

## BLF Episode 29

**Deena** [00:00:04] Welcome back to another episode of After Bedtime with Big Little Feelings and besties, I am so glad you're here, because today's episode is going to truly reshape your parenting and your life. So much of raising healthy kids and changing generational patterns is us reshaping how we handle stress and triggers. This episode gives you an exact roadmap to handle your triggers by building awareness, identifying your stress style, learning to monitor your triggers, and finding the right coping tools for you so that your triggers are no longer in the driver's seat of your parenting. Let's do this.

**Deena** [00:00:50] Here we are.

**Kristin** [00:00:51] Oh, hey.

**Deena** [00:00:54] Hey, bestie. And Tyler.

**Kristin** [00:00:57] And Tyler.

**Tyler** [00:00:57] Besties.

**Deena** [00:00:59] There he is.

**Tyler** [00:01:00] What's up guys?

**Kristin** [00:01:01] Hey.

[00:01:03] Hi besties. Hey, besties out there.

**Deena** [00:01:04] Team. I have a dilemma going on in my house.

**Tyler** [00:01:07] Don't like it already.

**Deena** [00:01:07] Vetoed. Okay. My three year old, for the first time ever, just asked me for a pet snake.

**Tyler** [00:01:15] Absolutely not.

**Kristin** [00:01:16] Oh, wow.

**Deena** [00:01:18] Yeah.

**Kristin** [00:01:18] Why do they always want snakes? I feel like mine always wants snakes.

**Tyler** [00:01:22] It's always snakes.

**Kristin** [00:01:22] And it always started with a snake, too. Like, our oldest really wanted a snake around three years old. What is that?

**Deena** [00:01:28] I don't know, but I thought I was going to be the chill mom before I had kids. I was like, I am that mom who would totally have a snake and like a cute little tank and everything like that. Like, I loved capturing lizards. I would always release them.

They're my besties. Yeah, I would take really good care of them. And then I would let them go.

**Kristin** [00:01:46] Did you build houses for them out of wood?

**Deena** [00:01:48] Of course I did. I got them food. They always had water. They had really nice little leaf tents. I mean, I went all out for them.

**Kristin** [00:01:55] Yeah. That's Deena's trauma response as a child was to create homes for different animals out of wood, which I feel like is a great trauma response. Honestly.

**Deena** [00:02:04] Yeah. It's not harmful. Yeah. So we'll put it that way.

**Tyler** [00:02:06] Did we talk about the woodworking? Did we talk about the woodworking?

**Deena** [00:02:11] We did! Daniel Tiger's mom, my idol.

**Tyler** [00:02:12] The Daniel Tiger mom.

**Deena** [00:02:14] Yeah, I still aspire to be her. But anyways, I'm not that mom. I don't want to have a snake in my house at this point.

**Tyler** [00:02:21] At no point have I ever been that parent.

**Kristin** [00:02:24] I feel like we get into low key conflict. Small conflict, because I'm almost that parent like you pull me back where I'm like, let's just like, screw it. Let's just kind of hamster. Let's just do the hamster thing, let's get some fish. Let's get, let's get a gerbil.

**Deena** [00:02:40] Let's get a bunny, who cares?

**Kristin** [00:02:42] Let's get some fluffy cats and he's always like, if, you...like he doesn't have a whole lot of hard lines. He's very supportive. And basically anything. I could say anything in the entire world, I think you would say to me, like sure, let's do this. And this is your one hard line that I just respect.

**Tyler** [00:03:02] But when I say, like, you better not bring home another thing that breathes.

**Kristin** [00:03:05] I might.

**Tyler** [00:03:06] Don't.

**Kristin** [00:03:06] I might. I'm so close every time.

**Tyler** [00:03:09] Besties, Kristen would be open to bringing home any animal.

**Kristin** [00:03:12] I really would.

**Tyler** [00:03:13] I cannot think of an animal that she would not bring home.

**Kristin** [00:03:16] I would totally.

**Tyler** [00:03:17] In this point in life.

**Kristin** [00:03:18] You know, like I'm that person.

**Deena** [00:03:19] Let me tell you where I'm at, okay? For Valentine's Day, my husband like hyped up my gift for two weeks at different times so he'd be like, sorry, I have to run out now and go coordinate your gift like I'll be back soon. He did it three times, and then finally Valentine's Day rolls around and he's like, here's your gift. And it's a live plant.

**Kristin** [00:03:39] Oh, no.

**Deena** [00:03:41] In a cardboard box. And I was like, why would you get me another living thing? I can't do this right now.

**Kristin** [00:03:46] This is a job. You just gave me a job.

**Deena** [00:03:49] I can't do that.

**Tyler** [00:03:50] Technically. Technically, plants are breathing, so don't bring those home either.

**Kristin** [00:03:54] Yeah, no, I'm more mad about a plant than an animal. Like, if you surprise me with an animal, I'd be thrilled. I mean, I've only wanted that my my whole life. I'll never forget that my sister got--

**Tyler** [00:04:05] There it is. There it is.

**Kristin** [00:04:07] My sister on Christmas morning before I was born got a kitten, okay? A kitten. And I never got a present or pet.

