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Kristin:

On today's episode of After Bedtime, we are unpacking the myth that parenting your child with respect, leads to snowflake or cupcake or weak children, and how research shows that parenting your child with respect and teaching them about feelings actually leads to healthier, stronger, more resilient, tough kids.

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, BigLittleFeelings, 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.

Deena:

Hello. Hi. Hey girl.

Kristin:

Hey.

Deena:

Oh hey.

Kristin:

And a big hey to the big little besties listening to this. Welcome to another episode of After Bedtime.

Deena:

Cheers.

Kristin:

Oh, I'm clapping.

Deena:

Oh, I'm glad to be here.

Kristin:

You can hear that in the background. I'm like, After Bedtime.

Deena:

You're clapping your-

Kristin:

... hell yeah.

Deena:

... knees, literally.

Kristin:

I'm so jazzed up to be here. I didn't think we were going to make it, honestly. I didn't think we were going to make it here today.

Deena:

We're here. Thank God we did it.

Kristin:

I feel great. How are you? Do we want to start with you, how are you feeling? What's going on in your world?

Deena:

I'm feeling good. I'm feeling excited. I switched out my decal coffee for a glass of Prosecco and I'm ready to rock.

Kristin:

Yeah, it's after bedtime.

Deena:

Yeah, let's do it.

Kristin:

Well, I'm rocking over here, you can't see it, listener, but I'm rocking a green juice because sickness, illness won, I feel like of the season has hit our house.

Deena:

It's making me question why I'm sitting here with you, but go on. Go on.

Kristin:

To be fair, it's questionable. I feel like we're on the other end. I feel like we're not contagious anymore, but who knows, right? It's all a gamble.

Deena:

You never know.

Kristin:

We're just kicking this season off. You know what I mean? And it's like this one, I'll take it. I'm #grateful, and that's how you're a parent is the level of sickness that you get and just how grateful you are when no one has to go to a hospital.

Deena:

That's actually really resonating because you were like, "Listen, I'm coughing, my throat's killing me." I was like, "Sorry, are you vomiting? Is your fever 102? No? Okay, I'll see you in a second."

Kristin:

Like trying to assess. It's like the daycare rule where it's that's how we have to-

Deena:

Did you have diarrhea this morning?

Kristin:

Exactly.

Deena:

No?

Kristin:

We have to wait 24 hours from the fever. And we did that. That's how we decide if we're going to podcast together or not. It's literally the daycare rule. We still have a story, that last year, oh God, when our kid had Norovirus, every single one of us had Norovirus, but when the first kid went down. And I'll never forget this because it was such a standout-

Deena:

Nope. I'll never forget this.

Kristin:

... moment where she threw up and I could hear it from the other room. And I hear my husband, he's like, "Oh God." But then I run in, I have towels, I have everything going on, and he's like, "Hey, hey." And he's like, about to give me a high five. He's like, "It's not on the carpet, it's on the tile, the throw up is on the tile." And that's how we gauge our lives for six months, is like, how bad is this really? You know what I mean?

Deena:

But I will never forget that specific one because then the next day I'm on a treadmill. I'm like a mile into sprinting, which is so me. Okay, okay.

Kristin:

Very on brand.

Deena:

Very on brand and you're like, "I hate to say this to you-

Kristin:

The dreaded text.

Deena:

... our daughter threw up last night and now Tyler's throwing up right now in the bathroom."

Kristin:

So bad.

Deena:

And I'm like, my stomach drops. I'm like, I'm next. I know it. I know it. And by 10:00 PM that night, I'm trying to go to sleep. I'm sprinting to the bathroom. Mike's like, "Are you okay?" And I was like, "Get away. Don't come near me. I'm contagious. I'm infected." It was so bad.

Kristin:

It was so bad. It was the worst one. I felt so-

Deena:

That was really bad.

Kristin:

... horrible. I don't know what's worse being the one on the receiving end or when you know are the one, and your kid is the one who infected other people.

Deena:

Because we forgot the important context, by the way. We were all together-

Kristin:

We were all together the day before, but there's no indication. It's not like everything else where it's like, oh, you have a runny nose.

Deena:

There's no clue.

Kristin:

You have a fever. You have no idea.

Deena:

It's not fair.

Kristin:

Norovirus is just like rapid fire.

Deena:

It's not fair.

