

Andrew Nance Interview

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Welcome to Just breathe parenting your LGBTQ T. Love podcast, transforming the conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child filled with awesome guests, practical strategies and moving stories host Heather Hester always makes you feel like you're having a cozy chat. Wherever you are on this journey. Right now, in this moment in time, you are not alone. And here is Heather for this week's amazing episode. Welcome to Just breathe. My guest today is Andrew Jordan Manse.



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Andrew is the founder of mindful art, San Francisco, whose mission is to provide literary and arts based mindfulness instruction to youth at underserved San Francisco schools. He has been an educator for over 25 years and is the author of four mindfulness books. This is an important and really useful topic that we haven't discussed yet on this show. So without further ado, here is Andrew. So Andrew, I'm so happy to have you here with us today. And this is a topic that I really haven't touched on other than talking about it more in an anecdotal sense, or saying this is a good thing for you to do. Right, but not going into a lot of detail. So I'm really excited for you to share your what you do with mindfulness and your experience with mindfulness. And really, why don't we start with just how did you get into this field? And why is this such an important work for you?



01:55

Right? Well, thank you for having me, first of all, and I started into mindfulness. around six years ago, I had been running a theater school in San Francisco called the new

Conservatory Theater center. And I had my degrees from New York University at their School of the Arts program. And I just loved the career that I had, I got to act all the time, I got to direct all the time I got to produce, I got to run the school I got to teach. But after my mom passed away, gosh, I think it's eight years ago now. So it's it's not six, it's like, it's like seven then that that I started getting into mindfulness. But my mom passed away. And I just just felt like, gosh, life is short. And I wanted a new chapter. And I didn't know what that was. So I really just, you know, I know it was really terrifying to say, I don't know, but I want to leave my job. So I I told our executive director that I was going to leave in six months. So anyway, so I left and I I eventually found a program called the greater good science center, which is an amazing,



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yeah. Have you heard of them? Yes, I have.



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They are so amazing. They're terrific. They have like great online content, and historic. They have these wonderful week long symposiums in Berkeley and you, you it's a sleepaway camp, basically, for teachers, and you go for hiking up in the Berkeley hills and do stuff outside and go to lectures and whatnot. And one of the things they did was they brought in mindful schools, which is where I eventually got most of my training. And that's a great online resource. They've been online for years. I highly recommend them. If you're interested in mindfulness training. It's not just for teachers. There's a mindfulness fundamentals course. So parents would be it would be such a gift to yourself, to have a mindfulness practice, especially if you're going through a challenging time with a child or teenager. It's just a real amazing gift to be able to check in with ourselves. So we don't get pulled down any rabbit holes or or emotional vortexes? teenagers are so good at doing. Right?



04:37

Yes, they are.



04:39

Yeah, so so yeah. So they started doing these mindful games with us. And I and I started watching these these games. And I said, Wait a minute. These are the games I did in

theater school back at, you know, NYU and before that, and so I realized that theater training and mindfulness training are extremely similar, they both. Yeah, it's really, it's kind of like this lightbulb moment for me too. They both invite the participants to be present, they both invite the participants to check in with their minds, hearts and their bodies. So they can fully connect with the people that they're with, especially like on stage. And Shakespeare said, All the world's a stage. Right. And, you know, you, when you start thinking about the future, like, oh, when I get home, I have to do laundry, you know, if you're on stage with someone, you can't be thinking about the future or, or the past, or the fact that there might be a reviewer in the audience or your parent is in the audience or whatever, you know, that's when things go off the rails. So and that's with mindfulness, too, you want to just connect, connect, connect to the mind, the heart and the body. Where I say they were I say, they have diverged, is, with theatre, we want to be as reactive as possible, right? Like, if you and I are on stage together, something exciting has to happen, right? You know, right? walks out, one of us, you know, throws something or pulls out a pistol or a, you know, a saber or whatever. And they know the audience goes wild, but but you know, home, you don't want any of those things to happen, right? You know, like, let's just sit down on the couch and talk about this. And that's a more mindful approach. So, so with mindfulness, we get to respond wisely, to a situation. And on stage, we get to react blindly, you know, these fears that way, of course, there's all sorts of rehearsals involved, but you don't want anything? Yes, they go to two off the off the rails, either. So yeah, so that's, that was this big, aha moment for me. And I wound up just falling in love with mindfulness training. And it just I really sort of embodied it pretty quickly. Of course, I'm not perfect. I, you know, I mindless human, right? I'm mindless many times a day. But I'm also mindful throughout the day to which is, which is a skill that, you know, all of us can develop, the more we practice, and that's why practicing is such an important point here.



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Right? Well, that's why it's called a mindful practice. Right? Yeah. Kind of like a meditation practice or a yoga practice. It's always practice. Yeah, yeah, I think I love



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they, they say that, you know, if you can have these little lightbulb moments throughout your day, you know, it'll just be more useful for everyone. And the point is to just keep noticing, oh, this is an opportunity to check in with my breath, and my body in my heart. You know, transitions are really important time to do that, you know, when you're walking in the door, you know, just breath, wiggle your toes, when you're, you know, brushing your

teeth, you know, there are all these little micro moments that we can remember to check in with ourselves throughout the day. And it's it's hard to do, but, but it's worth it. So, so I don't know if I quite finished that point. But But eventually, I started running a program, I was the founder of this program called mindful art, San Francisco. And it was just me at the beginning, teaching mindfulness to pre k all the way up to eighth grade. And I was going to schools all over San Francisco. And this volunteering, quite frankly, and and then people started hearing about it and wanted to be a part of it in some way. So I said, Why don't you be my teaching assistant for a while. And then if you want, you can wind up having your own classes. And that's basically what happened over the next couple of years. And now we have 40 volunteers in over 60 classrooms seeing 1000 hits a week.



09:25

Oh my god.



09:26

Oh, I know. It's really cool. Pre K, some middle school, but mostly pre K to fifth. And, and it's just a really great gift. We actually had to hire a program coordinator. So they place everyone and we're actually looking currently for a new one because the woman that we hired who is amazing and single handedly grew the program is finishing up her thesis and she just feels like she can't do both wells.



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I'm sure that that is a lot. That's a lot. Oh, my goodness, anyone out there



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is interested. It's a it's a San Francisco position. But it's it's an exciting program that's really growing, and I see it just continuing to grow and grow and grow and evolve as well.