**Deena** [00:04:19] And that's where her trauma started.

**Kristin** [00:04:22] That's where it comes from.

**Tyler** [00:04:23] Before she was even born.

**Kristin** [00:04:25] Can someone surprise me with something? That'll be great. I'll take a snake.

**Deena** [00:04:28] Okay? Maybe. We'll see what happens.

**Tyler** [00:04:30] Don't get a snake.

**Deena** [00:04:34] I would like a pig. I'm just going to end there. So if you're going to get a weird animal, can I get a cute pig?

**Tyler** [00:04:38] Mike, if you're listening. Pig, pig.

**Kristin** [00:04:40] Pig over plant.

**Tyler** [00:04:41] I want to know, though. What did he go do three times for a plant?

**Kristin** [00:04:44] I also want to know what were you expecting to come? Because I would expect you to know, something significant.

**Deena** [00:04:51] Jewelry. I did clarify that, after the fact, I was like, you know, when you really hype it up that hard, I thought it was going to be jewelry. I'm just going to say it. And I would love some jewelry, you know, I would really welcome that next time. Thank you for the thoughtfulness, though. He had to go literally to the nursery, talk to the experts. He's a Virgo. So he did really very thorough research to show the right plant with the right sunlight, the watering. He walked all the options and like really put a lot of effort in which I do appreciate.

**Tyler** [00:05:23] So you got like a good plant.

**Deena** [00:05:25] I don't know what it's called, but it's, red and green.

**Kristin** [00:05:28] Okay.

**Deena** [00:05:28] Beautiful. It's A little exotic.

**Kristin** [00:05:31] That's great. It'll be dead in two weeks for sure.

**Deena** [00:05:33] That's the sad part, for sure.

**Kristin** [00:05:35] Yeah. Do you feel bad about it any more? Because I don't. Anytime somebody brings a plant..Because I used to be the person that would bring the plants into our home, I'd go to Trader Joe's, I'd be with the kids I would bring home a plant.

**Tyler** [00:05:46] It's always like, this is it.

**Kristin** [00:05:47] This is it, it's my new little plant. I love this plant. It would die. I'd feel horrible. Now I definitely don't do that. And then when people give me a plant, I know the second they give that plant to me, I'm not taking care of it. It's gonna die. I just don't even try. And I don't feel badly about it anymore. I have no moral obligation to this plant.

**Deena** [00:06:08] I feel guilt about a lot of things. This plant is not one. And I told him straight to his face is like, I really appreciate all that effort, and I'm just letting you know we're going to set the expectation really low because I'm already juggling 1 million things. This plant is at the very bottom of the 999,000 things that are before this very cute, exotic plant. Thank you, I love you.

**Kristin** [00:06:33] Speaking of love, we love our kids so much. We love our kids so much and oh my God, they test us. They do. Like I am tested daily because triggers. Like we all have triggers and when we have kids, those triggers are just like dug out of the mud. Triggers you didn't even know you have. So today we are going to talk triggers and how to make sure your triggers are not in the driver's seat. They're not taking over all the time. They're just a part of this whole parenting thing that we can totally manage.

**Deena** [00:07:12] By the end of this episode, you're going to have a little roadmap to help you manage your triggers. But before we even get into that, I just want to take a second to really applaud you for being here. Parenting is hard. We love our kids so damn much that it feels like our hearts are going to explode sometimes. And sometimes we are so exhausted, so push to and past our limits and that is just part of being human. You are a

good parent. You are here listening to a parenting podcast, ready to show up, to get tools to do the work. This is not about perfection. You are already doing enough. You're here, ready to grow and that is amazing. So take a second to just celebrate that.

**Tyler** [00:07:55] Let me tell you, I am just really glad to be here for this episode because I got some triggers.

**Deena** [00:08:01] So do I.

**Tyler** [00:08:03] I got some triggers.

**Kristin** [00:08:04] We all do.

**Deena** [00:08:05] Okay, but speaking of triggers, I feel like this word gets thrown around left and right these days. Like what actually is being triggered? It's not just being uncomfortable. It's not something that just kind of like rubs you the wrong way. It's an intense emotional reaction in response to a current situation that involuntarily brings up memories, even ones that you can't explicitly remember in your mind. They're stored in your body, your past experiences. They've literally hardwired your nervous system. So now the reaction that you're having in this moment isn't necessarily matching the situation at hand.

**Tyler** [00:08:42] Yeah, that's something really cool that I learned about recently is like it's a stress response. It's a proper stress response. It's something that brings you closer to the edge of your window of tolerance, and it might take you past your window of tolerance, where you're no longer able to think about things rationally. You just want to respond. And that's where you have those subconscious responses to like yell or storm off or things like that. So it's really important, I think, to like, understand that's what's happening. You're not a bad person. These are things that are triggering past emotions and stressors, and it comes out.

