

[00:00:02.710] - Lisa Qualls

This week, we're bringing you a recording from a recent workshop that took place in The Village.

[00:00:08.210] - Melissa Corkum

In case you haven't heard about it, The Village is our membership community, where you can find support and training to meet your needs. For more information head to theadoptionconnection.com/VILLAGE.

[00:00:19.020] - Lisa Qualls

We hope you enjoy the workshop.

[00:00:25.350] - Melissa Corkum

Welcome to everyone. This is the Maintaining a Strong Marriage when Parenting is Hard workshop. Our goal is to leave, like, a solid 20 minutes for Q&A, because I know oftentimes there are individual situations and questions, and that probably will be the most useful thing for you all. Hopefully, by the end of this, you'll come away with some encouragement, maybe some practical things. These are the things that have worked for us and we think they will work, at least some, of them will work for you, too. So this is our family. I'm Melissa, and my husband Patrick is here. And we have six kids through birth and adoption. We also have two grandkids. And this is all of us at the end of April. And what's significant about this picture is this is actually the first time we've all been together as a family since 2015. And so our time together is too short to tell you all of the things that went on and all the reasons for why that is, but if you listen to the podcast or have spent time with Lisa and me, I've shared part of our story there.

[00:01:38.710] - Melissa Corkum

But just know that the reason that we hadn't all been together since 2015 is some of the hard things that are true about parenting. Kids who come to us from early adversity. And we have been an adoptive family forever, if you count the fact that I'm an adoptee and for 13 years since our first adoption. And we have just seen a lot, and so we haven't seen it all, but we know what hard is. And so the things that we have learned about our marriage have not come from a place of everything's fine and dandy. So we can empathize, I think, with a lot of the situations, maybe that you all are facing.

[00:02:24.390] - Patrick Corkum

So I will tell you the first secret that there is to maintaining a strong marriage is don't write a marriage book together. That is the absolute worst thing I think we could have done. And we've been working on it now for a good, solid three years or so. And the reason why it's taking so long is every time we get back into it, yeah, we need to get away from it. We'll just leave it at that.

[00:02:52.990] - Melissa Corkum

What he's not saying is every time we work on it, we have a massive fight.

[00:02:57.030] - Patrick Corkum

Yeah, massive is a good phrase for some of our worst, I think.

[00:03:03.150] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I think our therapist said this week, maybe you just shouldn't do that anymore.

[00:03:12.490] - Patrick Corkum

All right. Is this me again, this life?

[00:03:18.510] - Melissa Corkum

You have to follow that up with something serious.

[00:03:20.320] - Patrick Corkum

Yeah, something serious. So I think the thing that we often forget in marriage, even when parenting or anything, is that we are on the same team as our spouse. And I think the best way of illustrating how sometimes it feels, is a scenario when I was in high school, I used to play ice hockey, hence the

pictures, I don't know why you chose the Russian team?

[00:03:49.740] - Melissa Corkum

It just looks like the guys on the left were like working together, maybe to form a barrier, do something together as a team. And the two guys on the right are fighting.

[00:04:00.060] - Patrick Corkum

Next time I pick the pictures. So we were playing a team and all of a sudden, I was watching the game from the bench, and all of a sudden the referee blows the whistle. And we all look back down the other end of the ice and there's our goalie and one of our defense men. Same team and they were duking it out on the ice. And the referee had no idea what to do. I've never seen it before where two players on the same team are in a fight in an ice hockey game. It's always the opposite team. And for whatever reason they just forgot that they were on the same team, supposed to be working together. I don't know. But the referee had no idea what to do in terms of penalties either. It was the most confusing thing any of us has experienced from that perspective. But clearly we do this. I think in marriage as couples is we forget that we have the same goal in mind and that we're working together. And sometimes when one person does something maybe they shouldn't do or we don't think they should do, or maybe not on their best behavior or performing their best, we can get annoyed. But it's not that the other person is trying to do bad, or trying to not have the same goal. We have the same goal. So we really just need to remember that we are on the same team. And that's really, I think, going to be the central point to everything. So we just remember that one point.