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Absolutely, absolutely. I mean, it's a tool and a gift. Yeah, and learning it at such a young age, then it just becomes part of you, it's



10:36

habit. And I always say to myself, and to my friends, you know, we're all just a collection of habits. And some of them no longer work for us. And some of them do. And we just have to keep assessing, you know, how's this working? You know, even if we like, we run three times a week, you know, that's a great habit, but when you know, but when your knees bad, and no, and it's not a good idea anymore. We have to be able to check in with ourselves. And you know, it's time to take up swimming, or you know, or whatever. But a lot of us do what we do, and we don't check back with ourselves. And that's what I love about mindfulness is it gives us the permission to keep checking in and saying, Hmm, this used to really benefit me, and now it doesn't.



11:26

Right. And I think that is such a key word, the permission and, and taking the time to give ourselves that permission to really check in, I think, this is something that is very new to me as well, just in the past six or so years. And every time I realize, Oh, I have I have choices. That's right. And what is what's serving me well, and helping me serve others? Well, and what is not anymore, right? And I'm giving my permission, myself permission to let go of those things, right? And then be open to what else might be coming. And so it is, I find it so fascinating that for so long, I just kind of was and I think that this is true for most people, right? We just kind of go, and we don't stop to really check in and notice what's going on around me.



12:42

Right? That's right. And, and that, that that habitual response to be reactive, especially with our kids. It's just really easy to go there. And I think, I think if we can just listen more. And that's also I think a mindfulness practice is just listening. You know, it's a, they say, it's a noticing practice. Noticing is listening, right. And I think if we sort of talked less, with our teens and listen more and ask questions, I think that that dynamic would really shift really quickly. You know, I think I think we're so interested in fixing kids. And it's just, it just doesn't work does it? Because, you know, we all have had spouses or whatever, and you can't fix them, you know, as we thought we could in the beginning, we realized, you know, what, we just have to find some common ground, sight, find some understanding and some compassion and forgiveness and, and just, you know, be a little kinder to ourselves and to them. So, absolutely,



13:59

I mean, you hit the nail on the head across the board, whether it is with your your child or your spouse, it is such a knee jerk reaction when a crisis or a problem comes up that you just want to fix it. No, it's just want to pick, I want you to feel better, I want to fix it, right? and nine times out of 10 the other person doesn't want it fixed. They just want to be heard. And that is such a powerful thing for parents, especially to learn but when you learn that as a parent in relation to your child, that translates into all your relationships.



14:36

Yeah. What I what I tell teachers is that, you know, in order for a mindfulness practice to work in a classroom, the teacher really has to try to embody it. Because there's just it because otherwise you're just faking it. You know, so, if, if a teacher is reactive and You know what, not in a classroom, that's not mindfulness. So they really have to sort of put that oxygen mask on first, so that they can model the behavior because that's part of it too. Is that sure, you know, we've all been around those unflappable, teachers or people that just you just think, gosh, when I grow up, I want to be like that, you know, right. And, and I'm, I'm that way, a lot of the time, but you know, I have friends that I think, Wow, they're, that whatever they're doing is really working, because they just seem so cool, calm and collected all the time. And so I think kids really need to, to witness that as well. And I also think, like you mentioned on this a little bit, I really feel like, if we can get more comfortable with our own uncomfortability we're not for liberated we're because the body freaks out when it senses disease, or disharmony. uncomfortability. And we, there's this great expression, like, the body is sort of, like, the elephant, and the mind is the writer. And the body really can take over, you know, when you're feeling when we're feeling angry, or sad, you know, we we literally are angry, right? We are sad, right? And we're we just are consumed by it. And what mindfulness allows us to do is notice that anger, or sadness, or whatever the big emotion is, is is arising. But we don't have to become anger, we don't have to become sad, we can notice the sadness and be sort of the, the nurturing parent to the sadness, which is in our bodies. Another way to say it is the body is that that beautiful child that you love. And the mind, at its best is the nurturing parent. And so if we can notice when our bodies are freaking out, or having a big emotion, we can be skillful with what we do with that. And, and what happens is the child in, in our lives, whether it's in a classroom, or in our homes, has an uncomfortable emotion, a big emotion. And of course, we, because we're empathic towards those beings, we feel that and we feel uncomfortable, and we want to get rid of that uncomfortability. So we try to like you were saying, fix, fix, fix. And really, the goal and the, the invitation in mindfulness is to turn towards the uncomfortability. And say, okay, it's okay, we're going to be with this, we're just going to notice, we're just going to listen to what the body, either my body, or your

body has to say. And we're going to do this together. And I just love that, that, that, you know, we can treat ourselves. Like, like our best friends, you know, because, you know, often when we're when we're uncomfortable, we just were like, Oh, I'm just gonna go for a run, or I'm just gonna watch television or eat or drink or, you know, whatever. And the invitation again, is to turn towards it and go, Okay, wow, you are really feeling you're feeling something really uncomfortable. And, and,



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you know, and we, and I'm going to, I'm going to be with you during this discomfort. Right, right. Because I think to that point, what we do is we try to block it. Right, right. We try to stop it, or we shut it down, or instead of sitting through it. That's right. Yeah. And



19:07

I was gonna say, I also feel like, we've really done a disservice to ourselves by thinking that happy is the norm. Do you know what I mean? Like, yeah, like, imagine, imagine, you know, 200 300 500 years ago? Was everyone walking around happy all the time? No, they have, they had survival stuff that they were always dealing with probably 24 seven, you know, caught too cold to hot animals, tribes, you know, whatever. That is not the human condition, happiness. But what is the human condition is every single emotion that we feel and I think if we can learn to ride the waves, of, of the emotions, that come and go throughout the day, with some skill. That's what we're looking for, not to flatline our lives, that is not a mindful life, you know, to to, to just be with anything that arises whether it's inward or outward, like our kids. That is the goal. Not so like, Can everyone just be happy all the time, so I don't have to have a big emotion. That's not what we're looking for.