**Kristin** [00:09:14] And these responses I feel like for me at least, they're so shameful. Like I am not a yeller. I'm not a yeller. So why am I yelling? Like my personality is a certain way or I'll thank God I'm nothing like my mom. I'm nothing like my dad. I'll never do this to my kids. And then it's such a harrowing experience to hear yourself say the exact same things that your parents said to you, that you said you would never do or say in the way that you said you would never do it.

**Tyler** [00:09:49] And it's within seconds of doing it to where, like there's crying..oooh, crying is a big one for me. And I'm like, it's okay, stop crying. And then I'm immediately like, that was it. I just did it. I just repeated it.

**Kristin** [00:10:02] And we just, oh my God, we walk away, right? And we're just feeling now. We feel regulated because we like, got it out. We felt triggered. We went up, we exploded. We walk away, we get back to baseline and we're like, oh my God, like I'm a monster. My four year old was just asking for ice cream. Like, obviously they want ice cream, you know what I mean? And there's so much shame around it. And oh yeah, when we think of it as being this neurological response, this is hard wired into our nervous system. This is not actually me. I like to just kind of even separate it sometimes and think of it as this sort of other thing. It's this default mode that was programmed into me from my childhood. That's not me. And it's going to happen. And it's going to be there. Because the more shame we all feel around it, the more we try to push that shame away. And then

because we're pushing it away, we're not actually acknowledging what our real trigger is. Yes, I have an urge to yell, you know.

**Deena** [00:11:06] Right on. The more you resist it, the more it persists. The best thing we can do is just embrace that this is part of being human. We got to learn to work with it.

**Tyler** [00:11:14] And that's why I thought it was so interesting that you guys use the word of like, who's in the driver's seat? Because that's like the first step is who's driving. Is it your stress response? If you can recognize that, that's your first step. I mean, the fact that you're even realizing that, it's huge. Get your healthy adult in the driver's seat. Recognize the stress response. Say, all right, you're not driving. You're here, but you're not driving the car right now. I'm going to show up as the healthy parent.

**Deena** [00:11:38] Exactly. And the exciting thing is that we can literally build our brain to deal with stress and triggers better at any age, any age, you can build your brain and grow.

**Tyler** [00:11:50] Well, here's the thing, ladies. Question from me. And the best is how do we acknowledge those stresses but not let them show up as our response? How do we not yell? How do we not storm off? How do we not feel like a crazy person when we're getting so stressed out?

**Deena** [00:12:07] Good news, Tyler. We have four tools. Oh, we're going to literally give you an exact roadmap in this episode. You're going to walk away feeling prepared to deal with triggers.

**Deena** [00:12:19] I love all the car references, too, this is like sorted out for me, you know, the guy.

**Kristin** [00:12:23] This is for the men.

**Tyler** [00:12:24] This is for the, for the fellas. We got roadmaps, we got driving references. What else do we got? Do we got. Do we have something to turbocharge this?

**Kristin** [00:12:32] Sports?

**Deena** [00:12:34] I've only got one more car reference, which is, that's my number one trigger is crying when you're trapped in a car, when you can't get out and it's loud. That is, one of my yelling triggers.

**Tyler** [00:12:45] So let's dive into those first. Let's dive into the four tools.

**Deena** [00:12:56] Okay, bestie, so triggers are a part of life. This is part of being human. We get stressed, we get pushed to our limits. So what do we actually do? How do we retrain our nervous system? And the very first thing that we can start to do is make friends with your triggers.

**Tyler** [00:13:15] That feels uncomfortable. Like getting comfortable with my triggers. I don't want to do that. So how do we go about that? Like, how do we do that?

**Deena** [00:13:22] Well, actually, I'm glad you said that because you're the one who said distress tolerance. How much discomfort, uncertainty, loud noises, uncomfortable stuff we can deal with before we go into the red zone, which is like stress mode survival brain kicks

on. We can actually start to get comfortable with being uncomfortable with practice. And part of this is really just embracing and getting to know your triggers. Because when you just make friends with them, when you accept them as they are without like you said, Kristin, fighting it or pretending it's not happening like this is part of life. And when you know what your triggers are, you've already put yourself in a position to deal with them better. So step one, what are your triggers?

**Kristin** [00:14:11] Roadmap them. Literally roadmap them. This was such a game changer for me. I remember having a three year old and a one year old. This was before we started or right when we started Big Little Feelings, actually. And I remember this one moment; we were walking home from the park and it was about to be naptime and they were crying. It was baby and the three year old--there was there was so much crying. And I lost it. I snapped and I yelled and I threatened and I was like, we're never doing this again. Just all the things I never want to do. And I kind of started to notice a pattern that any time I, the parent, decided to go somewhere and do something right before nap time, that's when I would start to lose my shit.

