

00:00:00	Biz Ellis	Host	Hi. I'm Biz.
00:00:01	Theresa Thorn	Host	And I'm Theresa.
00:00:03	Biz	Host	Due to the pandemic, we bring you <i>One Bad Mother</i> straight from our homes—including such interruptions as: children! Animal noises! And more! So let's all get a little closer while we have to be so far apart. And remember—we are doing a <u>good job</u> .
00:00:21	Music	Music	"Summoning the Rawk" by Kevin MacLeod. Driving electric guitar and heavy drums.
00:00:25	Biz	Host	<i>[Continues through dialogue.]</i> This week on <i>One Bad Mother</i> — <u>am</u> I getting too old for this shit? We talk to Tom Vanderbilt about learning new skills. Plus, Biz asks, "Is fudge parenting a thing?"
00:00:38	Biz	Host	Biz and caller: <i>[uncertainly]</i> Woooo!
00:00:40	Caller	Caller	I think.
00:00:41	Biz	Host	Woo?
00:00:42	Caller	Caller	I had three crisis days in the span of a week. I reached out for help each time. A little bit better each time. And I called out from work for last Monday and Tuesday. And when I called out, I told them it was for mental illness. Because I needed two days off and I didn't wanna lie about being sick. Because fuck it. I am mentally ill. I am going through a very hard time. And I deserve to have a couple of recovery days at home because everything's baaad. I can't even go into how bad everything is—
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
00:01:29	Biz	Host	—because it's everything, and it's bad. But I'm so glad you guys are here. Thank you so much. Bye. Oh. You are... wonderful! You're doing such a good job! Recognizing that you needed some time off! Yeah! Mental illnesses is real. Yeah. We are all, like, being crushed under some sort of boulder of anxiety and fear and stress right now on top of however we might've been before this all started. <i>[Laughs.]</i> And I think mental health days are genius. And I also really appreciate—this is good! This is good. This is good. Being open and honest <u>about</u> our mental health? Is so good! Y'know, look. I am still high-fiving the caller who called in who didn't wanna go to that party so they pretended to be sick. I still salute you, and think that is—you're doing a good job. But I <u>also</u> think you're doing a good job if you have finally reached a place like you have where you're like, "I don't wanna use this as—" Y'know, "I need this as a recovery day." And I think that was just so bold and brave of you! You're doing a really good job! Thank you for calling that in. And I am... I am really—echhhh—sorry that it's so much right now. I wish... we're just... all gonna be here with you. Sitting in a water park lazy river of just too much! Too much. All mingling together. <i>[Deep breath.]</i> You are doing a good job.
			Now! Boop-boo-da-doo! It's time for the thank-yous. Because this pandemic isn't over. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Jesus Christ! It's not even... close. So. Thank you. Thank you, thank you. To everyone who works in the medical profession. Who have been on the frontlines since the very beginning of this making sure that the facilities are clean and safe to be in. To making, preparing, building, shipping, delivering

the equipment that hospitals and doctors' offices and clinics need. To the people who know how to run those machines—like ventilators—that so many of us rely on. And of course, thank you to the nurses and doctors and RNs and EMTs and—everybody! Thank you! For your work. And being there to take care of us. I will continue to show my thanks by wearing a mask.

Thank you to all the people in the industry of making vaccines. That is a science industry. *[Laughs.]* Where you do science magic! I know very little about the vaccine process, and so I am just in awe of you being able to work so hard and so fast on getting these different vaccines up and running. And thank you to the people administering these vaccines! My parents got their first round of vaccines last week and it was thrilling! And well-organized! And it went so smoothly! And that is because you are doing that. So thank you to everyone who is part of the vaccine rollout.

And... thank you, as always, to all the essential workers. I really hope we come out of this experience really, really and truly recognizing how essential every job is. So thank you to everyone at the grocery stores, and at the drugstores, and, y'know... staying open so that we can get what we need to stay at home. So thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Oh! And teachers. Oh god, I love you teachers! I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry I didn't say that right away. I... fucking love you. Thank you. And I am sure I am missing all sorts of people who need to be thanked, so just know that I am thanking—and thinking—of you. So, yeah! Okay.

