

Fostering the Future Podcast Chef Kibby - Connecting Through Cooking

Cat 0:00

This is cat, and I'm here with Jack and today we have a very special guest, this is Jeff Kibby who has made great use of his skills and fostering and we can't wait to learn more from him today. So chef Kibby. Let me ask you a very serious question. What is your favorite drink at Starbucks

Chef Kibby 0:28

favorite drink at Starbucks it's actually been a long time since I've been to Starbucks you know I'm a big supporter of our local little coffee shops and things like that. But if I were to choose, I would say something in the raspberry Mocha, the raspberry dark chocolate mocha would be, would be my jam. Oh,

Jack 0:47

that sounds interesting. Yeah, not about Raspberry Mocha,

Cat 0:51

what do you get at like the local places.

Jack 0:54

Yeah, if you're at a local coffee shop, what are you ordering

Chef Kibby 0:57

something similar to that but I know Starbucks has their own kind of vernacular, you know, you have to use the right words, otherwise they look at you funny. But, I think, you know the razzmatazz, I think, used to be used to be a thing there I'm not sure if it still is, but I remember having that not to be confused with the adult beverage, which is something completely different altogether. But, but yeah the raspberry coffee or a raspberry Mocha, that's that's what I like to roll with,

Jack 1:23

and you tell me how long you have been a foster parent, and what that looks like in your home.

Chef Kibby 1:29

Well, I've my wife and I got licensed I believe was about nine years ago, when we began this crazy journey that we've been on, and what that looks like on a daily basis. Well, it depends on the day, sometimes depends on the hour, as many of your audience could probably empathize with that. Over the years we've had, I believe a dozen or so children come through our doors we have had the great fortune and blessing to be able to adopt out of foster care, and it's, it's been a, an up and down road, it's definitely one of those things that my wife and I feel like we were called by God to be on this journey, not fully realizing until we were years into it, the kind of impact it was going to have on our lives both to the positive, and also to the challenging which I'm sure we'll get into as we continue our talk.

Jack 2:23

Yeah absolutely, I can definitely attest to that. I don't. I think it's just one of those things you don't really understand until you're doing it. And that's also why we've talked about why having a great foster parent community is so important as a foster parent, because you don't really get it until you're doing it, you don't really understand the fullness that it is in your life both very positive and both very challenging.

Cat 2:48

So true there's like nothing black and white about foster care.

Chef Kibby 2:53

And one of the topics I mean, it says you since you brought that up, I think it is important and that's why I love your show and I love the conversations that you're having with people is to kind of dig into these issues for people who are just starting their foster journey, or perhaps looking to begin a foster journey to kind of hit on those tough issues that other people maybe don't feel as comfortable addressing and doing so in a way that takes away some of that gray area and make things a little bit more black and white as much as you possibly can so that people can make the best decisions for them and for their families and to that end, I think there are some, some huge challenges for families going into foster parenting, That no We were not prepared for and it wasn't until years of going through it that we fully realized what it was that we were dealing with, and honestly, I've only come to really understand and appreciate it over the last couple of years, and that came about as, as a result of the pandemic, the pandemic, up until about March of 2020. I had a catering business we had a family catering business that was really doing well, and we were doing cooking classes on the side as well doing hands on kitchen sessions and all of that came to a screeching halt March of 2020 When COVID happened. One of the things that went out the door was eating together in large groups, and that was my business and so that went away. And because of that, not only was I forced into this kind of a self esteem, issue

because I attached, having this business to kind of justify being able to call myself chef Kibby, you know, and that was kind of taken from me. And so I kind of retreated to my home kitchen, where it was a place where I could control, you know, I felt a little bit more in control in this out of control environment that I was living, but it also brought me face to face with the issues that we were having as foster, adoptive parents, which, for the longest time, I didn't know what to do with. And so, I, I kind of just hoped and prayed that someone else or something would change, and that things would just get better, you know, kind of, in a way, put that off on my wife and others in our family, it's a kind of handle this and just kind of escaped work, I can no longer make that escape any longer. And that's when I began to take it upon myself to finally start playing some sort of a role in healing our family, and healing the relationship that I wanted to have with my children. And that's when I began to become acquainted with what has really become so central to my being and to everything that I'm doing and everything, I'm creating understanding trauma and understanding trauma informed care, understanding what adverse childhood experiences or ACEs have done for any child who was in the foster care system, and having that mindset, learning about things like tbri trust based relational intervention which has just been a tremendous game changer for our family and I recommend anyone who is in foster care or are considering it. But then, internalizing that while at the same time seeing the interactions that I could have with my children through the kitchen. It was just kind of this lightning bolt lightbulb moment, lightning rod moment however you want to call it I'm stumbling over my words that I was able to put the two together and realize that trauma is something that has disrupted my child's ability to accept my love, and to feel the trust that I am trying to build into them, and that cooking, not just for my children but with my children could be a way of communicating that love and that trust and acceptance, in a way that my words just couldn't. And that is the impetus behind my cooking is connecting program behind my podcast behind everything I'm trying to do to serve this community that you also are trying to serve.