**Deena** [00:14:57] Yep.

**Kristin** [00:14:57] And I knew I needed that nap time. This isn't about them. This isn't like, oh, they need nap or they're not going to-- I need nap time, right? And so the closer we get and if they're delaying in any ways because they're toddlers, they're going to start walking backwards on a path. The more I'm getting heightened and heightened and heightened, heightened because we're getting closer and closer and closer to naptime. I had to understand that while I might want to be a more flexible person, people shouldn't really feel triggered by this. You're feeling ashamed. You don't really want to be this way. Guess what? The reality is on my roadmap, one of my triggers is being out close to bedtime or nap time. What do I do about it? Well, this is how I am. I'm not going to put myself in that situation because I can't control my toddler in that situation. I can control myself. I'm going to make sure that we're home with more than enough time for nap and bedtime.

**Deena** [00:15:47] Yes, exactly. One of my triggers, by the way, that I've realized recently. And this will change in different seasons of life and parenthood. If I have a work deadline and my children are around, they could literally say anything, anything at all and I will probably turn and yell at them. And now I've built in systems to try and prevent this whole context from happening in the first place. But it's a good example. The more you get to know your trigger, the better prepared you can be. So, bestie, I want you to literally list out your triggers at the end of this podcast. Once you're done, take a quiet moment and just list out recently what has been triggering.

**Kristin** [00:16:29] Notice any patterns and really come at this in a non-shaming way. Because even your trigger, Deena, that you just mentioned is also my trigger. I just know that about myself. But I will convince myself that I shouldn't be that way. Like I can think of this one influencer who's a mom influencer who I love. I love following her, and I'm constantly seeing her stories and how she like structures her day. And she does it perfectly. And like when the baby is doing a sensory activity, that's when she posts her stories during the day and I'm like, oh, that's like, why can't I do that? And it's like, no. Same with nap time. Bedtime. It doesn't matter what it could be the most obscure, seemingly like this should be easy for anyone. Nope. What is the thing that once you get close to it, could be getting out the door for school, it could be making lunch, it could be so many different things. Identify shame free. What are your triggers?

**Deena** [00:17:24] 100%. And then we're going to shift into number two on our roadmap.

**Kristin** [00:17:29] Wait a minute, I want to I want to pass it to this guy. What are your triggers? You didn't share. You haven't shared. What's your triggers?

**Tyler** [00:17:36] I feel like I have so many I can't pinpoint one, which is like, yikes. But you guys made some great points and I want to acknowledge, like, something that's like, so valuable and something that I've worked on is like, not only are you finding out what your triggers are, you're being vulnerable about what they are. But once you begin to do that and you're like, okay, this is a natural response, you can start to remove some of that shame because you're not going to make any changes to this. You're not going to adapt to it unless you confront that shame and kind of realize, like, this is natural. It doesn't mean I'm a horrible parent. It means I have work to do. Let's get to work. That's my take away on it.

**Kristin** [00:18:10] What are your triggers?

**Tyler** [00:18:12] Oof!

**Kristin** [00:18:13] Do you not want to get into them?

**Tyler** [00:18:14] No, no, I think the main one. No, a big one is getting out the door on time for school or, like, going anywhere, because let me tell you, besties, I don't know about you guys, but my kids love to make a delay. They love to delay. What's one more thing they can do? It's like the thing that you guys say of nobody has more to do on their to do list than a toddler before bedtime. For me, it's it's with leaving the house.

**Kristin** [00:18:38] I know I think that's a big one for most people, by the way. I really do think that's true. And I think the one thing that help me with that one is I realized, do I want to get there on time and have a harrowing experience where I scream at my kids? And by the way, we probably still won't be on time.

**Tyler** [00:18:55] Still going to be late.

**Kristin** [00:18:56] Yeah. Or might I be 5 to 10 minutes late but we have like a pleasant experience getting out the door? So I just kind of like removed my guard, I really did. I was just like, you know what, babe? And like, the other thing is, we as adults, I don't know that we let children be children. And I know we need to get out the door. I know that I'm not saying, like, just don't ever go to school, but God, everything is an experiment to them. Like everything. Like they are little scientists. They're like, wait a minute, I need to just make sure this, like, ball is going to fall and drop off the table real quick and see what that happens. And it's like ugh.

**Tyler** [00:19:28] At the end of the day, 2 to 5 minutes is not going to destroy my day. And they're going to be happier. Yeah. And the more you fight it, the more time they're going to take.

**Tyler** [00:19:38] You just got a buffer in more time just let them be kids.

**Tyler** [00:19:42] It's on me for not starting the day sooner.

**Kristin** [00:19:44] Which is why we're talking about triggers.

**Deena** [00:19:46] See but now, you know that's your trigger and look at you doing all this work to, like, create systems and mental shifts. Look at you..

**Tyler** [00:19:52] I've grown so much. Not only are we on time more, but we were late two times this week already. And it's Wednesday. We're two for three, late.

**Kristin** [00:20:00] You know what? Still got tomorrow.

**Tyler** [00:20:02] But it's not perfect.

**Kristin** [00:20:03] Yeah.

**Deena** [00:20:04] Let's celebrate that win.

**Deena** [00:20:04] Like, you know what, guys? We can round out this week. We can round it out. And we were on time today.