00:06:05 Biz

Host

How am I? Let me check in. Guys? I don't always have a lot to offer, but Theresa is having a very bad week. *[Laughs.]* And do you know what? I knew—I knew I could offer something. And that something was fudge. I make Theresa fudge every Christmas 'cause she likes the fudge. She doesn't share the fudge, either. So when I was sitting there, trying to think of how can I help Theresa? What little special treat could I give my friend that I know won't immediately be taken or given—out of complete exhaustion—to her family? I want to give her something that makes her feel like a Self.

Fudge! So I made a whole thing of fudge that I usually split up and give out to lots of people. So Theresa got— *[Laughs.]* A heavy brick of fudge. Oh my god! It was so much fudge. And I drop it off at her house, and she has been eating the fudge and not sharing it and I'm very pleased to know that she is not sharing it.

And it was just so much fun! It was like the Fates had aligned for me to make the fudge. You can't make fudge in the rain. You can't make fudge when it's too hot. And there was just this weird one day here in Pasadena where it wasn't raining—'cause we were having a little rain right now—but it wasn't raining. It was sunny. It was cool and crisp. And this may be the best fudge I've ever made. And many people have been asking for my recipe. And do you wanna know what that secret family recipe is? Well you go to the store. And you go find the marshmallow fluff. *[Laughs.]* And on the back of that jar, it says, "Fantasy Fudge." That's what I do. No nuts. I don't do the nuts. Sometimes I totally forget vanilla and that's fine too, but it's three cups of sugar?

			So that's—yeah! Gabe just made a face like, “Yehhh!” Yeah. Yeah. You can't eat a lot of the fudge. You have to have just a little piece of the fudge. It was a joy to make this for Theresa. And it is a joy to make. Fudge is not something I wanna make every day. What I would like to figure out how to make are some good, old-fashioned, Southern pralines, which involves caramelizing things. And I have yet to succeed at that. Mainly because I haven't actually tried how to <u>learn</u> to do it. Which I think ties in nicely to what we're gonna talk about today with our guest, Tom Vanderbilt, <i>The Joy and Transformative Power of Lifelong Learning</i> .
00:09:01	Music	Music	Banjo strums; cheerful banjo music continues through dialogue.
00:09:02	Theresa	Host	Please—take a moment to remember: If you're friends of the hosts of <i>One Bad Mother</i> , you should <u>assume</u> that when we talk about other moms, we're talking about <u>you</u> .
00:09:09	Biz	Host	If you are <u>married</u> to the host of <i>One Bad Mother</i> , we <u>definitely are</u> talking about you.
00:09:14	Theresa	Host	Nothing we say constitutes <u>professional</u> parenting advice.
00:09:17	Biz	Host	Biz and Theresa's children are brilliant, lovely, and exceedingly extraordinary.
00:09:20	Theresa	Host	Nothing said on this podcast about them implies otherwise.
			<i>[Banjo music fades out.]</i>
			<i>[Biz and Tom repeatedly affirm each other as they discuss the weekly topic.]</i>
00:09:27	Biz	Host	This week, we are speaking with Tom Vanderbilt, who is a contributing editor at <i>Outside Magazine</i> and writes for many publications, including <i>Wired</i> and <i>The Wall Street Journal Magazine</i> . He is the author of <i>Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do</i> , <i>You May Also Like: Taste in an Age of Endless Choice</i> , and <i>Beginners: The Joy and Transformative Power of Lifelong Learning</i> , all published by Knopf. He lives in Madison, New Jersey, with his wife, the writer Jancee Dunn, and his daughter. <i>[Singing and clapping in time]</i> Welcome, Tom! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:10:00	Tom Vanderbilt	Guest	Hey, thank you! Great to be here! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:10:02	Biz	Host	It's nice to have you here! I usually start right away with “Who lives in your house,” but now I have to ask—do you have an affection for titles like one-word titles with substantial taglines? <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:10:16	Tom	Guest	As you were reading those off I, myself, was suddenly realizing—I mean, like— <i>[Laughs.]</i> I like to think they have a certain poetic cadence to them? But I might be humor—I might be—y'know. They may not. I don't know. Yeah. So.
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
00:10:29	Biz	Host	Well I was just like, “Wow, look at that! Boing, boing, boing!”
00:10:32	Tom	Guest	These are all carefully focused-grouped and, y'know, I—I—yeah. Yeah. So.
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
00:10:38	Biz	Host	Well then let's transition gracefully to “Who lives in your house?”
00:10:41	Tom	Guest	Well, you did mention, I think, but we're talking about it. Well—okay, yeah. I'm sorry.
00:10:45	Biz	Host	But they could've changed up since that bio. You never know.
00:10:48	Tom	Guest	<i>[Through laughter]</i> Exactly.
00:10:50	Biz	Host	Things are crazy right now! <i>[Laughs.]</i>