Kristin:

You have no idea where it's happening. This is obviously a parenting podcast that we're talking about Norovirus for six minutes straight.

Deena:

Yeah. Ever since we hung out with Paris, now I have to stop saying, "Loves it."

Kristin:

Listener-

Deena:

Do I sound like her?

Kristin:

... what Deena's referring to is, yes, the Paris Hilton, the Paris Hilton that we hung out with. I don't even know how long ago that was. It's really ingrained in you.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

It really is ingrained.

Deena:

Yeah. Well, she was like my hero, low-key in high school.

Kristin:

She really was.

Deena:

Shout out Paris for getting me through some tough times.

Kristin:

She really was. And the amount of people who send us DMs to this day that will be like, "Do you guys know that Deena is Paris' twin?" I'm like, "Guys, if you only knew."

Deena:

Okay, but do I sound like her?

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Kristin:

Okay.

Deena:

Can I try?

Kristin:

Yes, please.

Deena:

That's hot. Does that sound like her? Loves it. Did I get it?

Kristin:

Technically, by the way, BTDub 2023, Paris Hilton, proud of her.

Deena:

Oh yeah.

Kristin:

Because I would say you have nailed the 2005 Paris Hilton that we all know and love. Neither is better or worse, by the way.

Deena:

That's right.

Kristin:

But 2023 Paris Hilton, her book, I'm just going to say it, I read it in a day and a half. Okay. It details all of the abuse, physical, emotional abuse that she went through at the, was it Provo?

Deena:

Mm-hmm.

Kristin:

And first of all, phenomenal. Second of all, her documentary, third of all her voice, her voice has shifted into becoming less of this defense mechanism, tiny baby voice as she calls it. And now she's using her "real voice". I'm so proud of her.

Deena:

Okay, but that woman, when I say that one, Paris-

Kristin:

Yes.

Deena:

... my idol.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Resilient. And I think that leads us into today, how to raise resilient kids because we can't control what life throws at us, but we can help our kids build the tools and the skills to handle life and whatever comes their way. Let's do it.

Kristin:

Okay. First, a little bit of background context of what we're talking about today. So we obviously live online. We live in a community of three million people online. They're all parents. We're all trying our best. And one thing that we see time and time again when we post about feelings in general or kindness or treating your child with respect or anything like that, we are bound to see an influx of comments that are like, "You are what's wrong with the next generation. You are the problem. You need to be tough on them. It's a tough world that you grow up in."

Deena:

Exactly.

Kristin:

Exactly. So this is a super polarizing debate, and I feel like the irony if you really think about it is that actually parents who, let's say are using this kind of mentality, tough love and toughen them up for a tough world, and then also parents who are maybe doing the more respectful, some people call it gentle. We don't identify as gentle parenting, but whatever you want to call it, whatever you want to label it, we don't like labels, hate the label gentle parenting. We'll get into that later. Whatever you want to label it, the interesting and ironic part is that both sides of this debate, they both want the same thing.

Deena:

They both want to raise tough, resilient, kind kids who can handle life.

Kristin:

They want strong kids.

Deena:

It is ironic. They're trying to get to the exact same place, but taking totally different paths.

Kristin:

Two totally different paths. So on this episode, we're going to do exactly that. We are going to teach you exactly how based on brain science to raise a strong, tough, mentally resilient kid that becomes a strong,

tough, capable, resilient adult, which is what we all want. But first, we're actually going to debunk this idea that harshness and tough love is what creates strong kids.

Deena:

What we know from modern science, from the work of people like Martin Tuschler is that when we use punishment, when we yell at our kids, we use threats. We use fear tactics to get them to listen to us and behave the way that we want them to. What we actually do is teach them to push down their feelings, and we end up ironically raising children who don't have emotional skills, and that leaves them prone to not knowing how to deal with feelings, handle feelings, manage tough situations, and ultimately leaves them vulnerable and weak, which is so ironic because that's not the goal. And we know that later in life, that increases their risk for anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and trouble in relationships.

Kristin:

Because let's break it all down, is like every human being has emotions. We all have emotions. And I get it, the generation before us, or at least my parents, they didn't know that yet. I mean, this-

Deena:

No one was talking about it.