**Kristin** [00:20:09] You know what else? Because we're talking about how our parents' responses get wired into us as kids when it comes to getting out the door. I, as an adult feel frazzled. I feel anxiety when we go to travel. When I'm about to approach holidays, I feel next level physically stressed. Oh my God, what are we going to do? And then all this panic and you want to know why? It's because when I was a kid, those were experiences where my parents were shouting at me to get out the door. It was so high stress that getting out the door or going to travel or going to a holiday feels so stressful. And I want my kids. Yeah, I want them to be on time, but more so, I really want them to wake up in the morning, have their coffee, get out the door and head to work. And I don't want it to be hard wired into their nervous systems to feel horrible when they're--that it has to be just so. Or the the whole world is destroyed. That's not really what I want to teach them. I want to teach them healthy habits, to get out the door sooner and be on time. And also, it's not the end of the world. That's what I want to teach them.

**Deena** [00:21:17] Oh, yeah.

**Tyler** [00:21:18] What do we got next?

**Deena** [00:21:19] Okay, roadmap. We love a roadmap.

**Tyler** [00:21:22] We're back in the car as a healthy adult. Where are we going next?

**Deena** [00:21:24] Step number two. You have to get to know what your overstressed style is. Tyler, you were naturally hinting on this, that everyone gets stressed and everyone goes past their window of tolerance. Like how much distress you can tolerate without shifting into these stressful survival-mode, maladaptive, coping skills. So when we go beyond what we can handle well, our brain shifts into survival mode. Your prefrontal cortex, which is the thinking, the reasoning part of your brain is now offline. And now the emotional and sure survival mechanisms, they kick on. So I'm talking about fight, flight and freeze. So when we're talking about parenting, by the way, and we get over stressed, what's your style? Are you the fight, where it's like the exploder, which spoiler alert is me, the yelling, the outburst. You're saying mean things are you flight? That's more of like you're the runner. Either you're literally just leaving the situation or mentally you're checking out, you're going, okay, fine, sure, have whatever you want and you become kind of permissive. You're not able to

hold boundaries. You're not really able to show up in a sturdy, competent way or respond at all. Or are you a freeze? The total shutdown. You become paralyzed, frozen. You might even start to feel dizzy, like you're going to pass out, you know, find your stress style, which can change in different situations.

**Tyler** [00:22:51] And that's totally it. You said it. As soon as you go outside of your window of tolerance, you're in the sympathetic response mode. Fight! Flight! Freeze! I would love to say I'm a runner, but no, I'm a fighter. And I hate that about myself. I know what it is, and I hate it.

**Kristin** [00:23:04] I'm a runner and I hate that I'm a runner. So does that make you feel better?

**Tyler** [00:23:07] No.

**Deena** [00:23:08] I'm a fighter. And I hate that I'm a fighter. Yeah, literally. We had a lot of yelling. Like talking about how your childhood wires you. I came from a house where when tension happened, when someone didn't like the way you were talking to them or they didn't like your feelings. Frankly, there was a harsh, yelling, aggressive, sometimes physically aggressive response. And now I hate. I hate that when I am triggered and in the red zone, which we'll get to, by the way, in a little bit. Physically, I have this urge to like, you know, pick up my children and shake them like what happened to me. And I hate that. That that is part of my rewiring.

**Kristin** [00:23:49] And it's so unlike your natural personality. It really is. And I think that's the hardest part of all of this is Tyler, if I may--.

**Tyler** [00:24:00] We'll find out.

**Tyler** [00:24:02] We'll find out if you may.

**Kristin** [00:24:04] It so-- Sometimes the like, oh, this comes from your childhood. It's not that obvious. Right? So you're just like, oh, I'm a monster. With you. With you, I can watch it happening in real time where like, it will sound identical to your father, and it's so not your personality at all where it's just because you're in a stress zone and it's not constant. This isn't how you always are. But if you're in a stress zone, it's like, hey, pick up your shoes. Why are you putting that there? What are you doing? Where are the socks? It's about cleanliness for some reason. And I'm like looking at your shoes that you're tripping over, right? Because you're like, we're not the cleanest people. And it's only when you're in a stress zone. It's just this biological response that makes no sense. It's not like we're the cleanest house on earth and you love things to be clean. So now you've taught them over and over and over how to clean, and they're not really getting it right. It makes no sense. And it's just a parent response of what you heard as a child when your nervous system starts to feel stress.

**Tyler** [00:25:07] You know what it is. It's like, how can I control this situation?

**Kristin** [00:25:11] There it is.

**Tyler** [00:25:12] How can I control? Because it feels out of control right now.

**Deena** [00:25:15] Yeah.

**Tyler** [00:25:16] What can I do to control it?

**Kristin** [00:25:18] Wow. Because mine is the run away or to freeze. So mine is like, f this like, I'm done. I don't know what to do now. Not like I'm done with motherhood or--

**Tyler** [00:25:30] Drive yourself to school.

**Kristin** [00:25:31] Thank God, by the way, take a pause.

**Tyler** [00:25:32] You're old enough to drive?

**Kristin** [00:25:33] No, but it's more just like I just kind of shut down right where it's like. That's my instinct. And luckily I've been doing a lot of work, so I tend not to necessarily do that. But the threats that threats come out on my end, it's like, well, I don't mean we're never going to go to the park again by any means what is happening? And it's truly just this like vomiting out of my mouth based on my what was said to me as a child.

