

Deena:

Big little besties, welcome to After Bedtime, where today we've got a very special guest with us, someone who has transformed mine and Kristin's parenting and pregnancy life, Emily Oster, who takes data and research and translates it so that you can cut through the BS and get down to what matters and leave behind what doesn't. Since there's so much anxiety and fear around so many things in parenting, let's go.

Kristin:

Finally, here we are. It's After Bedtime. The kids are asleep and it is time to get down. I'm Kristin.

Deena:

And I'm Deena. We're the duo behind the ever-popular Instagram account, Big Little Feelings, which helps you navigate all things parenthood.

Kristin:

But this is not a boring parenting podcast. There will be inappropriate jokes. We will be getting down and dirty, so put those babies to bed and let's have fun. Deena, girlfriend.

Deena:

What's up girl?

Kristin:

Holy shit, what a morning.

Deena:

I know.

Kristin:

What a morning.

Deena:

I know. We're doing a morning sesh, by the way.

Kristin:

That's the difference. Is this okay? Are you okay right now?

Deena:

I don't know how I feel. I have more energy.

Kristin:

You're a morning person. That's the difference.

Deena:

I am a morning person.

Kristin:

That's the difference.

Deena:

I even made you a whole snacky.

Kristin:

Literally, in front of me besties, there's a plate of strawberries and a hard-boiled egg, but it's seasoned. You know what I mean? Just so much love and care. The reason we're recording in the morning, by the way, is because we have a guest and she's on the East Coast and we love her, so we're like, "Anytime you would like to record, we will."

Deena:

We'll be there.r

Kristin:

Record with you. I am having flashbacks of being in high school. This felt like I rolled up. I was 15 minutes late at least.

Deena:

You did roll in.

Kristin:

I had seven different cups of different things in my hands. I have the coffee, I have the water, the sparkling water, the Athletic Greens, the smoothie. I have everything in my hands. I have sunglasses still on. Sit down, and just roll right into this interview. You know what I mean?

Deena:

Can I admit something?

Kristin:

Like lets just pass this final, fine. We're fine.

Deena:

I've been to two cafes already this morning.

Kristin:

Like so much preparation, so we're studying probably, like os much studying.

Deena:

Meditated. Took my kids out to a cafe, had special mommy time already, just crazy.

Kristin:

About that, okay.

Deena:

But I'm a morning person. I always have been.

Kristin:

Yeah, this is different.

Deena:

You and a friend, by the way, was telling me you do this, but you switch off and someone sleeps in on a Saturday, someone sleeps in on a Sunday. The other person takes the kids. I can't even do that, because I literally cannot sleep in.

Kristin:

If you're with your children every weekend, I think you do three cafes in the morning just because it's not warm enough outside to go outside yet, even in the summertime, because it's like the sun's not up yet and you're already hitting up like three cafes. Go, go, go. And then-

Deena:

Normally they love it.

Kristin:

When we're vacation, what do you do when you're on vacation? I think I'm going to be very honest with you. I think you wake up, you go to whatever the cafe version is, which is breakfast by yourself, get the coffee. Sometimes it's emails, sometimes it's writing, sometimes it's reading something productive, but there's-

Deena:

Damn, you know me. You know me so well.

Kristin:

A little bit of productivity before you can start the vacation off. You know what I mean?

Deena:

Yeah, yeah. Like a productive meditation to settle right in.

Kristin:

If you're lucky, that's the most relaxing thing you're going to do.

Deena:

Yeah, exactly. It's often writing. It's often emails, just clear a few and then we can have a great day. That's exactly what I do, and then my husband has to bring both kids to breakfast. I'm like, "Round two, let's do it."

Kristin:

I'm even talking about solo vacations though. When we go on vacation together like besties, we're like okay-

Deena:

I do in both situations.

Kristin:

Deena, I'm sleeping in. See you at 10:00, and you're like, "I'll see you at 10:00 after my morning productivity session."

Deena:

A hundred percent.

Kristin:

Because then I can relax.

Deena:

Yeah, it's very much how I am.

Kristin:

Speaking of how I am, I have to say today is, I think you can see this Deena, bestie can't see this. Today is day one of me putting on the matching sweatsuit. You know how right now all the moms-

Deena:

I know this.

Kristin:

Okay. You know how they're wearing neutral matching sweatsuits, right?

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

You know I've been on the hunt for months, right?

Deena:

Yes.

Kristin:

It's like where are people buying these? Is it Amazon? Is it Target?

Deena:

You walked in the door. I was like, "Damn, you did it?"

Kristin:

Dude, I did it.

Deena:

How did you do this?

Kristin:

I have the mini Uggs too. I got the mini Uggs that nobody can get. I got them somehow, and they shipped. I ordered them six months ago. I am on trend today.

Deena:

You're living your dream.

Kristin:

Here's the problem, okay. I held off on the neutral sweatsuit for so long because I know when I slip this on, I'm never coming back.

Deena:

There's no going back. This is it. This is your new life.

Kristin:

This is my life for literally ever, forever. I will never put on a pair of even leggings again.

Deena:

Wow.

Kristin:

Leggings are gone because it's all about sweatsuits, and the problem is this is a trend. This is only a trend. People are not going to be wearing sweatsuits in six months. It's going to be jeans. It's going to be the next thing. It's going to be the next thing. I'm still wearing the sweatsuit, dude. I'm not going back.

Deena:

I say be you. Be weird. That's 2024, right?

Kristin:

I am, I'm going to be weird.

Deena:

I've been wearing black leggings for five straight years. It's not in. It's not cool, and I'm still going to be doing it.

Kristin:

It's going to come back though. If I stay in the sweatsuit long enough, you stay with your side part-

Deena:

Exactly, side part and the side bangs.

Kristin:

They're going to come back some day.

Deena:

Hasn't been in since 2016, side bangs.

Kristin:

It will.

Deena:

I'm hanging on.

Kristin:

I think we're a year and a half, two years away from side bangs being back in.

Deena:

I can't quit now. I've already gone through the worst of it, but I have one key question. Do your pants have pockets?

Kristin:

Dude, not only do they have pockets, these are zippered pockets, so my stuff doesn't fall out.

Deena:

Oh, wow.

Kristin:

I can even put a car key in here like a man. Like a man. I could put an effing credit card in here.

Deena:

Like a grown-ass man.

Kristin:

I could put anything I want in here and just keep it in my pocket. I'm never going back.

Deena:

Order me some. Order me some right now.

Kristin:

Is this what men feel like?

Deena:

It must be.

Kristin:

They feel comfortable and assured that the things that they need are safely inside of their pockets.

Deena:

No worries.

Kristin:

I'm going to order you a set.

Deena:

Wow, okay. Okay. I'm so excited.

Kristin:

Speaking of excited, I woke up at 4:30 A.M. because Emily Oster is on our podcast. It was literally Christmas morning. It wasn't even nervousness, I was just so jazzed that I couldn't go back to sleep.

Deena:

I'm excited.

Kristin:

I'm excited.

Deena:

I'm going to be a little starstruck. I'm not even going to let I'm be like, "Oh my god. Emily, you're here."

Kristin:

Is this going to be your Dorinda? Are you going to Dorinda this?

Deena:

A little bit, yeah.

Kristin:

Oh, Greystone Manor this?

Deena:

I'm going to scream just like you did.

Kristin:

I love that.

Deena:

Right in her eyeballs.

Kristin:

Totally going to freak her out.

Deena:

Let's do that.