Cat 7:06

I love that and I, I love that you found a tool to do that because I think so many people are trying to find tools to connect with their kids knowing that trauma has created the separation between them.

Jack 7:18

Yeah, and that's it goes back to, like, how do you heal from that trauma is the positive childhood experiences that help you heal from the adverse childhood experiences and and doing that in relationship is the best way to do that. And that's exactly what you're doing you're taking, like, the two most vital ways to heal from trauma and putting them together and using your skill as a chef to do that, I think that's a really neat.

Cat 7:45

It is it you're building resiliency. When you cook with your kids and you're creating these positive moments with them and they are building resiliency everyday so that's really cool. Can we rewind a little bit, and can you tell us about your first experiences ever with foster care so we can kind of get acquainted with how you got to where you are.

Chef Kibby 8:03

Oh, I'm laughing already because our first experience in foster care, very shortly after we were, were licensed I remember I'll never forget, I was actually on the line at in the restaurant where I was the executive chef I was running the kitchen line. It was a busy Friday night, and I got the call from my wife, and she told me that we had our first placement, and it was a sibling set of three boys under six,

Jack 8:32

that's something.

Chef Kibby 8:34

Yeah, nothing fully prepares for you for that. I think there are probably foster parents out there they're been doing it for 1015 years would probably feel a little bit overwhelmed by a situation like that, but we were newcomers, we didn't know any better. I mean, we'd even set aside that we were hoping for one to two and so when we got the call for three. We, we still said yes it's so hard, and I'm sure again I'm sure everyone in the audience has experienced this too it is, it is so hard to say no when someone is asking you to take in a child or two or, or three, or four or more and I know that there has been stories of similar situations. And so we went and we had one we had one biological at the time as well. So we went from one to four overnight. And it is one of the hardest things we've ever done. And equally as difficult was the time when we finally said that we couldn't do it any longer and we had to disrupt the placement. So, that there was a lot of grief. A lot of emotional, a lot of guilt in that a lot of questioning of whether or not we were fully cut out for this. Again, not fully realizing just the, the, the depth of trauma that we were experiencing in these three little tykes again not being very trauma informed even at that point, it was, it was hard and we held on to that, that that guilt and that secondary trauma that often comes as being a foster or adoptive parents for a while and it was a while before we were at a point where we could accept other placements, we did some respite care for a while to kind of get us back into the swing of things which I highly recommended respite care, I think respite care is amazing. In fact, in hindsight, I wish that maybe our agency or maybe more agencies I don't know if any way does this would either require or even recommends that new foster parents, begin by doing respite, Just to kind of get acquainted with

everything that comes with foster parenting, maybe we'd have less turnover. That way, I don't know, but but that was my experience,

Jack 10:56

you know, I think that getting your feet wet, as a respite giver. And you know what we need more people that can offer respite because I, you know, I went on vacation recently, and I plan to bring all of my kids with me. But, you know, at the last minute, my husband wasn't able to get away from work, and I wasn't able to bring a kids to a waterpark by myself when six of them were under the age of five. So I just didn't want anybody to drown and trying to find respite, you know, within a couple of weeks was not. I mean, it was, it was not an easy process, I basically, you know asked everybody that I knew until I finally found somebody and they and the siblings had to be separated, which is unfortunate. So,

Cat 11:41

the other nice thing about respite is sometimes there's a good match, that's made like a really good match like I've seen some kids that find their forever home from a respite is really nice