**Tyler** [00:25:55] It'll be, yeah, like you said, it'll be things you don't even want to do. You're like, well, we're never going out to eat again.

**Kristin** [00:26:00] Of course I want to go to the park.

**Tyler** [00:26:01] I am not cooking every single meal at home. So we are--

**Kristin** [00:26:03] I'm punishing myself.

**Tyler** [00:26:04] --Definitely going back out to eat.

**Deena** [00:26:05] I mean, I'm not doing that. It's true. But when you're in this overstressed mode and the survival brain has kicked on, you're no longer responding, you're simply reacting. And that's what we want to get ahead of here.

**Kristin** [00:26:19] Okay. So step one identify what are the outside things that trigger me realistically? By the way, do this without parenting. Do this in general. Number two, what is your response when you hit the red zone, when you're in overstressed mode? Number three is acknowledging your overstressed style. It's like, Deena was saying, her overstressed style is aggression like this, just this physical urge, so listener, maybe that resonates. Maybe you were spanked as a child. Maybe you were pinched as a child. Maybe you got like the arm squeezing as a child. And you hate that when you're triggered as a parent. It's just this natural urge. Here's what we're going to do, when we notice in the moment that this is happening, this is a harsh reality, but it is a reality. I am feeling the urge to pinch. I am feeling the urge to yell so loud. Right now I am just feeling this rage in my body, which I can relate to. What you're going to do is you're going to notice that feeling. You are going to say hi to it. You are going to separate this feeling from you. And I know this is hard. You're going to have to pause before you do this, and you're going to say, I'm noticing an urge to spank. I'm starting to feel really hot. I'm noticing an urge to just yell, hi, feeling, this isn't me, I'm just overstressed. This is my overstressed response. This is an impulse. Hi feeling.

**Deena** [00:27:51] Exactly. And then here is a concrete tool that I want you to keep in your pocket to help you continue doing this. Think of this whole experience of monitoring your

triggers, your experience, just like Kristen said. Think of it like a thermometer. You want to be able to track your temperature rising before you're going into the total red and it's a 911 situation, which, by the way, is still going to happen. We are not aiming for perfection here. We're aiming for progress and growth. So think of your thermometer. It's got three levels to it okay. There's the yellow like things are heating up a little bit. I'm getting a little bit annoyed, irritated I'm feeling a little bit of stress. Now it jumps up to the orange. You're at the next level where that stress, that discomfort, those uncomfortable feelings and sensations in your body are just building. And then the level after that is the red zone, my friends. And that is where it's become too much to handle. It's put us in a stress response. So we want to be able to think of it as this thermometer that we can start to track our experience.

**Tyler** [00:28:58] I do like the thermometer idea because when you're in the yellow, you typically are still aware of what's going on. You're still like, oh, like, I don't like this. I don't like what's going on. The idea is to keep that awareness as you get to orange, as you get to red. So keeping that awareness as you escalate, even if you're escalating, it's going to happen. Making sure you're still aware because then you can kind of keep a handle on that speed with which you're you're rising up the gauge there.

**Deena** [00:29:24] 100%. Because what we're really trying to do is regulate our nervous systems. We're trying to turn off the sympathetic nervous system, which releases stress hormones into your body, and it makes it harder to access that upper part of your brain. Again, that helps with thinking and controlling your impulses and leaving you in a state of hypervigilance, fear, rage, all our stress stuff. And instead we want to intentionally kick on that parasympathetic nervous system and release neurotransmitters, which has a calming effect, and more of those feel good hormones so that you can get the thinking, reasoning, impulse control, problem solving parts of your brain back online.

**Kristin** [00:30:15] Okay, so first we are listing out all of our triggers. So now we know what all our triggers are. Second, we identified our overstressed style. We yell or we shut down, whatever your style is. Number three is we're pausing in that moment and we're naming our feeling, we're naming what's happening and separating it from ourselves. Number four is we are using our thermometer to gauge what is happening inside our bodies. And number five, we are combining all these things together to add in coping skills for the different levels of your thermometer.

**Deena** [00:30:52] Exactly. We want to have real tools on hand for those different levels, because honestly, at different levels, like Tyler was saying, you're going to need different tools, like taking a deep breath when you're in the red. You probably can't. You just straight up probably cannot. So let's set you up for success by finding the right coping skills as that thermometer's creeping up so that you can actively start to bring it back down.

**Kristin** [00:31:17] Girlfriend, can we just pause for a second? Because I feel like this is what what stops so many of us from actually using coping skills is that everything that we see out there is so unattainable and unrealistic, where it's like, are you about to yell at your kid? Just take a deep breath and you're like, well, I mean, I can't. I can't. You know? And so it's just, all right, let's just barrel through the day. It is such a game changer. What Deena is about to share, where you really have to match what type of coping skill you are using in each level.