Kristin:

... feels yucky, stop doing that. Yeah, I totally understand. It's no one's fault. Now we know a little bit better, which is you cannot escape your own emotions. You cannot, truly. Cannot never feel anger or never feel sadness. And so these kids are learning to shove their feelings down. And so later on in life, what we actually want them to do is be like, "Oh, I'm angry." And then what you take from that part then is be like, "Do I punch somebody in the face? Do I punch a hole in the wall? Do I drink a bunch of alcohol to make the disappear? Hello? My early 20s and teenagehood, do I do drugs? Do I do this?" No. Here's what I do do, healthy coping mechanisms. Maybe I go for a walk, maybe I stomp my feet.

Deena:

Exactly. You totally miss the opportunity to not only teach them, but wire their brains to understand how to monitor and manage tricky emotions.

Kristin:

And let's just pause for one second as a clarifying, this does not mean sometimes you slip up. Sometimes you are yelling. Sometimes something happens. No, we all do that. We all do that.

Deena:

That's part of being human.

Kristin:

Literally true.

Deena:

I'm a therapist. I've done it every day. Yeah.

Kristin:

What we're talking about is this is an entire approach day in, day out. Behaviorally how we're approaching this is fear-based.

Deena:

Right. This is the mindset that yes, punishment is the way that you raise a capable, resilient kid. And what we do know is that parents, the way you respond, the way you talk to your child, you are actually shaping their brain. You are shaping the skills that they are going to carry through them for life.

Kristin:

Yes. And not only that, you're actually becoming their inner voice, which truly might be my mantra almost every day when I get to tough moments and I'm like about to snap, and then 50% of the time I do snap. But the other 50% of the time, I really think this all the way through, where I don't know about you, but I was not raised in that way. And when I make a mistake or if I have a setback, instantaneous voice in my head is, "You piece of shit. Second place is last place. How would you do it?" My instinct is to run, it's to flee. I'll never be good enough. I might as well not even try. I'm done. What I'm saying in layman's terms is I have zero emotional resiliency, none. I see a hard moment and I want to flee, and then I just flood myself with shame because that was the way that my parents spoke to me.

And that's not how I speak to myself. So I want my kids' inner voice in the face of a mistake or a setback to be gentle with themselves. I want them to say to themselves, it's okay to make mistakes. I want them to keep trying and to not be flooded with shame and debilitated when they make a mistake. And the only way to do that, by the way, is for my voice to be saying that out loud to them over and over because my voice becomes their inner voice. I am directly responsible for my kids becoming resilient. I'm also directly responsible for them possibly ending up like me, unable to cope or come back from a mistake or a hard moment if that's what I create for their inner voice.

I think we're all really good in this generation, no matter what, if our kids slips up hitting a baseball or doing an ABCs, we're like, "It's okay to make a mistake." But I think where we all level up now and we're getting to, which is amazing, that applies to behavior too. And it never has before where it's like, "You are hitting, you're a monster. Get in your room, how could you?" And instead it's using the same lens of, "You made a mistake, it's okay to make a mistake. It's not okay to hit someone. Let's teach you how to do that better."

Deena:

That's right. It's using these hard moments as learning experiences, which is easier said than done. But first, let's dive into the quick and dirty of brain development, because I think this is going to empower every parent, every person listening to just understand what's going on so you know exactly what you can do every day to foster a resilient brain.

Kristin:

Right.

Deena:

You've got the cerebral cortex at the top of the brain, and that includes a very important part called your prefrontal cortex. And that part of your brain helps you think, it has to do with reasoning, making plans, problem solving. And right under there you have your limbic system, which is involved with emotions,

with navigating relationships and making sense of what you're experiencing. And right under there you have your brainstem, which is all about your body functions. It's like breathing, your heart rate. Now notice they're one after the next, they are all connected. And so we want to be able to respond to our kids, and we totally can, by the way, in a way that helps them build and connect and integrate all these areas. Now, when they're firstborn, the more developed parts are your brain stem.

Kristin:

The on one the bottom.

Deena:

You need them just to survive. Okay, these are involved in basic survival, and the part that they have not developed yet, that's still call it under construction, is that prefrontal cortex. That's all about thinking and reasoning and making plans. And that is why with little kids, with toddlers and preschoolers especially, you are going to see them get overwhelmed with emotions and they are crying and kicking and screaming on the floor and flailing around. It makes so much sense. And we have the ability to help them learn how to notice and manage those emotions. And it's going to take a lot of time because it is this interesting back and forth of interacting with them to build those parts of the brain that help with coping emotions and noticing that it's just not developed yet.