Chef Kibby 11:52

for everybody and happened with us. One of the children that we had respite it eventually was, was displaced from the the foster family that that they had been with and ended up. We had the opportunity to take them, and ended up adopting so so yeah that is one of the experiences that we've had as well. So yeah, you just never know. But to understand what's, what's foster parenting entails in trauma training can only do so much, especially if training, you know, again, this goes through changes from agency to agency and from state to state kind of the, the focus of the training, whether it's on just managing behaviors, and following rules versus understanding the needs behind the behaviors and being able to, to take proactive steps to, to empower them and to create connection with these kiddos to put them in a place of safety and self regulation, where they can begin to see some behavioral changes, and to accept the love and the compassionate care that you're offering to them, because, you know, behavioral management just doesn't work the same because there's so much need like you were talking about the different types of trauma that these children have gone through expresses themselves in different ways and sometimes it's up to us to kind of be detectives in that and have some tools in our arsenal that we can use to address the needs behind the behavior so that they're at a point where they're calm and relaxed and not experiencing that chronic anxiety that those of us who have natural attachments to our primary caregivers who grew up without those kind of experiences don't necessarily. It doesn't necessarily come naturally to us, and I know there are many years where I kind of inadvertently blamed my children for their behaviors, and

not only is that not productive and healthy is just not good parenting, and I'm so thankful that not only have I, you know, learn from my mistakes but I now have an opportunity to share those insights with other current and potential foster, adoptive parents. And again, to have a new language through this shared act of cooking and eating with our children to be able to put them into that place where they can be more accepting and more regulated, I mean, no matter whether they experienced food insecurities or not, that is as common as a common expression of any kind of trauma, because it goes back to this, this feeling of I'm not safe, and, and feeling unsafe means I don't know when the next meal is going to come. And so to use the kitchen to empower them and to give them some agency in the provision of this most basic need. I have seen and heard from others that this could impact children that have been affected by all sorts of different types of trauma, whether it's food related or not.

Cat 15:08

I love that and you know the other thing I like about it is that even like typical kids seek out control in their environment. When life gets a little out of control like like school starts, and they're just seeing or, you know, we've grandma's been here for a week and life seems out of control and I've been staying up too late they seek out control in various ways and food is one of them, it was actually probably the most common. And so I think that's fantastic. Can we talk a little bit about, like, just to get a good idea of like, you know, how long you've been foster parenting, what made you decide to foster parent how they play since you've had.

Chef Kibby 15:46

I had no experience with fostering in my life, this was really a passion that God had put on my wife through her experiences growing up, that was a conversation that she and I had during our engagement period that she had it on her heart that she wanted to adopt. At that time it wasn't about fostering it was, it was more about adoption. And I was, I was on board. I had no objections to it. Now when a few. Fast forward a few years and we got to that period in our family where we were ready to start embracing the idea of adoption and to make that a part of our family. We realized that we were not in a financial situation to do any sort of straight forward, you know, traditional adoption, whatever terminology you want to use there. And so, not necessarily as a way of adopting but to at least begin to allow us the opportunity to invite other children into our home. We became licensed foster parents. And I'm trying to, I think I had mentioned earlier over the years we'd had about, I think we've had at least 12 placements over that period of time, Chef Kimmy,

Jack 16:59

can you tell us, what was it that made you decide to train and culinary art

Chef Kibby 17:04

is certainly wasn't something that was always in my mind, I mean growing up in small town St Mary's Ohio. I wasn't really exposed to a lot of food and cooking, growing up my parents really weren't that big into the food they weren't considered foodies. They cooked on a regular basis. But it wasn't like being a chef was something that the guidance counselor ever talked about with me in high school. It wasn't really until I had had a couple of different experiences that kind of reshape things. I went to Japan, when I was about 16 years old, on a 10 day Sister Cities exchange. And so that definitely took me out of my small town, Midwest experience to a completely different culture and a different food culture as well, which in hindsight was kind of weird because I was actually kind of a picky eater, so to leave my comfort zone, and to go to a completely different food culture. I'm not sure what was going through my mind at the time but I'm grateful for it. The second thing that happened a couple years later was I moved from the small town, and move to the big city of Columbus Ohio which, for people who are not familiar with Columbus, Ohio. It is actually a very diverse city and one of the most diverse populations in the Midwest, which is why it's often a testing ground for marketing and different products before they go nationwide. And I was exposed to such a wide variety of not only just cultures and ethnicities, but food cultures as well. I mean, traditional Middle Eastern and Greek and Italian and Ethiopian and Korean and Lebanese I mean you name it and it was represented in a restaurant in Columbus, and so when I came to, to the Ohio State University and was eating for my own and cooking for my own for the first time. My eyes were opened, and I had also been working in food service, as, as a day job throughout school and after college, I went into mortgage sales for a year and absolutely hated it, mortgage sales at that particular time especially the type of mortgages they were trying to get me to sell it just, it wasn't happening. And so I fell back into food service and just never left and ended up going back to school for my certification as a chef, and I'm now teaching for that college where I graduated from 10 years ago.

