

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the text.

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 176: Letting Go of Mom Guilt, Ending
Tantrums & Mindful Discipline With Heather
Chauvin

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Katie: Hello and welcome to "The Healthy Moms Podcast." I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com. And have you ever been stressed out as a parent? Because maybe you're the mom who has it all together and stays calm all the time. But I am not. And that is precisely why I invited today's guest, Heather Chauvin, from the "Mom Is In Control Podcast." Heather has been named one of the next generation's thought leaders in parenting and women's leadership. And her mission is to crack women open to their deep potential and to help us understand and decode our children's behavior. She's a TEDx speaker, and as I mentioned, the creator of the "Mom Is In Control Podcast." And today, we are going to jump into all things motherhood, parenting and everything else that comes up. So, Heather, welcome and thanks for being here.

Heather: Katie, thank you so much. I love having these conversations.

Katie: I think they're so important. And I had the chance to watch your TED Talk, so I know a little bit of your story. But I think we absolutely have to start there because your story is pretty profound. So, to begin, give everyone an idea of where you are coming from and how this became your path.

Heather: Yes. So, it definitely didn't become a path because I dreamed it and I said, "This is exactly what I want to happen." That's not how we manifest, right? Sometimes, there's a journey to get there. So, the whole reason why what I do is around motherhood is because it was really what cracked me open. It didn't matter how much you have your shit together...can I say "shit" by the way?

Katie: Yeah, you can.

Heather: Okay, good. You can keep that in there. Like can I say it? Can I be me? Which is part of the problem, right? Can I be who I really am as a woman, as a mother, as a wife, as a creative being? So, my son...I have three boys, they're 13, 8 and 5. And when I became a mother 13 years ago, I remember looking at my son and thinking, "I need to change. Something needs to change. He's not going to become anything if I'm not willing to do the work. So I need to show up." And the best way I knew how to do that was just kind of...not from my head down, but just he was my drive. He was "why."

And so as I kept evolving and changing and kind of thinking more outside of the box, what I noticed was when he was around four or five years old, I became...well, I was a social worker at the time and my soul...as I always say, "If the soul aches, the breadcrumbs," my soul was screaming at me that I couldn't, like, be that person. I couldn't work in that job for 30 years. I just couldn't. I could see my soul was just slowly leaving my body, but yet, you know, this voice inside of me saying, "Heather, you went to school for this. This is what everybody does. You're checking the boxes off. This is exactly where you need to be. Stop trying to overcomplicate it. Everybody else is miserable. Everyone hates their lives. Everyone, you know, always complains they don't have enough money, or energy, or time, or whatever." But yet there is this part of me that kept saying, "No, no, no, no. There has to be more."

So, when my son was five and he started with anger and anxiety and I couldn't really understand what his behavior was telling me, I had this aha moment and I said, "Okay. Heather, you went to school. You have a degree in psychology, in children's mental health. And you work with families who are struggling and you do not know how to solve this problem. No strategy in a parenting book is gonna help you here." Went to the doctors, pediatricians, therapists, you could name it. "Oh, Heather. It's just a phase, it's just a phase." And that is when I found meditation for my son. And when I found meditation for my son because, you know, he needed to meditate, he needed to be quiet, he needed to be calm, what I was really projecting within myself was I did not feel in control of my own anger or anxiety. Therefore, that is how I didn't know how to help him.

So then fast-forward, when I talked about in my TEDx Talk "Dying To Be A Good Mother" was I was hustling. I was hustling, I was go, go, go, go, go, trying to build my business because I decided I'm gonna leave my corporate job, and, you know, be the mom and be the business owner, and the wife, and the friend, and everything else, and I don't have time for myself. And what happened was, and I'm not claiming to be a physician here or anything, was my body went into burnout. I was in a crisis phase because I neglected my own needs. I barely ate because who has time for that. I definitely didn't work out. I opened my eyes when, you know, my middle son would bounce on top of me because he would just open his eyes in the morning and was full of energy.

So I was angry. My nervous system was over-reactive, I was in stress response constantly and, you know, on the outside, everyone's like, "Oh my gosh, you're a super mom. You can do it all." Because, you know, when you have a nice shade of lipstick and a clean T-shirt, people think somehow that you have your shit together. And I went to the hospital because my husband finally made me go to the hospital because I even left the first time thinking, "Why? I don't deserve to be here. I'm not bleeding. I have no broken bones. I can handle this discomfort that I'm in," because I had mild back pain and abdominal blotting. And I said like that. I was, "Ah, I'm just here for mild back pain and abdominal blotting."

And on the spot, they did a CT and blood work. And within two hours, Katie, they told me I had cancer. And in that moment, I already knew. It was like my body was giving me confirmation of something that I was running

away from. And it cracked me open. So, I thought, "Okay, there's four stages of cancer. Okay, that's the stage 1, like we'll figure this out. I could still hustle and burn myself out." Like, "Heather, you have a rapid-growing stage 4 cancer. If you don't stop what you are doing right now and get treatment ASAP, you're not gonna make it through the weekend."