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Absolutely, absolutely. I think one of the, you know, most interesting and helpful things that Connor learned several years ago, and we have all in turn embraced is the whole idea of impermanence. And that this is really uncomfortable right now, or this is really awesome, right now



20:55

write



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it, it's not always going to be like that. And that's okay. That's right. And being okay with that. And I think, especially when things are really hard, knowing this is for now. Yeah. And I can sit through this. And then it'll be, I don't want to say, okay, but I don't like that word, but it will, it will move into something else, and I can I can do this, or he gets me, I can do this. And



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can I do just this moment, I write a mindful thought is, because I think what happens, you know, like, if we're feeling miserable, the body doesn't really have the cognizance to say, oh, but you know, tomorrow, you'll feel better. You know, it just says, I feel the body just whatever experiences that it feels miserable. And it's going to always feel miserable, right? So we have to wake up enough to go, you know, your, your, yes, you feel miserable right now, or there's a lot of discomfort in the body right now. But it's gonna be it's gonna be different in and an hour, right? Or, or a day or two days. And sometimes we have to sit with discomfort, like grief, you know, sometimes we have to sit with that discomfort for four months, you know, and, and yet, if we look back on the grieving process, you can see the the metamorphosis that happens throughout,



22:42

you know, absolutely, absolutely. And I think especially with something like grief, just noticing it and allowing it rise. That's huge. Because it is, it's hard, it's painful, it's there's nothing fun about it.



23:07

And that, and I and I, for myself, I feel like there was a certain I haven't lost anyone recently, my mom, I think, will know anyone deeply close to me. But there's a certain gentleness that I think we give ourselves or myself with grief. You know, it's not like a Why am I feeling this way? You know, it's like, we're 10 we're a little more tender with grief than any other big emotion, I think, in my guess,



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I think you're absolutely right. Yes.



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But But when you're scared, but you know, when you're frustrated, or sad, or whatever, you're like, oh, rather, why am I feeling this way? You know, I should just be better and I should just let this go. And, and I really don't like the term letting go. I really think just letting it be. is really, really an important, you know, semantic switch.



24:07

I like that. Yeah, letting it be.



24:10

Yeah. Because letting it go. It's like saying a part of you should walk away from from your yourself, you know, like, just go away. Just, I'm gonna let this emotion go away. You know, let, I'm gonna let it go. But that's like saying to a child, be gone. I don't want you here. You know, right. And that's just not that doesn't feel good to say, I'm just gonna let this emotion go. I feel like that's,



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that's like that.



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letting it be. And I think that's, you know, I don't know about you, but I tend to visualize things a lot. And that's a much easier visual, like, you're here, and I'm just okay with it. I've, you know, whatever it is. I've worked through it, I'm working through it, I'm sitting with it. Wherever you are with that. That's Thank you. Really, really? That's so helpful. Goodness, oh,



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good, because I feel like for me, there's a nine year old boy that just wants to be protected, and loved and cared for. And so I never want him to say, Get out of here. You know, it's just just be a mean thing to do. You know, I think all of us could say, Yeah, my, you know, we have an inner child. And, you know, sometimes, therefore, sometimes they're three, sometimes they're 10, you know, but we never want to say, hit the road. It's okay. We're

not.



25:50

Yeah, exactly, exactly. That is, you know what that is? It's very wise. I like that so much. Because I think, you know, we spend a lot of time trying to, you know, work through things and then let them go, right? When perhaps the reality is, those things will always be a part of us, it's just the way we interact with them, or view them. And,



26:21

yeah,



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that's a lot easier to do.



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That's right. What's that expression, what we resist persists. That's sort of what we're talking about here is, is just that feeling of just everything has to be okay, because it's part of us. And, you know, just something silly that that happened to me, within my mindfulness practice is the, my dog used to bark or does bark at the door, you might have heard him bark for a minute, every time the doorbell rang, and silly story, but, and I would just feel my blood pressure go and I would get hot, and my shoulders would get tall, you know, raise. And then one day, I was at someone's house, and they had the same doorbell as us. And the doorbell rang, but there was no dog in the house, because we're in house. But everything happened by faith, washed my, I mean, yell, or they gain approval. I didn't go that far. But what, and I just realized, wow, that's all me, you know, it's just, it's just like this Pavlovian response. So ever since then, I've just been able to notice the sensations of heat, and the tension in my fists, and whatever. And so when the doorbell rings, I just kind of do this mindful check in. And it's a whole other experience, I feel compassion for him, because he's just trying to protect the house, you know, he's not trying to, you know, annoying me or being me, you know, and it was just this really lovely, full circle moment where I was able to notice that the body was trying to hijack me because it felt unsafe. And by being that nurturing parent to the child, that is the body. I just had a whole different experience around reactivity, as opposed to responsiveness. So so it was it was a real lightbulb moment for me that's really percolated into many different parts of my life,

including my, my relationship with my husband, all sorts of things, you know. And also, I think, sort of rambling here, but also just, you know, emotions need to be let go, or let not let go of but need to be checked in on so so they don't wind up building up in our bodies throughout the day. I don't know if I'm, I'm sure you've had that experience where, you know, you, you say something that's snappier than you'd like and you realize, Oh, this isn't even about this. This is about the fact that I was in traffic for two hours. Or Sure. No, and isn't. You don't tend to our bodies enough. throughout the day. I, I often feel like we you know, we should, you know, basically, you know, give ourselves like neck massages and body, you know, shoulder like that throughout the day. Oh, and another thing that I I'm totally rambling. So I apologize.



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I love it. No, it's great.



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One thing I learned in theater school is that we as humans hold a lot of tension in our jaws. So I don't know about you, but if you've ever come home from work, and suddenly you're eating, you know, you know, even if it's just a salad or something or, or Doritos, or what Whatever, whatever it is, there's this. I think there's this desire for the uncomfortability and our jaws to go away after a long, tense day. So we want to eat like crunchy stuff at the end of the day. So. So I just noticed that I really want to just work my job at the end of the day. Really just check in. So I don't make habitual choices that aren't in my best interest. So



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Wow, that's actually a really good connection. Because as you're saying that I'm like, Oh, yeah, right. Yeah, right there.



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Exactly. Right there. You can. Yeah. When I was 18, and at NYU, just got to stretch our, you know, our jaws. At the end of the day, really just do body check ins breath work, all sorts of things. Work.



30:55

Yeah. You know, I love the breathwork. Hence, hence the name of my podcast.



31:02

Yeah,



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it's so I'm a firm believer in terror.