[00:05:37.330] - Melissa Corkum

So practically though, what does that look like? So we have a couple things that we think equal being on the same team. The first is we want to prioritize spending time together. And I know this probably seems obvious in some ways. I think that the bigger question is how do we do that? This seems like an important time to just say if you are listening to this workshop with little ears in the room, this is a marriage workshop and so we are going to talk freely about all the things that marriage is. So if you have somebody near you or listening to this, you may want to pause if you're listening to the podcast replay, or grab some earbuds, or put your little people to bed. So it's okay to choose your marriage over your kids. And I think, especially in a world where a lot of you who are here or listening, come from a world where we know things like trust based relational intervention and connected parenting and the world of attachment, and we have kids who struggle with abandonment issues or who have been abandoned. I think it's really hard to sometimes separate ourselves, especially if we have kids who want to be near us all the time. It can feel icky to say, I'm not choosing you right now. I'm choosing this other person, or you have to go to bed, or you have to go over here, or we're going behind closed doors and leaving you out. And also, sometimes we have kids that need almost constant supervision, and so that is tricky too. But we want to give you permission to choose your marriage over your kids. We've been doing it for years, and our kids are all okay, more or less, but none of them are not okay because we chose our marriage with our kids. And I think we have to be willing to accept a less than perfect solution or scenario. We'll talk a little bit about some of the creative ways we've been able to get time alone. But also, if you listen to the podcast episode 144, Lisa and I spent a good 30-35 minutes talking about all the different ways that her and Russell, Patrick, and me have been able to do that. So we could probably spend all of our time brainstorming ways, creative ways to find time together, creative ways to find respite and babysitting. But there are so many other good things to cover. So we'll talk about a couple, but if you want to check out episode 144, you can do that as well.

[00:08:09.160] - Patrick Corkum

And really, if you focus on prioritizing each other and focus on that marriage, you will be better for your children as well. So really, focusing there is really important. It will give them good things to model and see, good relationship and things like that.

[00:08:28.210] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So for us, we've just always made it clear to our kids that we're a priority. We've modeled it not just in spending time away from them, but also when we're together. We love making out in front of them and making them uncomfortable. I mean, we just love making out together. The fact that it's

uncomfortable for them is probably just bonus. We have a big household with a lot of people. There are four generations currently living in our house right now. I think we're down to ten or nine. I don't know. You can count while I keep talking. But we've had as many as 13, and we don't have a big house. And our bedroom backs up to kids bedrooms and all the things. And sex is not just for nighttime, and I'm not a nighttime person. Like, I'm an early morning person. And so right now, we both work at home. And so one of the best ways you can guarantee, especially if you have older kids, that understand what this means to get time alone is to just announce to them that you're going to go have sex and they will all leave you alone. I promise you.

[00:09:33.250] - Patrick Corkum

You need to do that more often. Yeah. And by the way, there's eight right now, by far the smallest. Yeah, I remember the last time we were that small.

[00:09:44.920] - Melissa Corkum

Anything else about how we get time alone?

[00:09:47.810] - Patrick Corkum

No, I think that covers it well, being very intentional about it and don't feel guilty about it and do what you need to do to make it happen. I think one of the things we often don't do is, this is a two way street giving each other time for self care, that's yourself and your spouse. And there are a lot of times where the stay-at-home person. So both Melissa and I, for background, have been stay at home parents at some point in time, whether it was me working and she was staying home, taking care of the kids and homeschooling, or vice versa.

[00:10:26.090] - Melissa Corkum

And if you ever have a chance to switch roles with your spouse, I highly recommend it.

[00:10:31.070] - Patrick Corkum

Yeah, I loved being at home for that time.

[00:10:34.280] - Melissa Corkum

It turns out that perhaps, maybe 20 years ago, we should have decided he should have been stay-at-home-parent, and I should have started a career. But that's the story for another day.