Kristin:

That feels nice for me. That'll be like a little bit of redemption. That'll be nice.

Deena:

Actually, I think she's almost here.

Kristin:

Oh, my god. Let's get her in here.

Emily Oster:

Hello.

Kristin:

[inaudible 00:06:50].

Deena:

Hi.

Kristin:

We both did it. We were just talking about how we were not going to embarrass ourselves as to-

Deena:

Then we screamed.

Kristin:

How you're kind of a celebrity to both of us.

Emily Oster:

I do too.

Kristin:

As moms.

Emily Oster:

This is so nice.

Deena:

Welcome. Thank you so much for joining. So first of all, let's just kick this off. In the world of parenting, and even before that, in pregnancy, there are just a million and one confusing opinions and anxiety inducing messages. Honestly, just like judge-y shaming about what to do, what not to do. I mean, it starts in pregnancy. It's like, "Don't eat sushi or you're going to ruin everything." And then your baby comes, and it's like, "You should be co-sleeping or you're going to ruin everything," or "Don't co-sleep, now you're ruining everything."

I mean, it just goes on and on. And someone who has helped Kristin and I both so, so, so much as parents is today's amazing guest, Emily Oster. She is a professor at Brown, not a pediatrics or psychology, but economics, and Emily's incredible work, which includes your newsletter, which includes her books that we love, our faves Crib Sheet and Expecting Better. Emily analyzes data and translates science around parenting and child development so we can cut through the fear, the judgment, and make informed decisions to weigh trade-offs, and to distinguish trivial and substantial risks, and ultimately, just be more at ease, and remember that we are not effing this whole thing up. Some things matter, and some things just really don't, like big exhale.

Kristin:

Oh, Emily Oster, welcome to the pod.

Emily Oster:

Oh, my gosh.

Kristin:

You're so legit.

Emily Oster:

Thank you guys so much for having me. I am a big fan of your Instagram and what you do, and your podcast, and I'm just, oh, I'm so excited you had me here.

Deena:

We are excited.

Kristin:

When you reached out in the DMs, I was... And actually, I think it was an organic thing, where people in the comments of a lot of our mutual posts just kept being like, "You need to be on each other's podcast."

You need to be on each other's podcast." It was like, "We would be honored." And I think you responded to one of those, like "I'd love to." We're like "Really, really?"

Deena:

Yes.

Emily Oster:

Oh, my God.

Deena:

I'm super excited.

Kristin:

Oh, my God. You mentioned sushi Deena, I just want to say that my personal experience, that's how I found you, was seven and a half or eight years ago at this point, and it was the height of Facebook mommy groups. Instagram wasn't even there yet. It was the height of respectful sleep-

Deena:

Those were the worst.

Emily Oster:

Those were the Facebook groups-

Kristin:

People think that Instagram is anxiety inducing. That is nothing compared to-

Deena:

You don't even know what it's like to be in the Facebook mom group.

Kristin:

The Facebook mommy groups of eight years ago. So I found you that way because I loved sushi. It's my favorite food. It's ironically, or not, my daughter's favorite food now too, and I found you because I was like "Can I really?" And I ate sushi throughout my whole pregnancy because of you. Now she loves sushi. She went to Japan. She's seven. Correlation? Probably.

Deena:

Maybe.

Emily Oster:

Yeah, correlation, but also that's great. I mean, I think for me a lot of sushi is a gateway for a lot of people.

Kristin:

It's totally the gateway.

Emily Oster:

I think it feels... It's one of those things where it's like, "I like it. It's not like I can't live without it, but I would like to understand is there any actual reason to not do this?" And the answer is really, no. It's very freeing.

Deena:

Yeah, it really is. I love that's the core kind of essence around your work. It's so freeing to be able to look at actual data, and cut through all the BS and the fear that comes with so much parenting.

Kristin:

Why do you think there's so many fear headlines that seem to be aimed at mothers, and maybe it's parents in general, and it's not mothers, as a mom, it feels-

Emily Oster:

Feels like is fine.

Kristin:

It feels like it's aimed at us. Why do you think that is?

Emily Oster:

Well, I think the shortest answer, I'm an economist and we tend to think that things are supplied when they are demanded in the market. And I think one of the, I know we're getting very technical. And I think what happens is that people click on those. So if you put up a headline that says, "Studies show there's a mild correlation between screen time and children, but it's probably just driven by family background differences and you really shouldn't think about it." No one's clicking on that. That headline sucks. The headline's like "Screen time ruins your children," I got to find out more about that. And I think we sort of generate an environment in which that is rewarded. And then you back up to, okay, now it's sort of rewarded to write things even if they are not causal to sort of air in the direction of scary because then you get media coverage, and that's something people want. So there's a sort of cycle, but I think it starts with what people gravitate to, in terms of wanting to read.

Deena:

And we all love our kids so much, we'd do anything for them.

Emily Oster:

That's why you click on it, because you want to do it right. It comes from this place where we all want to be right, because we want to do the right thing, because our kids are so important to us. And so, if the suggestion we might be doing something that would damage them, it's like, "I got to find out more about that."

Kristin:

Yeah. Well, I feel like it's a real chicken or the egg situation though, right? Because I feel like it's a little bit rooted in anxiety. It has to be like fear. Yes, we love our kids, but a little bit of it is like, "Oh, my God. This is going to ruin them." Okay, click. Right? And you sort of don't, at least I'll speak for myself. It is a little bit like you get heightened. It is anxiety where it's not like a logical, 'Well, let me take this for a grain of salt.' I will literally be like, "Oh, my god." And it's a chicken or the egg, because then the more articles there are, the more anxious we are, and then the more articles there are and then more anxious, and then we're clicking more, so then they put more articles out because you're clicking and that's what works.

And so it's a real cycle reinforcing itself.

Emily Oster:

Yeah, it's a bad cycle.

Kristin:

It's a hard time to be a mom in that sense, and that's why I'm so grateful for your work, because it really is so succinct and so to the point, where we don't have a lot of time and we don't have a lot of energy. And whether you're reading, I read your newsletter this morning, I think it was about breastfeeding and a few other things. And your work, whether it's your newsletter or your book, or your Instagram, by the way, is just so succinct of where you're just like, "Yeah, don't fucking worry about that." And here I'm going to tell you why. I'll tell you now in this, here's the data and here's whatever. But you'll really give it straight at first, and I appreciate that so much.

Emily Oster:

The thing is, there are some things that I worry about. Occasionally, people will be like, "What do you worry about?" I'll be like, "Cars, pools. Those are my biggies."

Deena:

Yes.

Kristin:

No, there was one more. This is probably really creepy. You said the three things you were most worried about as a parent. It made me feel so good about myself.

Emily Oster:

Cars, pools, and translating my own crap, my own mental health crap to my kids.

Kristin:

It was emotional well-being or something. Yeah, emotional, that whole cycle. And I was like, "Emily Oster, me too." Drowning, accidents, and social, emotional, long-term health.

Emily Oster:

Its all the best. It's all the stuff.

Kristin:

And I'm feeding into that.

Emily Oster:

So it's not that I don't worry. In some sense, I am quite an anxious person. I worry all the time about my kids. And I think part of why I write the way I do, is the way that I have dealt with that is by trying to think about, okay, is this something I actually need to be worried about or is the evidence suggesting I don't? And most things, when you ask them, somebody in that newsletter this morning was like, "My kid's drinking the bath water. Is that a big deal?" And I was like, "Here are the four things in the bath water. Like pee, poop, mold, and soap. And actually they're all fine in small amounts, so don't worry too much about it."

