

HHM - 37 Family Meal Planning w/Marie Fiebach



David Sandstrom 0:00

Here's a sample of what you'll hear on this episode of holistic health matters.

Marie Fiebach 0:05

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David Sandstrom 0:35

Welcome to the holistic health matters podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential in spirit, mind and body so that you can pursue the abundant life more effectively. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, naturopathic doctor and biblical health coach, and this is episode number 37.

David Sandstrom 0:59

This episode is brought to you by nice town blackout curtains. One of the most important things you can do for your health at all levels is to improve the quality of your sleep. And perhaps the most effective thing you can do to improve your sleep is to darken your room. God designed us to be awake and alert during the daylight hours and drowsy at night when it's dark out. Do what I did, install some nice town blackout curtains in your bedroom. Nice town makes beautiful, affordable quality blackout curtains that you can install yourself in a few minutes. Go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com forward slash resources, and click on the nice town affiliate link and start enjoying all the benefits of improved sleep in a dark room the way God intended. In this episode, I'm talking with Marie Fiebach. Marie is an expert on meal planning. The surprising thing is, is she's not into eating the healthiest food possible. She's not into eating organic or paleo or anything like that. What she's into is planning her meals for her family so that everyone can consistently share a meal together and the relational benefits and the health benefits that come along with that. And she's got a lot to share with the double HM community because we know as health enthusiasts that we want to eat healthy, and in order to eat healthy, we need to plan our meals and fail to plan plan to fail, right. So she's an expert at meal planning. But

not only that, she's going to talk to us about the benefits that come along with the relational connectedness by sharing a meal together. Before we start, I want to share you might hear a little rasp Enos in my voice because when we recorded this episode, I was in the beginning stages of a COVID-19 infection. I didn't know it was COVID at the time, but it was and I'm doing fine. I did all the things that I needed to do I optimize my vitamin D levels bulked up on my vitamin C zinc. I got my lymph fluid moving on my trampoline and my Chi machine. I used my Near Infrared Sauna got good rest, and I'm fully recovered now. I'm feeling great, and I'm ready to jump back into producing these episodes. So let's jump right into my conversation with Marie feedback.

David Sandstrom 3:04

Weeknight family dinners are a struggle for all of us. Whether you work at a job until 6pm. Live in your vehicle running kids to after school activities or chase toddlers all day. dinnertime often creates a feeling of dread. Marie Fieback is here to help. She's dealt with picky eaters, food allergies and crazy schedules. And yet she still manages to eat home cooked family meals almost every night. Marie, welcome to Holistic Health Matters.

Marie Fiebach 3:31

Oh, David, it is such a joy to be here. Thanks for inviting me.

David Sandstrom 3:35

Yeah, well, thank you for taking the time. I appreciate you being here. I spent some time in your website last night. And I see that you're all about family meals. And you mentioned there that families that eat together on a regular basis enjoy better health benefits. That sounds intriguing to me. Could you speak to that some more?

Marie Fiebach 3:52

Well, absolutely. There is clear research out there. My friends at the family dinner project have done lots of research about family dinners and the outcomes. And it is clear that children that have regular meals do not have to be dinners but regular meals with their family usually have reduced teen pregnancy reduce drug use, they have better outcomes as far as grades. I really believe that family meals are so important to creating stability and predictability for your children. And I have four teenagers right now. And stability is something that is really, really important. It's important when they're little too. But as your kids get older, having a rhythm and having things that they can count on even when they're a little bit surly is so important.

David Sandstrom 4:45

Yeah. When I was a kid, my mom insisted on us eating dinner together. We've kind of gotten away from that you know where we've got busy lifestyles and I'm away a lot with my job, and it can be difficult for us. So I'm really happy to have you on the show and learn from you about How we can do better with our schedules in our meal planning and our family time.

Marie Fiebach 5:05

Oh, for sure, because really weeknight dinners are mainly about schedules and time management than they are about the food when you're trying to just get down to the nuts and bolts of it.