Kristin:

And sort of bad news, but maybe good news or just maybe something that not everybody knows. It doesn't fully develop until the age 25.

Deena:

25, 25.

Kristin:

So I feel like that's a big part of it is once our kids start to be able to speak or be able to say, "I want a hot dog", then at that point it's like, "Why are you being ridiculous? Why are you melting down? What do you mean? This is crazy? You should be able to do it."

Deena:

Don't get diddled. Don't get diddled.

Kristin:

This is a long game. This is a marathon, which is why we give ourselves a little bit of grace that you don't have to get it perfect every single day. This is really a long game that we're playing.

Deena:

That's right.

Kristin:

So to really simplify this, kids are not born with the ability to have "good behavior". Isn't that mind-blowing? Because when I was a kid, I know that I was expected to just sit still, be quiet, be good, follow

this, do it this way. And it's literally actually impossible. But what is possible is that if we work with them and where their brain development actually is, instead of fighting against it, we can actually teach those skills. And I think that's what has been missing for so long, is this idea that they should just be good. You are either a good kid or you are a bad kid. And instead, kids are born with an underdeveloped brain. And the part I feel like has been missing is that it's our job as parents to actually teach them better behavior, coping skills.

Deena:

And every time you do that, it's a still developing brain. And every time you do that, you practice naming the feeling and help them understand what they can do with that feeling. Because listen, pullback, they have not lived that much. Like real talk-

Kristin:

Just got here.

Deena:

... they've lived a lot.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

They're brand new.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

We can guide them through and help them understand when you are feeling angry, it's not okay to hit, but it is okay to take a deep breath. It's okay to tell them, "I don't like that." We have to teach them what they can do in these tricky situations. And every time we do, we are lighting up the different areas of their brain between the limbic system and prefrontal cortex so that they connect. When I have an emotion, here's what I can do and here's how I can behave. And we strengthen it. It's like going to the gym and lifting weights for your brain.

Kristin:

You're strengthening it every single time. And we also have to understand how do kids learn best? And how do adults learn best, by the way?

Deena:

Yes.

Kristin:

So we are teaching them the ABCs. We are teaching them how to hit a baseball. That's my favorite one. Or maybe we're teaching them how to swim. And let's say your kid takes their bat, they get out there a first time, second time, 50th time, 100th time, and they miss with a baseball. The last thing that we would do would be get in their face, be really loud and scary, maybe send them away, punish them. "How could you? How could you even do this? What is wrong with you?" So I think what's really important is shifting how we're approaching "bad behavior" and how we can look at it as truly teaching like a coach or a teacher at a school.

Deena:

I'm so glad you bring this up because fear is a really critical part of this. Now, punishments are tricky because punishments seem to work in the moment. You probably will if you are yelling at them, if you are threatening them, and that is your go-to method.

Kristin:

Or even if it's not that big, but it's just like, "Okay, no more iPad for the rest of the day. Okay, no dessert." It actually doesn't have to be any big fearful moment, but really anything rooted in something that's going to make their brain be like, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no, I don't want to go in my room. No, no, no. I do want my iPad." Anything that is sort of punishment based.

Deena:

Right, that elicits that fear, we may see them actually stop in the moment, stop that "bad behavior" and freeze. But it's not actually because that punishment technique is working. The fear has shifted them into a fight, flight or freeze response.

Kristin:

Which is why when they're, if they're hitting or something like that and you're like, "Hey, go do that, go to your room", whatever it may be, you might literally see them like freeze. It worked. They stopped hitting, great, awesome.

Deena:

The fear and what it does at a lower level is it takes that prefrontal cortex offline, that part that helps them with thinking, with managing their emotions even, it's offline.

Kristin:

And that's why it's so tempting, I think, to use these because it's like, okay, some of the time this actually works, and then some of the time you're taking your kid to go be in isolation, because what we've been taught, maybe our parents did that, maybe our neighbors do that, put them away for a minute, think about what you've done. And sometimes that works. We're doing the freeze. Sometimes you're seeing the fight where they're like, "No, no, no, no." Kicking, screaming. No matter what though, whether they're fighting it or whether it seems to have worked, their brain is actually again, offline, it's not working, it's not learning. They are not sitting there thinking about what they have done.

Deena:

That is the key part, because that limbic system which sits right next to the prefrontal cortex, they need to work together. So they need to be online together so that it can connect the emotion, the social

situation that's happening right now to also, how can I cope? What can I do? How do I problem solve it? Think my way through it.