[00:10:41.920] - Patrick Corkum

Yeah. But one of the things with our marriage, and I've heard this a lot, is when I go to work and I'd be at work and I come home at the end of the day, she just kind of wanted to hand off the kids to me, or expect me to all of a sudden be like super parent. Because, you know, I've been away all day and had adult conversation. And it was a super easy day for me and super hard for her. And that is true that it was super hard for her, but there are a couple of things often that she just didn't have perspective on. One is the stress of having to go to work and deal with a different set of children. But also one of the things we had, particularly in our family, was we had times where it was extremely unstable, and Melissa would call me during the middle of the day and say, I've locked myself in the room because, whatever particular reason, I need you to come home right now. And I lived with the stress of that at work. It was horrible going to work, and so stressful because I was about an hour away, no matter where I was, to be able to get home and be there for her, to help her as she was locked in a room or whatever.

[00:12:07.970] - Patrick Corkum

This would happen a couple of times a week sometimes, where I would get these calls. And that stress and anxiety was just absolutely draining. And it's not as easy on the other person either way for either side as we may think it is. So we need to give grace in that and still be able to give each other time to take care of themselves. I come home often, and the thing that Melissa love to do is always make sure that if there was a thing she could go do, she could go to adoptive mom's night out or whatever she wanted to do. She tried to give me space for video games and other things. That was really hard, I think, to do that, but it was definitely my way of self care. And fishing, clearly I love fishing, and the other side to it, Melissa you can talk about fixing ourselves and whatnot if you want.

[00:13:04.250] - Melissa Corkum

So, you know, if you've spent any time doing any of our parenting groups here at The Adoption Connection, one of the things that we talk about is reflecting on what we actually have control over and what we only have influence over, and then what we have absolutely no control over. And as it turns out, the best we can get in terms of our kids and their behaviors is influence and often no control at all. And same thing with our spouses. Like, I think there's a tendency when we ask the question before the workshop kind of what the biggest struggles that you all were facing in marriage? The two things that just came up again and again were finding time to be alone and how to deal with differences in parenting styles, which we'll keep touching on as we go through. And I think there's a tendency to think we need to fix the other parent, or fix the way that they're interacting with the kids. Ironically, in our relationship, I'm probably the worst offender of the bad parenting. But ultimately we only have control of ourselves. And so the most powerful thing that we can do is deal with our own stuff, whether that be exploring why certain behaviors get under our skin more than others, whether that be exploring why it makes us so hurt or angry when our spouse doesn't parent the way that we are expecting them to parent.

[00:14:41.380] - Melissa Corkum

And so one of the things that Patrick has been extremely gracious about for me is letting me go do the things that I feel like are the things that I can do for myself in terms of therapy or getting away, or I had the privilege of being in Suzanne Stabile's enneagram Cohort last year. And so that meant four weekends away across the span of a year. Well, actually, you came with me for a lot of them, so that might not count. But we made the sacrifice both financially and in time to make that happen. It was probably not how he would have chosen to spend his time. Or maybe not what he would have chosen for me to do to get better. But he supported me in doing that. And we both have supported each other to get time with a therapist or coach or whatever that looks like. To explore what it looks like to I think self care has a lot of different connotations. We've been talking here a lot about nervous system care at The Adoption Connection. What does that mean? This summer for Patrick, it's been cornhole. He's been playing, I don't know, what would you say, upwards of 15 hours of cornhole a week?

[00:15:52.740] - Patrick Corkum

15? At least 16.

[00:15:55.430] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. As it turns out, it's a rhythmic and repetitive activity that we can all do in relationship, and we brought the kids into it, and it's been really good. But he also spends a lot of time playing cornhole either in our backyard, which means it can be kind of more of a family thing or, like, going out and playing in little mini tournaments or whatever. And so different seasons have looked like different things. He has always been gracious about letting me do my thing, and I have often been resentful about him doing his thing. But I think we're doing it better now, and I think we're both better for it.

[00:16:28.590] - Patrick Corkum

Often we want to change our kids, we want to change our spouses. But the one thing we absolutely can change, the one thing we do have control over, is ourselves. And that's more than anything, that's what we need to work on and focus on. And the changes to ourselves can really make a big difference. And I know for myself, I had to change the way that I looked at our marriage and treated Melissa, and it made a big difference in our marriage when I changed and showed more compassion.