00:10:51	Tom	Guest	So I my house, as we've all been there for the last year, is Jancee Dunn, my wife of several decades, and my daughter, Sylvie, who's doing—actually, appropriately for the book, she's doing an online chess lesson at the moment. And we have a cat named—his name is sort of “Tux,” which is short for “Tuxedo” because he's a tuxedo cat, black and white. And he's a pandemic rescue cat that we greatly enhanced our life when we got him back in April or something. But he was a great joy during this whole thing. So. Yeah.
00:11:25	Biz	Host	Oh, good job! Let's talk about your new book, <i>Beginners: The Joy and Transformative Power of Lifelong Learning</i> . It... it sort of talks about the benefits of learning new skills and—but not to the point of like becoming experts. This isn't a book where it's like, “Guess what? You're gonna do this—the 10,000 times story.” Right? “And then you're gonna be an expert.” It's more about just trying to learn something new. And you reference your daughter's influence as well as you refer to yourself often as an “old dad.” “Old father.” [Laughs.] And I wanna start with sort of how those two things influenced or led to the book.
00:12:11	Tom	Guest	Yeah! That's a great question because yeah. Let's say I had a lot of experience in not being a parent.

[Biz laughs.]

Some four decades' worth. And then suddenly here's this child! And so talk about being a beginner. This was sort of the ultimate—for me—beginner experience. Because I had just—yeah. I was—had a way of doing things that was suddenly upended greatly. And then y'know it was this thing where, well, “Okay, she needs to know all these things! And guess what? Who has to teach her a lot of these things is me.” So—

[Biz laughs.]

Which was going well until the day she decided she wanted to learn how to play chess and I actually didn't know how to play chess. So part of this whole thing, being a parent, I was paying for all these lessons and—y'know, piano and all this stuff. And then usually I would sit there for an hour looking at my phone. Doom-scrolling Twitter or whatever we do. And then it just sort of got to me at some point, y'know, she wanted to learn chess, I'm like, “Okay, I can't really teach you but I can sort of teach you? But it would be better if you had someone who really knew what they were doing.” But then when the guy came over, Simon, I said—“Y'know, enough of this. Why don't I join in and we'll learn the same thing at the same time? See how that goes.” And she was four. She hadn't yet—no preteen rebellion or anything. So I liked it! I was sort of like, “Wow.” I just sort of felt my head expand. My sense of self was like—had slightly grown a little bit because, y'know, here I was suddenly a chess player. Where a week ago, I wasn't.

[Biz laughs.]

So with that experience in mind, I just suddenly thought, “Wow. What's the last new thing I really learned how to do?” And I kinda had a moment of crisis and thought—

[Biz laughs.]

“Well, if I can just convince my publisher to send me on this yearlong—” which turned out to be really like three years “—odyssey of learning all these things...” Yeah. So that’s the story. And you asked about old dad and so that was—part of it was that experience of having all this experience of not being a dad. But then there was this thing, y’know, okay, “She’s gonna be challenging me for a while here.” I just had this suddenly inner alarm clock going off of like, “Okay, you’re gonna hit 50 very soon. What are ya gonna do with that?”

00:14:23 Biz Host
00:14:25 Tom Guest

“What are you gonna do?” *[Laughs.]* Yeah.

Yeah. So in some ways I was trying—y’know. The long game here is that I was thinking, y’know, way down the road, to be in the best shape I could. Not just physically, really, but cognitively and all that stuff. So I just had the sense I didn’t wanna be like a frozen person at age fifty who was kind of resting on his—whatever scant laurels I had.

[Biz laughs.]

So that’s—I’m sorry, a longwinded answer, but that’s kind of what prompted it. So.

00:14:53 Biz Host

No, actually, it’s a great answer. And it—because I do... I am also an older parent. *[Laughs.]* What they call a “geriatric parent.” And so... I’m with you. But there’s also that balance of “Jesus Christ; I’m tired!” as well, right? *[Laughs.]* Some not-so-great benefits about doing it later in life. But I, too, often think about the cognitive skills. I think so many of us are also part of what they call “the sandwich generation,” where, y’know, we are between children and our own parents, who are, y’know, heading on in years.