Cat 19:33

Oh that's awesome. Can you tell us about the evolution, like where you realize that there was a connection between cooking trauma and healing and turning that into a way to connect with your kids, and also sharing that with others through social media and your podcasts.

Chef Kibby 19:55

I can point to a specific moment, a specific instance in the kitchen and I'm so fortunate and so blessed that I even have a picture of it, that I've shared on social media. Not too many of us did to have like a photographic memory of that moment when their life was changed

and I'm so grateful that I have that, and it all stems around my daughter coming to me while I was doing dinner prep and asking me, an absolutely ridiculous question. She came to me and asked me if she could chop up my vegetable scraps, and like, what you want to chop up my scraps, I mean this, we compost we have chickens out in the yard, they, we, we take our vegetable scraps and we throw it out to the chickens so they can eat it. And so, when she asked me that question, there were a number of different ways that I could say no to that request, like this is a waste of time. I need, I need to focus on what I'm doing. Why don't you, you know, go watch TV. We're just going to give it to the chickens anyway so let's just kind of, not all that useful. But in that moment, you know, God spoke into me with the work that he had been doing in my life in my heart and in the, in the, the education that I have been getting in trauma informed care, and the need for connection. And in that moment, I said yes, I said, Absolutely, let's get you an apron, we'll get you a cutting board, we'll get you a knife, appropriate for her level of skill. And I allowed her to chop up these vegetable scraps, and it was in that moment. Now I saw so much that she was teaching me about myself and about the agency that I have in our relationship. And then it wasn't necessarily about the food. It wasn't because I mean she wasn't helping me with dinner, by any means. I mean she was with me in the kitchen but she wasn't doing anything productive that was gonna help to get dinner on the table, anytime soon. It was about the modeling of how I was holding myself at the cutting board, how I was holding my knife and the food, using my pencil grip and bear claw that I teach everybody in my nice skills courses. And the, the act of creation of taking something and making something else from it. And it was the, the time of quality time with my daughter and the conversations we had, And just the fact of giving her a yes to something mattered to her. And it was in that moment that I really started to fully see the power of the kitchen, I'd always known the food brings people together, and I've always believed that teaching kids about food and cooking is important as a, as a, as an independent life skill, but to use it as a language to speak to my child. Yes, I love you. Yes, I want you in my life, yes I think that you are capable of doing things, yes I want to spend time with you. Yes. You are safe here. I mean, there's a reason why I'm so passionate about it now and why I want to empower so many people to have those same experiences, and one of the things I love about that story and maybe you've already picked up on this, is that there was nothing fancy, or, you know, Culinary Arts about it, I didn't really teach her that much with regards to food and cooking. It doesn't have to be. I've had a child, scrub the potatoes and they will claim that they helped make supper, and they'll, they'll take credit for all of it. That's the power that anyone can have you don't have to be a chef you don't have to be a culinary instructor you don't have to be a social media influencer in order to take advantage of this power that each and every one of us have, if we have a kitchen, and if we have something in the fridge, that we can do with it.

Jack 24:00

Let me ask you a question real quick, because, you know, you've had placements in your home that you've seen how cooking can transform them working out their trauma, building relationship with you. Can you tell us at all. A little specifically about how this has impacted a placement in your home.