David Sandstrom 5:16

Yeah, what caught my attention when you reached out to me to be on the show is that it really wasn't about finding the healthiest food and eating organic. It was about enjoying the relational connectedness that a meal together brings. And since I'm in a holistic health, that sounded very interesting to me, because the spiritual component to health is all about relationships, it's our relationship with God, it's our relationship with one another, and our relationship with ourselves. And that one another is super important. When I was reading my book, the Christians guide to holistic health, I came across a study that was published in the Harvard health news. And they found that people had experienced a lack of relational connectedness that was about the equivalent to smoking a pack of cigarettes a day was that detrimental to their health. And it was worse than sedentary lifestyle, and smoking. So everyone knows that those things are bad for our health. But not everyone knows that a lack of relational connectedness can actually be worse.

Marie Fiebach 6:14

And you know what? connection versus just being around people. There's a distinction there. If I tell you my family dinner table, most of the time it's eat dinner, and we're rushing from one thing to the next. And one kids walking off a little early and another kids stringing in a little bit late. But because we have this practice of regular family dinners, we have built a safe place for our children. And I'll tell you a story. This is something that happened a few months ago, but it is solidified in my head because it reminds me of the work that I'm doing and why it is important. Again, 95% of the time, family dinners, I'm still telling my kids to keep their elbows off the table and to use their knife and fork correctly. And we're running in and out. And so we're not having long family conversations. But every now and then a tender subject will come up. And I will not forget this happened at Sunday morning breakfast a couple of months ago. And one of my kids just brought up a really tender topic. And we sat at that table with my four teenagers for 45 minutes. And we dug deep into that topic. And my husband and I were able to talk about our family values and how we felt about

this topic, and why it is important for our children to think about these things and to prepare for their future. And that conversation would not have happened, if we had not had the practice of having regular meals, the practice of creating a space that was safe for our teenagers. Now most of our meals are not like that. But every now and then they come up and it's so important.

David Sandstrom 8:00

Have you always done this, since your kids were little?

Marie Fiebach 8:04

I have it's been a core family value. It was something that I grew up with, I grew up having regular family meals, and actually, I live a half a mile from my parents. And we still get together with my parents and my sister and her family so to speak. So it is a multi generational culture of family meals that has been instilled in me since I was young. And I'm hoping I'm instilling that in my children as well.

David Sandstrom 8:31

There's something very special about breaking bread together. When Jesus was in his resurrected body, one of the first things he did was he had a barbecue on the beach with the disciples, that's a really special time to share a meal together. And the story you just shared is great because that conversation probably wouldn't have taken place if you didn't have that as a habit.

Marie Fiebach 8:51

I firmly believe that it wouldn't. And that's why I am out teaching busy families how to make weeknight dinner happen even when their lives are busy. Because our current culture is full of so much business it was kind of one of the blessings of the pandemic is that many of us slowed down. And we started spending more time with our families because we were forced to. And I'm hoping that we can keep that going in the future so that our families have more time to be together. But sitting down and eating together is a very intimate thing. I mean, eating is one of the first things you have to do on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right, you have to feed yourself, right. And when you are doing something as primal and basic as that with your family day in and day out. You automatically create a connection there just by eating together.

David Sandstrom 9:46

Yeah, totally agree. You know, when you pause and think about it, it's not difficult to see the health benefits to the relational connectedness by sharing a meal together. But why do you think it's so difficult for families to find the time to do that?

Marie Fiebach 9:59

One thing is that we lead very busy lives. So many families are having parents that are both working outside the home. The kids are in lots of activities, sports, music, lessons, dance lessons, all sorts of different activities that our children are doing. And in our society, most schools are until 3:30 or four in the afternoon, which means you're trying to fit in all of your activities, all of your errands, all of your things between 4pm and 8pm. And I started feed your family tonight in 2017. Because I was sitting on the sidelines of my twins, soccer games. They were playing competitive soccer at the time. And I was sitting and talking to all of the moms and the moms would say, we're going to finish watching this game or finish this practice. We're going to hit the drive thru eat dinner, get the homework done, get the kids in the bath and get them to bed. And I was doing all of those things except for hitting the drive thru and they started to ask me, How are you not hitting the drive thru two to three times a week. And I didn't know I had to sit and reverse engineer what I was doing. And that became the basis of my three step process for helping families get weeknight dinner on the table. I had to think about how I planned my meals around my schedule, and that was where I started.