And you do—I will readily admit, I watch friends’ parents and my parents and I think “How can I get on this so that I’m,” y’know, “that person in that TV show who’s—” I wanna be like Betty White. I wanna be sharp as a tack until I’m out the door. So... they say learning new skills really helps with that. So I—how did you pick what you were going to tackle? When it comes to this? Did you pick it? Did your publisher say, like, “Oh, no. You’re gonna go learn how to be X, Y, or Z.” Like, how did you pick?

00:16:14 Tom Guest

Yeah. No. I did have a free hand, and as I once did in a previous book I went onto the website Ask Metafilter which is just a great place to ask people questions? And I said something like, “Hey, what new skills should this old dog learn?” And I got all these interesting things back. A lot of it was coding, which... I feel like I should know coding? But to be honest—and I was interested in computers when I was younger, but to be honest it just didn’t... I was already spending enough time in front of my laptop. I just didn’t want more. So it was a little-and it seemed kind of like, job-related? And I was looking for something apart from that. So then there were some good suggestions there. Very interesting ones. But I eventually went with just a short list of things that really at some point in my life I had probably expressed some desire to want to do but had never actually gotten around to doing. Or maybe had even

done a little bit when I was much, much younger and then had been sort of steered away from those things.

[Biz laughs.]

Or they had just fallen off in the way they do because, y'know, we don't teach drawing. Some people argue we should teach drawing the way we teach reading, but that's a whole other argument.

[Biz laughs.]

So the— *[Laughs.]* So these things were singing, surfing—I grew up in the Midwest so surfing was like this, y'know, impossible, exotic thing. There was drawing, which was something I think—y'know, I mention in the book that it's one of the most-searched Google terms is “How to draw”? Y'know, there's sort of like, “How to boil water,” something like that. There's a list of like the top ten. Drawing is— “How to tie a tie.” But how to draw. And then I wanted to make something? Just going back to the idea of being at the computer all the time. I'm just not that great with my hands and I felt this lack, y'know, this kind of—so anyway, I had lost two wedding rings while surfing. While trying to learn to surf.

[Biz laughs.]

Needed a wedding ring and I thought—just by chance, one of our neighbors was a master jeweler and I sort of got this weird idea in my head, “Maybe he could help me make this ring.” So and then the last thing was—not quite the last thing. The last official thing was juggling. Which—juggling's, y'know, it's just a pure motor skill? It's a great party trick and it's not that I had this lifelong fascination, but I think once at some carnival or something I'd tried to do it and I couldn't do it? And that was—I was just annoyed by that. But it's just a great way to think about learning. It's a little motor skills seminar in a box or something. If that makes sense.

00:18:36 Biz Host

Well that's what's so great about the different things you chose. Is that they require different methods of learning. Right? Like, they're not—juggling is not the same as drawing or not the same as surfing. And yet... they share some things in common, in general. Just the kind of mechanics of learning. So I guess—you're going through this process of these different skills that you're trying to tackle. They're all very different. You, at the beginning, know, “This is gonna help me cognitively.” Right? *[Laughs.]* But as you started this process, what else did you learn about the benefits of trying to learn new skills? Were you surprised by anything or were you like, “Ohhhh...” *[Laughs.]*

00:19:29 Tom Guest

Yeah. I mean, *[sighs.]* I mean, really, it sounds kinda dumb but the main thing was really just how fun it was. I have to say, y'know, even the practice sessions for a lot of these things—which is supposed to be work and you're supposed to do deliberate practice and learn from your mistakes and so it's supposed to be sort of like homework, but—for example, taking vocal lessons I just found to be the closest thing to a sort of therapeutic, meditative, practice where I was literally lying on the floor sometimes, letting my muscles collapse into the ground so I would become much more relaxed

because tension is the great enemy of singing? Among many other things.

[Biz laughs.]

But you can't show up coming off the Subway in New York City all hostile and go into your singing lesson and then expect to be, y'know, producing mellifluous tones. SO I would just leave singing rehearsals on an absolute high. And then it got even—the payoff was even bigger when I decided to, "Okay, let's not just sing to this nice teacher in the privacy of her home every week; let's take this out to the real world." I never thought about going to the Subway and busking or anything like that, but I thought, "How can I find a relatively safe environment, and yet still challenging?" And that was to join a choir. And this is—just to preface this, this is not something anyone I've ever known in my fifty years of life has ever heard me express a desire to join a choir.