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You know, we really don't we, you know, we could do some Now, why don't we do that? Let's do that. So, first of all, a lot of people breathe like this, right? You ask them to take a deep breath, and they go. And it actually, if you if you kind of take that deep breath that and it's really kind of chokes you



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up, doesn't it? Like, right here, the top right, there's



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like this tension right there, right, it's, so let's just drop our shoulders. And if you want, you can put your hands on your belly button. Okay, and just breathe in. And breathe out. So no shock, I don't see your shoulders moving, that's perfect. Then you just want your belly to fill up like kind of like a water balloon would. And you can wiggle your toes now. Which is another great way to kind of connect with your body. Notice the difference, you suddenly felt the new for the first day, right? In the last half hour. Right. And then what you're going to do now is you're going to keep breathing into your belly. But I want you to lift your toes, just your toes with every breath in. So just lift them up and put him back down and lift them up.



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And put him back down.



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Go one last time. How do you feel? How do you feel after doing three? three deep breaths?



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Really good. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, really good.



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Yeah, it really is important to build those in, throughout our days. Like I said, you know, entering the house, getting in your car, walking down the street, as your, as your child or loved one is talking, just written, take those deep breaths. So you can be completely present with them, and hear what they have to say. And then also notice our own reactivity, right? Because sometimes I l'm with a kid or with my spouse, and they're starting to talk, and I'm like, and I cut them off, because I either want to fix or I want to interject my own opinion or my own story. And it's usually not that helpful to interrupt someone, right? No one, no one really likes to be interrupted.



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No, nobody likes to be interrupted. It is very funny because I, my husband's family, whom I adore every single one of them. I'm very, very lucky. But, you know, big Irish, loud family. And when I first met him, I was like, Oh, my goodness. Like, just because everybody's always talking. And you never ever get to finish a story ever. Like, it takes hours. And, and now I'm so used to it, you know, 2025 years later, but it l there are times where I just giggle and my kids eat, of course really noticed that as well. And, and, and we just laugh because, you know, there are five stories going where everybody's trying to finish their story.



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Oh my gosh, that's great.



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But yes, it is. It is very true. And because nobody wants to be interrupted, but



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especially kids. I think I just interrupted you. I apologize. No, no, I



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was taking a breath.



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especially kids, I think who are trying to find their voice. You know, it's just doesn't feel very good to feel like this person has it all figured out. And, you know, and I don't, you know, it's just, yeah.



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Yeah. And especially if you are you not necessarily, you know, a louder person or I really effervescent, you know, type a person, right, you're a little more reserved or a little more shy, then that makes a really hard because when do you ever step in? Right? Right, right. So it is,



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I'm sorry.



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Yeah. And I was gonna say on often, you know, when you're a teen, just verbalizing something helps you us figure out what it is we believe in, you know. And if we aren't given that opportunity, we don't know what we want or like, because someone's always trying to tell us what we want or like, and that's no fun.



36:15

It is no fun. at all, it is no fun. And I love that you said that. Because that as bad as our kids have gotten older. So my oldest is 20. And then my girls are 17 and 15. And then my youngest was a boys 13. And we have you know, especially over the past four or five years, the conversations have become livelier and more open and more and more shared. And,

and there are times I you know, giggle because there is so much talking. Yeah, but they are that's exactly what they're doing. And that's what you My husband and I talk about that like, you can almost see them trying to figure it out as they're talking right? They're just there's tok tok tok tok tok tok and, and, you know, we just sit there and let them go, because that is, that's how they figure it out. And it's kind of this lovely process to, to witness.



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You're absolutely right. And it's so cool. When you know, when you get a teenager to talk, you know, and they're just going, don't you just feel like, Ah, this is perfect.



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This It is, it is the coolest thing. It really is. And, and I laugh, because I think there's probably a decent third of it that I'm like, Oh, my gosh, I totally don't agree with that. Right? I'm not gonna say that. Right. Right. Or, or I'd love to give my opinion on that. Yes, right. And I there are times where, you know, we will kick each other under the table, because it's the Yeah. Right. So like, this is how they figure it out. It's so cool that Oh, my gosh, right.



38:13

These moments so vividly, you know, that I'm just always blown away with, you know, we had our niece live with us for about a year. And, you know, I remember we, we went to a park near our house, I'd say maybe five or six times, you know, maybe not even that much, but she remembers it as like, all the time. You know, and I just love in that suite. And I just think, you know, like, they'll kids will say, you know, we always used to, you know, play games every weekend, you know, and it's like, well, we played games, you know, maybe three times you know, but they remember it as these just juicy moments where they felt safe. And there was fellowship and connection and it's just, it's just really nice to kind of cultivate those those feelings of safety for kids, you know, no matter no matter what, what that looks like.



39:16

Right? Right. Exactly. And I think really kind of cluing into what it is that makes them feel safe, right because it's different for each one of them. And and that's a really it can be

stressful trying to get there. When you are realizing that you're missing the connection. But working on that and working through trying to figure it out and getting there is really cool and worth it. Very worth it.



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Absolutely, absolutely.



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So



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there's one thing I was thinking early or that I was like, uh, actually, two things. So a response to your dog's story because I love that so much. And I don't want you to feel like you're alone, because the same exact thing happens to me. And I have noticed it. So we have two dogs, and one is, you know, seven year old golden doodle. And then our our baby dog as we call her. She's a she just turned one. Because everybody needs a COVID puppy.



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Yeah. And you got that? He got



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that? Yes. Because you know, why not? We're all already shoved in a house together. Let's add a puppy to that was four kids with four kids. Yeah. So perfect. And she is a character. I mean, she is she's a mini Berta Doodle, and she's a character. And anyway, she so two of them, the doorbell rings, and I have two of them losing their minds. Well, we finally decided that it was time that she needed to go to, to boarding school. Okay, yeah. And so she's been away for two weeks now. And every time the doorbell rings, that happens to me, and I'm like, to all of us, especially my 17 year old, she's like,



41:27

Oh, my gosh.



41:29

And then I realize nobody's barking. I know, it's so nice. So it's literally the baby that gets the bigger dog going. I mean, our older dogs show like bark once or twice, and it's done. Right? It's



41:44

the baby who's like, I love what you said about that, too. Because realize, you know, I'm so using this, I'm so excited to tell my daughter too, because being able to really notice that,



42:00

you know, I yeah, totally, like you could totally just turn to each other and just say, Tell me what you're feeling. Okay, I feel heat. I feel, you know, and because what's happening is we're hijacked by our bodies in that moment. Yes. It's just like sending all this, like fire to our brains fix this really annoying situation, you know, that's really stressing me out are pissing me off or whatever. totally right. And so it'd be kind of fun to just turn to each other and just say, Tell me, tell me everybody sensation you're having right now? Yeah.