Kristin:

Yeah. If you are listening to this, by the way, and you have done punishment based discipline, whether that is sort of taking your child and sitting in isolation because by the way, very common and all of our parents did it, if you are taking things away, I want you to know nothing is wrong, nothing is damaged. There just might be a better way to do it. And one that is backed in not only research, but also strengthening your relationship with your child. Let's go with what's easier. So if you're stuck in an endless discipline punishment rut, this makes sense. You are not alone if you are literally seeing your kid hit and then they freeze and then you punish them and they're like, "Oh, okay, we're all good." And then they come out and then they hit their sister again and you're like, "Oh my God, what is going on?"

It makes total sense. And what we're going to do now is we're going to talk about how you actually teach better behavior. How do we actually teach him not to come out and hit again or maybe not to hit in the first place? We're going to start actually on the highest level because it all comes down to this. It's what we were talking about earlier is fear and a fear-based approach. And if the whole reasoning behind anything is they're just afraid of you and they obey you, well, you can guarantee when you're not around, not going to work, it's not going to translate the second you walk out. So how do we build really long term?

Whether you're watching, whether you're not, we ourselves are going to model some of the behavior in the first place that we're looking for. We like to call it being the CEO of your home. So when you are leading your home, and this does not by the way, mean you're permissive, you're best friends, you let them do whatever they want. No, think about being a calm, confident leader, the best boss you ever had, the best coach you ever had. How do employees learn? How do kids learn? How do adults learn? It's through calm consistency.

Deena:

That's right. And what you're actually doing is creating this safe feeling environment. And a safe brain is a learning brain.

Kristin:

I love that. So let's start by thinking about the best boss that we've ever had. Listener, is it coming to mind? Who is the best boss? Or even your best kindergarten teacher, your best coach? Okay. The best boss that you've ever had was probably someone who was very supportive, someone who believed in you, somebody who was consistent that you could depend on. Things were not chaotic. And when you made a mistake, they were truly invested in teaching you how to try again. They weren't going to ride you. They weren't going to shame you. They weren't going to threaten you.

Deena:

They weren't going to make you feel like goibage.

Kristin:

Goibage, a hot steamy pile of garbage. They also made you feel like you were part of a collaborative team. And really at the foundation of it too, you could sit back, put your focus and energy on your work, feeling totally secure in your day-to-day environment, knowing they were running the ship smoothly and

they have it all under control. They were cool, calm, collected. Now, think about the worst boss that we've ever had. Okay? They're probably coming in. You have no idea when they're coming in, you have no idea when they're going. You fear it though the minute that they get in, you're sitting there, you're having your coffee, you're having a nice morning, and suddenly when that door opens a pit forms-

Deena:

Girl, I'm sweating

Kristin:

... in your stomach. And they walk in and you're like, "Okay, all right, here we go." And you're probably not actually performing better work, by the way, because you're just so nervous and you're just thinking about it all day long. They are probably riding your ass if you make a mistake. They're threatening your role at the company. They're threatening your salary.

Deena:

They're terrified to make a mistake.

Kristin:

They're terrified to make a mistake, God forbid, which is human, by the way. And more importantly, you're probably dreading coming into that office day in and day out. You can't wait and you fantasize most of your day about the time that you get to leave that place. That is what we want to avoid in our home. And I think many of us experienced that as childhood. Honestly, I did.

Deena:

Which is why it's such hard work to rewire your own brain now as a parent when you're trying to do it differently.

Kristin:

Absolutely. So when we are teaching, when we are disciplining, the true meaning of the word discipline is to teach.

Deena:

To teach.

Kristin:

To teach.

Deena:

Yeah. Think about the word disciple, right? That's where it comes from. We are teaching.

Kristin:

How do teachers in schools teach? Again, punishment has gone out the window. I know we used to do it, but why aren't we doing it anymore? It doesn't work.

Deena:

It does not work.

Kristin:

It doesn't work if you're learning the ABCs. So now let's bring in an example. You're swinging the baseball bat. We're back to the baseball bat. So we can really apply the baseball situation to anything at home. And I wish we had all day to literally walk through literal examples, one by one by one, but we don't. So really use this analogy for anything that we're teaching. So if you're teaching your kid how to swing a baseball bat, all right, we're first going to explain to them how you swing a baseball bat. What can you expect? What does it look like? What does it sound like? What does it feel like? What is your goal? Here's what we're doing. We're swinging this baseball bat. Same thing can go for, let's call it hitting, our hands are for playing with toys. Our hands are not for hitting.