Chef Kibby 24:23

Well, the biggest impact that it has had has been with the child that we had adopted, because, again, for the longest time, I couldn't understand why, Even though I was being consistent with, with discipline and with rules and with expectations that none of those were being well received or met, and they're just never seem to be any progress and I thought that the problem was with them and really the whole time. The problem was with me and not seeing that, when, when this child was having behaviors that we might think are maladaptive or dysregulated, it's not because anything I was doing was necessarily wrong or inappropriate it was because there were needs behind those behaviors that that child didn't have the ability to vocalize, and it was up to me to finally come to the point where I could realize what was going on behind the scenes to understand a little bit more of the interpersonal neurobiology that was going on in her brain the understanding flight and fight and freeze and all of these things that we see on a regular basis as code traumas and error as as tantrums and meltdowns and to begin to see the needs behind those behaviors and change the way I was addressing those behaviors, and then to use those experiences in the kitchen to kind of lay a foundation of, of, I am a safe person, and that I see you, I recognize you. I see the needs that you have. And I want to put you into that place of safety and comfort and calm and to experience the regulation that I have and to internalize it, and that has made such a huge difference in our relationship. And I just, for years I just felt like I wasn't cut out for this and that things were always going to be the way they were. And it wasn't until I saw the power that I had, and in this this language of of cooking and eating together, to begin to not only change her mindset about me but to change my mindset around her.

Cat 26:46

That's so nice because I think it's so nice just to people in general being able to share something with one another. But also, it's so rare for, I mean just kids in general or even adults to have something that they feel like they're good at, you know, and, and so forth, to feel like I did something I'm good at it I completed it, look at my completed task, that's where we get self worth from, and it's from that that we can grow and we have a full tank and we can feel like we're good at other things too and, and, you know you can value the people around you by spending time with them and saying I enjoy doing this and you can do it with me you can be with me while I do this so there's, I feel like there's so many great,

great things we can do with the people that we love by incorporating cooking with them I think it's such a great idea. I feel like you've stumbled upon something that's so valuable.

Jack 27:41

Yeah and I've, like, I've found especially with like when I've had a placement of an older girl that their favorite thing to do is help me cook something and whether it's something small like spaghetti or whether it's something a little more intense like a client Rollatini. Like, it's not just about, I mean, they all, you know, are eager to be the one that is with me in the kitchen, you know, touching certain tools that most of the time they're not like other kids wouldn't be allowed to touch, but also the pride they have when we put out that meal for the other kids I've never really looked at it in the way that Chef Tibi is explaining until I found his Instagram, and even while we're talking now I'm coming up with more thoughts in my head about how this could help various kids I, you know when you mentioned the food insecurity is, I mean really, all of my kids have food insecurities, but especially one of them, you know, and he does love helping me in the kitchen so maybe if I can give him more authority and more time doing that, you know, maybe the food hoarding will slow down and, You know, maybe, maybe that's gonna help him build confidence in other ways, so you know I am learning so much from him from his Instagram account from, you know, the conversation that we're having here right now. And to that end, you know you've taken your experience with your placements with dealing with the pandemic of being home and making use of your skills in a completely different way. Now you're taking that outside of your family, and you're sharing it with the world through a podcast, through your Instagram account, can you tell us a little bit more about some of the other things that you're doing and how people can find your content so that they can use it to help their families as well.

Chef Kibby 29:30

Absolutely. And before I do that I just want to tip my hat to you because I've actually talked to other people in the foster care space and people who specifically who have served, young people who have aged out of the foster care system, and what they have told me is that very commonly, one of the things that a lot of foster caregivers have a hard time doing is trusting specifically older foster care placements in the kitchen. And what happens, results from that is that children aged out of the foster care system without having those experiences without being trusted with these tools and implements and techniques in the kitchen, and so they are lacking in that ability to to have that, that area of their life where they can regulate and provide for themselves. So I absolutely love what you were doing for your children. And I just wanted to recognize and appreciate that. For for people who are listening to this program. As we're recording this, I'm going through a bit of a transition in