Kristin:

Don't worry about it.

Deena:

Love it.

Kristin:

We're all drinking pee water.

Deena:

You're like the effect of having the third or fourth baby, but for your first baby is what it is. You know what I mean?

Kristin:

You're exactly right.

Deena:

I'm on my third, it's naturally that way. I forgot what my... Oh, actually, I probably shouldn't even share this, but he drank a little bit of something that probably he shouldn't have had, literally a sip. And I just flashed back to when my first was born, she put the tip of a Crayola marker in her mouth. She didn't even eat it. She literally touched it to her lips. I called 911. I think I called the pediatrician, but it was as if... Like, it was a crisis. I had my husband come home from work, it was crisis.

Kristin:

Like emergency.

Deena:

And when my baby drank the other, I'm not sure what it was.

Emily Oster:

Poisoned.

Deena:

It basically, like a teeny tiny bit about, I was like, "Well, we're probably going to see what happens." I mean, I'll know if this was a problem pretty soon, and I feel like that's what you are. You are like, "What is this? Yeah, is this a problem? Probably not." There are problems, like I need pool gates, I need water safety, I need car seat safety, very legitimate things that we need. And then there are other things where Emily Oster comes in and tells you like, "You know what? It's actually going to be fine."

Kristin:

Exactly, like "Girlfriend, don't worry."

Emily Oster:

The third kid point is so, it's so right. I mean, I'll get these things from people who'll be like, "My child ate one Honey Nut Cheerio, and I'm worried about honey." You always want to be like, "You know, hat's the first..." And then the person who's like, "Listen, they ate three large pieces of goose poop. Do you think I should call someone or is that fine because mostly grass?"

Kristin:

I wouldn't even ask, yeah.

Emily Oster:

And you're just like, "Okay."

Kristin:

It's fine.

Deena:

Vitamin D, whatever.

Emily Oster:

Yeah, just watch them for a bit.

Kristin:

That's literally, I think, the answer, is just like you're not going to know.

Emily Oster:

They're probably going to vomit it up.

Kristin:

And then I'll still be like, "Is this, now we call the pediatrician." I have to tell you that this was the perfect day for this interview. I don't know if you've seen this one yet or not. This literally, I came across, I scrolled, I'm showing Emily.

Emily Oster:

Oh, I saw that one.

Kristin:

I scrolled across this on Good Morning America, on their Instagram. It came up in my algorithm. Rude, I need to re-switch my algorithm. I'm going to read this for you, because I think this is one you've already pinpointed is probably one of the biggest things everyone feels guilty about.

The first part says, in this post, "For children under two, TV screen time is associated with sensory differences later in toddlerhood. Here's what parents need to know about the new study." I'm not even going to look at your face yet. Okay, swipe. "For children under the age of two, television screen time is associated with sensory differences later in toddlerhood. Children who watched any television or DVDs at 12 months of age were twice as likely, by thirty-six months, to experience atypical sensory processing, that is challenges and processing day-to-day sensory input compared to others of age. At 18 months of age, each hour of screen exposure was associated with a 20% increased likelihood of sensory processing differences according to the study published in JAMA Pediatrics."

Deena:

Okay, my child's ruined, go ahead.

Kristin:

So I read this and I have three different kids, and one has sensory issues, and literal instantaneously, and I'm kind of worried about her right now because she's having a little bit of a harder time. And instantaneously, I was like, "I ruined her. I ruined her." All three had pretty much the same amount of screen time, but I was like, "Oh, well obviously," you know? Emily, please, take us-

Emily Oster:

Yeah, so I read that post, I have a story about this post. So I read that post this morning and I looked at the JAMA Pediatrics article. So let's start with what's there.

Kristin:

I'm so glad. Okay, good.

Emily Oster:

And what they do in that article, is they compare some kids in a survey, and they have information on how much television they watch and they have some information on this sensory processing. And this is not a paper with a causal interpretation. It's a correlation, and there's a lot of differences across kids and families based on how much exposure to screens they have. Their results are kind of mixed. Some of them show up negatively, many of them show up as zero. There's some really in the weeds technical stuff with the data. But I think the most important thing to take away from this, which I want to be clear, the authors themselves say in the paper, is that it is very difficult, impossible to separate screen time causes this from kids who have these sensory issues are going to potentially have more screen time because their parents may be giving them more screen time to address the sensory issues.

So I think it's very common if your kid has a lot of sensory issues, this can be something that can sort of pull them down, can relax them. And so, you're likely to see the kids who are already having some sensory issues getting more screen time, and then if you see later they have more sensory issues, well, that's not the screen time. It's what we call reverse causality. The causality is basically going from the sensory issue to the screen time, rather than the other way. The authors actually say at the end of the

paper, "We cannot establish causality because of this particular issue." I commented that, including that quote, on that GMA Instagram post and they restricted it, and they restricted my account.

Kristin:

Oh, wow.

Deena:

Interesting.

Kristin:

That is interesting.

Emily Oster:

Which I felt was-

Deena:

You bring up a good point.

Emily Oster:

I found upsetting in the sense that, look, we're all on Instagram. Sometimes people say rude things in your account and you have to restrict them. And I believe that people should be able to curate the feed, even public people. But I think a post that, a response that says, "Here's some context and here's a quote from the paper," doesn't feel to me like a restrictable offense. But I also think it's like the reaction you had, that's a reaction many people are going to have, right? I mean, the amount of panic that I see in my DMs with something like that, people are like, "I ruined my kid. One time, I let my child watch 20 minutes of Cocomelon. Is that the end?"

Kristin:

Oh, the Cocomelon.

Emily Oster:

Like they FaceTime their grandma. They FaceTime their grandma one time. It's like there's so much panic that comes out and it makes me sad that people read this stuff and then I'm just like, "I'm just out here trying to let you FaceTime grandma and watch a little Cocomelon so you can-

Kristin:

Just trying to watch Cocomelon.

Emily Oster:

Make dinner.

Deena:

Love it.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Just trying to have some family time with someone who lives five states away.

Kristin:

Exactly.

Deena:

Just trying my best.

Kristin:

That's so interesting. I will say, we've only had positive experience with Good Morning America. Like truly, overwhelmingly.

Emily Oster:

Me too.

Kristin:

Yeah. And you've been on Good Morning America. They pushed our interview back because I was having a miscarriage. They're very-

Emily Oster:

So understanding.

Kristin:

So I'm going to chalk it up to some intern who gets scared all of sudden. Oh, my God. You're like, "Well, you cant-"

Emily Oster:

Good morning America.

Kristin:

Yeah, yeah. Whoever, Amanda this morning, didn't... She's not helping the moms. She doesn't get it.

Okay, so can we also talk about that where... Actually, I really want to ask about Cocomelon real quick. Can we talk about it real quick?

Deena:

Because I am so curious.

Kristin:

Because I know that's old news, but I don't know that I've heard it from you, where that was the biggest... Is the Cocomelon thing real? But also then, at the same time, does it matter when it comes to screen time in terms of quality programming? Two different questions. Two different questions.