[Biz laughs.]

It's not like longing after choirs. It just sort of came out of the blue and I joined this choir and suddenly singing with people was just this—yeah. Just this transcendent thing that had not been there for me and was suddenly there and that just amped everything up times twenty. So I mean, that was just one of the initial things and I'm kind of just kicking myself, why did I, y'know, wait so long for all this stuff. And it's not like I wasn't doing anything, but... I'd kinda gotten locked into, like, just in the book I sort of mention how I'd gotten into cycling. I love cycling but it sort of dominated—every weekend I was just cycling for like fifteen hours or whatever and it was just a little bit narrow and becoming a bit too much like a job. Yeah. And then—yeah.

00:21:46 Biz Host

Biz: No! I was just—

00:21:47 Biz Host

Tom: I could go on, but I think I've—yeah.
No! I think it's actually really... interesting. It is almost—it's almost the norm for us, as a people, to settle. *[Laughs.]* To like get stagnant. To get into ruts. And to not—I'm not sure outside of, like, maybe one or two kids' books or kids' TV shows are we ever encouraged to go try as many things as we possibly can. Right? Like, and to learn new skills and learning can be very sort of restrictive. Sometimes when we're growing up. And it actually makes a lot of sense that we wind up suddenly fifty and, "Why have I never been in a choir before?" Right? And I also—this is sort of where I wanted to kind of eventually get to, and that is—once you have kids in your house, it really can put the kibosh on anything remotely self-care-y; self-driven; self... anything. Right? like, it's—"I'll do it later. I'll eventually get to it." Right? And—

00:23:01 Tom Guest

Right. Yeah.

00:23:02 Biz Host

So for people who have been listening to the show forever—your wife, Jancee Dunn, was on episode 198 when her book— *[Laughs.]* *How Not to Hate Your Husband After Kids* came out. And it was—both of you—it's so funny. When I—

00:23:20 Biz Host

Tom: A wonderful work of fiction, I might say. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:23:26 Biz Host Biz: —first—oh yes, yes, of course. It's based on everybody else. It's based on friends that you know. She is an absolute delight. But one of the things we talked about on that show and that the book talks about so much is that feeling of being, like, one of the parents who does fifty things. And in that time, the partner has picked up some Legos. *[Laughs.]* Right? You're like, "What is happening?!" Right? And then communication was another big part of it. And y'know, and then—my favorite question that we talked about was, "Who is this book for? Should I leave this on my husband's pillow and then just pretend to be asleep? Feels a little passive-aggressive." And—sorry, my husband literally just walked in here. So here comes your book a few years later. And it's about the joy of trying all these new things. And... I will readily admit—despite all the growth of talking to so many people over the years and years of therapy and my children being older—it would be really easy to say, y'know, "Well, isn't that nice. What a super self-indulgent book you got to do." *[Laughs.]*

[Tom laughs.]

00:24:58 Tom Guest Those books tell very different narratives. So I actually, though, feel like the two books fit really well together in some way. Like I can see where they complement each other? To do the sort of, y'know, journey that you were taking on—even just one skill—can be really hard to find time to do when you're balancing, y'know, family. Yeah. No. I do think they complement each other. And there was sort of a natural progression here which is that—y'know, one of the themes of Jancee's book is that time is divided very differently in families and it's often—even when both parents are fully employed, it's the wife, y'know, picking up more of the slack around the house and doing on whole much more work. So as sort of an outgrowth of that and a response to that I was trying to definitely find ways I could, y'know, just pick up more of that slack.

And this even gets into its own little thorny thing, which is where often the dad becomes kind of, y'know, let's call him the Minister of Fun or something. Y'know, where he's—y'know, doing the fun stuff rather than doing some of the hard labor. So I had to be cognizant of that, too. But it was this idea, though, that as I was becoming a little bit, y'know, quickly—it's not that fun, always shepherding your kid to so many lessons and then you have this nagging thought in the back of your head, "Oh, I'd like to do that, but." So then I just sort of had this idea that, well, maybe we could do these things together and that would sort of magically solve both of these issues at once.

[Biz laughs.]