42:37

We're gonna have fun with this. And I think it's



42:39

right. Yeah. And it might you might cure you. I mean, that's what it'll be really cool is a bit curious. You have that reactivity. And then it'll sort of open up all these doors of, well, where else am I reactive? You know, when my pain or when my daughter says that thing? You know? Or when lightning or you know, whatever it is?



43:03

Yes, yeah. When I'm driving, right? Yes, yeah, I was, I used to be a very, very angry driver until I had kids. And I knew that they could understand what I was saying.



43:17

Right?



43:18

Yeah. And I then became very good. And now that they're all older, you know, especially the older two, I have them yelling,



43:28

the passengers. Right?



43:31

I'm like, oh, guys, like this



43:34

mess. It just does us damage. You know, they, it's just not a good thing. You know, for many years, I used to tell a story in my head about the other driver. But, but I would switch it and I would be it would be a positive story, right? Oh, that person just cut me off. Because they're on the way to the hospital to, you know, and their wife is, you know, nine and a half months pregnant or whatever, you know, and you just tell your, you just tell this story. But mindfulness is not about storytelling. It's about checking in. It's about noticing, like I said, so what I do when someone cuts me off, or whatever, is I just notice the sensations in the body like the doorbell and that also fix the fixes the trigger, you know, that hijacking. It just gets better and better. With every incident on the road. You just check in with the body, and then you take that breath and you they there's expression, you name it to chain it. So that was really yeah, you probably heard that. So if you just name whatever you're feeling, suddenly it's the you know, the sort of that primal part of us that wild part of us isn't so wild because it's no longer right. The show our consciousness is running, right? Yeah. Pretty powerful. I mean, I, I you know, every every year I'll look back on how my mind Well, I do this all the time. But I look back on my mindfulness practice and I see the evolution of it, I see how I'm able to handle different scenarios with so much more ease and grace and kindness and curiosity. My my kind of little mantra is, you know, today, may I be kind today, may I be focused? Today? May I be curious? Okay, I and the acronym is KFC. So I don't really I don't eat KFC, but, but I did like it. So I totally, but I just think it's, it's just, it's really true, like, be kind to myself, be kind to others, focus on myself

and focus on others and my surroundings. And be curious about everything. Right. Right. And, and that's, that seems like a way good way to live a life, you know?



46:15

I think so. Yeah, I like that very, very much. And I think that's a good, a good mantra to start every day with just as a little reminder. I am a big fan of mantras. And, and just affirmations. And I'm wondering, as, as someone who, you know, does this all the time? Because I feel like I've kind of tripped on a lot of this. But is that part of mindfulness of having a mindfulness practice? Is that something good to have? Or does it help? Kind of?



46:57

Yes, I think so. I mean, I, you know, nothing is required. Here, everything is an invitation. But I would say yes, because since mindfulness is about awakening, every part of us, the heart is one of those things. So we really want to open up our hearts, and, and have them be able to just experience I don't know, connect with what we're what we're experiencing. So. So yes, I think practicing kindness is a really good technique. And I, I think, actually, I was just in a class the other day. And I was the students. And the teacher was saying, he, whenever he goes up to the cashier, he'll just, or he tries to say, you know, may you be happy, may you be healthy, may you, you know, find ease. And he just so his heart opens up a little bit. So there might be an opportunity for connection. But also just that feeling of being near someone that you don't know, that there's a little bit more ease there than there would be if if you hadn't done those practices. So, right, he has a dog too. And he said that he does that with other dog walkers in his mind, he'll just say that. So there can be a little less tension around the interaction.



48:28

So sure, because that energy is definitely felt. Yes.



48:32

Yeah. Right. Right. That's people up, you know, as you approach them, and their dog, you know, like tightening the leash, or, you know, or whatever, or getting the dog treats out or whatever tricks you have. Right? Also just that, you know, may they be, may they be kind, may they be curious, may they be at ease, whatever the monitor is. And also, it's that check in, so you're probably taking a breath in that moment as well, which is helping to

oxygenate the mind. So it functions better in this potentially stressful situation.



49:10

Right? And I think that is a very, that's this is gonna sound really funny, but reminding yourself to breathe, because I don't know about you, but I, when I am in stressful situations, or if I'm really thinking, I hold my breath, and I'll catch myself holding my breath. And I don't know how long I've been holding my breath. And actually, my therapist started pointing this out to me, because when we'd be talking about really intense stuff, she's like, you've been holding your breath for like a minute and a half.



49:42

Yeah.



49:43

I'm like, oh, gosh, I am You're right. And so becoming very aware of, Okay, I'm feeling that I'm that I'm in that place where I start to tighten up. I don't breathe to breathe, and really focus on that breath, then it allows the flow.



50:09

Yeah, that's right. I know our smarts go up, I mean, all sorts of things. I mean, who hasn't been taking a test in school, and you're just frozen, right? You. And if you just were able to take a few deep breaths, you probably wake up enough to say, you know what, let's just try the first problem. And we'll go to them, we'll go to the second, you know, rather than, Oh, my gosh, I'm never going to know all of these questions, you know. Exactly, exactly. And that's that waking up part of it. And I think too, I you know, I imagine, you know, with a teenager, just, you know, just if, if you're silent, as a parent, just take deep breaths, so they can see you taking deep breaths, I'm sure, you know, you know, I'm not sure I believe in all of this, but you know, entered your energetic field, I think will change and imperceptible, in other words, probably not, ways that the child will pick up on on some level, you know,



51:17

I think so. I, I do believe in that. And I think that they are very, they're very aware, and lots

of different ways that we don't realize that they are aware, and they do pick up on, it's always interesting to me when, you know, a situation has occurred, and what they've picked up on are the subtleties of the situation, not so much. You know, what exactly happened? So I think that they are very, you know, they're just open and, and even if they don't know exactly what that is, they feel it. Right. And it's kind of fascinating, you