[00:17:00.030] - Melissa Corkum

So along with compassion, the other thing that we would say part of being on the same team is staying curious instead of critical. And I think this circles back around to what our tendency is when our spouse isn't showing up the way that we were hoping or expecting that they would. When I get stressed, I get critical, and when I start getting critical now, I can use that as a red flag to myself that I'm stressed and make it more about me than about whatever's happening in the circumstances. But we have to remember we're on the same team and work from that foundation. And so that allows us to stay curious. And moving to that curious mindset instead of being critical when your spouse does something that pisses you off, will require some personal work on your end, which refer to previous

point, right? For me, that means really working on communication, verbal and non verbal, rehearsing what it sounds like to be curious instead of critical when I address things. I mean, just asking a simple question can come off like an interrogation, and I'm the queen of that. But there are ways to ask questions and enter into a situation where you saw things differently or experienced differently or you wish it went differently in a way that's more curious.

[00:18:29.260] - Melissa Corkum

And in parenting we talk a lot about connecting before correcting. And that probably goes a long way with our marriages too. We always have our hard conversations in bed, facing each other, I would say, like do something that makes you feel close, that you can remember you're on the same team and a lot of that will break down, some of that more aggressive, irritated, resentful body language.

[00:18:55.930] - Patrick Corkum

We've also had the opposite. Not just because Melissa has a tendency to have a loud voice that comes across as yelling, okay, it is yelling. And it really hits my buttons. And one of the ways we've actually helped us is because her body language, everything, we just need to separate some. And we've used text message as a form from different rooms or whatever in cases where the in person is not working because the nonverbal or even some of the verbal things are coming across not as intended. But one of the things when it comes to the curious instead of critical is, we often many, if not most, parental situations, there is a primary and a secondary parent. So there is the parent, and one whose stay at home, she was the primary. She would be there for the majority of the day and I would come in with my wisdom and shed all the light o all things. And clearly I knew exactly what was going on and I had the solution for everything. If only she would just listen to me as the secondary parent. But seriously, the thing that we had the biggest problem was that when I would see something, she would see it that way, that I had no say in the parenting of a child or the way or whatever because I wasn't there all the time. And she got to decide because she was the primary parent.

[00:20:39.400] - Melissa Corkum

I'm always right.

[00:20:41.450] - Patrick Corkum

Yes, clearly we know that for a fact. That was a big struggle and pain point for me. And the flip side, I of course said, no, you don't know everything. And even when I had specific value, it was rejected. And my lack of curiosity and time to understand before I spoke was problematic. If I had sought to understand what she was doing more, as opposed to coming in and just being critical, and being able to have a reasonable conversation about it would have been better. But then on the flip side of that, her being willing to listen and understand that somebody from an outside perspective, partially outside, could add some value to it. But when it comes across with such a close relationship, that is hard. But staying curious and seeking to understand before we judge and criticize and fail to listen is super important.

[00:21:45.690] - Patrick Corkum

So thinking outside of the box, this is something that is really important for us to do. One of the, you can see this is at the end of an Escape Room that we had done, and we've gotten really good at Escape Rooms, and a lot of them take a lot of thinking outside the box. And I think in that particular one, we broke the record. It was 2 hours escape room, and, like, in an hour 20. That was a lot of fun. Do you want to talk a little bit more about this one?

[00:22:19.470] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. So when I was thinking about what have we done well, in our family and in our relationship, is we have been able to think outside the box. And I think maybe that started with just us doing life outside of the box. Even before we had adopted and before life was really crazy. We got married really young, which felt a little outside the box. We bought a house with my parents 14 years ago, and not for any particular reason other than we all wanted to try to do life together, which felt outside the box. We adopted three older kids out of birth order, which felt a little outside the box. I mean, there's just been a lot of things, and as we've gotten deeper into this journey, as you all know, like, parenting in

these situations puts you in some crazy situations that you never would have expected. And we have had to think outside of the box through a lot of them.

[00:23:24.650] - Patrick Corkum
We've had to, you stayed in a trailer once.

[00:23:28.890] - Melissa Corkum
Yeah. I spent a summer in a camper with one of our kids just to keep everyone separated.

[00:23:33.430] - Patrick Corkum
Yeah. And we had one point in time where we sent the kids to three different houses because there's so many kids, we sent them to three different houses and.