They didn't say it there. But when I went for my follow up because I, of course, was resistant to chemo and like, "No, no, no. I'll just drink my green juices and I'll solve this problem." Because that's what everyone tells you in the holistic world. They're like, "Yeah, that might work for some, but not this. This is rapid growing." This is ridiculous. And I didn't have time to do my research. I didn't have time to gather \$50,000...that was my dog. I didn't have time to gather \$50,000 and fly to Mexico to some crazy retreat. I didn't have time to do research. I had to surrender. And that is a whole another story.

Katie: Yeah. I think that word "surrender" is probably one of the toughest for a lot of women especially, I can only speak for myself, but being a perfectionist and type A or I should say a recovering perfectionist and still very type A. And I think something you highlighted, I wanna get into parenting, but first I think we should go deeper on women and self-care because for whatever reason, I think we are wired...because we care probably deeply about our families, obviously, we are wired to take care of everyone else. And taking care of ourselves is potentially the hardest thing I think we face as women because it's very difficult to make ourselves a priority, at least I know that it is for me. And it's so easy to prioritize our children and what they need and our husbands and what they need and our business and what it needs. So, like talk about that. Talk about your journey to self-care because that alone is a huge journey.

Heather: Yeah. I'm still trying to figure out a different word for self-care and self-love because it kind has become cliché in the personal development world and it doesn't even do it justice. So, I'm gonna give you an example. I always talk about high leverage tasks. And my journey, so it's been almost five years. My journey five years ago for self-care or self-whatever was self-respect, self-whatever, boundaries, all that fun stuff people talk about, was I needed to figure out how I wanted to feel. Danielle LaPorte talks about this all the time in "The Desire Map" and I know a lot of other people do as well.

So, I knew I didn't wanna die. And I didn't wanna be depleted and I was kind of just done with my own bullshit. And, you know, I felt like somebody plopped me in a different culture and they are like, "figure it out, Heather." So, I had to ask myself, "What do I want? How do I wanna feel?" Because I knew what I didn't want because I was experiencing it, I was living it. So, I said, "I wanna feel alive and energized." Those were just the two things that I picked up. Alive and energized.

So, I'm like, "Well, what does it mean to be alive? Like I don't actually...like when was the last time I actually felt alive?" And I had to think about it. And I couldn't even think of a time in my childhood when I felt alive, which is pretty sad. So you can tell that this trauma and this belief goes back into childhood. And because women, we are raised like this. Like I'm raising three boys and I watch people who are raising girls and I see how the expectation is culturally just different. The boys can be "lazy," and girls need to clean the house. They need to do this, they need to do that. So teaching my boys these domestic chores is not, you know, I'm trying to reinvent the wheel here or trying to go against the current.

So I'm like, "What does it mean to be alive? Like who around me looks alive?" And it was typically the people that were fun, adventure seekers, always on vacation, always like active. So I'm like, "Okay. Maybe paddleboarding? Okay, I'll try that. Maybe going for a hike?" And for a really, really long time, I couldn't feel

any of this stuff. I really couldn't. I'm like "I'm hiking or I'm paddleboarding," I'm like, "This is kind of stupid. When is this gonna be over?" Because I was so numb to joy, so numb to joy.

And then energized. Well, when the social expectation is to feel depleted all the time and that's a badge of honor as a mother, like the more exhausted you are, you know, the bigger the gold star. One, I had to really combat that limiting belief that I needed to be tired in order to be a good mom or a "successful parent." And I just started asking myself, "What is gonna energize me?" And slowly I started shifting my food to more energizing things rather than eating or drinking 20 cups of coffee that gave me gut rot and made me wanna puke by the end day and actually, you know, screwed up my hormones. I'm like, "Okay. Drink your green juice. Drink your, you know, vegetables." Like real food that came from the earth.

I mean, night and day...I'm night and day now from where I used to be. Something like working out, okay? Taking 20 minutes, 30 minutes for yourself to work out, that has always been a mindset shift. But realizing the more energy I have, the more I can give to my children, the more I can give to my work, the more I can contribute to my clients. And the more I do that and the more I generate and the more, you know, as that momentum grows, I can make a bigger difference in the world.

So, a lot of times, when people come to me, you know, working with me in my Mastery, in my Soul Elite program, what happens is, you know, I talked about this in the TEDx Talk, "The Sustainable Ambition Model." So we have... what is it? Survival mode and then we have the momentum phase and then we have thrival state and then there is this, you know, creative abundance that happens. And you can jump in and out of each state. But what happens is your soul might have, you know, the thrival or the creative abundant desires and dreams. So you're like, "I wanna make a big impact in the world," or "I wanna travel the world," or all of these things. But yet, you know, you're exhausted, and you don't even remember the last time you got a good night's sleep, or your bank account is drained, or, you know, you are so mean to yourself, or you let people walk all over you, or you're constantly yelling at your kids.