the way I'm presenting my content and the way I'm going to be providing resources to foster and adoptive parents in the near future, and really taking the, the, the, the insights that I'm getting from being on podcasts like yours that there is something really to this that other people need to learn about of creating more of a, an organized program, like a training course around this idea which I call cooking is connecting. And so this cooking is connecting method I've already integrated into a 20 day email challenge that your listeners can take part in. I'm sure we can find a way of putting that link in the show notes and head, but the the 20 Day Challenge is based on a framework by Search Institute called the developmental relationships framework. And in that their research showed that there are five areas of developmental assets that young people need. And in those five areas are 20 activities that are actions that we as caregivers need to provide to our children, to give them those developmental assets to grow up, resilient and have strong mental health, and when I saw that for the first time I saw that all 20 of those activities could be done through the shared act of cooking and eating with our children. And so I've taken each, each of those actions, and I'm helping my listeners and my followers in my community to understand how they can implement this research based practice in child development and implemented through the shared act of cooking, eating together, that has been 20 episodes of the cooking with Kibi podcast, That is the 20 day cooking is connecting challenge, and that will be one part of what I'm developing right now as the cooking is connecting program which will be a training program to help parents and those who assist parents, you know those in the mental health space, consultants and therapists, and, you know, small group leaders, agencies, whatever the case may be, to, to see what it means to connect with our children to see what agency we have to connect with our children, and then how to use this innate trust, that is built in the kitchen, to, to create a a an implementation strategy that any family, no matter how often they cook and no matter how experienced they are in the kitchen to use this connecting power of cooking and eating with our children to help them to, to move past the effects of trauma and to build deeper connections, and so that's what the future holds for me as I fully embrace this. This experience that I've had and what it can be for other people.

Jack 33:34

Let me just ask you one quick thing. Just because I'm curious what is your absolute favorite thing to cook.

Chef Kibby 33:44

I would say risotto. And the reason why I like risotto is because it's yeah it's it seems fancy it's this fancy Italian rice dish but I like the flexibility of it there's a lot of different things you can do with it. I appreciate the work and the effort that goes into it in that when it's made right there's kind of layers of flavor that built into it. And also there's an emotional

attachment to it because Rosetta was something that my wife made for me when we were still dating, and it's one of those food memories that she and I have. When we first. When we were first falling in love with each other and

Jack 34:25

you've been building.

Chef Kibby 34:28

The building connection. Yeah, and that's one of the amazing things about food that people sometimes take for granted, is that, well, we can look at pictures and you know we have our, our Facebook memories that pop up on our feed every now and then we kind of relive that moment, but with food you can actually kind of physically relive a moment in time, and so when I remake that risotto that she and I had, you know 17 years ago. It's like you're experiencing it all over again. And so to be able to give those kinds of experiences to my children now. It's also use it as a vehicle to share things that happened in my life before they were around, you know, to make that dish, and to share what meaning it had to me and my wife, or to make the kind of food that my wife and her parents had when they were living in a fishing village on the northern coast of Spain, and the conversations that come about as a part of those meals, is it's just so powerful, I could just go on and on.

Jack 35:31

Is there is there something that is that you would recommend as a great thing to do a recipe to cook with a kid that you're trying to connect with with like your go to

Chef Kibby 35:44

our go to is granola. I love granola, it is healthy, especially when you're making it from home, anything that you make on your own, you allow yourself to have more control over what's going into it, so I mean you can buy granola, it's it's way too expensive if you'd asked me, but you can make your own with a few very simple ingredients, and it allows for a lot of opportunities for my children to take part, spreading out the oats on the feed trays before we toast them mixing the liquid ingredients, mixing the dry ingredients stirring everything together, there's no sharp knives involved so that's, that's always a good thing as well, and it's gotten to the point where I can just tell them that we're gonna make granola and one or two of them three of them however many are helping me, they'll, they'll scatter around the house and they'll gather this ingredient and that ingredient in this tray, and they'll bring it all to the kitchen and bring it together like they know the routine. And I just, I love that. I love the connection that they get with it, and at the end you have something sweet and crunchy and delicious that's full of soluble and insoluble fiber that you can throw in your breakfast bowl for cereal or you can put on top of your ice

cream or frozen yogurts, you can crunch it over top of your pancakes or waffles, and there's so many different things you can do with it, it's very versatile, and we go through a lot of it our house.

Jack

I think I'm going to do that. That's going to be my goal before the school year starts in a couple of weeks is to make granola with each one of my kids that's a great idea. Can you give me one word that you think people would use to describe foster parents.