[00:23:44.360] - Melissa Corkum
Kept one kid home.

[00:23:45.520] - Patrick Corkum
Yes. And there was a time where I took one kid and drove up and spent, like, a week with my parents because that particular child was causing problems in the house. And there are so many things we've had... I came home once, and Melissa had a child that was struggling, and she had dressed up and put a hat on and a scarf and all this other stuff. I don't know what the name of it was and had climbed out the bathroom window and come in through the front door and pretended to be some other completely other woman that was there to help them out. I walked around in, like, high heels and all kinds of things to help with our kids. And the same thing goes with the parenting, sorry, with the marriage, is we have to find ways of getting time to ourselves, time with each other in some creative ways that maybe most people would think is we think maybe weird or not normal. But you know what? That's okay. We don't have to fit into anyone else's paradigm. We get to do our own thing, make our own decisions, and you know what? We're already weird enough. Just keep being weird.

[00:25:07.170] - Melissa Corkum
Yeah. So this also applies to when you're both coming at a parenting decision or you're dealing with the behavior in kind of opposing ways, or where one doesn't agree with the other. Maybe you both don't agree with how the other is handling it. And we also find that typically where there's a lot of disagreement between parenting styles is that one parent would identify as the high nurture parent, and one parent identifies more as the high structure parent and especially relative to each other.

[00:25:47.560] - Patrick Corkum
Which one are you, Melissa?

[00:25:50.310] - Melissa Corkum
It's already a well known fact that I'm the high structure girl and Patrick's high nurture. You're not really a pushover, but you're definitely more prone to nurture.

[00:26:02.080] - Patrick Corkum
So I'm definitely high nurture. But I think the biggest problem for us comes when under high stress because I become high structure then as well. I'll flip in high stress situations. I think that's where one of our biggest struggles is to provide too much of one side and not enough of balance.

[00:26:21.700] - Melissa Corkum
And I also hear from parents that they might be more balanced, but if they have a high structure parent that they might not agree with, then they tend to try to be more high nurture to balance it out. And then that parent ends up being more high structure to balance their high nurture out. And so that you create this divergence in what you're doing. And so in order to find the kind of magic solution, Dr. Purvis used to talk about, our kids require something that's both high structure and high nurture. And so one that's really the best thing for our kids anyway. Even if you both agree on parenting, like, you should agree on something that's high structure, high nurture. And a lot of times when we can find that high structure, high nurture ground, which is kind of like a no man's land, a lot of times we think

we have to be one or the other or neither. And when I first learned about this, I thought, oh, yeah, that's like, for some reason the combination that never occurred to me. But often that does satisfy kind of the needs of both sides, I think.

[00:27:24.080] - Melissa Corkum

The other thing that's important to remember, we talk a lot about our kids when they behave. A lot of times they're behaving out of their downstairs brain, or that reptilian brain, kind of instinctual survival brain, and we want them to think or behave more out of their upstairs brain or make decisions, have more impulse control. And we talked about that disconnect that happens when they flip their lids or whatever. But that's also true of us as parents and adults. Is that when we are in high stress situations, which often is all the time for us, is that we have trouble accessing that front prefrontal cortex, the logic part. Which is also the kind of creative part. Like in order to figure out what these outside the box and creative solutions are, we have to figure out what regulates us first. Because we have definitely been in situations where we're so stressed out, it seems like there are no solutions. And I promise you there's always more solutions than you think there are. But they often don't occur to us or appear until we've kind of regulated and started to invite ourselves to think more creatively.

[00:28:42.700] - Patrick Corkum

And one of the things we've used, which has been, I think, really helpful for us is a couple, is when we're both regulated, like we've had the conversations about the parenting when we're not in this situation, it goes much better than but we have a safe word that we use. This is for parenting, that when one parent is, we feel the other one like I feel like completely off a rocker and Dysregulated, I will come in and tag her out and she knows when I come and do that, it's over. Like she's out of the parenting situation. And the same goes the opposite way. If I become a Dysregulated parent, she will do the same. And it's really helped us having that knowing ahead of time that this is what we want the other person to do. Because we can recognize that outside the situation that we're not always the best parent in high stress situations.

