



Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider

Episode 197

thesimpleshow.com

Segment One

Tsh: [00:00](#) This is Simple; I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

Hey friends, in this episode I'm chatting with my friend Jacqui Skemp, who's been on the show before a while back when she shared with us her good list. She writes at MexicanDomesticGoddess and she wrote for us this week about small, simple ways she incorporates her culture as a first generation Mexican American into her home where she's raising little kids with her husband who she describes as basically Midwestern white. His ancestry is a mix of all sorts of good things like German and Irish and they've stopped counting how many generations have been in the US in his family. We get into the little everyday parts of their home life to help incorporate her heritage into their home in Minnesota, far from where she was raised in southern California. Then we get into a short and sweet good list update where Jackie shares her four things currently making life sweeter right now.

Really quickly, it's been awhile since I've reminded you so just in case you need this reminder, the best way to keep up with new episodes of Simple is to subscribe. All you gotta do is pick your favorite podcast player, like the native iTunes or Google Play apps on your phones or something like Overcast, which is what I use. Then search for Simple and then hit that subscribe button. That way you'll never miss an episode because they'll automatically drop into your feed and all you have to do is hit play. If you haven't done that yet, go do that right now. Your ear buds will thank you and so will I. Okay, so let's get right into this episode. Here's Jacqui starting us off with her thoughts on raising multicultural kids.

[01:44](#) Jacqui, you wrote this fantastic post about what it's like to be the daughter of Mexican immigrants, a first generation American, who is now married to someone not of that origin and you guys are raising kids together. Let's back up a little and just tell me a little bit about your broad experience of what that's like, both in your marriage and in your parenting.

Jacqui: We honestly didn't think about it very much. I didn't really start to think about what we had to do as parents to introduce our children to both of the cultures, I think until I was pregnant with my first and my husband and I had this

conversation about immigrants and the immigrant experience and assimilating into a culture and what that looks like. It was probably the first time I really thought about what it was like as a first generation immigrant or first generation here and how much happens over several generations.

I'm still at the beginning of that process as opposed to some of his family has been here for many generations and so really his cultural background is your typical American Midwestern experience. When I was pregnant with my first and we were talking about that, I realized there's a lot of things that we are going to have to discuss. Actually one of the first things was we didn't know if we were going to have a boy or a girl and we were talking about piercing ears. Mexicans do this to daughters when they're infants and my husband had not really thought about that. I think a lot of his sisters did it when they were older. I just assumed that this is how we would do it because this is how my family does it.

It started that conversation about what do you do and what do I do? What are our expectations for what our family is going to look like?

Tsh: Because you being first generation American, that meant that your parents were living cross culturally here in the United States. I presume that your upbringing was pretty different from his, like as a child, your experience in small ways like that, like the ear piercing stuff.

Jacqui: Right. In many ways I think I have the benefit of, my mom came here when she was five, so she was brought here as a child. She grew up in California though she was a native Spanish speaker and still had very strong ties to the Mexican culture. My Dad was in his twenties. They had different experiences as well. My mom knew what it was like to go through the public school system. I benefited from that because she was able to guide me through my public school career where my father didn't know. He didn't know a lot of the expectations or different things that were happening in that system because his experience was completely different. In many ways, I watched that happen and that is something that is being mirrored in my own family life where we've got two, kind of similar but also kind of different cultural backgrounds and we're trying to blend them together.

Tsh: Sure. You grew up in southern California, right?

Jacqui: Correct. I grew up as a California, just 20 minutes out of downtown LA with no traffic.

Tsh: [05:15](#) I've got it. Yes. I've been there. I know what that's like. What was your immediate surroundings like? Were you in the minority as a kid or were you around lots of other Spanish speaking families and kids?

Jacqui: My high school graduating class was 99% Hispanic.

Tsh: Got It. Okay.

Jacqui: Mostly Mexican and some people were from Central America and South America and then we had a lot of Filipino families and some African American families and we had a handful of white students at our school. I was definitely in the majority.

Tsh: And then your husband, I know you guys in Minnesota now, is he from Minnesota?