Chef Kibby

The first thing that comes to my mind is brave. Because there. There's a lot of people that, that look at foster parents on the outside looking in and saying, Wow, I could never do that. And honestly, if I had known the things that I had known before I started I probably would have said the same. Again, being a very novice to the idea of foster parents and going into it I think was, was very fortunate, because I think there are some aspects of it that kind of scare people away. And I think that has to do with just the lack of information, historically that's been out there about interpersonal neurobiology about brain chemistry about trauma, and now we're in a different place where we're starting to see agencies we're starting to see states, they're really making a strong concentrated effort to make sure that people know why foster parenting is difficult and the majority of that is from connection, or a lack thereof, that we take connection is something for granted that if we take someone in and we give them a bad and if we feed them, that the connection is just going to naturally happen. And then when it doesn't we feel there's something wrong with them or with us, and it's learning that a tune or that it's not possible, or that it's not possible. Yeah, and so yes there is a sense of bravery in in kind of going into something like kind of venturing into the unknown, a little bit. But those who are successful at foster parenting, those who are able to, to take multiple placements and are able to give safety to these children I think the common thread between all of them is attunement attunement to themselves, to their own emotional state, and attunement to the child's emotional state, because it's in that attunement that connection is able to take place.

Unknown Speaker

I think it's, you know, more recently to that not just in the child welfare arena but kind of everywhere becoming more aware that this is something that we all need to look at like with Simone Biles withdrawing from the Olympics, and people saying, like, this is good, you need to be conscious of your mental health and you need to take care of yourself, and the Olympics is secondary to your mental health. I think even four years ago. You know, people probably would have encouraged her to white knuckle it through that I think everywhere, we're seeing more of a conscious effort for people to be more aware of their

mental health and to be more proactive and maybe even the pandemic, help people to realize that but I think that you're right and I think that being more conscious of foster parents are doing and how foster kids are doing their home in their home and, you know, not just giving them the necessities but but checking in, you know, seeing how they're doing and seeing how foster parents are doing and making sure that people aren't just surviving but that they're that they're being, you know, everybody's being a little more proactive these days I think which is, which is good. That's very good.

Jack

Let me ask you, how do you see the role of foster parents in the child welfare realm. I already stood on

Chef Kibby

it were you, I say and this I think this is probably common throughout where people's experiences are, I think, overall, I think the most healthy way to see foster parents and foster caregiving is stewardship is stewardship of a child who is awaiting a plan of permanency, whether that plan of permanency is reunification or is PC and being made available for adoption, no matter what the outcome, the role and the purpose behind foster care and foster caregiving is his stewardship of that child and providing them with safety and connection and support while you await permanency. Now there's a lot of other entanglements that, and that come along with that as far as the the role of reunification and, and, And when it should happen and how long it can take place and a lot of other kind of uncomfortable conversations. And I think those conversations are a good thing to have, and I think you also kind of alluded to it already just the mental health of the foster caregivers, and how much secondary trauma, we experience in the, in the length that sometimes these placements can take and the kind of up and down and the uncertainty and the expectations that for, for sometimes good reasons are given to us that don't always pan out the way we expect, there's, there's a lot of difficulty, and a lot of trial that comes along with foster parenting. And I think that's one of the great things about programs like yours, is because not only does it give a voice to those of us who have been through it, and have positive things to share. But it creates a community, and it helps those of you who are listening to this program, understand that they're not alone in in the struggles that they're faced in the trials that they've been through the the kind of things that you don't always feel comfortable sharing on Instagram and on social media, to know that it's normal and it's natural and it's healthy to go through these experiences, and that there are positive ways that we can work through them self can be what keeps you from burning out. Part of my self care is, is my relationship with God and my prayer, and being connected with a church family, that is also very pro support for foster and adoptive families, and even going even further, and supporting families who have the potential of

being involved in the foster care system. So, having a family of faith is incredibly important, cooking as well, is, is an outlet for me, it's something that I can control, and something that I feel like I'm good at. And so it's something that still gives me pride, Even though. Now that I've seen the connecting power of it it's no longer my primary motive in doing it, but it is still a source of personal pride and satisfaction for me, and then getting outdoors. We've been very blessed to live on about 12 acres of land out in the middle of the country to have a creek, and a fields, and, and, and land and chickens and things where I can kind of get out there and breathe the air and watch the sunrise and watch the sunset and, as I see the fireflies began to come out my back window, just kind of the connection to God's creation, just gives me a sense that that that we're going to get through this.

Unknown Speaker

What are some of the biggest struggles that you see in foster care and your estate.

