything and where they're wrapped. And so I have a gift giving sheet where you list each person. You list ideas that you want to buy for them and where you can buy them, and then you list whether you purchase them or not, where you've put them when you've purchased them, and then if they've been wrapped, and then when you've given them away. And so that way, if you do your shopping before Thanksgiving and you forget about it, you have something to remind you where you put that, because how many of us have bought a gift way ahead of time, hidden it somewhere, and then when it's time to get it, you can't find it.

[00:22:27.450] - Melissa Corkum  
I have two things I'm currently looking for right now that I put away safely, completely different, and I've spent literally hours of the past two weeks looking for these two things, and one of them is going to cost me a lot of money if I can't find it.

[00:22:40.650] - Marie Fiebach  
Melissa, I have so been there. That's part of the gift giving. The other thing is when you are planning ahead and you're filling out gift giving sheets and listing all of the people that you need to buy for, I don't want you to forget anyone. So if you have to buy teacher gifts, make sure that's on the list. If you give a little something to your neighbor, even if it's a baked good, put that on your list. If you have an elderly neighbor that you always exchange a card with or something, put that on your list, get everything on your list. And then here's the fun part is when you list where you can get all these things, you can save shopping trips instead of heading to your mall three times, you can hit the mall once, get all of the things that you need, and you might be shopping for the postman, and you might be shopping for your nephew, and you might be shopping for your son and your spouse, but it's all in one shopping trip. You do that online and you're going to save shipping costs, too. And so you have it all in one order, all in one shopping trip, so I'm saving you time and money by putting it all on paper. And some people are digital people. I physically need to write it on paper. That's just how I am, and so I print out gift giving sheets for all of my kids. I have the lucky predicament of my children having December birthdays. So I have two sets of grandparents and my husband, and they're all saying, well, they need gift ideas for Christmas and birthdays, so I'm having to come up with, like, five or six different gift ideas for my children in December. So I print out a sheet for them, and I list five or six different things. And then I start saying, who I said to get that gift because the grandparents want something that the children want, and so that way, I'm not getting repeat gifts for my kids, and I have it all organized because otherwise it gets really overwhelming, really fast.

[00:24:38.250] - Melissa Corkum  
That December birthday thing should really be illegal. We have one of those, too, and we have two early January birthdays. And so it's just like, what do you want? What do you want? Or someone's asking me, I need ideas, and I need more ideas, and I need more ideas.

[00:24:53.140] - Marie Fiebach  
Yes, oh my goodness. Yeah, my two oldest have December birthdays, my mom and my dad both have December birthdays, so we basically eat cake for, like, five days straight in our family because they're all, like, seven, eight, nine. I mean, they're all in one week, and it's hard. And I want to make sure that they get meaningful things, especially because it's all coming in December. I want them to have things that they will appreciate for the rest of the year. And so by taking time now in November, you

can be so much more intentional about the kinds of gift ideas that you're giving to other people because this is about buying gifts yourself, but in my case, as a parent, I'm giving ideas to aunts and uncles and grandparents. And by putting it all on paper, it keeps me so much more organized. And what's great is when it's on paper, then it takes all of that space out of my head, and I have less anxiety, and I have less worry because it doesn't have to be twirling in my head to not forget to add that item or to tell Grandpa that Max wants a specific pair of earbuds or something. It takes it out of my head, and that helps me be a better, more present parent for other things.

[00:26:08.010] - Lisa Qualls

I totally resonate with that because I have to write everything down. Melissa knows this. If I don't write it down, I can't hold it all in my head. I have too many people, too many things. So I use my Google calendar and all my digital planning stuff, but I have a paper planner that I take everywhere, and I write everything in it because I just won't be able to remember. And my kids know that about me.

[00:26:33.490] - Melissa Corkum

Well, not even that, like you said, even if you can remember it, Marie, it takes a lot of energy and a lot of brain space, and it creates a lot of stress. And actually, Lisa, we have a day in our box care course about relieving your mental platter to give room for connection. Like you said, Marie. So both really resonate a lot with that. Lisa and I are not phenomenal, like actual physical gift givers, but, Lisa, you had a couple of ideas of some kind of virtual gifts or ways that were not so much like things you can buy at a store, but experiential gifts that you could give if you are miles and miles apart from a loved one.

