

[00:00:00.735] - Melissa Corkum

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[00:00:13.995] - Lisa Qualls

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[00:00:38.135] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:00:46.025] - Melissa Corkum

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

[00:00:51.365] - 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, "I would love to hear you guys talk about parenting kids over a large range of stages. All our kids joined our family through adoption. We have a 19 year old working and staying out too late, 6 and 7 year old homeschooling by necessity, and a one year old baby. It feels like all the stages run into each other, especially when it comes to sleep and connecting with all of them." Ahhh, we have both experiences, Melissa.

[00:01:29.465] - Melissa Corkum

I know. I know. Well, and you, I think, have more experience in this, but currently, even though we're not full time parents of a little person, we do have kids aged like 23 to 2 living at home right now, so. I think the first thing, and I probably sound like a broken record saying this, but I have a really clear definition of what success looks like in this season. And I would encourage you to remember that you don't have to do it all and it does not have to look like other families. And perhaps if your 19 year old has been with you since he was little, or she was little, you know, what you are able to do with one child and give that one single child versus what you can give your current one year old baby may look very different, and that's OK.

[00:02:26.565] - Lisa Qualls

Right, I would agree, and I think that when you're especially, I mean, the littles, your littles and your baby you can kind of like lump together. I think the bigger challenge is "How do you connect with your teen while caring for those littles?" And in my experience, unless you want to stay up really late every night and I'm not a late night person, you have to be strategic about finding times to connect with your teens. And it might be that you're going to have to be creative, like take them to lunch on occasion, take them out for breakfast while your spouse is home before your spouse leaves for work. Plan something on the weekend just with your older teen. And if you're able to, if you have family or someone you can trust to watch your littles, you could even do something with you and your spouse, just with your teen, something that you can't do with the little ones. Go to a movie together, do some kind of neat thing with your church, or an adventure of some sort. So I think it's just, it requires a little bit of creativity and planning because otherwise those teens, you know, they're in a developmental stage where they're separating from you and that's good and appropriate, but you really don't want to set them adrift because they still need us a lot at that age, even older. They still need us. They need us to be interacting with them and thinking of them and still meeting some of their needs. So I think that's where you're going to have to focus, for me, the most attention in terms of pre-planning.

[00:04:05.155] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, and I think the thing with pre-planning also is, you know, we talk a lot about this like mental load that we hold as parents and so, you know, making a schedule or somehow tracking the time you're

using to connect, you know, with each of your kids, get it out of your head and onto paper. And this might sound like too robotic for parenting, but, you know, you might have to, you know, set a goal to send X number of texts to your teen or, you know, have breakfast once a month or remember to take the 6 and 7 year olds out separately for, you know, special like an ice cream cone or something fun like that. And you might really have to put it in your calendar, your planner, or write it out to keep track of it. Even that alone, just getting it out of your head and, you know, concretely written down somewhere might feel like a huge load off of your shoulders.

[00:05:01.015] - Lisa Qualls

Well, not only that, let's say you set the first Wednesday of every month to go out for breakfast with your teen. Then they can look forward to it. And the truth is, things come up. You can always change it, but if it's in the calendar, it's a ton more likely to happen so that even if you have to adjust it slightly, you're probably going to have a lot more opportunity to do that. I also think with the other kids being young, put them to bed early and have a fun dinner just with your teen and maybe watch a movie that you wouldn't watch with the little ones around. You know, again, you want that special time for connection. They will be gone before you know it. I mean, it's kind of shocking what happens when they get to this age and they become increasingly independent. And you just I would never regret I don't regret any of the time that I spent with my teens. If it's possible to even do something more special, like get away overnight, either you or your husband or something with your teen, those memories are really important to build. My husband was able to go on a really special backpacking trip with some of our teens and young adults and our younger kids didn't go. And in fact, I didn't go. I stayed home with them, but they talk about that trip all the time. It's a really deep established memory of a special time with their dad.

[00:06:20.335] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I love that. I think also, and you mentioned this a little bit before, Lisa, we're going to need help. You know, a lot of our kids have more needs than neurotypical kids, and so you might need to have a family babysitter or an extended family member or you might need to tag team with a spouse. But go ahead and accept help, you don't have to do it all. And I would say accept help on both ends. So accept help, you know, someone to watch the little so that you can spend time with your older kids or someone to watch just two of the little so you can go out with another one of your school aged kids, but also accept help, when we had a lot of kids still at home and a lot of kids with really high needs, we had some fantastic friends come around us and they each kind of took one of our older kids under their wing and offered kind of like a mentor/adult fun friend opportunities. And so I would say accept help in relationships and connecting with them, you know, you don't have to be the person who connects all the time. And for our teens, they didn't want me to be that person all the time, they actually preferred to have like a cool aunt, quote unquote. Or someone to connect with them, take them out for lunch, or to go shopping, or, you know, to connect with them in a way that my personal personality doesn't always allow for. That's a lot more challenging. Like my sister is a completely opposite personality. She's like the cool younger aunt for sure. And so she loves to take my girls out to do girly things and shop and window shop and try on clothes in dressing rooms. Of course, this is all pre-covid, but, you know, those are things that drive me crazy. And so I'm happy to let them go off and do that and they feel like they've gotten quality time to connect with an adult who cares about them, and it didn't have to be me.

[00:08:15.435] - Lisa Qualls

That's a really good point. Another thing I would say is take advantage of the technology. Like, our kids are all so tech smart, especially compared to me as an older mom. But even still, I've really used technology to stay in touch with my kids. I text with them quite a bit, my teens and young adults, I face time with them. Even if they live in your own home, sometimes face timing is just a quick way, you know, you get to see each other. And then we have a family Snapchat. Now, I do not use Snapchat for anything else. Like, I cannot handle one more platform for anything, but we have a family Snapchat that we use and it is such a great way to keep in touch. Because of course, my kids, a lot of them are adults now, so they're spread out. But even my ones who are teens, you know, I get to see little glimpses of what they're doing and we interact there. So I think we can take advantage of the technology our kids are already using and join them in ways that aren't super, super demanding to us.

[00:09:20.745] - Melissa Corkum

Yeah, I like that. Whatever you decide to do to help keep that connection fluid through your entire family, again, just reiterate to be very kind to yourself. This is a conundrum of sorts. Like, it is challenging to parent across such a large age range, so I think sometimes we think, "Everyone else is doing it better than me" or, you know, "I don't know why this is so hard for me." So I just wanted to say that this is something that is tricky to navigate and we're not going to always do it perfectly, and so be kind to yourself. I'm sure your kids have many, many positive memories and, you know, points of connection and so sometimes I think when we're asking the question, "Am I doing enough?" Even if we're asking that, means we probably are.

[00:10:09.465] - Lisa Qualls

And don't be surprised that your teenager might be tucking you in bed at night. They come and sit on your bed, you know, at night and you're ready to go to sleep. And so it's a funny thing that happens because I need more sleep now. My kids will sleep later. I'm up early, so I'll get in bed, and then sometimes my teens will just sit and talk to me, and then I turn out the light and they leave. So, you know, it's a funny it's a funny thing that happens in these years, but it's really, really special and it's an important time to stay connected with them.

[00:10:38.565] - Melissa Corkum

Absolutely. So if you have a question that you would like us to answer here on Mentor Moments, we would love to hear from you. You can give us a call at 208-741-3880 to ask your question on our listener hotline. No one picks that number up so you can call any time of the day or night. You can also send us an email at email@theadoptionconnection.com.

[00:11:05.775] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:11:13.485] - 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.

[00:11:23.655] - Lisa Qualls

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

[00:11:30.825] - Melissa Corkum

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