Emily Oster:

So on the Cocomelon thing, the origin of the idea that Cocomelon is ruining your kid is somebody's not an expert, not like an academic, not an academic paper research, just somebody's widely-shared view that the frames are too fast, and that that somehow could have some negative impact, but there's no evidence behind it. I mean, that's a theory. And if you looked at evidence, we don't really have any, nobody's studied Cocomelon, but there's nothing else really in the data that would say that what you're watching matters. Which is kind of the answer to your second question. Basically, we don't have anything that would say educational television is especially better. Now, I want to caveat that a little bit, because when Sesame Street first came out, so when kids are sort of three to five, actually Sesame Street turned out to be good for kids like kindergarten readiness.

So when kids are three to five, they can kind of learn stuff from TV. And so if you said you have to pick between one thing or another, and they like them equally, maybe there's some value to something that has some educational benefit. But I feel that for many people, some of the value of TV is this is a break, and that if we think about it more like how does some amount of screen time fit in terms of not taking away from family time, not taking away from other things, but being a place where people have a break, then I'm not sure that you need to be super rigid on you have to watch this particular thing because this is your opportunity to learn numbers. Maybe this is just your opportunity for some screen time. And if you want to watch Caillou, actually don't watch Caillou because-

Kristin:

Nobody wants to watch Caillou.

Emily Oster:

Nobody wants to watch Caillou.

Kristin:

I'm sorry.

Emily Oster:

But if you want to watch Cocomelon-

Kristin:

I feel bad.

Emily Oster:

So if you want to-

Kristin:

Daniel Tiger.

Deena:

I'm not sure-

Kristin:

I'll go PBS usually.

Deena:

Yeah, yeah.

Kristin:

Focused on that.

Emily Oster:

I mean, of course you want to be careful about content. You don't want your kid to be like, you don't want your four-year-old watching-

Kristin:

Age-inappropriate stuff.

Deena:

It needs to be appropriate stuff, yeah.

Emily Oster:

Agent appropriate stuff, exactly.

Deena:

Totally.

Emily Oster:

So common sense media is your friend, but is this their opportunity to learn algebra? No.

Deena:

I'm not going to lie, there have been so many shows recently where my three-year-old watches, and I'm usually watching because frankly, I use screen time to just cook dinner. It's great, and we have a good time watching everything, but there are so many things he repeats later. I'm like, "Wow, you really learned that?" That's wild. We learned something.

Emily Oster:

Yeah, they can totally learn, and on the opposite.

Kristin:

That keeps going. So when they're seven, they can learn other things and you'd be like, "Oh, maybe we're not going to watch the Bad Kitty show anymore." They really are picking up things in there.

Deena:

It's true.

Emily Oster:

No, it's true. Because then my almost 2-year-old, not even the other day, was talking about ghosts in his room. I was like, "Oh, screen time, huh?" Yeah, no.

Kristin:

It's just scratching the surface. Now I think this brings us to, when it comes to screen time and us all feeling guilty, because I think, even I, who have read your books, you have read books. You are literally a child therapist. We know all the logic behind it. I still feel guilty, I still do. If it's a little more in excess, I feel-

Deena:

So do I.

Kristin:

Yeah, I feel guilty. Is there any... I guess, our reasoning here, or at least my reasoning is, is this going to give them a healthier me, right? Where if we're weighing out, and I think this is what you do in your book so well. You're weighing out all these different risks, where it's like, "Okay, in a dream scenario," let's say my dream scenario, let's say, everything is completely organic, made from fresh, from scratch. I don't cook at all. I literally don't know how to cook anything, and they're never doing screen time. And we live on a farm, so they're outside all the time. We also have a mountain that we hike every single day, and I'm with them 24 hours a day.

Deena:

You're basically, you're ballerina farm.

Kristin:

We'll talk about ballerina farm. I feel so bad about myself if I watch that. If I watch that-

Emily Oster:

I don't even know what that is, I'm going to be honest. What is this?

Kristin:

Hide your phone, the algorithm cannot bring this up. Deena will literally go off of us.

Deena:

Oh, boy.

Kristin:

This is a bad thing. I watch it and I'm like, "Fuck this, I can never do that." And Deena would be like, "I could do that."

Deena:

My perfectionistic self.

Kristin:

Yeah. Okay. So my point is, if I did all of those things and I'm with them 24/7, and we have no screen time, I just know this about myself, and I think pretty much every human being on Earth, I would be a monster. I would be an absolute monster. I would be pushed to my breaking point. Not everybody would be, maybe, but I'd be pushed to my breaking point. I would probably be snapping and yelling, and really unhealthy myself, not emotionally regulated. You don't have to be all the time, but I'd probably be never emotionally regulated because I would just be drudging through all day.

And so when it comes to things like screen time, it's like you have to take into account the entire holistic approach when it comes to data because it's like, "Well, if they're saying a little screen time might have these risks," but there's also risks to having a depressed mother, let's say. Right? If I'm postpartum and I just had a baby and I'm not letting my toddler have screen time because I'm so anxious that there might be something wrong with them. So I develop postpartum anxiety. This is a true story, so I develop postpartum anxiety in the meantime, because I never have a break. Is that really good for her either? So you're weighing out the pros, the cons, the risks and whatnot, and I think we all land on a healthy, happy medium, right? Where it's like this is a break and this is healthy for all of us.

Emily Oster:

I totally agree. I mean, I think we've gotten into a place where the first thing you said, which is here is the ideal.

Deena:

Is it?

Emily Oster:

I mean, I think we've gotten into a place where this idea of intensive parenting has gotten very... We've gone very far in that direction, that we kind of need to be doing with our kids all the time. When I was a kid, I mean, yes, I definitely watched on screens, but also a lot of the time their parents were just like, "Go away, go outside." It's just like, what are you doing here?

Deena:

Come back when it's dinner time.

Emily Oster:

Yeah, come back for food, and then leave again. And so I think it was, we've gotten into a little bit of a space where we have this idea that the ideal would be like everyone is playing wooden toys on the floor for nine hours a day, but I'm actually not sure that's even good for our kids to have that much access to us.

Deena:

That's such a good point. It's almost kind of wild that, and this is what society has told us is the ideal. We've taken that in.

Emily Oster:

Yeah.

Kristin:

I do think that the way that is framed though, that ideal, and this is where you come in Emily, the way that is framed on social media right now, it's because of data. It's never because it's like one person or one influencer's opinion, the Cocomelon thing, yes, but everything else is always like, "Danish, Swedish researchers have found that when your child naps inside of a crib and not outside, you are damaging the health of the cellular respiratory," like everything that you're saying in these ideals are, quote-unquote, based in research.

Emily Oster:

Yeah.

Deena:

Pulling little lines from studies.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Emily Oster:

Right, and it is little lines from individual studies. And the thing we almost always miss about those, is even if that were true, almost none of those effects are big, right? Even if it were slightly better for your kid to nap outside, in the scheme of the things, that's small. And therefore ,it's like if you said, "Well, I'm a robot and I can implement everything that anyone has ever shown to be a tiny bit effective. I can implement that because I'm a parent robot." Okay, sure. Maybe that's the way you program your parent robot. Who knows? But you're not a robot and there are these trade-offs, and being happy or relaxed or feeling confident about the lifestyle you've built, or even saying... So for us, screen time's before dinner. And so there's screen time before dinner, my kids are a little older, and so for my oldest one, she may or may not get it because sometimes there's homework or violin or whatever.

But basically, that's the time before dinner, no one is with me and I'm cooking my dinner, and it's a nice experience. And then we come together for dinner, and because everyone is kind of dialed down the cortisol or whatever it is, with some relaxation, dinner is really... Can often, not always, but can often be really fun and our opportunity to connect. And I think if we had spent the 45 minutes before that with people whining and complaining at each other, we would not have that part. So then how do you trade that? I know how I trade it, and we thought about how we trade it, but I think it's not like... Maybe there's not a way to... You're not a robot, is what I'm saying. You're not a parent robot, just a person.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

I think we underestimate our own needs when we're having all of these conversations. It's just wildly left out of the conversation where-

Emily Oster:

Parents are people too.