52:08

know, a little, little life hack is, your kids are, you know, like, talking to you like this, yes, try to switch, try to change your body language. So if they're like this, put your hands You know, like, on the counter and go, Well, tell me more honey, and you know, and really open up to them. And what you'll find is, they'll probably switch to your posture, or they at least won't feel like, like they're mirroring your attention to. So you right around with their tent. I mean, it's, it's, it's a little manipulative, but in a good way, right. It's really fascinating, like, if you if or if you go to lunch with someone, you'll find that both of you will be sitting like this, you know, because, because it's a good friend of yours. And you're just your mirror neurons are firing, and you're just really connecting, it's the coolest thing to watch. Like, you'll just kind of almost be dancing with each other at the table. If you're really, you know, into each other, like, you know, your best friend or, or whatever. It's, it's a fascinating technique to try. It is awesome. I was just on a zoom call with a bunch of colleagues and the three people that I work with the most. We were all sitting the same way on the zoom call. Always that only thing and everyone else wasn't. But I just felt like we were all like, you know, we felt like a little tribe or something it was fascinating. Is Yeah, so you can really, parents can really help their kids kind of relaxed, just with body language. You know, crossing your legs, not crossing your legs. You know, leaning in, not leaning in. I think leaning is probably a little too much for for a kid. Yeah. Leaning, leaning back. You know, don't don't you always find that driving your kids around, you get a lot more information because you're looking forward, right?



54:23

Yes, it is so true. I mean, that is my hands down my favorite time. And I've always been so sad when the next one gets their driver's license, right. But even now, like when Connor comes home, we have this coffee shop that we love. That's, you know, like 20 minutes away. And that is like the best time driving there and back, you know,



54:48

yeah, there's, I guess we're just not being able to pick up on body language. So we're just,

we're just relaxed. We're more relate or something. It's



54:57

fast. There's something there's definitely something with the car. When all of my kids love the car and, and one on one time in the car specifically. So it is kind of I don't know if it's that it is just the two of you in this enclosed space and and nobody else can hear. There's something very safe about it. Yeah. I don't know. There is something very magical though for sure.



55:24

Yeah. Yeah. And and then the vol volume is a little bit more contained, right. No one's tending to, like, be using their booming voices or correct now, it's interest her act like there's an echo issue with the windows and whatnot. So we chill here as we as we drive and you know,



55:45

exactly. That's interesting. Exactly. I know, isn't that funny? Such a, you know, what, whatever works for you, whatever, you know, you just have to find, find what works, right? Oh, my goodness, okay, we have covered some really, really awesome things. And I feel like we've covered a lot of, we've covered some great practical strategies, actually, which was one of my very specific questions, but I feel like we've kind of put some stuff, good stuff out there. But I'm just wondering if just for a couple of minutes, we could shift to my specific audience and talking about this, you know, most of everyone listening out there are parents allies, advocates of either an LGBTQ, you know, child, young adult. love someone in their life is LGBTQ. So I guess I'm wondering, you know, kind of two things. I'm wondering if you could share your story of coming out with us, as well as perhaps some, you know, this is kind of off the cuff, but like, very specific mindfulness techniques that both parents and kids can use.



57:11

Great. Sure. So I came out when I was 16, and probably 1983, or 219 82 or three, so long time ago. And I was pretty outspoken, I'm marched in the LGBT while probably is the gay Freedom Day Parade back then, in San Francisco, was one of the organizers of youth contingent, we make banners. And so I was really politically active really early on. You

know, growing up in San Francisco, there was a little bit more of an openness. I actually found coming out in high school, I went from an all boys school to a co Ed High School. And it just was much more easeful to be out in that environment. The kids were really welcoming. And I really didn't have a hard time of it. I got a boyfriend very early on, he was a little older than me. And I'm not, I don't recommend that. But it was fine. It was like a year and a half. And and then eventually, when I was 20, or Yes, 24, I met my now husband. And we met at a cafe in in San Francisco outdoor cafe called cafe floor. And we just met across the crowded room, and it was very, you know, sweet and flirtatious and, and I wrote my name down on a card and gave him my phone number and Adam called. Yeah, and then the rest is history. And then we were together. We've been together for 31 and a half years now. And like, you know, and as you know, relationships have their ups and their downs. But mostly, it's been great. And, you know, we're really, what's wonderful is we both are interested in growing emotionally. And, and that I think, really matters. Like it just it does this don't think I want to hang out with someone who's not interested in looking inward. It just, it just seems like a bad idea. For me.



59:41

Yes. Yes.



59:43

So and that's and that's hard, you know, like, you know, and I and I feel bad for you know, straight men in the United States is, they've really kind of been told that they don't need to look inward and looking inward is feminine and You know, it's, it's not it's not a great sort of mo to get out there into the world. Unfortunately,



1:00:07

it's not it's a tough stigma for sure. And I think very, you know, I would say that would be one of the few things that I'd be like, boy, you have that that's really nice for you, and nice and easy, right? You know, those things I would say. But, um, you know, just thinking about how my Connor is able to connect. And, you know, and then how hard you know, my husband works at it. And I mean, granted, there's, you know, he's older too. And so things are always harder when we start them older, which is why it's so lovely that you're teaching this. So Young. But that is a great, a great thought and a great observation, I think. Yeah.



1:01:04

Yeah. And, and so I would say, you know, I mentioned it a little bit before, but just that the idea that, that being gay, I think it's a gift, you know, it, it sort of opens up my lens about what it's like to be different and, and be a minority, and have empathy and, and be an ally for other minorities. To just, I really think it's, you know, it's certainly not a handicap in any way. You know, I love that that native, many Native American cultures believe in that to spirit quality. Yes, yes. Yes. And lesbians, and transgenders, transgender people, and I just love that. And I've always felt that, that I'm able to be able to sort of be sort of that half man, half woman, energy or, or tap into that half man, half woman energy and, you know, I, I love that they're, we're looking at, you know, just how do we want to be called, you know, do I want to be called him or he or they? And I, I'm okay with VA, because, you know, I do feel like we're, we're souls having a human existence anyway. And so, I'm okay with a if someone wanted to call me. They. Anyway, I don't know, I, as far more practical advice for parents, I just, I just say, breathe more. Listen, more. Connect, ask questions. You know, mindfulness is a noticing practice. So just notice where your kids are at? What do they need? You know, just like in mindfulness, what is my body need right now? What did they need right now? Right? And how can I be them there for them? It's just, I just find that ease whenever possible. And, you know, I was thinking about this too. Like, I think there's a lot of fear, you know, like, Are your parents gonna still love you, when you come out? What is my life gonna look like? So and I mean, shame by that shame of feeling like you've known something your whole life, and you haven't had the wherewithal or the, the, the verbal skills to voice it. But you know, in your heart that if you tell this secret that you will be ostracized, you know, you'll be kicked out of the tribe and, and, and that is they call it I think, insidious trauma, that insidious trauma of having this secret doesn't matter if it's gay, or or whatever it is, this secret that you think, will prevent you from being loved is really, really hard on the body and on the psyche. So, so I think, I think, you know, that coming out process and, you know, sometimes there's a lot of that a lot of anger that kids have when they're coming out. And I think it's just like, you know, what, I'm going to be angry because if you reject me, I'm going to be ready for it, you know, and, sure.