David Sandstrom 11:24

That's interesting. So what is your meal planning look like?

David Sandstrom 11:32

As a naturopath, I can attest to the importance of quality sleep. All kinds of crucial health building functions take place during sleep. Our bodies make important hormones such as DHEA, which is a building block hormone that contributes to the formation of other important hormones such as testosterone and estrogen. Growth hormone, which is important for cellular repair is primarily produced while we sleep. Benefits are not limited to simply hormone production either. Our brains detoxify themselves by way of the glymphatic system that's active during sleep. Our brains also consolidate short term memory into long term memory during sleep. As part of the double hm community, you probably already know the importance of quality sleep, yet many people still struggle to get a good night's rest. As an airline pilot for the last 32 years, I've slept in a lot of different rooms. I've had some great night's sleep, and some Well, not so great nights. And there's a lot of things that go into a good night's sleep and the comfort of the mattress, the thickness of the pillow, the quality of the air. But there's one thing that all hotel rooms that provide the opportunity for a great night's sleep have in common in a dark room. High End hotels spent a lot of coin on expensive blackout curtains, you can have that five-star hotel feeling in your own bedroom, for a surprisingly low cost. Nice town makes beautiful, affordable quality blackout curtains that you can install yourself in a few minutes. That's what I have in my bedroom. And my wife and I can't imagine trying to sleep without them. Because they're so thick. They also have the added benefit

of reducing outside noise. Nice town has all kinds of sizes and colors to choose from. Go to my website, [David sandstrom.com](http://DavidSandstrom.com). That's d a v i d s a n d s t r o m as in mike.com, forward slash resources and use my affiliate link and start enjoying all the health benefits to sleeping in a room that's dark and quiet. Now let's get back to the show.

David Sandstrom 13:50

That's interesting. So what does your meal planning look like?

Marie Fiebach 13:53

Well, I meal plan every Monday and I have a weekly meal planning sheet I have a free copy for your listeners, if they want to go to [feedyourfamily tonight.com slash health matters](http://feedyourfamilytonight.com/slash/healthmatters). They can get a free download of this weekly meal planning sheet. And it starts with a space to list your activities. And I usually list what's happening in the afternoons. But some families are listing what's happening during the day. If you know that you've got a busy day at work and you have meetings back to back to back and you're not going to have energy to fix dinner. When you get home. You want to put that on that activity part of the weekly meal planning sheet. Anything that's going to affect how dinner is executed, needs to be on that activity sheet. And then from there, I do what's called set a dinner bell where I write the target time that our family is going to eat. And that target time changes from day to day because I have four kids in different activities. I would love to say that we sat down and had dinner at 5:30 every night, but I promise you it doesn't happen some days at 6:30 some days it's 6:15. Some days, it's seven, depending upon our schedules. And so I set that target dinner time. And then I plan my meals around what my activities and energies are like and what time I have to have dinner.

David Sandstrom 15:14

So for most people, their schedule just kind of happens to them, they don't plan it out. And they approach their day. And they're spending most of their time just putting out fires, the urgent things that come up, and they're not being real deliberate about how they plan their meals. So it sounds like you are being very deliberate. Is that right?

Marie Fiebach 15:32

I am putting my schedule first. And I'm deciding what kind of meals to have on a particular night that works with that schedule. Because I can't set a family dinner time of six o'clock every night, when one kid has dance. And one kid has football practice, and another kid has theater practice, I have to work around the rocks, which is my family schedule, and find out what type of meals work. Let me give you an example. On a day where we have piano from 3:45 to 4:45. Soccer from five until six and I have a PTO meeting back up at school at seven, I

have to eat dinner at 6:15. The second we walk in the door from soccer practice. So on a day like that I plan a meal that is in my oven, or in my slow cooker ready to go the second we walk in the door. Two days later, we may have piano and I may not have danced until 7:30. And so I can have a meal where I can stand at the stove and physically cooked for 20 or 30 minutes before we eat. On a day like that I'm going to cook something like a stir fry, where I'm physically standing there cooking. So I think of the kinds of meals that work on the different kinds of days that I have in my life.