Deena:

This is how you set them up for success. Give them that foundation.

Kristin:

Give them that foundation. Explain it all. Toddlers don't know a lot, like Deena's saying, they just got onto this or something that seems very obvious to us, may not be that obvious to them. Which brings me to my next point, which is consistency, right? Because you're probably thinking, well, I've told my toddler not to hit and they hit over and over and over and over. How many times do I have to say it?

Deena:

Spoiler alert, it's one million times.

Kristin:

A lot of times, just like on the baseball field, how many times do you think a baseball player has swung a bat? I don't know, like a million. I'm not a sports person. Part three of this, after we're going first, we're explaining, we're teaching them what to expect and what is going to come. Number two, consistency over and over and over again. Number three is uh oh, they missed. This is a learning moment. This is not a mistake. This is literally the best way we can teach them. So if you think about that with your child's behavior, instead of viewing it as something is wrong with them, this is a failure on my part. What is wrong with them? This is good. This is literally the only way we're going to be able to teach better behavior or teach them how to swing the baseball bat, is for them to miss.

Deena:

100% this is what a researcher, one of my faves, Carol Dweck, talks about a growth mindset that for a growth mindset to occur, we have to embrace that mistakes are a crucial part of learning.

Kristin:

And this again applies to behavior too.

Deena:

Oh yes.

Kristin:

Right? It's not just about the ABCs or making a mistake or your blocks fall down. Having a growth mindset when we're approaching our own behavior is so important because later on in life, when we fuck up, when we yell at somebody, when we yell at our part partner, when we're just in a shitty mood and we just don't react the best way we possibly can, we need to be able to have the skills to be like, "Okay, I messed up. Let me regroup. What was going on? What was I thinking? What was I feeling? How could I do that better next time?" That's our job as parents now to instill that into our children so that when they make a mistake and they get older, they don't just beat themselves up and become an asshole forever, like I was for 10 years. They can actually make a mistake, look at the mistake, and then grow from it.

Deena:

And it all starts with you talking about feelings, naming feelings, helping them understand what they were feeling when they hit, even after the fact, and understanding what they can do with that feeling next time.

Kristin:

And lastly is step four, which is maybe we need to take a break. Maybe we need to step away from the baseball field. Maybe we're feeling overwhelmed, we're feeling mad, we're feeling scared, whatever we may be feeling. And that's the same thing. If your toddler is hitting or screaming or just giving you the hardest time, we're looking at that as like maybe it's not because they're defiant or they're manipulating you, or they're just like a bad kid and they need to learn how to do better. Maybe they need a break. Maybe they need to step away with you, with their trusted caregiver, take a break and have a minute to calm down, to recenter.

Deena:

Well, here's what happens, is in those moments, that center of our brain, our limbic region is so active and we can't reach the top part of the prefrontal cortex, but with a pause, with a deep breath, with a trusted caregiver, we can actually help them settle their nervous system. And that pause, that moment can help them get back to that prefrontal cortex and cope with what's going on.

Kristin:

That is the best time that they can learn. So like you're saying, during the break is not the time to be teaching them any new behavior.

Deena:

First connect. Just connect with what they're feeling. Be that safe person.

Kristin:

Take a break, let the brain just go, let it go. Let the healthy release go. Be with them. And then, like with baseball, when we're all calm, we've had a break, we're feeling good. Are we ready to get back out there? Yes, we are. And we try again. You start all the way at the top and you just keep doing it. And honestly, if any of this just feels really complicated and it feels really hard in the moment, you can come back to this one centering notion. If you want to raise respectful kids, you have to treat your kid with respect. If you want to raise a kind kid, you have to be kind to your kid, and that means during their hard

moments too. If you want to raise compassionate kids, you want to be compassionate to your kids. If you want to raise harsh kids that are really harsh with others, you should be harsh with your kids.

If you want your kid to walk into a classroom and hit somebody in their classroom, you should hit your kid, because they will learn to hit other people. The way that we are treating our children and also others around us and also ourselves and their watching and feeling and picking up on all of it is how they are going to treat themselves and how they're going to treat others. So we don't have to be perfect. We will absolutely yell. We will absolutely make mistakes. Deena and I were just talking about it before we got on here, a time that we messed up literally last night.