Chef Kibby

I guess the most personal experience that I could see, I mean I can't speak for everyone in my state because I know every placement is different and every agency is different, every case is different. But the thing that I've experienced the most firsthand that I have found the most troubling is how long placements last and how long cases go without reaching a sense of permanency, and that's not healthy for the child. It's not healthy for the Foster, caregivers, and honestly it's not healthy for the biological parents either, and there might be some people that disagree with that, but that's just where I'm coming from as far as my understanding of of neurobiology and brain chemistry and knowing that the longer that a child is is placed outside of that home. The more neurological connection that child is making with their caregivers and the more they're internalizing those caregivers as a part of themselves. And so, when either. When those cases last that long, is just further decrease in that child's ability to, to heal and to end to grow, even if the end is reunification, or even if that end is is permanent placement with their caregivers. There is trauma in the process. The length of time that these placements get get drawn out is not healthy for anybody involved in as much as we need to be very careful about the decisions we make in the courtroom. We also need to recognize and acknowledge that the time involved has a consequence, as well, not just the decision that's made in the court,

Jack

yeah and you know the, and I'm sure CAD could speak to this better than I can, but I do know that, while a child is in limbo while they're waiting for that permanency, there are continuing to have anxiety, and the anxiety is further traumatizing them and the more trauma, especially the longevity of the trauma creates brain damage, and you know literal brain damage from the chemicals that are coursing through their body from the anxiety,

and this is just further, you know, making a bigger challenge for them to when they do have permanency to be able to attach properly to have relationships in their life as they grow up, they really just makes everything more challenging and while you know, the system might be focused on, you know, trying to give the parent every last chance before everything is ended. You know, when the child is in care for four years, that's you're almost like a quarter of their life. A quarter of their childhood is, you know,

Unknown Speaker

isn't that it's in crisis, and children have the right to permanency, they just do. It's just an unfair thing to do to kids.

Jack

So I know that, you know, we've we've all got, you know different situations in our homes. And, you know, the placements you've had have probably been very different from, you know placements someone else has had, but what do you think, from what your experience as a foster parent. What do you think that community can do to prevent more kids coming into care.

Chef Kibby

Yes and I think that there are agencies and organizations that are stepping up to play that role, and here locally here in central Ohio we have an organization here called My village ministries, and they are an organization they are a, a Safe Families style organization where it's a wraparound service for families who for one reason or another, risk and how many children are placed into foster care whether it's because of job loss, or unable to pay bills or it could be from medical issues, or you know just other concerns that they have, where it could be avoidable, for that family, to be able to retain the the care of their children without being placed in foster care. Obviously there are cases where there is neglect and abuse, where there should be a process where child welfare is stepping up and providing safety and providing a safety opportunity for the families to, to get the resources they need to, hopefully provide that child with, with the proper living environment, but there are many cases where those, those placements can be avoided, and so I hope that there are more people out there that that see the need and step up, like, my village ministries here in central Ohio is doing, and I have seen that in other areas I know that is really big in in Florida and Texas and I believe Georgia, there's states around the country where from a top down, and also from a grassroots approach are seeing the needs of families that run the risk of being involved in the system where it is avoidable and it's just a matter of providing some, some supports, and not necessarily even financial resources, a lot of time it's mentorship. Sometimes it's caregiving for children, so that parents have time to work or to to work on their relationships, there's a lot of things that we can do, even for

those families who don't feel like they're in a place where they can be foster or adoptive parents to still be a resource and a help to those families.

Jack

What are your goals to make positive change in your community.

Chef Kibby

Well, there's only so much I could do. And there's so many things that I would love to change but I think the, the area that I can change the most is what I'm doing right now, and that's sharing my experiences and sharing the biggest lesson that I've learned as a part of this, and that is that trauma is disruptive, but cooking is connecting. That is the heart and soul behind the the life transformation that I've been brought through over these last couple of years, and I fully believe, and I know this from the people that you know like you have responded to my voice in this space, that there are people out there that will connect with that message and will begin to see themselves and their families and their kitchens in a different way. What's a great message and I'm definitely gonna do some cooking with my kids, that's for sure. And if you ever any, any cooking questions as well. You mean you can always slide into my DMs on Instagram. I mean, I'm

Cat

I am definitely going to Chef Kibby thanks so much for being with us today. I really appreciate it.

Jack

Thanks for coming. I appreciate so much for joining us today.