I could sort of do this growth of exploration and self-care and my daughter could also be learning something, too, and then that would be bonding between us that would leave Jancee with a new—new amounts of spare time to do her own self-care. And then, so I tried to find all these things that my daughter and I could do together. It started, obviously, with chess, and then so I became like the chess coach. Chess dad. But then I made sure to get her out surfing,

which I think had its own benefits for her apart from my own selfish reasons.

[Biz laughs.]

Y'know, just starting anything that young, as someone who started way too late, I think it's great. And it's one of those sports that it's changing quite a bit lately but there's a little bit less female participation than male participation? Anyway.

00:27:01 Biz Host

Yeah, no, no. Let's just say it. She's a badass. *[Laughs.]*

[Tom laughs.]

00:27:08 Tom Guest

You're signing her up for badass lessons. It's okay. Well—

[Biz laughs.]

And this is—y'know, what happens—I tried to look into this. I was like, “This is a great idea. Adults learning the same thing at the same time with our kids. Like, this should be a thing.” So I went online to look and I just—I'm sure people are out there doing it, but I couldn't find that many people talking about it. Much research about it at all. And I just kept finding advice about how to be a better teacher. How to encourage your child to learn. Not to actually—and the only reason I bring this up is I really think there are these benefits to doing that. Not just on familiar bonding, but having your child see you struggle to learn to do something when you're usually this unimpeachable voice of authority. There's some interesting research that sort of hints that if they see you struggle then they're going to try harder themselves. They'll get less discouraged when they have trouble. It's not to say I've glommed onto everything that my daughter's doing. I've tried to give her some *[through laughter]* autonomy.

[Biz laughs.]

00:28:16 Biz Host
00:28:19 Tom Guest

But there's a lot of minefields you walk into here, right? There's the whole idea of, “Well, I didn't surf when I was a kid, so I'm gonna have my kid be a great surfer and live—”

Yeah. Vicariously living through your child. Right.

Exactly. So I was aware of all that. But yeah. So I think in the end, y'know, I think it's worked out? In terms of the message of Jancee's book. *[Through laughter]* And this was obviously of concern when she first heard of me—

[Biz laughs.]

00:28:46 Biz Host
00:28:48 Tom Guest
00:28:51 Biz Host

—that my idea had been—she's like, “Y'know, wait. So you're gonna pick up five new hobbies—skills—that each require at least a night, a day, away per week?”

Yeah. Countless time away. *[Laughs.]*

Yeah! Yeah. It didn't go over that well.

Yeah. I was gonna say—that—that—probably a tender time. To have discussed those things. So no, I get it. But I think it's actually, though... when I think about—you said, “Why am I not learning this? Why am I not using this time while my kid's learning

something?" 'Cause I've been there. You're sitting there at the ballet lesson or the whatever. And—"Why am I not learning something right now?" And I think—we talk on the show sometimes about just changing the narrative that we're telling ourselves?

And I think all of us—narrative gets really narrow when I think kids show up in your house. And I think if you're in a partnered relationship and both can change that narrative of... how am I using this time? I mean, I'm the same way! I didn't—y'know, everybody on the show knows I've had a banjo sitting under the bed for thirteen years, if not longer. And during the pandemic finally decided, "Okay, I'm going to learn how to play this fucking banjo." Right? Like, and there is that pressure of "Now I've gotta be really good at it. Or—what if I don't really like playing the banjo?" *[Laughs.]* Right? Like—but I agree, there have been times my kids have walked in and been like, "God, that sounds better than it did!" Right? Like, things like that.

And so... whoever the dominant, like, caregiver is in the house, I think there is some room to have—like, you use Jancee's skills of communication. *[Laughs.]* To bridge this sort of murky area of self-sacrifice and turn it instead into... y'know... self-care! Like, finding these things that you can do. And not putting that pressure on yourself to be perfect at it. Was there anything that you were like—wrap up on this fun one. I know that the choir and the singing turned out to be this really great thing. This great experience that you worked in. Was there anything you were like, "Oh, god, I don't ever wanna do that again!" *[Laughs.]* "That was horrible! That was awful!" *[Laughs.]*

00:31:01 Tom

Guest

[Tom laughs.]

Yeah, no. Luckily I avoided any major entanglements of that. But there—I did—y'know, it's not like I—there were some things I took to more naturally. And I took a—for example, there was something in Brooklyn called the Metal Shop Fantasy Camp. Which was actually—which was a great thing!

[Biz laughs.]

And it was a great—y'know, there were a lot of great things about it. I mean, I loved like holding—it was a welding class. To explain it. So I loved holding the metal and working with this 3,000-degree raw flame. But I was just really not that good at it.