Deena:

It's all of us.

Kristin:

It's all of us. But if we can, I don't know, 50% of the time, or at least our underlying reasoning is I respect the shit out of my kid. I love the shit out of my kid. But if our underlying foundation of what we believe and what we're aiming for is to treat our kids with respect so that they go out and respect other people, that's enough. That's enough.

Deena:

And as a child therapist, I can assure you that if you want to have a kid who is tough, who can handle life, who is kind, who is resilient, this is the way to go about it. Treating them kindly, treating them respectfully will give you that tough, resilient kid who can really thrive in life.

Kristin:

Yes.

Deena:

Okay. Let's shift gears a little bit and jump into some questions that you, big little besties have sent in yourselves for us. So question number one is from Jennifer. My son is terrified of going to the doctors because of how horribly it went last time.

Kristin:

Oh, so common.

Deena:

Yes.

Kristin:

Sorry. It's the worst.

Deena:

It is. Okay, so let's just jump right in. The key thing for a doctor's appointment is we want to prep, prep, prep. You cannot prep your child enough for a doctor's visit.

Kristin:

And you really can't prep them early enough either. I mean, truly at six months old, nine months old, 12 months old, it may seem crazy, but it really makes an impact. Now, why do we prep? Okay. I always use this example, because as an adult, imagine if you went into a doctor's office or a dentist's office, you had no idea why you're going, and then suddenly a dentist opens your mouth and starts this procedure and you're like, "I don't know how long it's going to be. Is it going to hurt? Is it not going to hurt? I have absolutely no idea." People don't do this to adults, and it makes sense, when we know what to expect. Okay, the procedure will take 25 minutes. First, we're going to put Novocaine on your gums, then we're going to give you a shot. It might feel like a little pinch, but it shouldn't hurt, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. We're not going to panic, right?

Deena:

Okay. And you just learned all about how a safe brain is a calm brain. And when we help them understand what they can expect, their brain feels calmer and safer and they melt down less.

Kristin:

Right. And it can be so tempting because doctor's visits maybe haven't gone that well. We're just going to surprise them. We're going to bamboozle them.

Deena:

Just [inaudible 00:35:07].

Kristin:

We really don't want to understand. We really don't want to deal with the meltdown beforehand, we're just going to slide right in. Let's not do that. And even one step further, I would argue that even if your child does meltdown or does cry, it's still better relationally and also even just for their experience to know what was coming. So maybe we prep them and they still cry, and that's okay. That may happen. It's absolutely okay. The shot does hurt a little bit. We can let them cry.

Deena:

Let them know.

Kristin:

And we don't need to minimize that. We don't need to invalidate it. We don't need to be like, "What? It's fine. It was nothing. It's no big deal." It hurts.

Deena:

And if they are upset, if they are crying, if they're scared, that's okay. Validate that and let them know that you're right there with them. You're their safe person.

Kristin:

Next question. Oh, I love this one.

Deena:

What is it?

Kristin:

Which Bravo lab would you want to have drinks with if it could be anyone? I'm not ready for this question.

Deena:

Oh, wow.

Kristin:

I need a spreadsheet. I need to beautiful mind this shit and just put some things on the wall and then put some red string in between them and the past.

Deena:

If you don't not know this, this is Kristen being a football fan, but she has a fantasy league basically for Bravo.

Kristin:

Is this what football is?

Deena:

Yes. The passion.

Kristin:

That's cute. Okay, I get that now. Yeah, this is my Super Bowl. How do you choose? It's too hard. It is it Dorinda? Is it Jackie? Jackie comes to my mind, curve ball. You don't even know who that is. The pressure I am feeling. Obviously I want both Kyle and Mauricio. I need to understand what's going on there. And also they're just very good-looking. I just wouldn't mind. And Mauricio, he seems like he's so fun. They even talk about it and admit it, and I would love personally, maybe Mauricio's the surprise answer right now.

Deena:

Yeah, that's a twist.

Kristin:

I'm really surprised at myself where I just want to see, you know what I want, here's where I got to. I would like to have a dinner that is set like the Housewives, this is very specific, in Kyle's backyard with all the housewives, and I would like Mauricio to be present. That's what I want.