Jacqui: Yeah, he was actually born in New Mexico in Albuquerque. His father was doing his residency there, but both of his parents are from Minnesota and he grew up in Minneapolis. They came back here when he a young child, I think three or four years old.

Tsh: His upbringing was fairly different in terms of just cultural influence and the world around him and probably the type of school he went to. Right?

Jacqui: Correct. He went to private school all the way through. I was a public school child all the way through. Even that is a big difference too.

Tsh: Okay. You guys are now living in Minnesota and you're raising your kids in this, I guess just a multicultural family with lots of different influences and backgrounds and grandparents, I presume. I would love to hear from you, you already got into this and what you wrote for us this week, but you shared a few practical things that you guys do. I'd love to hear more about what that looks like on the ground in the day to day. Because I presume it's not something you're constantly just saying, so kids here we are, we're going to be doing cross-cultural reading now. It looks a little more organic, right?

Jacqui: Right. We're not sitting here and telling them we want to expose you to a broad variety of experiences. It started when they were little with having a lot of books on hand. I Facetime with my family quite frequently and so they hear me speaking Spanish to my father. My father speaks English, but he and I converse in Spanish primarily. When I'm speaking in Spanish, they know that I'm talking to my father, typically. Sometimes reading books with them and even if it's not a Spanish book, I try to point out things in Spanish and repeat things in both languages for them.

Tsh: The other thing I should probably ask, because our listeners probably are wondering, how old are your kids?

Jacqui: My kids are six, four and two. They're pretty little.

- Tsh: They're all in the little kid stage. Got It. That's helpful. So you point out the words in Spanish, even if the book isn't necessarily in Spanish.
- Jacqui: Right. My son who is in school is taking Spanish classes in school. He actually is learning quite a bit and what I've been most surprised by is the fact that his pronunciation is fantastic. I mean, he has a perfect Spanish accent and I think maybe it's a little bit of perfectionism, but I think he just had growing up hearing it. My husband and I obviously don't speak to each other in Spanish, but my son hears me speak the language with my family. We listen to music that's in Spanish around the house. We talk about that. We use certain Spanish words. We say agua instead of water. Little things like that. There's plenty of little words that we use the Spanish version of that word and my husband has even adopted that as well.
- Tsh: That's cool. You mentioned music just now. What does that look like? In the background as you're going about your day?
- Jacqui: We'll have different, maybe we'll play an album and it'll be a Spanish album, it's mostly just background stuff. It's not like we're going to sit down and listen to this song. My older son has adopted a few of the songs that he really likes and he'll request them. It's just fun to see that he likes that too.
- There are things that we're looking at ahead at as well. I would really like to sign my son up for, if he's interested in it, . There's Ballet Folklórico, which is the Spanish dancing that you've probably seen them before. The big colorful dresses.
- Tsh: That's actually a really big here. I live in Austin, there's always a big festival downtown every year with them.
- Jacqui: It's not something I ever did and I always wanted to, so it'd be fun to have my boys do it and we'll just try it. We're very open to letting them try something and if they really don't want to do it, I'm not gonna force them to do it, but I like them to have experience of practicing and rehearsing and then maybe that will change their experience if we go see people dance, which we've tried to do as well.
- Tsh: [10:07](#) I'm curious because I know your husband is a bit of a, he's got all sorts of ancestry as you said, he's multigenerational American here. Do you guys do anything with his cultural background or is that more of a question mark? Does that make sense what I'm asking?
- Jacqui: Yeah. We talk about it probably more than we do the things. There are things like food wise, like I just don't know how to cook some of this stuff. My husband

will do like brats and sauerkraut and that's the extent of it because he didn't really grow up eating a lot of, maybe like corn beef and stuff around Saint Patrick's Day. It's very stereotypical Midwestern American in his family and they do a lot of variety of food. It's not just your typical hot dish thing.

Tsh: [10:54](#) Classic Midwest stuff.

Jacqui: We went to see Sivan (sp?), which is a band that played here locally and we decided to take our son with us because they're going to have Irish dancers before their. Ian, my husband really wanted to introduce him to that and let him see that. It was late at night and he didn't last very long, but he was really curious about why those girls had such big hair.

