

[00:00:00.250] - Melissa Corkum

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[00:00:13.250] - Lisa Qualls

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[00:00:45.360] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:50.990] - Lisa Qualls

Today is a Mentor Moments episode where we answer a listener question. These episodes give you a chance to join the conversation and guarantee we're providing the most helpful tools and resources for exactly where you are. This week's question is, how do you celebrate your child's adoption day? And Melissa, I'd love for you to start out on this question because not only are you an adoptive mom, but you're also an adoptee. So you grew up celebrating your own adoption day, and now, which you do continue to celebrate with your siblings. And then now you're also celebrating your children's Adoption Day. So I want to hear from you first.

[00:01:27.530] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. Well, we celebrated what we call airplane day because we all came on airplanes to the States, and I don't know exactly what the legal process was when I was adopted, so I'm not exactly sure what the legal day was we all officially became Dunns, but we celebrated actually at the airport. We had a number of other friends who also adopted from Korea. And I remember having big airport parties. And so there was all of these celebration at the actual day that a child came home. And then it just felt, I guess, kind of normal to continue to mark that celebration as the years went on. So we called it airplane day. And for us, it's morphed over the years, but when we were young kids, it always meant sitting on the sofa together and my parents telling us our adoption story, how much they wanted kids and how they first heard from the agency and when they first saw our picture and the pictures of us coming off the airplane. And it always also equaled probably a small gift of some kind, a special meal and ice cream cake or ice cream. We have a lot of ice cream celebrations in our family because my dad loves dessert more than anything else. For me, it always felt like a privilege or kind of something special, right to have a second birthday almost. And I had made my friends jealous of airplane days because it was like having a second birthday. So I know not all kids get to do that, and that can be really hard. And so I've said it a bunch of times on the podcast already, but as an adoptee, I think it's really important to follow your child's lead. And I came home as an infant, so I didn't have other memories of other families, but some of our kids came home a lot older. And so it even might be smart to have or offer a day that it could be a celebration, but also a day where maybe there's more remembrance or maybe things are a little bit more somber depending on what your child story is.

[00:03:36.530] - Lisa Qualls

So with your family, you have two siblings, correct. That are also adopted.

[00:03:41.070] - Melissa Corkum

Yes.

[00:03:41.070] - Lisa Qualls

Did you each get your own individual airplane day?

[00:03:45.010] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, we did. And my best friend is also Korean and adopted, and she has an airplane day, too. So I

have to remember everybody's birthdays and everyone's airplane days now. We have a big family now, so there's me and my two siblings, and then we have six kids and my sister has a son and she has a fiance who has a son. And then also four of our kids are adopted. So when you add up all the different there's four generations living in our family, I think, or in our house, even. When you add up all the birthdays and the anniversaries and the airplane days, it can get a little overwhelming. So we tend to kind of group things together now, especially now that we're all a little bit older. So we do one big summer crab sea celebration in the summer, which isn't really near anybody's airplane day. But just as a celebration for airplane days, we don't get specific airplane day gifts anymore. As adults, we still celebrate. Fortunately, two of our kids came home on the same day from Ethiopia, so that kind of consolidates things a little bit. And even though their adoption journeys have been a little bit harder, we usually celebrate their airplane days by getting Ethiopian food. And of course, they are all for any excuse to eat Ethiopian food. And I think because also they were second generation adopted, it was like this is what our family does. We celebrate adoption days, and they've never really questioned it.

[00:05:11.730] - Lisa Qualls

And with your siblings and your best friend, was there a period where any one of them really kind of didn't want to celebrate, or was it just so much a part of your family culture and maybe their own experiences that everybody was always happy to celebrate?

[00:05:28.020] - Melissa Corkum

I think everyone was always happy to celebrate. We just really like food in our house. And I always met someone got to choose, like to go out to Chinese food or bring carry out in or something. So I don't ever remember there being a big question or big pushback against it. It doesn't mean that there weren't feelings of grief for us at other periods of time. But for whatever reason, airplane day always seem to be a happy time.

[00:05:51.290] - Lisa Qualls

So one of the questions we get sometimes is what do you call your adoption day and you call it airplane day? Of course, we've heard of people who call it Got You Day in our family, we call it Forever Day. And I think different families have different personalities about that. Do you have any thoughts on that, Melissa?

[00:06:11.490] - Melissa Corkum

Well, obviously, airplane day doesn't work for a lot of families who maybe have done domestic adoption or foster care adoption. I've heard families do Family Day or Forever Day. I asked this question on my Instagram recently, and I got family-versary, which I thought was kind of fun. I think the only one that I think I would stay away from, if you haven't named your day or if you're willing to change it, is Gotcha Day. And I think I hear from the adoptee community, and I resonate with this as well. It feels a little possessive, a little bit rough around the edges. It just has us feeling like we got you, but you are something to be caught, possessed. I don't know. It just doesn't feel as kind of kind and open as something more like Adoption Day, which is what it is or Family Day, Forever day. So I think really maybe talking to your adoptee if they're old enough and being willing to flex with it. Maybe your child is an infant or a child now and you can't ask their opinion, but you're willing to explore it later on.