And so, we have to start where we are at. Your soul is always going to give you these little breadcrumbs. It's always gonna give you like what I call "downloads." It's gonna give you that vision. But we have to start where you're at, and sometimes you need to slow down to speed up. So, that's a really long explanation for your question.

Katie: I think that's so great. And it sounds like for you...like, obviously, cancer was a huge wake-up call as it is for, I'm sure, anybody who has that diagnosis. And my hope is that most of the people listening never have to experience that. But from your TED Talk and from what I've read on your site, that was a big wake-up call for you, but it also was a wake-up call, like you've touched on a little bit, with parenting and how you interacted with your children. So, I'd love for you to go deeper on that and explain...well, first of all, explain how you recovered because you're, obviously, here with us now. But also how that then transferred into other areas of your life.

Heather: So, I was talking to a friend the other day and she had a similar health experience to me, which was I'm starting to attract people who wanna know what I did, wanna know how I recovered. Because she never...I ended up doing chemo, she did not, and she didn't do radiation or anything like that. I'm all about integrative medicine. But I will tell you the stories and when I say "stories," what I mean is the beliefs, the mindset, the crap I used to tell myself in the head about Western medicine was very negative. I feel like there's two parties of like Western and Eastern. And we live in a Western culture but yet we have this, you know, we are grabbing

on to this holistic ideology, but we're not living an Eastern lifestyle. So, I had to really surrender to part of that.

I didn't know if I was gonna live or not, to be honest with you. And there is this paradox, this weird place, that you live in when you're crying in fetal position on the bathroom floor and your whole body is telling you you're going to die. And what I mean by that is you're paralyzed in fear. And fear is like, "Oh my gosh, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die." My gut did not think that. But I couldn't listen to my intuition. I couldn't allow that to guide me because fear was just all-consuming. And I didn't wanna cry in front of my children all the time. I did cry in front of them, I did let them see that I was vulnerable. But I tried to hold my own. I didn't wanna be like, "Oh my God, you guys need to take care of me." It was more like, "Look, mom is real. She has tears. She's scared. But I'll figure this out. And we're all screwed up and that's okay. We'll figure this out together." But what I kept doing was just asking myself, "What do I need today? What do I need today?" And just slowly and steadily figuring that out.

And I kept telling myself that, "If this is my last Christmas with my children, because I was diagnosed four days before Christmas, I need to live in the moment. And I'm gonna feel alive, and I'm gonna do whatever I possibly can because even though I don't have hope, well, I have to have hope and faith that the future is going to be here. But if it's not, that's okay."

So, I remember doing integrative medicine and getting vitamin C IV infusions in my arms three times a week. And it was like \$600 a week. And I remember we had...so this is you wanna talk about a big parenting moment, I remember we had to sell our pop-up trailer so that summer we were gonna go camping. So we like to camp as a family. And we sold our pop-up trailer for \$3,000 so that I could pay for some of my treatments. And I felt so guilty. I was like, "I am taking memories away from my children. This is awful. I can't believe I'm doing this to them. I'm a horrible human being." And then I stopped myself because that's a story that we tell ourselves from a place of guilt, right? "Oh, I feel guilty therefore I won't do it."

And I stopped myself and I said, "Heather, by taking this action and selling this trailer, what are you going to gain?" I'm like, "Well, I'm going to be able to re-invest in my health, which is therefore going to keep me here on this Earth, in this body, or it might not. But at least I'm willing to try and I'm willing to do that gamble. And I'll be able to create more memories with my children. And so I don't have to, you know, go camping to do that. We can pitch a tent in the backyard or we can go on another adventure." But that was an example of where I needed to prioritize myself in order to be able to give back to my family.

And this drastically shifted how I parented because before, my business was all circled around teaching children mindfulness and meditation. And then after this, I realized that a lot of the parents that were coming to me would say, "I don't have the time to implement these tools. Heather, I'm so overwhelmed. I don't know what I want out of life." And I realized the connection...I keep saying "I realized" a lot...the connection between how a mother feels, and I say "mother" because I only work with women, how a mother feels and how her house functions – the ecosystem, the energy, the culture of her home – and the direct correlation between her mental health and the child's mental health. Not saying...our children can still struggle, because mine do, they are three very different boys, but I can be present and now I can say, "What do you need," rather than me projecting all of my anger on to them and me saying, "Stop yelling" while I'm yelling at them. Or, you know, if they are all hyper, me going, "Sit down. Sit down" because I can't manage the stress and anxiety that their behavior is causing me.