Tsh: Right. That's cute. You mentioned the food and gosh, your cultural background is like my favorite thing really and truly, we joke here in Texas about the food and the listeners have heard me say this before, it's not Mexican food is just food. For me anyway, growing up here in Texas until I married my husband who's an Oregonian, I did not realize that people did not have tacos four times a week. That to me is just normal. I don't even think of it as Mexican food or something quote ethnic. To me it's just food. That's just what you need all the time. I love that you, it sounds like you bring your food from your upbringing California to your kids in Minnesota, right?

Jacqui: My family, they own a restaurant in Mexico and in California, so they have a few locations and food is just a big part of our family life. Growing up we spent, for example, during Lent, on Good Friday we spent the whole day fasting but also preparing the meal for that night and you spend the whole day soaking the lentils and making the pudding and it's very much of all day family experience. We've just really been, we don't offer them different options at meal time. This is where we eating. Even when it comes to spicy food, when we add salsa to stuff, sometimes they kids say this a little spicy. I say, well we like spicy food and you can try some of it and if you don't want too much you could put less on but this is the kind of food that were eating. They've seemed to have gotten along with it. They're taking the bait. I'm going to keep coming with that.

Tsh: You mentioned tamales at Christmas, which I love because that is a thing down here in Texas as well.

Jacqui: We grew up making them and also buying them. There's a local supermarket here in the Twin Cities that makes the masa and has all of the husks and everything ready here. My sister-in-law actually spearheaded this. She said we should do this every year together. She's not Mexican, but she loves to make them. We spend a day, a couple of days before Christmas, we get together and we put out the big table cloth and the kids get to spread the masa. I spend the

day before cooking the filling and we just spend the whole day steaming them and then sharing them with family and friends over the Christmas season. It's a really nice tradition and it's a lot of work. I only do it around Christmas. I really don't do it any other time of year.

Tsh: [14:06](#) That's really fun though. I love that you've done it and I love that your sister in law has jumped in on that. That's really cool.

Jacqui: Oh yeah, she is great. I mean she actually gave my sons, their first book in Spanish, which was *Good Night Moon*, but the Spanish version and I just really appreciate that our family has also been really...my mother in law has made pose at Christmas time as well and it's very honoring and just really nice to know that they also appreciate my background and want my children to have that as well.

Tsh: That's great. Speaking of, you're up there with your in laws or near your in laws in Minnesota, but you travel, like you said in your post, you travel pretty annually, it sounds like, to visit your family for several weeks in California, right?

Jacqui: [14:52](#) Yes I do. When I only had one child, I traveled twice a year to California and now we just do one big trip and we all go for several weeks. Last year was our longest trip and we were there for six weeks.

Tsh: Wow, okay. That's a long time.

Jacqui: It was. It was a very long time, but it was really good. It was fun for my kids. They spend the whole year not seeing their grandparents and my parents in person. It's just really nice for, I think my parents too, to have that quality time and it's not a vacation, we do do some things, but it's really just, we're gonna do our normal day to day thing, but we're doing it here and we're doing it with our extended family. That was what I did. I grew up doing that as well. We didn't do vacations. We didn't go, like I mentioned, we did go to Grand Canyon. I had never been to San Francisco. In California, I really didn't go further north than Los Angeles for many years, but we went to Mexico every summer.

Tsh: Is it a drive?

Jacqui: Sometimes we would drive and sometimes we would we fly. It's a 28 hour drive.

Tsh: Wow. That's a long drive.

Jacqui: Where my mom's family's from, it's a long drive but it was really fun for us. We would pack up books and cassettes and projects to work on in the car and we would leave really early in the morning like four or five in the morning and make our way down in two days. We'd be there.

Tsh: Two days? That is impressive. We have about a 30 hour drive too from Texas to Oregon, but we have to spread it out for our sanity. That is impressive.

Jacqui: [16:24](#) My parents are pretty adventurous and just wanted to get there because they knew once we got there they could just rest. When we drove to Texas for Thanksgiving and this last year we were going to attempt that and it was an 18 hour drive. We ended up splitting it up, it was quite a bit with young children and the potty breaks really do extend the to drive time.