David Sandstrom 16:46

That's interesting. So you don't have much control over your kids activities and your family's schedule. So you put those on your calendar first because you can't change them. And then you work your meal planning in and around those times. So that's, that's very intriguing.

Marie Fiebach 17:02

Exactly, exactly. And then the magic of feature family tonight is something that I call always have a backup. And a backup meal is anything that you can get on the table in 20 minutes or less with ingredients that you have in your house all the time, because every one is going to have a day where the wheels fall off, and your plans are going to fall apart. And you're either not going to have the energy or something came in you know, you've got to take your kid to the orthodontist appointment and you're sitting there for 45 minutes, something's going to happen. And instead of hitting the drive thru, it's going to take you at least 20 minutes to get to the drive thru and back. But if you can get dinner on the table with things you have in the house, you're going to save yourself the drive thru and the headache.

David Sandstrom 17:48

Give us an example of what one of those meals would look like.

Marie Fiebach 17:50

Oh sure. My favorite backup meal is chicken noodle soup. I always have chicken broth and chicken meat in my freezer, I can pull out a box of noodles, I can cook that up and serve it with a salad or some cut up fruit. A lot of families do breakfast for dinner as a backup meal. They'll keep a dozen eggs in their refrigerator and maybe a box of their favorite pancake mix. And they'll make pancakes and eggs and have breakfast for dinner. I'd like to do being in casadias is anything that you can keep in your freezer or your pantry that you can get on the table really quickly.

David Sandstrom 18:25

Excellent. How do you deal with most of that a lot of families have a picky eater. And the kids will Oh he'll only eat chicken nuggets or something along those lines. So how do you deal with that as a family?

Marie Fiebach 18:38

eaters can be really challenging and boy, I have had them in my house, there's a couple of things. One of my best techniques for dealing with picky eaters is making sure that there is always something on the plate that you know that they will eat. And then they can supplement with other things that they can get for themselves. Especially because my kids are older they can always make themselves a sandwich if they if they need to. Yeah, so if I am cooking something like ginger pear chicken, and I know my one kid cannot stand the taste of ginger. I will cook the chicken meat and then I will pull that out before I start making the sauce and they can have the plain meat and then they can eat some of the veggies we start in our house every dinner off with a salad. My children are not the best at eating cooked vegetables, but they will happily eat a raw salad. So in our home, that is how I make sure that I get vegetables into my children is we eat a raw salad before any of the other food is served. And everybody eats a giant bowl of salad

David Sandstrom 19:39

What a great simple strategy. You know what your kids like and don't like so have some of the stuff they like on hand all the time. You know I don't often refer to this but I'm also a certified nutritional counselor and having a salad before the meal is actually a great idea. Especially if you can get some of the bitter herbs in there like arugula or dandelion leaf. It actually stimulates your digestive juices and get your stomach and your digestive system ready for the meal that's on its way.

Marie Fiebach 20:08

Well, I didn't know that about the bitter herbs, but I sure love my baby irregardless. I suppose that's probably good.

David Sandstrom 20:13

Yeah, absolutely.

Marie Fiebach 20:15

Well, I'll have to remember that as I go grocery shopping this week. But yeah, so with with my family that I know, my kids are always going to have their vegetables. And if they eat part of the entree and some piece of it, then I know that they've gotten their basic food for the day, and then I let it go from there. The thing about picky eaters is and I've seen this with my oldest, who is the most picky eater is that it ebbs and flows. And they will be really picky about

something for a while and then out of the blue, they'll be ready to eat it again. And then they'll eat it for a while, and then they'll stop eating it, and they'll eat something else. And onions is an example my son would not touch onions for years and years. And then out of nowhere, he decided that he liked onions. And so now he puts onions on everything. So your picky eaters will not be picky forever. Make sure that there's at least one or two things that they can eat and try and make the same family meal, but just pull out the pieces that the picky eater will eat. And that will help a lot.