[Biz laughs.]

And it just... it took—my eyes were like—I was blinded the next, y'know, the next—I woke up with—what are they call it? Like, arc welder's blindness or something? Because of staring. I made a lot of mistakes. And you're talking about perfect—yeah. I do have the—I tried to make this a manifesto about not being obsessed with perfection. But in that case I felt like I was so far off from even showing any promise that—I mean, in the end I did produce this metal—this three-dimensional metal cube, which was the object of the class. With some help from the teacher. But I just didn't—I didn't feel that itch. And I'm not sure that I gave it enough time. I don't

think everything has to click right away and that maybe that's okay. That it might take a little while to reach that sweet spot. And I think we tend to get obsessed with this idea that we have some sort of passion that's out there lurking.

[Biz laughs.]

Y'know, maybe that banjo under your bed. But there's—y'know, Carol Dweck, who's the famous researcher behind the concept of mindset? Having a growth mindset? She has some interesting research that talks about this idea of passion can be a dangerous thing because just announcing—the very act of announcing this passion kind of lets ourselves off the hook sometimes. And we're almost less likely to actually indulge in that thing because we've just said, "Oh, it's our passion." And then sort of like— *[Laughs.]* And the passion will kind of do the work for us and it's not gonna be hard and there's not gonna be hours of failure and all that stuff. So yeah. So welding—y'know, it wasn't... yeah. *[Laughs.]*

00:33:11 Biz Host

Not your thing. *[Laughs.]* I look forward to that children's book: *Welding: Not My Thing.* *[Laughs.]*

[Tom laughs.]

00:33:19 Tom Guest

But the happy thing was, I was able to take some of that kind of manipulation with metal and fire and bring it to the jeweler's workshop, which was a little bit—for whatever reason—more my thing. So I don't know. it sort of worked out in the end. But I think with more time. But yeah. So I don't think that—it's okay to—y'know, don't think that you have to start something and that you need to give five years to it. If it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out. Like, life is short. Y'know.

00:33:45 Biz Host

It's just the learning. The act of trying to actively learn something is the challenge.

00:33:51 Tom Guest

Yeah. I mean, I think parents probably send kids to classes all the time that last exactly one class. And they decide, "Oh, I don't like ice skating" or whatever.

[Biz laughs.]

00:34:08 Biz Host

Somehow we get hung up on these, y'know, ideas that failure and lack of commitment and all that stuff. So.

Oh yeah. "You gotta win! You signed up! You gotta win for your old—bring your A-game, Tiffany!" Alright. *[Laughs.]* Well, Tom, thank you very much for coming on the show and talking to us about this. As well as for writing the book. I am glad it didn't destroy your marriage.

[Tom laughs.]

00:34:50 Tom Guest

That's always—I always—I think that's always a positive outcome for all people. *[Laughs.]* When it comes to... their work. And we will make sure that we link everybody up to where they can get the book and find out more about it, and I really do appreciate it. It sort of takes the pressure off the fun of learning! So I, y'know, it's fun! Thank you. And you're making me think of an alternate title, which would've been *How Not to Destroy Your Marriage*—

00:34:54 Biz Host

Tom: —*After Hobbies. After Hobbies.* Y'know. *[Laughs.]* Okay.