1:04:45

And I so I think that's, I think that's part of I think that's part of it, for at least for me, it was that I was just sort of, you know, a little guarded during the coming out process because I didn't know you know, What every day was going to bring, you know, you know, my, my mom was very emotional when I first came out, she eventually was amazing. And, you know, but you know, she needed She needs a, you know, like a month to kind of, sort of process it all, and maybe even grieve, like, we were talking about grieving the loss of one or her thoughts were about the future, and kind of compare them to what the reality was,

which, you know, turned out to be a really lovely reality of, you know, 31 year relationship, a lot of love and connection and, you know, with, with her and, and, you know, she was she and my husband, you know, loved each other so much. And, you know, we'd go to football games together and love to tease each other and giggle and yeah, they just, they just were besties. So, and he, you know, he thinks about her all the time, even after she's passed. You know, it's interesting. He loved his mom, too, but he often brings up my mom, just out of the blue, and I just think that's so sweet. So So anyway, yeah, it's just, you know, it's it's a challenging time, but it doesn't have to be, you know, an awful time. It's just, you know, there's just a lot of big feelings that come with coming out. And I think if we can just label them as big feelings or uncomfortable feelings. You know, it doesn't have to be all this negativity. We don't have to use the words negativity. Right? It's just, it's just uncomfortable right now. And it's gonna get better, you know, if we put in the work, and the kindness and the focus and the curiosity.



1:06:54

So, see, kindness, focus, curiosity. Yes, no. Yes. Yes. And yes. And I



1:07:05

there's my dog. Yes. Tension right here. Do



1:07:08

you feel Yes. Are you feeling



1:07:10

Yeah, right here? My hands. But



1:07:14

there's nothing I can do. No, no, that's what they do. I feel it right here. Am I?



1:07:19

Yeah, yeah,



1:07:20

that's right. Interesting.



1:07:22

Yeah, yes.



1:07:24

Good.



1:07:25

Yeah.



1:07:25

She saw the light on my door. She knows that I'm recording.



1:07:30

Oh, she's she's a show dog.



1:07:35

I wish you were that. observant. But sadly, um, as much as we do, you know, think that our dogs have very complex thoughts. I don't know how accurate it is. But yes, anyway. So just thinking that is, I think, having this mindful piece, this is why I was one of the reasons I was so excited to talk to you today because I think this is really valuable for wherever, wherever anyone is in their life, but specific to my audience, as a parent, being able to just check in, check in with yourself, check in with your child. Breathe. Yeah, pause, you know, the gift of the pause is huge, huge. Right. And, you know, I'm listening to you. I, you know, list off all of the different feelings, right. The, the grief for the parent. You know, I call that that the mourning the movie real?



1:08:45

Yeah,



1:08:46

it's, it's a necessary process. Yeah. It's okay. Yeah. Right. And then, you know, for Connor hit all of those, he the shame, the anger, and it just, and I know, lots of kids do this, right. But just I think being able to allow themselves that and not, you know, add shame on top of shame, right? Oh, I shouldn't be doing this. The whole shed thing, don't shut on yourself. Right? That's right. So,



1:09:18

and uncomfortability if we don't manage our uncomfortability and shame is part of that. It's going to come back and bite us in all sorts of ways as we go through life. You know. I think that's why, you know, in the LGBT community, you know, there's a lot of different abuses that, you know, we we do to ourselves over the years, because of that inability to deal with uncomfortability and the more parents can model you know, what, this is an uncomfortable time, and we're gonna get through this together. And we're going to bring the love each other through this. That's huge. And again, it's like mindfulness, it's, it's modeling that behavior that they're going to carry through their lifetimes. Right? So



1:10:19

I think that you know, more than what I like a lot about mindfulness, and everything you've shared with us today is that it is a way of moving through life. It's not, you know, here are 10 exercises that you should do twice a day, right? It is. And, you know, you check in and see what feels right with you every day. So part of me that's like, the biggest thing is just checking in with yourself, right? So little bit at a time. That's right, a little bit at a time. And,



1:10:58

yeah, and you mentioned that, you know, it's not about exercises, but you know, some people are more reactive than others, you don't seem like a very reactive person, you might have your moments but, but, but that's why I do recommend that people do come up with some sort of mindfulness practice that works for them, you know, and that could be, you know, try to take a half an hour walk every morning, you know, try to do yoga, try

to just have the TV off and just drink your coffee, staring out the window, or the, or your tea or whatever it is. It doesn't have to be all Buddha's, and you know, maths and everything else. But if you want to go down that route, I would encourage like an app called daily calm. And just, you know, there's like five minute meditations. And they're guided, there's 10 minute meditations. And one thing that a lot of new meditators are uninformed about is that mindfulness is not about emptying the mind, about quieting the mind, that does happen sometimes. But don't count on it. So just sit for five minutes. And if you have the busiest day ever, and you're just your to do list just keeps popping into your brain for five minutes, just keep noticing that that's happening. And that is the perfect mindful sit, it doesn't have to be, oh, I sat for five minutes, and my mind is completely empty. And now I'm going to go to that board meeting and give the presentation of my life, you know, it's, it's sitting for five minutes, noticing all the tension that's happening in your body because that board meeting is coming up, or whatever it is. That's, that's it, that's all you have to do is just notice, there's no right, there's no outcome. There's no, I'm trying to flatline my brain. That's just not possible in this busy day and age, you know, with four kids and two dogs and a husband and a house and a podcast and, you know, right. It's just not doable for everyone. 365 days a year.