**Deena** [00:31:47] Okay, let's break it down. You've gone from green where you're all good. Now. It's creeping into the yellow. You're getting irritable. You find the tension kind of rising

in your body. What coping skills will help you when you're in this mild stress state? Is it taking a deep breath? That's actually a time, yellow, is when you probably can take a deep breath and it's really, really effective for shifting your nervous system. Maybe it's smelling something intense, which is a little hack to shift how your brain's working and get you calm again. Get outside, look at the sky, touch some grass. I am not kidding. That's not like a silly TikTok joke. Maybe you go on a walk. It's that bilateral stimulation. Maybe this is the right time for shifting how you're thinking. Notice what are you actually saying to yourself in this moment? Is it I'm about to lose my shit? You can actually shift what you're saying to yourself. Like I can do hard things. Use some of those mantras. Therefore, I'm 34. This will pass. Whatever type of thinking support that will help you.

**Tyler** [00:32:47] if you're having a hard time, but you're inside of your window of tolerance. For me, this is the time to use like the cognitive stuff. Reframing, thinking okay, why am I feeling this way? Is that logical? What are they feeling as a child? Is it typical for a child? It probably is. Am I responding as a healthy adult? Maybe I'm not. That's the time for when you can rethink things. Once you get outside of that window of tolerance, don't even bother trying to think it's not going to happen until you get back inside your window of tolerance and you're in those sympathetic responses. That's when I love the physical sensation stuff. 54321. What is that? Five things you see. Four things you hear. Three things you smell, two things you feel, and one thing you taste. You're using all of your senses to get back in tune with your body. Come back into your body. Holding ice cubes. I love that one. Our daughter already does that one.

[00:33:40] I know, she figured that one on her own.

**Tyler** [00:33:42] Proud of her. Things that make you back in touch with your body again. You're dissociated, smelling eucalyptus peppermint. Those are good ones.

**Kristin** [00:33:51] I like to put my back against a wall. You got to figure out what works for you, by the way, because not everything--taking a deep breath doesn't work for everybody, but it does work for other people. Yeah. And I feel like there's so many different ways, like you're saying, of staying within your window of tolerance before you get to red because you're not going to do any of these things in red. Let's all just be really clear.

**Tyler** [00:34:10] And don't expect to make any breakthroughs when you're in red, either. If you're about to explode, now's not the time to go, I'm a bad parent. What do I do? What do I do to be a good parent again? It's like, don't even focus on that. Get back to parasympathetic.

**Deena** [00:34:24] Yeah. Tyler, you just killed it. You just literally explained, like, all the psychology stuff behind this.

**Tyler** [00:34:30] Nailed it. So high five.

**Deena** [00:34:31] Yeah. When you when you're in the yellow and orange. And then as you shift into that high orange into the red it's really about the body stuff. And Kristin, like you're saying, you have to not only find what works for you, find it for you, and tailor it to these different levels. When you were in the red, straight up stop if you can like tap out. I have a system at home right now with my husband where if he's home, we're both home. We literally if we are in the red, it's just like, I need a break. You go in, I'm tapping out. I need a break.

**Kristin** [00:35:05] The only time we use a time out in our home. This is such a big little feelings joke. The only time we use a timeout in our home is when the adults need a timeout. And that's our system too, is we will--I will hand a crying child to my husband and go, I need a timeout and there's no questions. And it's not a bad thing and nobody is ashamed. And it's a good thing. This is like awesome, good for you. You just notice that you need to go take a step away. Nice. Okay. What about when your partner is not there because you may not have a partner. Maybe your partner is away. What then?

**Deena** [00:35:35] 100%. Listen, if your kid is in a safe place, go to the bathroom, take a second. Go in the pantry for a moment in the pantry.

**Kristin** [00:35:44] I love a pantry moment.

**Deena** [00:35:44] And honestly, if your kid is there and you can't leave them alone because that's going to happen too sometimes, go put cold water on your face, like right away, it'll shift how you're feeling. It gives you that moment to pause.

**Kristin** [00:35:58] And I feel like the way that our childhood experience was, was our parents got into a red zone, and then there was this blanket sort of punishment of, go get in your room. I can't stand to look at you. I can't even look at your face. Think about what you've done. And as a kid, I remember it's like sometimes I did something, sometimes I didn't do something. Whatever it was, now I can see they were just triggered. They were in the red zone. And so when you need a moment and you're in the red zone, let us be clear. That is okay. I want you to take a moment. And there is such a difference in saying, go, get in your room. I can't stand to look at you versus saying, I'm feeling really hot in my body. I'm feeling really angry and I just need a moment. Mommy needs a moment. I'm going to step in the pantry now. You are safe, I love you, I will be back. And that is so, so, so different. And not only is it amazing for you to take a minute, it's amazing for your child to watch you and hear you narrate how you handle when you get into a red zone, so that when they are older, they know, okay, when I get into a red zone, I need to step away. I need to take a deep breath. I need to take a minute for myself.