Kristin:

Parents are people too.

Emily Oster:

Parents are people.

Kristin:

And again, all of the studies showing a healthy parent or a parent that can be somewhat present, and they don't have to be perfect, but just in terms of, I don't know, they have a healthy lifestyle, they exercise, whatever it is, they can show up and be a little bit of a healthier parent. The effects of that are huge. They're insurmountable. And it's almost like we could even sometimes put that first the way you just did, where it was like, "Screen time helps us as a family, have a really happy dinner," done next.

Deena:

Well, I'm glad you bring this up. I feel like that's actually something to keep an eye on and cut through, that's become really popular in the past years, is a good mom in particular, is someone who gives everything to her kids and puts herself last. You put your kids first, and you know what that really leads to is burnout. It leads to burnout, and then your kids aren't seeing a great role model of what it looks like to tap into your needs, to make them a priority, to take care of yourself, and then the cycle just continues.

Emily Oster:

Yeah, totally. I completely agree. Yeah, I mean I think we're modeling for our kids what we think is a healthy adult lifestyle, and sometimes saying, "I'm going to prioritize myself and I'm going to do this thing." I had this experience, so I did a marathon in December.

Kristin:

Good for you.

Emily Oster:

Running is my self-care, and so there was this moment with my eight-year-old, where on Fridays I was not walking the kids to school because I wanted to get to my long run early. And so there was some time, I was putting them to bed and I was like, "All right, I'm not going to walk you to school in the morning. I'll say hi, but I'm going to go because I have a long run."

And he was like, "I want you to walk me to school." And I was like, "No, I'm not going to do that." And he was like, "You love your long run more than you love me." And I was like, "Not in the aggregate, but in the moment, that's what I'm going to prioritize." And it's like, it's so easy to be like, "Oh, I don't want you to feel that way." But it's like, actually, you're just saying... In this case, he's just saying things to try to see what might come up, and then in the morning he didn't care even for one second. But I think there was something valuable in being like, "No, it's not that I love my long, it's not really a meaningful statement, but I am going to choose this priority because that's also important."

Deena:

Totally. I had to do it the other day too, actually. It was Saturday, I was going to work out, and then I was like, "You know what? My body doesn't feel like working out." So I was just going to go to a cafe for two hours by myself, and then the three-year-old had a hard time and was like, "I want to come with you. I want you to stay. I'm going to miss you. You should play with me." And I literally got down, I was like, "Hey, I hear that you're feeling sad, and you know what? Mommy needs to go take care of herself so that I can come back, and I can be a patient and fun mommy, and I can't wait to play with you when I'm back. And it's good for moms to go take a little break sometimes, and take care of themselves." And he kind of got it, and I was like, "You know, this is good."

Kristin:

That's great. I don't feel like they always get that.

Deena:

They don't always get it.

Kristin:

I don't think they always get that.

Deena:

Maybe I'm just telling myself that, and hoping that he got it.

Kristin:

It can be so tempting, and that's a journey for you. I feel like you, two years ago especially, would've been like, "Okay, honey," like we all are.

Deena:

A hundred percent.

Kristin:

On such a journey in your motherhood to figure this part out, because I think for a lot of, at least us, I don't know about your childhood Emily. But a lot of us who grew up in homes that maybe weren't as healthy, so we have so much pressure trying to change generational cycles and do it just right. I feel like we tend to put ourselves last anyways, in general. I mean, that's just something that comes out of living in a home like that, and so your needs and your worth is not on your mind. And the only way I was able to reframe it for myself, was to say to them, and to myself, in the instance of your run, Emily, would be something like, "It's because I do love you so much. I need to be able to show up here and love you the most. I'm doing this for me because I love you so much."

And that was the only way I could really justify it at first, because I didn't love myself enough to be like, "I need a run today. I'm going to go." That was never going to work for me. I had to ease my way in to be like, "Wait a minute, I'm effing this whole thing up by being short and irritable and a martyr and taking care of everything and making all the snacks and making all the food. If I love them, I'm going to do this for myself." And that was the baby step to get there.

Deena:

Easing your way in. Yeah, you found your why.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

And that why can change over time.

Kristin:

Totally.

Emily Oster:

But I think that feels so important to me as a first step, which is to say, basically, if you are struggling to do this and you want to take that first step, you probably need to find something other than "I want to," because the whole thing is I want to, that's not a valuable thing. So for me, part of what has really helped with the running is, at least initially, it was like, "Okay, I'm doing this because this is healthy. It's exercise." And of course, my husband's like, at this point he's like, "Well, I don't really think that number of miles is strictly," now I can be like, "Oh, well it's just I like it." But it was that initial step of being like, "Well, I'm doing this for extra. I'm doing this because of cardiovascular health and longevity, or whatever it is." And that was, for me, that was the sort of step to start doing that.

Deena:

Yeah, totally.

Kristin:

Yeah. That's awesome.

When it comes to this idea of perfect parenting that we're all talking about and the unattainable standard. We've already talked about it, we're not doing it, eff it. Is there data that shows, and there may not be, is there data that shows how much we really need to show up in a healthier way, let's say? Meaning none of us can show up and be emotionally regulated and calm and loving and handle everything perfectly a hundred percent of the time. Is there some sort of a benchmark, or a percentage that any data goes to, of kind of keep your shit together this much?

Emily Oster:

Not in that way you're looking for, no.

Kristin:

No. We are looking for it.

Emily Oster:

It's a sort of tricky space, and I wrote about this a few weeks ago. So in some ways, the years between zero and three are incredibly crucial. If you look in the broader sense, across socioeconomic groups in the US, across income, basically what you see, is you actually see quite big differences in kindergarten

readiness, and any way you're going to measure that, when kids from early life differences. And so there's some things that seem to matter, but a lot of the questions that people would ask me basically, or are on the minds of the people who are probably listening to this, those are not the things that are important. It's things like access to quality childcare with a caregiver who is paying some attention to you. It's like lack of toxic stress, meaning a safe, consistent place to live and enough food all the time, enough sleep, a quiet place to sleep.

It doesn't have to be a silent, but just someplace that feels safe. So those are the things, like providing an environment that is stable and consistent, that's something that's really, really important for kids. And we have a lot of different ways to see that that's true, but that's sort of so far from the question of like, "Is it okay if I give my kids some screen time?" Or if some of the time, maybe I'm not as present, I'm on my phone, this is really far from that. And so I think that's sometimes important for people to remember when we think about how are we trying to deliver for our kids. And when we think about public policy, it would be great if the world provided a situation in which people did not have this kind of toxic stress with their kids. That probably isn't something individuals are going to have, that's something the government should be doing better, but that's a whole other conversation.

Kristin:

Definitely been down that rabbit hole, a hundred percent. Like some support for parents, and then we won't [inaudible 00:38:15] the cycle.

Emily Oster:

Paid leave. It's a little paid leave, child subsidy.

Kristin:

Yeah, I might be a better mom. Everybody in the US might be a better and more present parents.

Deena:

Hundred percent.