So, there's big, big shifts that I've had with my parenting. But now it's more like how do I want my children to

remember me, rather than, you know, thinking from a microscale of, "how do I get my child to listen to me?" Or "You didn't get an A++ on your report card." I want my children to become good people. I don't just want them to be able to, you know, check off certain boxes.

Katie: Yeah. I think that's a big trap for a lot of us is that falling into that idea of thinking like our kids' behavior is a reflection on us and being so conscious of that and overly cautious of that. And I know a lot that...like you mentioned a little bit earlier, it all goes back to our own childhood and how we were raised. I'm curious for you, like how did your own childhood really manifest in your own belief system as an adult?

Heather: How much time do we have? So as a child...I definitely went into parenting overcompensating because the story I was telling myself is I never want my children to feel the way that I did as a child, which is part of why I do what I do today. I never want my children to know that, you know, they are alone. I want my children to know that they can come to me with anything even if I don't wanna hear it, that I will never be mad at them for being themselves, so whoever they turn out to be, that my expectations of them should not stop them from doing something that they wanna do. So I'm like, "Oh, you need to do this," or, "Well, this would be a great idea." If they wanna join the circus and that's what their soul is craving, go for it." I just want them to be happy.

But when I came into parenting, I was overcompensating. I was trying to be that "perfect mother." I was young and I felt like my parents just weren't emotionally there for me, so I wanted to be that for my kids. But then slowly, I just have to like unravel these stories. And I've also had to forgive my parents. For so many years, it was like, "Oh, must be nice, must be nice." Or, you know, "You were never there for me. Why won't you be there for me now?" But I really had to forgive and I had to trust of, you know, they are doing the best that they can, today, still. Even if they drive me nuts, they are doing the best that they can with what they have. And I think that's what we are all doing. We're all doing the best that we can.

At the core of it, we need to learn how to feel good enough because there are many mistakes that I make on a daily basis. And I'm sure there's still things that I will do that screw up my children. But this ideology of perfection, I don't know where it came from. I think it's constructed by the ego. And then we get wrapped up in parenting and then marketing gets involved and we're like, "Oh, we need to buy all of the latest and greatest for our children." And then cultural expectations that our children need to be busy. And then we wonder why our children are stressed out. And then we wonder why we can't cope. And so it's just this ever perpetuating thing.

But again, I always go back to "how do I wanna feel in my everyday life?" And then designing a life from that place and parenting from that place.

Katie: Yeah. That's such a great point.

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Katie: And so another thing you talk about on your site and also a little bit in your TED Talk that I know that other moms are gonna wanna hear about is more in-depth on that tantrum issue because it's like every kid has gone through that at some point, every mom has been there at some point. And I feel like you have a really unique perspective here. So can you kind of delve into the tantrum side of things as a parent and what you've learned about that through your experience?

Heather: Yes. So give me an example of a tantrum and then I can play it out for them.

Katie: Oh, got you. Okay, so maybe that three to four-year-old age range when they are either told to do something and they don't want to and so it's the "I don't want to, no," or they want something and you tell them no, and it's, "I want it" are the common ones that I see.

Heather: Okay, so everyone is always like, "Oh, the terrible twos, the threenager. Oh, now I have a teenager." It's like well, is there ever a perfect time to be a parent? There's always gonna be an additional phase that they are jumping into.

So, in my background in children's mental health and developmental...child development, what I was learning was a lot of psychology and what I was seeing was labeling, right? So we categorize people. "Oh, this child has this. This child has that. Or that child is just behavioral. Oh, they have this type of personality." And I'm like, "Great. Just because I'm Heather and female and this and that doesn't solve my problems." So, what I try to teach people is what are the tools and strategies that we can use to understand a child's behavior? So first, a child behavior is speaking to you. It is a language. If you put a piece of tape over your mouth and did not talk all day, you would be able to observe...understand what your child behavior is telling you just by observing them through their behavior.

So, when a child says, "No, no, no, no," you know, understand, that even at a small age, they're trying to get some sense of control. A lot of children with sensory processing and, you know, spectrums and all of these things, and human beings, we try to control outward things because we feel out of control internally. And it's okay to give people flexibility.

So, the first concept that I always introduce is red, green and yellow zones. So, right now, I'm in a green zone. I feel great. I'm excited. I enjoy having these conversations. A yellow zone will be kind of when I'm getting tired. I'm like, "Ooh, yeah. My energy is starting to drop." I know what my yellow zone is. Nine out of 10 people do

not know what their own yellow zone is or their child's yellow zone. So, my child's yellow zone, for example, three boys, all very different yellow zones. But if, you know, one child, we actually let him stay up longer than typical. That's his yellow zone. He's gonna enter his red zone very quickly and then it's just gonna be a slippery slope. So, you can see he's getting a little agitated. You know, there's...it's just observing those behaviors in your child and understanding "what is their yellow zone?"