David Sandstrom 21:17

Excellent. I'm thinking there's got to be somebody listening this as well, that sounds great. But we all get home at different times. You know, we have two parents working and the kids are out doing activities, especially once they start driving. So how do you deal with different people arriving home at different times of the evening?

Marie Fiebach 21:32

Sure, sure. When I talk about that setting a dinner bell, the dinner bell is the target time that you are going to have dinner and in my house, that sometimes means it's when the first person needs to eat. So someone's going to be eating early, and they're going to be going off to their activity and the other people are coming in and eating later. Sometimes the person leaving early will have a snack, we'll have dinner and I'll save them a late plate. I families are coming in and out at different times my friend Shannon had this situation where no one was home at the same time in her home. And she would make her dinner bell at 10 in the morning, she would take her children's school, she would go to the gym and she would come home and fix dinner. And she would put the dinner into clear glass containers labeled with each person's name. And they would pull out their meal and reheat it and eat it whenever they were home. It's feed your family tonight is not a one size fits all solution. It's a solution to make it work in your home. Because we all have different foods we prefer. We all have different schedules. But there's a way for everyone to make it work for them.

David Sandstrom 22:42

Excellent. I love the mason jars, you use mason jars.

Marie Fiebach 22:45

I use a lot of mason jars, I got one sitting at my desk right now pull 11 water,

David Sandstrom 22:50

we drink out of them. We use them for everything. It's a great way to store food. And you can you can even put a salad in there, put some some things in there and then don't put the dressing in. But when you're ready to eat it, put the

dressing in oil, vinegar, whatever you want to use, shake it up and you get yourself an instant salad and it'll stay fresh in there.

Marie Fiebach 23:06

Oh yeah, those salad jars are great, especially if you are taking lunch to work. It's a nice little way to pack your lunches in a mason jar.

David Sandstrom 23:15

Yeah, I like that. Well, you know, I do a lot of food planning and prep when I go to work as an airline pilot. And people laugh at me but I have a nice cooler, and I prepare my meals ahead of time. And I put them in a vacuum seal bag. And I wrap the food in parchment paper first because I don't want to be reheating it next to the plastic. And when I'm at a hotel, I'll throw some hot water in the sink and put my meal in there and it gets you know, most of the time reasonably warm. And I can eat home cooked meal on the road. It saves time I first started doing it because I wanted to eat more healthy. But I realized after doing it for a while that it saves an incredible amount of time and an incredible amount of money. One of the things that people will object to healthy eating is they'll say, well, eating organic is expensive. So I can't do that. Well I can tell you something that's more expensive than eating organic and that's eating out.

Marie Fiebach 24:11

Totally.

David Sandstrom 24:12

So when you pay somebody to prepare that food you pay dearly.

Marie Fiebach 24:16

Well, and you know, I talk about this when people make new year's resolutions. New Year's resolutions usually have to do with one of three categories. They usually have something to do with your health, something to do with your organization or something to do with your finances. And when you start the habit of weekly meal planning, you are going to help all three of those areas. Simply by eating at home you will eat healthier statistics have proven that you eat more vegetables and less sodium by eating at home. And you will save money because it is way less expensive than hitting the drive thru or buying pre packaged or pre made foods and it helps With your organization, because you get so much brainspace by taking 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning of the week, I can free my mind of that dinner dread. I don't even think about what I'm making for dinner until it's time for me to fix dinner. And so I know that I have set myself up for success. So I have organization, I have money savings, and I have improved health just by 10 to 15 minutes a week of planning.

David Sandstrom 25:27

So you take 10 or 15 minutes, I'm thinking maybe Sunday and you plan your whole week out.

Marie Fiebach 25:32

I do I plan. I usually plan on Mondays, Monday's work for me because I work at home and my kids are usually in school and I often will grocery shop on Mondays. And I I do I take 10 to 15 minutes, I write out my activities, I set my dinner bell, I plan my meals, and then I write my prep. And this is a really an interesting thing that I do. It's not what most people think about when I write prep, I write the prep on the day I need to do it, not the day of the meal. So if we're having roast beef on Sunday, on Friday, I'm going to write take roast out of the freezer. Or if I'm having red beans and rice on Tuesday, on Monday I'm going to write soak the beans. And so I do all of the prep that I need to do usually when I'm cleaning up my dinner dishes, because I've already got a cutting board out my kitchens already messed, so I'm not cleaning up twice. And I get myself set up for the next day. So that I have everything done that I need to do. So at five o'clock, I can go and start fixing dinner and not have to worry about skipping steps like marinating or soaking beans.