Tsh: Yeah. They change everything. But it sounds like you have taken your boys to Mexico, right?

Jacqui: Yeah. My middle son has only been there once. My youngest has never been, my eldest spend twice. We've gone as a family two times, and we would like to go again soon, but I still have, my grandparents live there and I have an uncle and cousins who still live there. It was great. I did not find it particularly stressful. The last time we went, we had our eldest and our middle son and I was very early on pregnant with our third and I got really sick and my son, the younger one was also sick, and we got to the airport. We were feeling so crabby, get to the airport, we had just flown into LA the day before and we're flying to Mexico the next day, we're checking in and then the woman who's checking us in says, oh, your husband can't fly because his passport expired a month ago.

Tsh: No, Oh my gosh.

Jacqui: I was just, this cannot be happening. I found out that you can get a passport in a day through one of the embassies, but he had to wait a day. He ended up flying out with some of my family who was coming out later. I was stuck, pregnant, sick with a very sick infant on the plane. That part was pretty miserable. But he went to San Diego and got to eat fish tacos at the pier and it ended up being fine. I mean, I will never let that happen again. Now we're super on top of our passports situation.

Tsh: It's funny how those expiration dates creep up on you.

Jacqui: Yeah, I did not even think about it. I did not find traveling with children to be difficult. I think we just approached it like this is an adventure. We're just doing this fun thing and we're gonna make the best of it. I don't really know what's going to happen. Kids are really resilient.

Tsh: They really are. The listeners know, whenever I talk about travel with kids, the thing I always say is the more you travel with kids, the better travelers they become. To avoid it means it's just going to continually be harder and harder. I think it's really great that you took your little kids there, that's fantastic.

Jacqui: We just threw tons of stickers and candy and had very low expectations. It turned out just fine.

Tsh: If you assume traveling without kids or with kids is going to be like traveling without kids, you're going to be disappointed. But if you know it's gonna be a different sort of travel and maybe even a more fun travel, than you would have had were you kid free, you roll with the punches and are okay with being surprised.

Jacqui: I definitely learned I can't bring the magazine on with me or I bring a travel mug now for my coffee that will not spill out. Different expectations

Tsh: [19:40](#) Jacqui, you wrote your post about raising a multicultural family. You've been on the podcast before though, you shared with us your good list where we talk about four different things that are making your life better. I thought it'd be fun for the second half of our chat to revisit this whole framework because it's been awhile. I would love to hear what new good list you would have at the moment fo as we get into the summer right now and for listeners as a reminder, our good list cover four things, a thing, habit you've adopted, a work of art, and a philosophy. I just thought it'd be fun to tap into that a little bit for the second half.

Jacqui, what is a thing right now in your life making everything better.

Jacqui: I finally did it and I don't know why I waited so long, but I have started using a grocery delivery service.

Tsh: [20:30](#) Yes, man.

Jacqui: Life changing. I used to think, oh, we couldn't afford to do that, it's so expensive and I don't want to pay the extra fee to have somebody, but we actually end up spending less money because I don't do all impulse buys and I have to be really careful with my meal planning and I'm amazed at how much more time I have. I don't have to lug small children out and try to get things and deal with potential tantrums and whatnot. It has been life changing. I text one of my girlfriend's frequently, pretty much every week when my delivery shows up. I said, oh man, I just, I can't get over how amazing this is, it's so amazing. It's a luxury and I'm really loving it right now.

Tsh: [21:12](#) We had it when we lived in Turkey, our kids were little when we lived in Turkey and they've had it there for a long time. I think a lot of cultures, a lot of countries have had grocery delivery service. I remember thinking, I don't know how I would be raising little kids right now without this grocery delivery service because I already hate the grocery shopping chore anyway, with or without kids.

I don't even like going by myself. The fact that I can avoid it for me, it is totally worth, for us, it's a \$5 charge. To me it's worth every penny of that.

Jacqui: Worth it. Absolutely.