**Deena** [00:37:10] And listen, we are human. We are going to go into the red, beyond the red and lose it at times. That's part of life. And what you do in those moments is repair, repair, repair. Own it. Apologize to your kid. Acknowledge, I probably made you feel scared and sad, didn't I? And commit with them to growing. Say you know, yelling isn't the best way to let feelings out. That's me. I'm going to work on that. We have a whole episode, by the way, on repair. It's so good. This 15 minute tool and hack can literally change your life, your kid's life, and generational patterns in your family.

**Kristin** [00:37:48] When we go back and we repair with our kids after we've made a mistake, it takes the shame off of them. What we don't want to do when we repair, by the way, is say something like, I'm sorry that I yelled at you, but God, you just wouldn't listen to me. I've done that about five times. There's no buts. There's no putting it back on them. Own your repair. Because we want our kids to get the shame off of them. And children are egocentric. They're going to think this is all my fault, I am a bad kid and my mommy doesn't love me. When we go back and we apologize, we are just retelling the story that is going in their head so that after the apology they are thinking, okay, mom had some big feelings. She's really sorry. She's going to work on it. I'm a good kid. We're all good. Like repair and move on and let that guilt kind of go.

**Tyler** [00:38:38] And besties, like, really absorb that, that apology. Think about if you were a child again and if something like that happened, there was an explosion moment. Think about how impactful it would have been to just hear, hey, sweetie, I'm sorry. That wasn't your fault. And that's all you need.

**Deena** [00:38:56] Just hearing you say that to me as a partner in this in this room is really nice.

**Kristin** [00:39:00] Yeah. I was like, oh, my God, thank you.

**Tyler** [00:39:02] Hey Kristin, I'm sorry.

**Kristin** [00:39:06] That was nice, It's like a warm hug right there.

**Tyler** [00:39:07] Remember that besties. Because, like, that's the hug you could have used as a kid. So give it to yours.

**Kristin** [00:39:12] Okay, and bestie, harsh reality here. I hate to say this, okay? Because we see it everywhere. Self-care. Self-care. Self-care. I don't really know if we need to call it self-care. I think it's more about noticing when your gas tank is starting to near empty, and instead of only kind of refilling that after, it's all like we have broken down on the side of a highway and everyone is screaming and everyone is crying, and it is just a disaster. Okay? Like triple A has to be called in to come and save you.

**Tyler** [00:39:45] You're on the Griswold family vacation.

**Kristin** [00:39:47] I don't even know what that means.

**Tyler** [00:39:48] Don't worry about it. Two people will get it and that's enough for me. Okay? That one's for me and Steve.

**Kristin** [00:39:54] Instead, we're really identifying when we are starting to feel run down. That means 911. I've got to put my oxygen mask on first. It doesn't matter what it is. Whatever fuels you up, whether that's a workout, a bubble bath, getting a babysitter, having grandma come over, there's a million different things you can do. But trying to avoid the I am rundown and on my last rope. Whatever you need to do to avoid that in the first place, we got to do it. We got to recognize that when our gas tank is on empty, of course we're going to yell. Of course we're going to be short with everyone, our partners, our kids. We are going to be so broken that we take it out on the people that we love the most. So we've got to keep our gas tanks halfway full. I'm not going for full. I'm going for halfway full.

**Deena** [00:40:46] 100%, I'm with you. Besties remember, the goal is not to be perfect and to never get triggered. The goal here is to start noticing that the thermometer is rising before you're in the red and practice tools for regulating your nervous system. You're already doing a great job. You've got these tools now, so I'm really, really excited for you. And take a second to really just acknowledge how amazing you are doing at this parenting thing. You're already crushing it. You've got this and now I've got to go to bed.

**Kristin** [00:41:19] Let's go to bed, besties.

**Deena** [00:41:20] Let's go restore. Let's go have a moment.

**Kristin** [00:41:23] Let's do it.

**Tyler** [00:41:23] Good night, besties.

**Kristin** [00:41:31] If you are struggling with toddler or preschooler tantrums, push back, discipline, picky eating, just all the confusing things. This podcast, we can only scratch the surface. If you need help, our course, Winning the Toddler Stage is here to help. It is aptly nicknamed the Toddler Manual because it truly has every single thing you could possibly struggle with under the sun between the ages of one and six within one course, we're not going to do a bunch of workshops. You have to buy the Sleep Guide and the Picky Eater Guide, and this guide and that guide, no, everything you could possibly need for ages one through six is all in this one course. We were never meant to do this parenting thing alone. You deserve to have help. We are here for you. You can find that course at [Big Little feelings.com](https://www.biglittlefeelings.com), and be sure to follow us on Instagram and Facebook. At Big Little Feelings, we give free tips every single day. They might change your life with one free tip.

**Deena** [00:42:35] 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 Tabaddoor and theme music composed by Liz Fohl, then 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.