David Sandstrom 26:39

Yeah, you know, that's one of the biggest problems when it comes to staying on a consistent eating plan is You say, Well, I don't have the The food here right now. I don't have the time to go get it. So we're just going to go to the drive thru. So if the food is in the house, man, it makes it a whole lot easier. And I love the system you got of saying, Okay, I'm not stressing about it. I have down. I know what we're eating on Tuesday. I know what we're eating on Thursday. I love it. That's really, really good.

Marie Fiebach 27:06

I was going to say I tell my viewers and my listeners that at least once a week that plan is going to change. So know that the plan is there to serve you. You don't have to be a slave to it. But it is there as a backup. And it's there to free your mind of thinking about what you're going to make for dinner all day long.

David Sandstrom 27:28

So it's a flexible schedule. Yeah, yeah. So flexibility built in. That's really, really cool. So I'm ready. Do you have any culinary training?

Marie Fiebach 27:38

No, I don't. But I when I was in middle school, I did competitively bake. I competed in state fairs and that type of thing. So I have done competitive

baking, but I do not have formal culinary training. I am a home cook. And I am a mom. And I'm okay with that.

David Sandstrom 28:02

That's really good. I love it. I love it. It's a it's a great mission you're on. So if people want to get ahold of you, what's what's the best way to get ahold of you?

Marie Fiebach 28:11

You know, my website is feedyourfamilytonight.com. And you can get links to my podcast. If you want to learn more about getting family dinner on the table. Check out the feed your family tonight podcasts. It's there on my website. I also have a Facebook group. And that's the main place where I connect with people to hear about what's happening in your life and answer any of your questions and

David Sandstrom 28:33

Is that also called feed your family tonight.?Y

Marie Fiebach 28:36

es, feed your family tonight. If you search for feed your family tonight on Facebook, it'll take you to my page and you can join the group there. And if you want to know some of the background of what is happening in my homes of my crazy antics of having four teenagers follow me on Instagram. I'm at Marie Fiebach.

David Sandstrom 28:53

Excellent. And then that resource that you mentioned earlier,

Marie Fiebach 28:56

Oh, yes. And the free weekly meal planning sheet which walks you through that step that I kind of talked about how I plan it, [feed your family tonight.com](http://feedyourfamilytonight.com) slash health matters.

David Sandstrom 29:08

Marie. Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom with us. I appreciate you being here. And you have a great day.

Marie Fiebach 29:14

Oh, thanks a million David. The pleasure was mine.

David Sandstrom 29:17

Well, I hope you enjoyed that conversation with Marie Fiebach. Once again, her website is [feed your family tonight.com](http://feedyourfamilytonight.com) and she created resource for the wh m community. It's at [feed your family tonight.com forward slash health matters](http://feedyourfamilytonight.com/forward-slash-health-matters). If you go to that page, you can download a free meal planning guide that she put together. Please don't forget this episode is brought to you by Nicetown blackout curtains. Think of sleep as you would a nutrient because it is we should all be taking steps to improve the quality of our sleep. Why not start with some low hanging fruit? No other investment gives you more bang for your buck. The blackout curtains in your bedroom because God designed us asleep when it's dark out, go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com forward slash resources. Click on my affiliate link for nice town blackout curtains. Don't forget to buy the curtain rods I've curated there for you as well. When you make a purchase from one of my affiliates, you're also supporting the show financially. You won't pay any more, and I make a small commission. So thanks in advance for your support. For more, go to David sandstrom.com. in the show notes for each episode, you'll find links to all the resources that were mentioned, as well as a full transcript with timestamps that you can download for free. In addition, I always include a content upgrade with each show, which is a free download that is designed to help you go deeper with that subject. Once again, thank you for listening, and I'll talk with you next week. Be blessed