[00:27:15.000] - Lisa Qualls

Well, and some of them what I was thinking of may or may not be a gift, but they'd be a great way to connect, like Marie was talking about. Sort of a new alternative way to connect over the holidays. And I have a good friend who's just a super phenomenal grandmother. She's also very organized, Marie, you would love her. And you two are two peas in a pod anyhow, but she plays games with her grandchildren over Zoom or FaceTime. So they'll set up like her grandson will have a chess board, she'll have a chess board and they play together or word games or different things. But I was thinking for the holidays that maybe it would be neat if grandparents wanted to record themselves, make a video of them reading a Christmas book to the grandchildren, because maybe they won't get to, you know, grandparents may not be flying around the country this year, right. And so maybe the grandma who would have liked to have been reading a Christmas story to her grandchild can still do that. And she could even send the book as a gift. And then the video, they could watch her read it or you could do it live. There are just so many ways I think that we can still connect. And I think for kids who are, like, older elementary or even middle school, if they wanted to do gifts for younger cousins or something, they could do the same thing. They could record themselves telling knock, knock jokes or reading a funny story or something and send that to some younger cousins. So I guess, yeah, I'm not always awesome at physical gifts, but I do think this idea, Marie, of new ways of connecting is really good.

[00:28:54.270] - Marie Fiebach

Totally, you know, I have a love language of gifts. I love presents, and I love giving thoughtful presents. And for me, when you are trying to give a really thoughtful gift, it has less to do with the amount you spend and more to do about what that person you are giving loves and what is important to them. I mean, my husband just recently gave me a new set of measuring spoons. It was like a \$6 gift, but he saw that I was frustrated in the kitchen because I do recipe development, and I was like, I need another set of measuring spoons. I'm tired of washing in between. And so when you're trying to give thoughtful gifts, when that's kind of your challenge, start thinking about the other person and some of their pain points, something that's frustrating them and see if you can find a way to relieve that frustration. And that's one of my big tips for helping you give gifts.

[00:29:50.010] - Lisa Qualls

Oh, that's a good one. I was thinking of giving my husband the gift of having his car be detailed. Like, maybe that's because what I would want. Maybe I should think about asking for it rather than giving it, but I think he could really enjoy it.

[00:30:04.050] - Melissa Corkum

He probably wouldn't know how much he enjoyed it until it happened.

[00:30:07.830] - Lisa Qualls

Right.

[00:30:09.090] - Marie Fiebach

You know what I love about that gift is? There's no more junk cluttering your house. It is removing clutter from your life rather than adding clutter to your life with my children, we think very intentionally about the gifts that we give them. One of our favorite things that we have given our children over the years is monogrammed bath towels, and we do that for two reasons. One, it's a useful gift that doesn't clutter our home, but two, and this is so true now that I have teenagers, you know, whose tiles on the floor, that they dropped someone else's tile on the floor because it has their name on it. So that's one of my favorite gifts, especially that doesn't add clutter to your life.

[00:30:51.180] - Melissa Corkum

Well, and a lot of our kids kind of need the safety of possession of possessing something. And so even it might sound boring a bath towel, but a bath towel, maybe in your favorite Disney character with your name monogrammed on it would probably feel really special. And some kids would know that this means that my sibling won't touch it. I know for one of our kids, she would be thrilled to know that no one else's germs were on her bath towel, that it had been marked as hers. And for her, it was anything we could designate as specifically hers she would just be thrilled at, even if it was her bananas for the week. I told the story a lot, how I would buy her her own separate bunch of bananas for the week, and the rest of the family would get their own, and hers would get masking tape and her name on them or whatever. And again, I wasn't spending any more money. I was going to buy bananas for the whole family to eat anyway. I just knew that she was going to want one every single morning, and so we would just designate them for her, and again, no clutter. And so be creative about the things that maybe are causing conflict amongst the siblings in your house and things. And maybe you can replace some things that are used every day with some special personalized versions.