And then the red zone is when the child is actually screaming at you. They are having a full-blown tantrum attack wherever it is, public, private. And this is the moment where you're gonna have a volcano erupting inside of you. This is where you need to trigger your own coping strategies. And if you don't have any, you need to get some ASAP because this is where the blame game starts. This is when you start shaming your child. This is when you start, you know, disciplining and taking everything away. "If you don't listen to me, if you don't stop right now, I'm putting you on timeout and I'm taking away your electronics for a year." Well, part of the problem is you need to take away your child's electronics because their brain is on overload.

So, what you need to do, especially if you're operating from a crisis or, survival mode, you're constantly gonna be in your own red zone. So what you need to do is identify and go, "Okay, in a red zone..." I mean, I can talk about this forever and I teach this in my "Teach Your Kids To Meditate Program." But in a child's red zone, you cannot solve any problems. So if your child is tantruming and you can tell, do not say, "Stop yelling at me. Go on time out." You need to just get them in a safe zone. So, if they are kicking and screaming, you're like okay, take away other people so that they are not kicking those people. Let the child calm down. And if you have to...and I actually say don't use force on a child because that's just gonna make it worse because then they are just gonna kick back, they might bite. But just walk away if you can. Depending on the child's age, walk away.

If you are in store, oh my goodness. You know, we've all seen it in the store where the parent is screaming and yelling at the child to stop and the child won't stop. Just physically, take the child's hand or pick up the child and leave the store. Yup, leave your groceries in the middle of the aisle. The child is in a red zone. Remember, a child is learning how to self-regulate, so we have to learn how to cope with these strategies and be embarrassed at the same time because that's exactly what's happening.

But what the aim is is once you get to understand your kids more, routine, boundaries, coping strategies, you're gonna end up living more in your yellow and your green zones. And that's where you have to do the daily practices. That's where you have to, you know, do your own eating, your own lifestyle shifts. And once you do that, you don't enter the red zone as much.

So, I talk a lot about...on the podcast, I'm starting now to talk about it a little bit of a yelling, no yelling summer, meaning just observing how often we are yelling at our kids. And I haven't been keeping track, but I do know...we went on a week-long vacation where we were stuck in a...and I say stuck, we weren't stuck. We were in an RV together. It was me, my husband and our three kids. And I did not yell once. I got upset once and I was getting a little frustrated, but I diffused it very quickly. And for me, that's like a game changer because I used to be a very angry, angry parent.

So, yeah. I mean there's a lot tied up into that question and I could literally talk about it forever. But I find that the red, green and yellow zones is a good indicator for people of "Where am I? You know, I don't even understand what zone I'm in. And I'm trying to solve all my life problems and my child's behavior in the red zone. And I never actually, you know, live in my green zone." And that's kind of the cultural epidemic with parenthood.

Katie: That's such a good point. And I feel like you are so right about when you get in that like stressed out of your own red zone and your own limit and that's when you are like, "Why did you do that?" Or you're yelling and you are making unreasonable consequences that you don't actually even want to carry out because they are as much a punishment for you as the child. But it's easy, I think, for parents to fall into that. I'm certainly not shaming or guiltning anyone for that. I've been there too. But I'm curious...so part of it I get, totally like working on ourselves and working through that and acknowledging things like probably our lives and our minds have never been changed by someone yelling at us and telling us we were doing it wrong. And the same is certainly true for children.

So then once you've removed from the red zone and you've worked on your own anger and your own temper, what are some of the ways that you can then apply a more positive and mindful parenting when they are more in the green and yellow?

Heather: Yes. So, I always say return back to the conversation when you are both in your green zone. Sometimes this takes a really long time with a stubborn child or a stubborn parent. This is not a one-and-done thing. This is a mindset shift. So example, depending on the child's abilities and, you know, emotional intelligence and cognitive...but even a small child will understand what you are talking about. So, let's just say, take my five-year-old, for example, and he has a tantrum in the grocery store. And I remove him, we go back home. I'm like, "Hey, honey. Grocery shopping did not happen today. We need to get it ordered or I gotta go back by myself. We're ordering a pizza for dinner. It's just not happening. Is that okay? Whatever."

Then, when my son is, you know, he's had his pizza, life is good, I see he's happy, he's playing again, I'm gonna say, "Hey, honey. What happened in the grocery store?" And he might go, "Oh, I was so angry." He might tell you what he was feeling. Or he might shut down and go, "I don't know. I don't know." But the point is that you return back to it because culturally, we teach our children that emotions are bad, that feelings are bad. And they are not. They are just feelings. And that is called emotional intelligence, right? Being able to control yourself emotionally. So, understand that this is something that children will learn as they grow. But I always say, "come back to it." And you will learn so much about your child through that process.