Tsh: That's a great thing. A second thing is a habit you've adopted. What habit in your life right now is making things better?

Jacqui: [21:53](#) This is actually something I've been doing for over a year and I saw that you had somebody on who spoke about this, intermittent fasting. I've been doing it since February of 2018 and I actually did it at the recommendation of my doctor. Aside from the health benefits, it really has just changed my mindset and my relationship with food. I feel like there's so much more freedom when it comes to what I'm eating and when I'm eating. It's really been a good life changing experience because I now see that feasting time is more joyful. I enjoy this thing and I'm okay with eating this thing because I know that I'm also going to have a time of fasting coming up. It's been a really healing relationship with food and that can go into a whole other host of things. I love it and it's so natural, it just feels so much easier. As a mom of small kids, one of the things that used to drive me crazy was, I haven't had a chance to have breakfast because I'm dealing with their needs early in the morning and tantrums and whatnot. And now I just don't eat until one of them goes down for a nap and it's so easy, I don't have to worry about that thing.

Tsh: Yeah. It's funny because I do intermittent fasting too. The more and more people I talk to that do this, especially women, the more I hear from everybody saying it's not even a chore. It actually feels natural and good like you're healing your body just in a, I don't want to say it's easy, but it is kind of easy. I was surprised it was, I thought it would be like this thing I'd have to work up to slowly or something. Eating twice a day, for me anyway, in just a short amount of time actually feels to me like this is what my body's been wanting all this time.

Jacqui: Right. It made me realize that I was not listening to my body's signals for hunger and for being satiated. I just wasn't listening to what my body was saying we're done. Now I do and I'm much more in tune with that.

Tsh: I'm going to put a link in the show notes for anyone listening if you're curious which episode this was. It was with Christine where she shared about intermittent fasting and I shared about my different ways of eating, which include mindful and intuitive and all that good stuff.

I am right there with you. Next thing on your good list would be a work of art, and as a reminder, that can be anything from a movie all the way to just some

funny meme you saw. Jacqui, what's a work of art right now in your life that's making life sweeter?

Jacqui: I am super late to this party, but I have been listening to Leon Bridges album *Coming Home*, which was released four years ago. But it's so good. I must have heard his stuff and just never really knew who he was. One of my guilty pleasures is the show, *The Voice*. I watch it by myself because my husband won't watch it with me. One of the contestants who came on had this really beautiful, unique voice, he sang, *River*, and I love it. It's such a beautiful song. I looked it up and found this album and have just been playing the whole album on repeat. I love when I can find a whole album because it really is a work of art in and of itself, when you can listen to the whole thing as one. I've just been having that play in the background and it's just such a good album.

Tsh: It is fun when you find an album because, these days when people drop singles so frequently now you forget the work of art it is to compile a full collection of songs that interplay with each other and make a more zoomed out sound from start to finish on an album.

Jacqui: I remember I had a teacher tell me that once when the Beatles Anthology had come out when I was in junior high, I think. I was talking to him about it and he said, you really should try to listen to the album and not just anthologies or collections because you can hear how their sound changed throughout the different albums. It just really stuck with me and so I really try to listen to a whole album, so this is what I'm enjoying right now.

Tsh: That's very cool. I'll put a link in the show notes and it got me in the mood to listen to another good album. I love creating playlists. For me that's sort of a hobby way to spend my time on Spotify. I have a tons of playlists but I also really do love album collections. I might write about that sometime because I know people come to me for music playlist. I might have to just recommend full albums and I have to admit, I don't know if I've listened to his full album. I'm going to do that when we're done here.

Jacqui: Okay, good.

Tsh: The last thing in our good list is a philosophy, which is a way of thinking big or small, some piece of wisdom you got from someone smart, whatever it is. What's a philosophy right now that's making life better for you?