[00:32:05.750] - Marie Fiebach

Do you know another one of my favorite things like that is getting everybody their own water bottle. And we kind of have a rule in our house that anytime we're getting into car to run errands, everybody brings a water bottle because you get 5 miles down the road and the kids like, I'm thirsty. And so my kids are in the habit of always bringing water bottle in the car no matter what. I don't care if you're going five minutes down the road or you're taking a three hour road trip. They always have a water bottle with them and they have their own.

[00:32:33.760] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, and that whole hydration piece is really important, too.

[00:32:37.670] - Lisa Qualls

So, Marie, we're talking a lot about the holidays. And one of the things with the holidays is we get so laser focused sometimes on those big special meals that we find ourselves maybe a little too busy to do the regular feeding of our families just because we aren't maybe planning ahead and thinking ahead about regular meals because we're focused on the big ones. So what would you suggest we all do to kind of keep our families, like, we don't want to eat crazy for the weeks leading up to the holidays, we want to go into the holidays feeling healthy and good, so what is your suggestion about that?

[00:33:13.530] - Marie Fiebach

Meal planning is my jam. That is my favorite thing to teach families, and if you can plan your meals, it takes ten minutes at the beginning of the week and write out your activities, figure out when you're going to eat, and plan your meals around your family's activities, you are going to give yourself so much brain space and you're not going to forget that on Tuesday of Thanksgiving week, your family needs to eat and you're going to plan to have something that's not poultry at the beginning of

Thanksgiving week, because that's another thing that I'm totally guilty of, and it helps you add variety. I have a free download for your listeners. It's at [feederfamilytonight.com/adoption](http://feederfamilytonight.com/adoption). It is my weekly meal planning sheet, and it will walk you through a whole process for planning weeknight dinner that is going to take so much stress out of the holiday season, because when we are so busy, it's so easy to fall into the trap of having the same foods over and over again or hitting the drive food or getting overwhelmed about dinner, and when you plan your meals, especially during the holidays, it is going to help your household run smoother.

[00:34:24.330] - Melissa Corkum

Marie, thank you so much. You've brought up some things that I had neglected to think about coming up into this holiday season, so I'm going to get busy on my planning, hopefully. And maybe this will be the year to change things. Maybe I'll approach holidays differently from here on out with your help.

[00:34:39.520] - Lisa Qualls

I'm looking forward to applying some of these new ideas you've given us, Marie.

[00:34:44.550] - Marie Fiebach

Well, Lisa, Melissa, it is such a joy. And again, I just want you and your families to enjoy connection and have a little less stress.

[00:34:57.730] - Lisa Qualls

Well, you can probably tell from listening to this interview that was fairly free flowing. And literally, as Marie was talking, I was getting these little sparks of ideas of things, and I'm actually excited about trying some new things because like, a lot of you listening, you may have adult kids who aren't at home or you could have kids living away from home for a variety of reasons. And I'm excited to continue building new ways to connect.

[00:35:26.410] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I am feeling inspired. I feel like I need to drop everything right now and just do the things that I'm inspired about, like maybe do some online shopping or some brainstorming or something because otherwise I feel like maybe I'm going to lose my momentum. If you are interested in connecting with Marie, she can be found on Instagram at @MarieFiebach, F-I-E-B-A-C-H. And on Facebook @FeedYourFamilyTonight. I also recommend checking out her podcast. It's short and simple, and you'll get phenomenal tips. Also, she has, as she mentioned, a freebie for you guys, which is at [Feederfamilytonight.com/adoption](http://Feederfamilytonight.com/adoption). Most importantly, if you want to get a jump start on planning your holiday season, we recommend that you grab her holiday guide at [feedyourfamilytonight.com/holiday](http://feedyourfamilytonight.com/holiday) and of course, all of those things will be in the Show Notes where you can connect to all the things and the show notes are found at [theadoptionconnection.com/108](http://theadoptionconnection.com/108).

[00:36:25.990] - Lisa Qualls

Before you go, we'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find us on Facebook or Instagram @theadoptionconnection.

[00:36:33.760] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:36:43.870] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:36:51.070] - Melissa Corkum

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