[00:29:44.150] - Melissa Corkum

That's not where I thought you were going with that.

[00:29:45.810] - Patrick Corkum

Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

[00:29:47.060] - Melissa Corkum

No, that's good. I was going to say that outside the situation, if we can step back from the situation, like a good old fashioned brainstorming session. Like, do you remember in school when they would tell you like brainstorm something, they give you the rules of brainstorming, everything goes. You can't pre filter it. It was usually in group work, right? And so whatever crazy things your group members said you had to write down on the group piece of paper. I feel like that's where some of our best solutions come from. We just start throwing out literally anything we can think of, even if it's completely off the wall. And often that sparks something that comes into the realm of feasible.

[00:30:29.150] - Melissa Corkum

All right, not quite lastly, but kind of the undergoing, I think, of all these things and the reason why we're still married 20 years, six kids and two grandkids later, is we have to keep a sense of humor about us. And we have not always done this well, but I noticed lately. So I would say our hardest kid right now is our youngest kid. And he is amazing, and he is caring, and he would give you the shirt off his back, and he means really well, and he has almost no impulse control or common sense. And he just does things that used to make me really angry and sometimes they still make me really angry, but I'm finding myself more and more, just laughing about you have to laugh about it or we're all going to die, right? So we find ourselves laughing about the most ridiculous things that maybe some families wouldn't be laughing about, but we just live a life that requires humor or failure, I think. Apparently Patrick has nothing to add to that.

[00:31:40.260] - Patrick Corkum

I have nothing to add to it. Nothing. You know me. I have no sense of humor. Rules for fighting. I think

this is where we're going to include and the rules for fighting is one simple one: don't do it. No, just kidding. We definitely fight. It's natural. It's common. If you don't fight, something is seriously wrong, I think.

[00:32:03.960] - Melissa Corkum
Common? It's not that common.

[00:32:06.480] - Patrick Corkum
Not for us as much as it used to be. But as long as we're not writing the book together.

[00:32:13.250] - Melissa Corkum
So we're doing this workshop in lieu of the book.

[00:32:17.270] - Patrick Corkum
No fights from this one. The picture, how many of us were there? Eight of us. Yes. Took taekwondo together. We filled an entire class. It was rows and rows of Corkums. All right, so rule number one for when we're fighting is that we never leave angry. So I mentioned a little bit earlier, maybe I'll go into the car and Melissa will text me. We'll text back and forth, and that's as far as I ever get, is to the car. We never get into a fight and drive off or leave each other. The last thing that I think I would ever want to do to Melissa is leave angry and get into an accident, die and have her do that. That is not how I want things to go. And so we never leave angry. That's one of our number one rules, is to never do that. Number two want to go back and forth here?

[00:33:14.810] - Melissa Corkum
Sure. Work it out before going to sleep at night. And this is probably, out of all of them, the one we get the most pushback about when we talk about these. Some people say it's not good to fight when they're tired. We talk a lot about regulation, and we're not our best selves when we're tired, and I get that. But if you're anything like us, we don't sleep well anyways if we go to bed angry at each other. And sometimes we've maybe taken a short nap, but it feels always worth it to stay up until we're back in sync. So that's the way we've worked at it. And sometimes it's been like an almost all night affair because we're stubborn.

[00:34:00.290] - Patrick Corkum
You've struggled with that one because you fall asleep so easily nowadays.

[00:34:05.510] - Melissa Corkum
Always.

[00:34:06.390] - Patrick Corkum
Okay. Fair. All right. Always. And that brings us to number three. Avoid the absolutes. Like never and always. It's just not true. We say those things, and it's intended to be hurtful. Or we may think in the moment that is true, but it really isn't. Nobody is never always one way or always another way, or whatever the case might be. It's not fair. It's hurtful. And it's kind of what it's intended to do. And it takes away from the point of the conversation in the fight, the real meat of things. So we try to avoid those.