So, a lot of my clients will learn their child actually is a very sensitive child. And you don't necessarily need a diagnosis. So the first thing people do is they run to the doctor and they go, "What's wrong with my kid? What's wrong with my kid?" But they are not changing any of their approaches. They are not changing how they talk to their children. They are not changing their energy. They are not changing the lifestyle because there's so much chaos in the house. And they are not realizing that that chaos, that energy, even clutter in a child's bedroom, can affect their health and how they feel in that space. Like put yourself in the child's shoes, "Do you feel gross when you are in a state of clutter?" Of course, you do. So, they have anger, they have anxiety and they just don't know how to express it.

So going back and asking your child, "What's up? What are you doing?" You know, "What was that?" And just being very curious and conversational with them will open your eyes. And they might go, "I don't know." They might not know and most likely they won't know. But your child might be very sensitive. And realizing that that is part of who they are. So then, you have to kind of intervene and say, "How can I create more space for my child to just be?"

One thing I noticed today...we're on summer here, so all three boys are home. And my mom took them for a

night and she dropped them off today and my youngest is highly introverted and barely talks, like he's so quiet. And he loves Legos, and he loves playing by himself. And he also, you know, loves playing with other people, but he was with his brothers for 48 hours straight, they were in a hotel room. And he came home and the first thing he did is he went to his bedroom. So, the old me would have went into his room and said, "What's wrong? What's wrong? What's wrong? Come out. Come out. Come out." And he goes, "Nothing mom. I'm just playing." And I was like, "Okay." This child just created his own boundary and went in his room to get some quite space, had his like stuffed animal and he was just, you know, playing, imagining because he was over stimulated, and he needed space, and needed rest.

So, if we are not giving these things to ourselves...I always say, "We are our child's greatest teacher. We are their coach. We are their guide." And if we don't have the tool in our own toolbox, we're not gonna understand what's going on with our children. Every day, they are teaching me something else. And, you know, if I have a belief that staying in your room is bad because, you know, as a child, I've associated that with punishment, my son is isolating himself in his room. I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. What's wrong with him?" Because it did pop up for a second and then I caught it. And he was like, "I just needed to rest." And I'm like, "Okay. That's awesome. You can self-regulate."

So, we really need to ask our kids, "What's going on inside your body? And what's going on inside your mind?" And the more we get to know about them, the more we can help them cope.

Katie: Yeah, absolutely. And I think that that's an important point that applies across all aspects of our life and parenting especially. But I feel like, at least from my perspective, a lot of times, we kind of...we don't give kids enough credit and we don't understand how much they are capable of understanding and working through and being educated on. I know from my background in nutrition, that's one thing I tell parents a lot is we underestimate kids so often in how much they can understand about nutrition and how they can actually make great choices when we actually give them the building blocks to do that. And we instead assume that they just wanna eat chicken nuggets and pizza, and that's the only thing on kid's menus. And then we're timid as parents to offer them anything different because that's what their expectation is.

And I feel like the same is true in parenting. We sometimes underestimate how emotionally capable they can be or at least if we let them and give them the building blocks, how they can work through that. And I think that respectful and mindful parenting is how we would wanna be talked to if we were upset. And it's only logical that we should do the same for our children. But I know one of the follow-up questions that may be on some people's minds are like that's great. Okay, so don't talk to them, don't work through that stuff when everybody is upset. That's a great lesson. But how do you get them to do the things they do need to do when they are in the green zone and they have chores and they are resisting? That kind of stuff. What's your approach there?

Heather: Boundaries and expectation and rules and respect. So, following through with the boundary is key. So, example, it's summer time. If I want to get...to get, like I'm manipulating him. But if one of the rules in our home is to tidy your room, right? Some other people might say that's not an issue here.

I've co-created a lot with my children, meaning like, "Hey, bud. You're not just sitting around all day doing nothing. What are you going to do this summer? Let's come up with a plan." So we came up with a morning routine, right? Morning routine was you get out of bed. I'm not gonna push you out of bed, but you're definitely not sleeping until noon. You don't really have a lot of access to your phone or other electronics. But

if you do want some access, you have to get up, you have to take a shower, brush your teeth. You have to eat because he won't eat. And then you have to do a chore and then you can have access to your phone. The reason why I use the phone for the access, it's because that's the only currency that he's motivated by. He's not motivated by much else and most teens are only motivated by screen time currency. So, that's what we utilize.

For smaller children, it's more of holding that boundary and being in that state and owning the discomfort that the child is experiencing. So, holding space for that child while they are dealing with their own resistance.

So, Katie, tell me one thing that you've done that you've resisted, but you had to get it done.

Katie: Oh, gosh. Let's see. Every time I have to go...like the laundry gets backed up and there's like nine loads and I don't wanna do it.

Heather: Yeah. But you have to get it done, right? And you have this like physical response, this mental response and like you have probably a little tantrum going on in your brain, right?

Katie: Oh, totally. I think yeah. Total mom tantrum and then you're gonna catch up and it's gonna be done for 12 seconds anyway.