Deena:

Okay. Yeah. Sorry. I'm just seeing it all play out. I'm seeing the fireplace next to us, the rows of the glasses and the plates, the drama that's going to unfold.

Kristin:

I want to witness something. I want to witness a table being thrown or a tablecloth, like a napkin being, not too much.

Deena:

Not too much.

Kristin:

I don't really want too much, just a little bit.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

Just a little bit.

Deena:

Don't ruin my dress, like a napkin, not the wine thrown at me.

Kristin:

Let's not waste the wine.

Deena:

I know I've been quiet over here, but I know who mine is. It's so obvious. Mine would be Andy.

Kristin:

Oh shit.

Deena:

Duh. Duh. The nicest dude alive.

Kristin:

Fucking. Okay. First of all, I don't classify Andy as a housewife, but I should, but I should.

Deena:

No, you should.

Kristin:

Because that is the obvious answer.

Deena:

Right.

Kristin:

You're right. They did say Bravo lab.

Deena:

Bravo lab.

Kristin:

It's Andy.

Deena:

It's within scope.

Kristin:

It's Andy. I want to go to Montauk with Andy Coop. Can we call him Andy? Can they both be Andy? Probably hates that, I have no idea. I want to go to whatever east coast beach that we're all going to, and I just want to have a couple of drinks during the daytime, not too late. You're right. That's a fantasy. Don't think that happened.

Deena:

That's the one.

Kristin:

Okay.

Deena:

And our last question for today. Best way to ditch the pacifier for a two year old who is truly addicted.

Kristin:

Oh.

Deena:

That's a good one.

Kristin:

You know what? I was so, so, so nervous for this. I also might've had a touch of postpartum anxiety, but I was-

Deena:

That part.

Kristin:

... terrified for this transition.

Deena:

I remember.

Kristin:

Also, nobody tells you when you have a kid or when you have the baby, that right around two, all at the same time you have to make 100 transitions. There is a big kid bed. There is the pacifier, there is potty training. Nobody prepares you.

Deena:

Oh, don't forget the two year old, there's a sleep regression that happens. They're coming-

Kristin:

Oh girl, I did forget.

Deena:

... out of their bed. They're awake during the night.

Kristin:

Nobody tell me.

Deena:

Block that part out. Block it out.

Kristin:

Not in a bad way. I just didn't know there were so many transitions and how you go about any of them, by the way.

Deena:

Yeah. Wonderful news, you can definitely take away the pacifier without traumatizing them. And this is our go-to strategy. It is called the Passi Fairy, and the general concept is the Passi Fairy is going to come after you, prep your child so they know what to expect. We say goodbye to the passies consciously. We give them coping skills ahead of time and in exchange for passies, the Passie Fairy leaves a big party and a present, and it's a fun time.

Kristin:

Yeah, you put all the passies in an envelope. I remember it was so sweet and so cute. And decorate the little envelope. Put little stickers on it. Have little confetti in it. All the passies go in there. They go outside or wherever it goes, wherever the package is. Then you replace it with a party.

Deena:

Exactly.

Kristin:

It's awesome.

Deena:

You can do it.

Kristin:

You can do it. It might not be as bad as you think it is.

Deena:

Okay, I have to go to bed. I've loved every second with you.

Kristin:

Girl, we have to go to bed.

Deena:

I have to go to sleep now.

Kristin:

It's so fun. And it's time for bed.

Deena:

But before we wrap, I am so damn proud of us, of every parent listening right now because we are doing a damn good job raising resilient kids, navigating some hard stuff.

Kristin:

We're trying our best. We're going to make mistakes, but at the end of the day, we love our kids, we're trying our best, and I'm just going to tell you, your best is good enough. You're doing amazing. Thank you for being here with us. Big little bestie. I cannot wait to do this again next week. I can't wait.

Deena:

I can't wait.

Kristin:

If you are struggling with toddler or preschooler tantrums, pushback, discipline, picky eating, just all the confusing things, this podcast, we can only scratch the surface. If you need help, you can find that course@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:

Thank you so much for being here with us. This has been an Odyssey Production, executive produced by Lauren LoGrasso, produced by Daniella Silva, edited by Bob Tabaddor, and theme music composed by Liz Full. Then Studio Lighting, designed by Shane Sackett and designed by Jackie Shearman. Special thanks to Odyssey Executive Vice President and head of podcast, Jenna Weiss-Berman, and thank you for being here with us. We can't wait till next week.