[00:34:43.200] - Melissa Corkum
We do try to avoid those. But what we have been really good, I think we have never name called in a fight, ever. And we do think it's really important. I mean, that's the thing, right? You can't take your words back and you can do perhaps unreparable damage with really hurtful things. And so even when we're really angry, we try to be mindful of the words that we're saying and try to use words that are true. And so the names just feel like a no-go zone for us.

[00:35:23.150] - Patrick Corkum
Yeah, that statement, sticks and stones may break my bones, words never hurt. Yeah. So this is something that I think Melissa is probably better at than me, is being the first to apologize. Even when she doesn't want to, she will try, even if it comes across as disingenuous. But disingenuous, it's the

right word for that. Non sincere, at least it's the attempt. And it does actually get us somewhere, usually. And starts the downward progression of the fight. So at some point in time it peaks and maybe you don't want to talk to each other. And then once somebody starts to apologize, the fight kind of comes back down on the curve, back to normalcy, and some figuring out what the core of the actual problem is. Because it's never about what the actual fight starts at. There's always something deeper. So be the first to apologize. Remember that, Melissa. Always be the first to apologize.

[00:36:20.430] - Melissa Corkum
Or cry. Crying works to disarm you also.

[00:36:24.670] - Patrick Corkum
Yes, that's when I become the first to apologize. I just assume that the crying is the apology.

[00:36:32.470] - Melissa Corkum
Alright. And this is not the last one. We should make this the last one. A fight is not over until you're ready to make love. I mean, it's really just the best way to end the fight. Makeup sex.

[00:36:45.570] - Patrick Corkum
And if you're doing it before you go to sleep, sleep a whole lot better.

[00:36:51.770] - Melissa Corkum
Yeah. So that's a true test, right? You could say, like, I'm over it or I forgive you, or we're fine. But really that's the true test is if you're ready to have sex with the other person.

[00:37:11.090] - Patrick Corkum
Did you say with another person?

[00:37:12.980] - Melissa Corkum
With the other person!

[00:37:15.630] - Patrick Corkum
Oh the other person. Sorry, no.

[00:37:16.830] - Melissa Corkum
If I'm ready to have sex with another person, the fight definitely did not go well.

[00:37:20.360] - Patrick Corkum
Did not go well. And the last piece is try to do it in private. Fighting, try to do in private. One of the worst things, I think the most difficult things, when our kids can see what we're fighting out and fighting about, and then they can use that to try and delight us, or find pressure points to try to hurt us, or whatever the case might be. And doing it in private as best as we can is just going to be helpful all around.

[00:38:02.070] - Melissa Corkum
We did debate about this a little bit because there are some schools of thought, and we're not completely against this. Where it is healthy for our kids to see healthy conflicts, right? And to hear us disagree and work things out. And I would say we do that for sure. Like the kids see us bicker. Sometimes it's in fun and sometimes it's for real conversation but when it gets really serious, and you're both really hurt, and it really requires much longer and deeper of a thing, you want that to be in private probably. And for us it also can take hours and so you obviously don't want an audience for all of that. But we do recognize that especially in the situations that a lot of our families in, that triangulation is a big thing, and we want our kids to know that we're a united front as much as possible. And so if you start the fight in front of them you want to circle back around and let them know that you've resolved it. Or even if it's not an actual verbal recognition, behave like go back to making out in front of them or whatever the thing is that you do that assures them that you guys have recognized that you're back on the same team. The other thing that we really do in private is if we disagree about how the other parent has handled the thing, is we try to wait until that thing is over and

then talk about it. Refer back to the curious over critical point, but try not to undermine your spouse in a parenting situation in less 1000% necessary.

[00:40:01.270] - Melissa Corkum

We are so thankful for the amazing guests who share their wisdom and expertise in The Village. Adoptive parenting gives us both the challenge and the opportunity to keep learning new tools and perspectives.

[00:40:13.390] - Lisa Qualls

Each workshop in The Village is followed by a live Q&A with our guests. If you're not already a member of The Village, we invite you to join us for regular gatherings and workshops where you will find the tools you need for exactly where you are.

[00:40:27.130] - Melissa Corkum

As a valued podcast listener you'll get 50% off your first month. Just go to the adoptionconnection.com/VILLAGE and use the Code podcast.