Kristin:

If they had basic needs. So what you're saying though, I think is that, this is what I kind of always say to... We get the same DMs obviously. It's just fear, fear, fear, fear, fear. I'm probably the same with you, where it's like 95% of the questions are, "Did I mess them up forever?" Is it 95%? It could be about screen time, it could be about school, it could be about separation, it could be about divorce, it could be about anything. But the underlying question is, have I ruined them forever?

And I feel like what you just said, that's a nice little checklist, I think at the end of a really long, hard day is I think we get so caught up on the details, and if you have that checklist that you just said, where it's like, "What am I feeling guilty about right now? That I gave waffles for dinner? Oh, Emily Oster said they need to be fed. Where they fed?" Chuck killed it. Oh, I'm feeling guilty about screen time, blah blah. Did they have a roof over their head while they watched those screens? Oh, Emily Oster, that's a check. If you're following a parenting Instagram account and then you're rolling into the DMs because you're so worried about your kid, you're probably doing a great job and you've hit those five checklists.

Emily Oster:

Totally. Somebody asked me, sort of early on, gave me a long story. This is at some event that was like, there's two preschools. One of them has all the teachers have a master's degree and one of them, only one has a master's degree, but it's in early childhood education. And I was like, "If you are thinking about this, you're fine." Go to the one that's closer, that's it.

Kristin:

Yes.

Emily Oster:

Go to the closer one.

Kristin:

Which ones better for you?

Emily Oster:

Yeah. Because these are the same, and at this point, it doesn't... You're so far down the rabbit hole of having done the stuff that's important, that you just pick the one that's closer.

Kristin:

You should have seen my preschool spreadsheet when I was a first time mom.

Deena:

Oh, I remember that.

Kristin:

I sent it to you because you were a child therapist. So I had to be like-

Deena:

We need therapy.

Kristin:

Yeah, we need the literal... Like Dan [inaudible 00:40:22] to weigh in on what preschool my daughter... It was, I mean, the spreadsheet was insane.

Deena:

It was really extensive, I will say that.

Kristin:

Oh, wow.

Deena:

Maybe this is the same question though, but is there data on how much yelling is too much yelling? It's kind of related to what we were talking about, but-

Kristin:

Only because probably the number one thing, again, that is our audience, especially, is worried about.

Emily Oster:

Not really. And I think this is a place where I actually find the whole space of the literature really hard to parse. We have, I would say, reasonable data, that physical punishment is associated with bad consequences later.

Kristin:

What are those consequences by the way?

Emily Oster:

Mostly other behavior problems. So basically, that it is associated with mental health issues and behavior problems later. And then we have also, a set of data that suggests that consistency in response is kind of the most important aspect of any kind of, I don't know if you want to call it a discipline program, but any kind of behavior modification. I don't know what words we're using, but that sort of doing the same thing every time so your kid knows what to expect, is a really important part of that, both in terms of getting outcomes, and in terms of kids not being, in terms of stress. But the question of I yelled at my kid, everybody yells at their kids, everybody yells at their kids.

Deena:

Say it louder.

Emily Oster:

Everybody yells at their kids.

Deena:

I'm a child therapist, I've done it.

Kristin:

Deena does, your pediatrician does.

Deena:

Yeah, it's everyone.

Emily Oster:

And people say, "I don't want to do this." I go, "Okay, look, first of all, sometimes you're going to yell your kids, everybody yells at your kids. It's okay." And then back up a little bit into, okay, well this is much more Deena they me, but backing up into a situation of what is it about the world that is having this happen more than you want? Particularly, if you're saying, not occasionally, "I yell at my kids," which everyone does. But this is happening more frequently, to ask what are those situations? Is there a way to react to them differently? What can we put into place so we're not having that situation? I think that kind of advanced planning is part of all of this sort of deliberate parenting.

Deena:

Yeah. As a child therapist, I always think of it kind of like this, where it's like, what is your ideal go-to approach? What are you being consistent with? If your core belief is that kids are going to behave better and learn better by you punishing them and threatening and yelling at them, because you are the parent and they should respect you, and so they should be yelled at to do what they're supposed to do. That's different than the flip side that we're talking about, is I am a human being who has hard days myself and I'm tired, and sometimes I just run out of bandwidth and I snap, and then I repair with my kid and I explain that I was having a hard time. This wasn't about you, and I'm going to work on having my big feelings without yelling at you, and I'm really sorry.

Kristin:

And newsflash, your kids someday are going to be adults. So someday your child will get angry. And yes, we want to show them how to healthily deal with anger. So some of the times, hopefully we can do that, even when you're in traffic, right? I'm guilty of it too. But a great way is when it's not with your kid, to try your best to model anger, where it's like, "I'm feeling really frustrated at this car in front of me, and nothing I can do." You know what I mean?

You can model anger in that way, but your kid's going to snap someday. They're going to make a mistake. We're all human beings. So it's actually kind of healthy for your child to see you mess up, make the mistake, own that mistake, and they can see afterwards what that looks like. It doesn't need to look like going into a shame hole or never talking or leaving things really weird, and then you wake up the next morning and everyone's yelling again. They can see, "Okay, when you get angry and you make a mistake and you snap at somebody, here's what you do. You take ownership. You say, I'm so sorry and I'm going to go take some deep breaths, and I'm going to work on it next time." What a great thing for them to learn.

Deena:

To learn that they're human too.

Kristin:

I think what we're saying, is we're crushing it.

Emily Oster:

I think everyone listening to this podcast is crushing it.

Deena:

Everyone listening to this podcast is crushing it.

Kristin:

I'm going to guess right there.

Emily Oster:

You're doing a good job. It's like the big time adulting thing where at the end of all of her [inaudible 00:44:36], where she's like, "Get yourself a snack."

Kristin:

I love her.

Emily Oster:

I feel like a tagline, like "You're doing a good job."

Kristin:

Just eat a snack. Just get yourself a snack, girl. So speaking of your kids watching you, I listened to one of your podcasts, oh, my gosh, please remind me who the guest is, about grief, Parenting with Grief?

Emily Oster:

Marissa, Marissa Lee.

Kristin:

That was one of the most impactful podcasts I think, I've ever listened to as a parent.

Emily Oster:

Thank you.

Kristin:

I mean, can you give a little summary of, especially what... I don't know, is there data there? Was it just opinion based on when you, yourself, a parent, are having a hard time, you're going through grief, that could be loss. I mean, there's anything, miscarriage, death-

Deena:

Divorce, change.

Kristin:

Divorce, change, it could mean so many things, how you can show up as a parent while you're grieving.

Emily Oster:

I mean, I think in some ways, a lot of what we were talking about there is the same idea of making it okay for you to be having a hard time. And it's okay to say that. So Marissa has a two-year-old, and even with her two-year-old and with my own kids, when my mom was sick, maybe I'll say, "I'm having a really hard time and I need some space," or "I need this," is okay. And so I think just that a lot of what we're talking about there is how you show up and be honest with your kids that you are struggling, because it's hard.

And all of these same instincts that make us want to be the martyr, or be the person who never has a problem, I think, come up against limits when you are really grieving something, right? I mean, it's one thing to say "I'm stressed at work," whatever, "I'm trying to push through it," but if it's like, "My mom is going to die tomorrow," you're not pushing through that and being like, "Well, let's all go to six Flags and I'll pretend everything's fine." You're just not. And I think pretending that we're able to do that, is almost the extreme form of some of this self-sacrifice. And we are really talking about the idea of you don't have to do that. Ask for help, get help, and tell your kids what's going on, and in age-appropriate ways.