Heather: Yes. But you realize what this resistance looks like in your body. So, a lot of tantrums that our children have are actually just resistance. And in order to push through that, we have to get ourselves really uncomfortable.

So, if I say to my eight-year-old, "Okay. You know, what do you want your chore to be?" And he's like, "Feeding the dogs." Great. Awesome. Okay. It comes time to feed the dogs and then he's doing like his Oscar-winning cry, right? Like, "Why me? I don't wanna do it." And it's just hilarious. He can turn it on and off just like that. And I'm becoming non-reactive. So, I'm sitting there, we've practiced it. I'm like, "Oh, here it comes." Now I just expect it that he'll have his little show. Sometimes he doesn't anymore, though, and I just ignore it. And I go, "Cool. Awesome. It's time to feed the dogs. Don't wanna feed the dogs? We don't move on to the next step. You don't get computer time. You don't get whatever. You know, we're not gonna be able to go swimming." So, it's like you can resist it all day. You know, you can sleep in all day if you want, but you're never gonna get that phone. You didn't do the chore today, so no. You're not gonna be able to text your friends.

So it's like allowing your child to take responsibility for some of their actions and really holding that boundary and helping them co-create what it is that they wanna do. So instead of being so controlling and like, "Do this, do this, do this, do this." Go, "Well, what would you like to do? How can we work this out together?" And, of course, it's age appropriate.

Katie: I love that word "co-create." And in our family, we've done a little bit similar of an approach and we have a family manifesto that we came up with together that kind of just talks about the things that we all believe and love in our family and how we approach conflict and how we work together. And part of that is that we all share the responsibility of living in the household because it's not that like I am the like innkeeper for these seven other people who live in my house. They all live here too, we're all contributing. And so, like you said, there's expectations that come with that and chores that are part of that. And I don't get paid or

bribed or in any way, you know, taught to do those chores. I have to just cook because everybody needs to eat. And it is what it is. And that's part of being the family.

And I feel like, with my kids, one thing that's been really helpful in that is just respecting their independence, for one. We have a...part of our manifesto is that we don't things for our kids that they are capable of doing themselves just because we respect them as autonomous children and that they can do it. And then the other part of that is that they are required to contribute. And we let natural consequences kind of come in without us yelling or screaming, but natural consequences. So, for instance, everybody...my kids from five years up, so not the baby, but the rest of them, can do their own laundry. So I don't do their laundry. And if they run out of clothes, it's a perfect natural consequence because they have nothing to wear.

Things like that. I don't have to yell. When they are out of clothes, it's like, "Well, why are you out of cloths? Did you do your laundry?" And then that's a lesson that's easier than me teaching or yelling or, you know, nagging or bribing them to do it. They learn themselves. And that's a perfect example for adulthood. Because what happens if I don't do my laundry? I don't have cloths. So, that's how we kind of worked it in our family. It seems like you guys are doing a very similar thing as far as like, and not that I'm perfect at it, but trying to keep your cool, trying to work with them and let them understand we're part of this amazing thing that's family together. But part of that is there is expectations. And when you don't do that, the family unit suffers. And here's why.

So another one would be, if they don't do their dishes after a meal and put them in the dishwasher or wash them, then I can't cook the next meal because there are no dishes, things like that. And those are the lessons I feel like that are so applicable to adulthood because adults, we face that every day, the consequences naturally of our actions, if we don't do what we're supposed to do. So I love that you brought that up as well.

Heather: Yeah. And I think it's just little, subtle things like that where people are forced...I mean, if we've gotten a longer conversation about the epidemic of anxiety and depression among teens and college people, it's because they don't have the right coping skills. And I hear this all the time from colleagues who work with children entering college. Like the parental stress that's on them to get these grades, but yet they don't even know how to wipe their own ass or do their own laundry. And then they go out, you know, to university or they don't know how to cook for themselves and that's not healthy, right? Like you don't have any fuel in your system. No wonder why you're overwhelmed and burned out. So, too often, we think we need to put all of this on our plate as parents, but what we don't realize is we're actually doing our children a huge disservice.

Katie: I'm so glad you brought that up. And I've had other podcast guests who said the same thing, that like we're requiring so much more of our kids academically or in these areas where people see that, externally their behavior, but we're not requiring the things that previous generations just had to do that was never even a big deal. You just helped around the house. You just did these things. And we are not requiring that as much. And the other part of that that several experts have mentioned is we are also not letting them, and it sounds like you are, but we are not letting them be kids and have this normal childhood experiences that are not in front of a screen, that involve climbing trees and building forts and playing outside and taking calculated risks, so we learn what our boundaries are before we're adults. And then we're in college and we have no self-regulation and we have to then try to figure that out in a very public adult way with people watching. So, I think that's such an important point. I'm so glad you brought that up.