[00:07:21.590] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. And I would say from my perspective as a birth or first mom, Gotcha Day doesn't feel really great to me either. Because the day of my greatest grief and loss was the day that my son's parents got him and celebrate him, and I want him to be celebrated. Gotcha makes it pretty light hearted when it was not in any way light hearted, even though there was joy for them, absolutely. So for me, as now as an adoptive mom, for us, Forever Day resonates because we've had some really hard times as an adoptive family, but we will FOREVER be our children's parents. We share that with their birth parents, who will also forever be their parents. But it resonates more for us. Okay, so let's talk a little bit about different ways that families might actually celebrate this day. We have mostly celebrated in the past, we would celebrate by telling the story a little bit, by eating special food. But to be perfectly honest, for our family, it has been so emotionally complicated and painful. Some of our kids have struggled so much that over the years we began recognizing it less and less and less because it became kind of a

triggering, disregulating thing rather than a happy, celebratory thing for us. We met three of our kids on the same day in February 2007, and we didn't know it then, but we met our other daughter the very same day. We didn't know she was going to become our daughter. So with all four of them, we have one day that we recognize as our families Forever Day. Like I said, there have been years where we actually just let it go by rather than try to celebrate something that maybe didn't feel so happy to them. But I was just thinking that I think we're at a place now where it might be kind of great to reintroduce it, that we're in a place as a family where I think recognizing it again could be a joyful thing. And like you, our family really enjoyed celebrating with food. So I think it will involve special food, maybe sharing some of the photos. Now we don't all print out photos like we used to, and so going through some photos together, it could be really fun. So I'm kind of looking ahead to ours. Of course, it won't be until February. So I think that this year might be our year to begin reestablishing that with our kids.

[00:09:56.150] - Melissa Corkum

I love how open and flexible you guys have been that you did it when your kids are little, you kind of recognize some of the signs, even if your kids didn't verbalize, we don't want to do this, but that you were able to say or notice attuned to this isn't really helping anything, and that you're able to circle back around now and say, we're in a different season. And I think that's the thing that can be really hard as adoptive parents is whatever season we're in right now feels like it's going to be forever. And we've been around the block enough times to know now that seasons come and go and they change. And so it is interesting to kind of wake up one day and think, oh, gosh, maybe we could handle that this year.

[00:10:38.230] - Lisa Qualls

Yeah. It's kind of a hopeful thing. I will let you know. It's not until February, but I'll let you know. And I think because we only have our two boys still at home, I want to kind of take my queues from them. What would they like to do? I was telling you earlier, Melissa, that we live 2 hours away from the closest Ethiopian restaurant, so you don't want to do that unless we did it on the weekend near Forever Day. But I'd also be happy if there was another kind of food they wanted to choose. So, yes, I think this year might be the year to try it all again.

[00:11:08.170] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. We also reached out or someone actually asked in our Facebook group what types of gifts families gave to celebrate adoption family for every day, whatever your family is choosing to call it. So some of the ideas were a photo book of just the past year. So there's kind of a new one every year. A lot of people did personalized or engraved gifts, some jewelry type options for girls. I thought build a bear was a really fun thing because you can really personalize it kind of create an experience and a lot of families did say that they do more of an experience during that day, maybe like a family day trip. Our family is not huge on marking days on their exact day so I think that's a great idea to pick a weekend kind of on either side of whatever day it is and maybe plan an outing as a family.

[00:11:56.510] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah. And we have our adult daughter lives in the nearest sort of city that has Ethiopian restaurants so she and her husband could probably join us and that would lighten it up too and just make it even more special. So, yes, I think this is the year and I hope that our conversation has just actually just started, all of us thinking. Any of you listening, just thinking about how to celebrate, when to celebrate, if you should celebrate, and if your kids are old enough to have some conversations with them about it and do what feels best to your family, you do not have to do it like any other family does.

[00:12:32.300] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, absolutely. So if you have a question for a future mentor moment, feel free to hop into our Facebook group at [theadoptionconnection.com/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/theadoptionconnection.com) or you can always call our listener hotline. It doesn't ring anywhere so feel free to call it at any time of the day or night and ask your question with your voice. We love being able to air those. You can call that number at 208-741-3880.

[00:12:58.730] - Lisa Qualls

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

Instagram as @postadoptionresources

[00:13:06.500] - 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 whom feeling alone.

[00:13:16.610] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:13:23.690] - Melissa Corkum

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