Deena:

Exactly. And as a child therapist, that actually impacts the kid in a great way, because kids can pick up, they can feel what's going on around them. They can feel when we're off, when we're struggling. And so when we help them make sense of it, it actually helps them feel safer and feel calmer when they understand what's going on.

Kristin:

And especially for kids who are pretty new to this world, it's like the thing itself is scary. It feels insurmountable for us as adults, to look your... I don't want to cry, but to look your child in the eye and say whatever it is, right? Where it's like "Grandma's dying," that seems scary and insurmountable.

But to a child, what feels scary and insurmountable is not knowing, is sensing and watching everything be different and having, "Is it me? Is it you? Did I do something?" The not knowing is scarier than the thing.

Deena:

Exactly.

Kristin:

And they're going to face those things. That's what breaks my heart too, is this actually... I think when you go through a hard experience and you share that with your kids, you have that realization that's also kind of scary. It's like, "This actually won't be the last time that they'll face this," right?

Deena:

Yeah, yeah.

Kristin:

Or that we will face this as a family. So all you can do is show them how you can show up, and wouldn't we say like, "Hey honey, let it out, cry. It's healthy to cry." So we should probably do that and let them see that. That's what we want them to do. Oh, that episode was just perfect. It was perfect timing.

Emily Oster:

Thank you.

Kristin:

I just-

Emily Oster:

Marissa is like... I found Marissa actually, when my mom passed. Somebody sent me a podcast she had done, I think on We Can Do Hard Things, and was like, "You should listen to this." And I read her book and she's just like, she's kind of perfect.

Kristin:

She's perfect. She's perfect. We can agree on that. Do you have one final question, because mine would be about Kinder Readiness, but I wonder if yours is better.

Deena:

No, hit us with it.

Kristin:

You want me to hit it?

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

Is that okay?

Emily Oster:

That was actually in my mind too.

Kristin:

This is your other bread and butter. I think sushi, and if I may, because I'm your target demo. A very anxious mother.

Deena:

Very caring mother.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Loves her children, goes to therapy weekly.

Kristin:

I go to therapy weekly, seven years. I'm working on it. I feel like sushi is the gateway to your first book, and then, which is Crib Sheet. And then I feel like Kinder Readiness, correct me if I'm wrong, Kinder Readiness and red-shirting them, and that whole debacle is the intro into Family Firm. That's why we're... Okay. Is that accurate?

Emily Oster:

That sounds right. Yep.

Kristin:

So red-shirting, it's this thing. Do you want to briefly explain what this concept even is?

Emily Oster:

Yeah, sure. So red-shirting in this context, refers to the practice of holding your kid, typically a kid with a summer birthday, back a year so they enter kindergarten a year later. So rather than being just five when they enter kindergarten, they're-

Deena:

A fresh six.

Emily Oster:

They're just six. And the idea is that people would do this so their kids would be, basically, perform better in kindergarten, get a leg up, similar to the origin of this word, which is in college football, where you wear a red shirt and sit on the bench for your first year, so then you're bigger and can hit people harder in future years. So in kindergarten, it would more be about reading than hitting, but whatever.

Kristin:

Sure.

Emily Oster:

Also hitting.

Kristin:

I feel like, I mean, this is somewhat of a recent... I mean, when the grandparent generation hears this, they're like, "What?" I mean, you were a September birthday and you were fine. And I just have to say, I wasn't fine, for everybody listening.

Emily Oster:

I was little in my grade too.

Kristin:

Yeah. I was a September birthday, and I ended up, actually, red-shirting, if you will, in seventh grade. And I really wish that I would've red-shirted in kindergarten because I have such distinct memories of just not being there. Definitely with, I mean, I'll never get there with math, even as a 37-year-old. But in those concepts that were harder to grasp, being a year younger did not do me any favors. And even socially and emotionally, there's such a big gap in terms of a year, and all kids are different. So if I struggle a little more in that area, it makes sense. So what is your opinion, what is the approach when it comes to people who are on the fence of a blanket approach of like, "Well, it's a summer birthday, I'll just hold them back," versus being a little more nuanced about it.

Emily Oster:

Yeah, yeah. So I think what we see in the data is the one sort of thing that seems to be kind of causally related to entering at a younger age is behavioral diagnosis, like ADHD. So if you think about kids who are entering younger, especially boys, are sort of more likely to get that diagnosis. And that's true, basically, not because they're more likely to have it, but seems like it is true because you're comparing them against kids who are on average, older. So if you are just five and there's somebody who's six in the class, and the expectation in kindergarten is we all are able to sit still and learn phonics, you're a lot less likely to be able to sit still and learn phonics because you're five and-

Kristin:

Because your brain hasn't developed like the other kids, yeah.

Emily Oster:

Because your brain hasn't developed, and so then it's sort of relatively, in some environments, sort of easier for teachers to be like, "Oh, well, this kid is struggling with this." So that is the main database thing that we see. And I think for me, it argues for a very thoughtful, nuanced parent kid-specific approach to this. So on average, boys are more likely, I think, to need more time, but not every boy would need more time. And it's much more in the data here, this is to suggest it's much more about socio-emotional development, or the sort of behavioral side, than it is about do you know all the colors and do you know the letters. Which there's a lot of variation, and it is true that kids who enter kindergarten older test better in kindergarten, but those effects go away by second or third grade, whereas the effects on these kinds of diagnoses persist because the diagnoses persist.

It's an interesting space because there are people who would say, there's a guy named Richard Reeves whose view is every boy should be red-shirted, just blanket thing. The expectation should be boys take an extra year. And then there are people who are sort of more in the middle, who would say, "Basically, there should be an option for a second year of pre-K." That the way that the school system should be structured is formal school starts the year before kindergarten, and some kids do two of that, and then some kids go. And for me, that feels like if we could manage that in a public policy sense, that would be perfect.

Deena:

That sounds nice.

Kristin:

Yeah, that would be.

Emily Oster:

Yes, that would be perfect.

Kristin:

I'm curious, as we talk, obviously there's no data here at all. This is just three women sitting in a room. Do we think that girls are being left behind in this conversation because they're not exhibiting giant symptoms? I'm just saying for myself, or even for one of my kids who I decided to red-shirt. If a girl is quiet and complacent, but they're still having a hard time in terms of maybe they're not the most outgoing, maybe they're a little bit meeker, they're a little bit milder and we're not really accounting for, she might be stronger, she might be more confident. With the red-shirt situation, I feel like a little bit, girls are kind of left out of the-

Deena:

The conversation all together.

Kristin:

Equation because it's not... It's almost like girls being left out of the ADHD diagnosis, by the way.

Emily Oster:

Which they all still are.

Kristin:

Because it looks, exactly, it looks so different, where we're so worried about these boys, rightfully so, because it can maybe be violent behavior or it's bigger, right? It's scarier. It's this [inaudible 00:54:01] control on it. Yeah. Whereas girls ADHD, or even in this case, I feel like the struggle is presented in such a different way, that we're not really paying attention to that.

Emily Oster:

Yeah. I mean, I think some of the overall reaction to this has to do with the fact that boys don't seem to be doing great lately. They're graduating at lower rates, they're less likely to go to college. There's a lot of reasons why people have started to talk about issues with boys, but part of the reason I don't like some kind of blanket thing that's like red-shirt all the boys, is of course, it misses that there's going to be variation in girls, in how ready they are, in a variety of ways, and it's probably different than the ways that boys are. So I think we need to take a little bit more of a thoughtful approach to early childhood that would acknowledge that, just between the ages of four and six, kids are moving forward at... It's like that age, and then it's this adolescence period, the sort of sixth, seventh, eighth grade, where there's just a lot of variation and that's where you see the boy-girl stuff show up also.