Jacqui: I have a couple of girlfriends who are just super generous with their time and I feel like until recently had been in a season of just really protecting my time with my family or just my own time. I feel like I'm entering a season now where I can be more generous and still be sane. My husband and I had talked about at the

beginning of the year what were some, not New Year's resolutions, but something that we wanted to maybe work on this year. One of the things was inviting more people into our home and sharing, particularly our family life and not worrying, I think you've written about this, not worrying about what the house looks like and what project isn't done and knowing that well, yeah, we live here so it's kind of messy, but we want to spend time with you. So we're okay eating off of paper plates and things not being perfect, but really the joy is in being together. We've had people stay at our home. We've just let people come in last minute. I've been more intentional about inviting extended family of my husband who lives here and also just going to see friends and being generous with my time in that way as well. We've had a lot of friends who recently had babies and so bringing them meals and offering to care for children and just being more present in people's lives. I think part of that is just the season that I'm in right now. I don't have an infant and not expecting one so I'm in a place where I can offer more of that. I think just this overall sense of generosity and giving more of myself.

Tsh: I like the several things that you brought up there. One of which is because you don't have an infant right now, you can do this so that listeners who maybe are in that stage of newborn at home or some other form of just crazy season of life where you want to give, but you instead are the "givee" the one who could

Jacqui: Receiver?

Tsh: [28:53](#) It's like, what is that word in English? I forget. That sometimes that can feel hard because you want to be on the other end of things, but just to welcome that and just to embrace that people do want to give into your life and that before too long it will be a season when you can be the giver again.

Jacqui: I had experienced some guilt about, I can't do all of these things that I want to do and then accepted, okay, that's just not my phase of life right now. But now that's changed and now I'm sleeping better and I have more energy and pretty soon, I'm only going to have one little kid at home, which is going to change things for me too.

Tsh: [29:34](#) There you go. I like that. I like the whole paper plate thing. We've talked about that before here on the pod where you can invite people over and do the paper plates, do the frozen pizza, do the carton of ice cream for dessert, whatever it is, that's an easy button for you. Don't let you know the preference for some sort of beautiful three course meal stop you from still inviting people over with a less than quote perfect a set up because really people don't care and people actually like imperfection.

Jacqui: That was actually the first podcast episode of yours that I listened to, my girlfriend Anna had told me about it and she said, you should probably listen to this because we get together often. It was really freeing to hear, oh yeah, I don't have to have everything be super clean. Are the toilet's clean and the tables mostly wipe down? Aside from that, people just want to spend time together.

Tsh: That's right. I don't know if I said it in that episode, but I was told some really great advice about that. If you don't have time to clean the whole house, clean the toilet.

Jacqui: I think maybe you did mention that.

Tsh: I think about that all the time now. People are going to come over in an hour. I do not have time for a full scale up top to bottom cleaning. First things first, the toilet.

Thank you for sharing your good list. It's fun. Thank you for sharing your thoughts on cross cultural parenting or I don't even know if you'd call it cross cultural. Is that the word you use?

Jacqui: Multicultural? Bicultural, whatever it is. It's definitely not the same. Surely, I mean, every family really is to some extent multicultural because your own family culture is different from the person that you end up partnering with.

Tsh: That's so true. I was actually thinking of that when you were talking that whenever we lived in Oregon, I felt this compulsive need to introduce Texan culture to my kids where we have much more of a Cinco de Mayo thing or we do tamales for Christmas or even if it's not necessarily strictly something like that, but at some family tradition that is important to me that you want to carry it and we all have experiences of that.

Jacqui: Right? Exactly.

Tsh: [31:49](#) You can find Jacqui at MexicanDomesticGoddess.com or on Instagram @JacquiSkemp. To keep up with me, I'm on Twitter @Tsh and Instagram @TshOxenreider, and of course at theartofsimple.net where you can find my writing as well as Jacqui's posts from this week. Head to the show notes of this episode number 197 at thesimpleshow.com where you can find all sorts of things, links to things we talked about, where are you can sign up for my weekly email called Five Quick Things, how you can become a patron and support the work it takes to create the show for just a few dollars per month as well as how to connect with Jacqui and myself. The show was produced by Chad Michael Snavely, and thanks also to Caroline TeSelle, Andrea Debbink, and my furry

intern, Ginny. Thanks so much for listening. I'm Tsh Oxenreider and I'll catch you back here soon.