Heather: Yeah. And you have to be really rock solid in your core. And what I mean by that is I'm always scared, I'm always, you know, worried or afraid or I have guilt that comes up and fear. I have all of these human emotions just like everybody else when it comes to parenting. But the thing is I just keep saying, "This is good enough. This is good enough." Right? And we don't need to be like everybody else. We need to ask ourselves, "What works for us? What works for our family?" And, you know, every home is an ecosystem. Every home is a culture.

Katie: Absolutely. I think mom guilt and the parenting shame, I think, they are rampant right now because we, in a social media world, we see everybody else's best face and we project that on ourselves. And I think, at least for me, the antidote to that has been reminding myself that my kids are autonomous, they have free will. And while I'm here to guide them and be a big part of their lives right now. I can't control them, for one, and I shouldn't be trying. And not every single thing they do is a direct reflection on me. Just like I did as a kid, they are going to make mistakes and they are going to have bad moods and they are going to work through these things. And that doesn't mean that I'm a bad parent.

Of course, there's always ways I can work to support them better, but that isn't something I need to internalize. And I think that's a big step for a lot for people. And it's hard. And like I said, I'm not perfect at it, but just realizing that they are autonomous and then their own person, it helps kind of alleviate some of that mom guilt.

Heather: Oh, for sure. And then you get to this place where you feel like, "Wow, parenting feels easy." And, yes, there's definitely challenge moments. But I think a lot of us are conditioned that life needs to be hard and we're not allowed to feel good because of what previous generations taught us. And so then you get to this place of "this is easy," and then you try to overcomplicate it. So, it's coming back to, "how do you wanna feel?" Allow it to feel easy and it's okay. You don't need to put more on your plate. But when we're in this go, go, go, go, go, go mindset, then we start to create that perception and reality for our children. And then it perpetuates this cycle.

Katie: Absolutely. And another thing that we say a lot in our family because I feel like it's something that I know intuitively, my parents always loved me. I never doubted that. But then I didn't hear it verbally in these many words and I make sure to say it to my kids is that "I love you so unconditionally. There's literally nothing in this whole entire world that you could ever do that would make me love you less. That does not mean that I approve of every decision you make or that you get a free pass by any means. And that doesn't mean you always have my approval, but you can never, never, never do anything that will diminish my love for you even a tiny bit." Because I feel like that gives them the balance of freedom and responsibility to know like "I am seen, I am loved no matter what. But also I still have responsibilities and that means that like I am required to pitch in and be part of this and be a good person. But I always have the love at the end."

Heather: Yes. Yeah. For sure.

Katie: So, as we...we've already got almost to the end of our time because this has been such a fun conversation. But one thing I'd love to ask is what are a few things that you feel like about your area of expertise that people maybe don't really understand completely?

Heather: A lot of it they don't understand. The difference between a coach and therapy, I would have to say, jumping from a therapy world to coaching. And I would say this in general and, of course, every practitioner is

different. There's a difference between talking about a problem, which we all need to do, and taking action to solve the problem. And coaches in general will typically have a plan, or a strategy, or a blueprint of sorts for you, and hold you accountable to creating transformation. So, understanding that there's a huge difference between talking about something and acting on it.

Katie: Such a great point. Another question I would love to ask is if there's a book that has had a particularly big impact on your life or that you love to recommend to others?

Heather: Lots of books. But I would say in the parenting world, definitely anything Dr. Shefali has written. Her stuff is very...well, it's called "The Conscious Parent" or "The Awakened Family" is really out there. And what I mean by that is sometimes you need a little more evolution, like conscious evolution to understand what she's saying. And I find a lot of people in the parenting world are looking for that quick fix. And you have to realize that it's a journey, it's not a quick fix. And not every solution...you know, there's not the twist and turns that work for every solution. But I think she does a really good job in understanding that it's okay to parent differently and that there is this conscious movement happening where we don't need to emotionally traumatize our children to get them to listen to us.

Katie: I love that. And lastly, if there was advice that you could spread far and wide, and you will have reached at least a couple of hundred thousand people on this podcast, what would it be and why?

Heather: You matter. Your desires are there for a reason. And putting, you know, just saying, "I need space" is probably the greatest gift you'll ever give your children because when you are full, when you are present, you'll get so much further than just putting out fires on a daily basis.

Katie: Awesome. And where can people find you? Your podcast, I believe, is called "Mom Is In Control." And they can find that on iTunes?

Heather: Yeah. The podcast should be everywhere – iTunes, Stitcher, Spotify, Google Play – and kind of my home online is my website my name, heatherchauvin.com.

Katie: Wonderful. And those links will be in the show notes as well at wellnessmama.fm so that people can find you directly. Heather, thank you so much for being here. This was such a fun conversation. And I think the work you are doing is so important.

Heather: This has been amazing. Thank you, Katie.

Katie: And thanks to all of you for listening. And I hope to see you again next time on "The Healthy Moms Podcast."

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.