Deena:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, their brain goes through another crazy growth development period during the teen years,

Emily Oster:

Which is a whole other source of podcast-

Kristin:

Whole other podcast.

Emily Oster:

A whole other thing.

Whole other ball of wax.

Kristin:

Whole other Instagram page.

This has been amazing.

Deena:

Emily.

Kristin:

This has been amazing.

Emily Oster:

Thank you guys.

Deena:

I don't want to stop.

Kristin:

I know. I want to chat forever. I have so many questions selfishly, that I will wait for the next time that you're on podcast or we meet somehow in person, someday.

Emily Oster:

We should meet and have coffee.

Deena:

I would love to meet.

Kristin:

I would love that. Where are you? Where do you live?

Emily Oster:

I live in Rhode Island.

Deena:

Okay.

Kristin:

I don't know if that's a part of my journey, but I'll make it a part of my journey. We're in Denver.

Emily Oster:

Okay.

Kristin:

Yeah, we got to meet sometime.

Deena:

Let's do it.

Emily Oster:

Yeah. I was in Denver, this is like six months ago, in September for a conference, and I had a really terrible accident with a bike while I was running and I ended up in the ER. So I can tell you-

Kristin:

Stop it.

Deena:

Oh, my god.

Kristin:

I'm so sorry.

Emily Oster:

I know about Denver, is your ER is fantastic.

Deena:

It really is great here.

Kristin:

That's nice.

Emily Oster:

It was so nice.

Kristin:

Do you remember [inaudible 00:56:02]?

Deena:

That was terrible.

Emily Oster:

I was sorry about the staples in my head, but I was really a huge fan of the ER. That was lovely.

Kristin:

I remember literally watching this, by the way. It's probably very creepy, but we got it all... I remember watching, because I think you shared something at first, where you were like-

Emily Oster:

Yeah, I was like-

Kristin:

"I was hit by a car," and then it just went blank. And all of us were like, "Is she okay?" And it was like you showing up however many, in the ER being like, "I'm fine guys. We're okay."

Emily Oster:

Just a few staples in my head.

Kristin:

Oh my God, Emily, you can't deal. Oh God, we were all so worried.

Deena:

Well, we're glad you're okay.

Emily Oster:

Thank you. [inaudible 00:56:31].

Kristin:

Emily Oster.

Deena:

Come back, give us another try one day.

Kristin:

Please.

Deena:

Give Denver another shot. We can do better than that, I promise.

Emily Oster:

Thank you guys so much.

Kristin:

Thank you for coming on our pod. We love you.

Emily Oster:

Until the next time.

Deena:

Yeah, until the next time.

Kristin:

Oh, how do you feel?

Deena:

That was so fun.

Kristin:

Oh, my God.

Deena:

I didn't want to stop.

Kristin:

Are we best friends with Emily Oscar?

Deena:

I love her.

Kristin:

Is this the Andy Cohen thing where it's like slight delusion, or I feel like we actually might be friends.

Deena:

I think we're friends.

Kristin:

Wow, wow.

Deena:

I want to have a coffee with her.

Kristin:

Wow, that was wild.

Deena:

Do you know long we've been reading her stuff.

Kristin:

I know. And to actually talk to her?

Deena:

This was a dream come true for me, the data nerd that I am.

Kristin:

Yeah. Do you feel better? I feel better just talking to her about... I feel better about every choice I've made as a parent.

Deena:

Literally everything. I never feel this way, where I'm like, "Wow, am I crushing it?" But now I'm feeling it all of a sudden, I'm like, "I'm doing a damn good job."

Kristin:

I'm not joking, that's why I follow her on Instagram. And I'm telling you, I'm not just saying this because she's on our podcast. I mean it when I say her newsletters, because newsletters-

Deena:

Oh, they're good.

Kristin:

Newsletters, they kind of suck, right? They're just like, nobody wants a news-

Deena:

Hers are amazing.

Kristin:

I need her newsletter every single week because it's like, "Oh, I'm not messing them up."

Deena:

You get an instant boost where you're like, "Okay."

Kristin:

I feel like that's my takeaway today, is like I'm going to keep mantra-ing and channeling those top things she said of positive outcomes in children, of literal basic food. Do they have access to food in their eating, safety and shelter? Do they feel safe? Do they have a roof over their head, and do they have somewhere nice to sleep? Not even nice, just somewhere quiet.

Deena:

Quiet.

Kristin:

We're doing it to sleep, and I'm just going to keep... That was my favorite takeaway. I'm going to keep mantra-ing that.

Deena:

That's right. Yeah, felt really good.

Kristin:

Did a really good job today.

Deena:

Yeah, we need this perspective. We really do, especially in this crazy time of parenting, where everything's flying in your face.

Kristin:

God, I love her. Let's go for a run in Rhode Island. Should we go to Rhode Island?

Deena:

Yeah. Do you want to run?

Kristin:  
I might.

Deena:  
Okay.

Kristin:  
Like how you say-

Deena:  
We could all jog together, I'd like that.

Kristin:  
I'll do whatever. I'll do anything. You know what I mean?

Deena:  
Okay.

Kristin:  
I'll be behind you in the sweatsuit with my coffee and my smoothie.

Deena:  
Take a video of me.

Kristin:  
I'll meet you at 10:00 at the brunch place. We all know I'm not going to show up. Bestie, it was so nice hanging out with you. We love you.

Deena:  
Because it's so fun.

Kristin:  
We can't wait for next week, bestie. It's 10:00. What are we even going to do with our day?

Deena:  
I don't know.

Kristin:  
This nice.

Deena:  
Let's go hang out.

Kristin:

This is cool. Yeah, let's get breakfast. I'm starving.

Deena:

You want to hang out with me?

Kristin:

Yeah, let's hang out.

Deena:

Bye.

Kristin:

Bye, bestie.

Deena:

Besties, this was a great episode. I don't know about you, but I'm feeling fired up to go back to parenting. And at the same time, the toddler, the preschooler year has come with many, many unique challenges from bringing a new baby into your family, to hitting, tantrums, discipline, another area where there's a million opinions of how to approach behaviors. Here's the thing, you are a great parent, and sometimes great parents need help, or they need some fresh strategies. Our course, *Winning the Toddler Stage*, is the world's bestselling behavioral course for a reason. It is rooted in science, but written by two busy moms, and literally, is one course that has everything you could possibly ever encounter or need for ages one through six. I'm talking bedtime, picky eating, discipline, tantrums, it is all in this one course. This is the toddler preschooler manual that helps you take the guesswork out of behaviors and discipline, and you can find it on our website at [biglittlefeelings.com/courses](http://biglittlefeelings.com/courses).

And don't forget to follow us on Instagram at Big Little Feelings where we have the best community of parents. No joke, it's so supportive and amazing, and we offer free tips there all day long.

Kristin:

Thank you so much for being here with us. This has been an Audacy production executive produced by Lauren LoGrasso, produced by Daniela Silva, edited by Bob Tabaddor, and theme music composed by Liz Fall. In-studio lighting designed by Shane Sackett, and designed by Jackie Sherman. Special thanks to Audacy Executive Vice President and Head of Podcasts, Jenna Weiss-Berman. And thank you for being here with us. We can't wait till next week.