1:13:30

No, it's definitely not. And that is something took me a long time to be okay with because when I first started meditating, and really being mindful, you know, I would sit and there would be days rose, just my I could not shut it off just the noise. And I'd be so mad because I'd be like, Oh, that was 15 minutes of wasted time. You know, I don't have 15 minutes to wait. And then I began to realize that, that's okay. That's where I am right now. And



1:14:06

yeah, you know, what's kind of fun is when your mind is really busy, you can actually kind of feel it like bumping around up there. I don't know if you've ever experienced we know, it's like, almost like it's like little boxing gloves hitting your top of your cranium or something. And that's really cool to watch or witness, you know, and you can almost feel like flashes of light or if you close your eyes, you can see yes, you know, it's kind of cool.



1:14:34

It totally is if you focus in on it. Okay, I'm so glad you said that. Yeah. Because that happens to me quite often that what is going on?



1:14:43

Right? I mean, it's like when you have a headache, right? You can actually feel your headache, throbbing, you know, right and to a lesser extent, when you have a busy mind, that activity is happening as well. So you can just get curious about all of that. Like, is it here is it back here? You know, is it on my temples? You know, where is that activity the most? Right? So



1:15:06

it's giving yourself the permission, right? Yeah. Yeah. That's huge. Right?



1:15:13

Yeah. And again, you know, and don't start with the brain. Or don't stop with the main just keep dropping through the whole body. where's where's uncomfortability? Showing up? Where is boredom showing them? where his frustrations showing up? And, and that five minutes will fly so fast. If you're that curious.



1:15:36

For sure, you may need more time. Yeah. It's five minutes already. Yeah, it's true. Yeah, the body check in the body scan ones are great, because it does kind of force you to be like, Oh, that feels really tense right there. I wonder why it feels tense right there. Right. And really, I mean, the other thing that I remember, you know, hearing when I first started out, like, breathe into it, breathe it. What does that breathe into it? Right? Well, now I, you totally can like you really, when you think about sending your breath. There.



1:16:12

It goes. Like it's right. You could feel your Toad right. Couldn't you feel like tingling down on your toes when you were doing that? Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And I think it's almost like the parents swooping into that area to just be like, how are you doing? Are you okay? You know, it's this really sweet thing that we can do to our bodies anytime we want. If we put our put our energies towards that.



1:16:39

I love that. That was awesome. Oh, my goodness. Oh, can you remind me one more time because I definitely want to put this in the show notes too. But I just want to remind everybody, we started out with talking about where you did your mindfulness training and I am drawing such a mental blank. mindful schools. mindful school. Okay, yeah. Okay.



1:17:01

And there. And



1:17:03

there's others too, of course.



1:17:05

Okay.



1:17:08

And you learned about them? Was it through



1:17:10

greater good science center?



1:17:13

Okay. That's what I was thinking. Okay.



1:17:15

Yeah. And then I actually get a monthly magazine called mindful, mindful magazine. And I really love it. Wonderful. You get it, too. Yeah. Isn't that nice? I just, it's such a great way to just check in and remind myself of different activities that I can do. And, of course, look at different programs around the world that I could participate in if I wanted to.



1:17:42

It is wonderful. You're absolutely right. And I think that is, it is something that I give myself permission to sit and read.



1:17:52

Yes, me too. It's a great thing to do before going to bed. I love it. Because it's hard for me to read a novel before going to bed. Because I I want to enjoy the novel. I don't want it to use it as a as a sleeping aid. Whereas the mindful magazine I use as a sleeping aid sometimes.



1:18:12

Yes, because it kind of lends itself to that. That's right. Whereas if I'm the same one, I don't read novels at night, because then I don't go to bed. Right? Because it's 2am. And I'm like, Chapter Yeah, right. So I it's one of those things where I'm like, I just don't do it anymore. Because Well, that's good now myself.



1:18:34

Yeah. I'm impressed that you stay awake. I fall asleep after a page or two.



1:18:42

Oh, my goodness, I wish I could I know my kids. That's one thing. They laugh at me. Or they laugh at me for many things. But that is one of them is that when I do read I love to read but literally the house could be burning down. The dogs could be eating each other. And I would have no idea. If I'm reading a good book. Then they all know not to talk to me they know not to come bother me. Well, that's present



1:19:10

moment awareness right there. You know, it's probably a little too focused. But But yeah,



1:19:18

that's probably an extreme example, maybe of what not to do.



1:19:22

But um, yes.



1:19:26

pretty valuable skill to be just be able to hearing everything out.



1:19:31

I think that's like a mom skill. Yeah, I was gonna say I thought the same thing. I think it is because



1:19:39

you know, I don't know if you're oh my gosh, what's the cartoon Family Guy with still a with a mom. Okay, I'm not a big watcher of it either. But my kids, my kids are and there's this one character and his big thing is he's eyes mom, Mommy, Mommy, mommy mom and the mom like never hear something right? Mom's Whatever. And so it's my ringtone for all my kids. Oh,



1:20:05

that's adorable.



1:20:06

Because it's so true. Like, they'll be like, you know, it's the whole like, hey, hey, hey, hey, you're fine. Like,



1:20:14

oh my gosh,



1:20:15

are you on fire? bleeding out? We need to go to the emergency like, what kind of what are

we talking here?



1:20:24

That texting has, I think? I don't know, as rumored that's all or a way to communicate to, but I do it. Yeah, we



1:20:34

all we all do. Yeah. Oh no. Right. Well, is there anything



1:20:38

else you would like to add today before he



1:20:43

just, you know,



1:20:46

just take it easy, you know, just really try to be in the moment, take those deep breaths, wiggle those toes. Listen more than we talk. But I just it's a hard You know, being a parent is hard. I don't have kids so. So I bow to all of you who have been raising these beautiful human beings for so many millennia. And, and just thank you for having me.



1:21:17

Well, it was a pleasure to have you this was such a fun interview. And I learned so much and I know that my my audience is just gonna love this as well. So, thank you. Thank you.



1:21:32

Thank you.



1:21:35

Thanks so much for joining Heather today. Remember to just breathe. Take a few minutes every day to calm and center yourself. Reach out anytime with ideas, questions or feedback. Please rate and review just breathe on your favorite platform. Subscribe to Heather's website [WWW dot chrysalis mama.com](http://WWW.dot.chrysalis.mama.com) to receive her monthly newsletter and stay informed. Join the private just breathe Facebook community to chat with other parents and allies and share with anyone who needs to know that they are not alone.