			Biz: Yeah! <i>How Not to Destroy</i> —That's right! <i>After Hobbies</i> . A follow-up.
00:35:00	Biz	Host	Alright. Well I hope you have a wonderful rest of your week and thank you very, very much.
00:35:05	Tom	Guest	Thanks so much! My pleasure.
00:35:06	Music	Music	"Ones and Zeroes" by "Awesome." Steady, driving electric guitar with drum and woodwinds.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:35:23	Music	Music	Cheerful ukulele with whistling plays in background.
00:35:24	Theresa	Promo	<i>One Bad Mother</i> is supported in part by Function of Beauty, which offers precise formulations customized for your hair's specific needs.
00:35:34	Biz	Promo	How do I know what my hair needs? Well! I took a quiz. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			<i>[Theresa laughs.]</i>
			And it was a very quick, easy, but well-questioned quiz? So that when I was done, my hair type, my hair goals, the color—which has been slowly fading <i>[through laughter]</i> since the pandemic started—as well as fragrance preferences, were all considered when it came to putting together a shampoo and conditioner formula just for me. And I'm always on the lookout for products that are vegan and cruelty-free.
00:36:12	Theresa	Promo	So guys, never buy off the shelf just to be disappointed ever again! Go to FunctionOfBeauty.com/badmother to take your quiz and save 20% off your first order. That applies to their full range of customized hair, skin, and body products.
00:36:30	Biz	Promo	Go to FunctionOfBeauty.com/badmother to let them know you heard about it from our show! And—to get 20% off your order!
00:36:38	Theresa	Promo	That's FunctionOfBeauty.com/badmother .
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:36:46	Theresa	Host	Hey, you know what it's time for! This week's genius and fails! This is the part of the show where we share our genius moment of the week, as well as our failures, and feel <u>better</u> about ourselves by hearing yours. You can share some of your own by calling 206-350-9485. That's 206-350-9485.
00:37:06	Biz	Host	<i>[Dramatically]</i> Genius fail time, Theresa Thorn. This is your life! Prepare to be judged! <i>[Regular voice]</i>
			<i>[Theresa laughs.]</i>
			I feel like I need to put a little extra in every week 'cause we only have this special time together—
00:37:21	Theresa	Host	I know. We have to make it good.
00:37:24	Biz	Host	Yeah. Good. Real content. So that may have been too much. So... genius me.
00:37:31	Clip	Clip	Music: Dramatic, swelling music in background.
			Biz: Wow! Oh my God! Oh my <u>God</u> ! I <u>saw</u> what you did! Oh my God! I'm paying <u>attention</u> ! <u>Wow</u> ! You, mom, are a <u>genius</u> . Oh my <u>God</u> , that's <u>fucking genius</u> !

[Biz and Theresa repeatedly affirm each other as they discuss their respective genius moments of the week.]

00:37:45 Theresa Host

Okay.

[Biz laughs.]

It was definitely too much, considering the low bar of my genius moment. Which is that I managed to buy more contact lenses for myself. And today was the first day that I was wearing them again after weeks of just not having them and just having my glasses? And... y'know. For all those of us who wear glasses sometimes or all the time, during a pandemic, the mask-glasses combination is really complicated. It's a whole thing. There's a lot going on.

[Biz laughs.]

And it's fine. You still do it. You do what you gotta do. But there's a lot of fixing and maneuvering and fogging and defogging and adjusting. At least that's been my experience.

00:38:37 Biz Host

Yes. Oh, it's my experience.

00:38:38 Theresa Host

Okay.

00:38:39 Biz Host

Yeah.

00:38:40 Theresa Host

So... and I tend to be a contacts person anyway, generally speaking? So I ran out! And having them back in my life today—like, I felt amazing. Like I noticed—there was at one point this morning where I was like, “Why do I feel so good right now?” And I was like, “Oh, yeah! ‘Cause I don't have glasses on my face.”

[Biz laughs.]

“And I can see. It's great.”

00:39:05 Biz Host

So I think... this shows that you recognized that you were a Self.

00:39:09 Theresa Host

Yes.

00:39:11 Biz Host

In its most basic— *[Laughs.]* form.

00:39:14 Theresa Host

That my body needs to see. *[Laughs.]*

[Biz laughs.]

00:39:17 Biz Host

You are doing a really good job!

00:39:22 Theresa Host

Thank you, Biz.

00:39:24 Biz Host

You're welcome. Mad Libs. Every morning we do family meeting. You all know this. *[Singing]* Family Meeting Time! It's Family Meeting Time! Who's got an announcement? *[Regular voice]* This is what we do. And at the end we play like a family game. This is something that we started at the beginning of the pandemic because it kind of mirrored what they did in school. Right/ And so—it also helped Stefan and I realize what—

00:39:48 Biz Host

Biz: —we were doing during the day? Yeah.

Theresa: Was happening that day? Yeah. Yeah.

00:39:51 Biz Host

So the games have been very... varied. Over this time. But Stefan—out of the blue—*[Laughs.]* Pulled out Mad Libs. We've been holding onto this book of Mad Libs since the last time Kat went to summer camp. Never really using them. We're just like, “These are the best? Why doesn't—why aren't we using Mad Libs?” So this has become the family meeting game, and it's timed out perfect. Because Ellis is learning about nouns and verbs and now is ahead of the game knowing what an adjective is. Also, Kat has

00:40:39	Theresa	Host	really— <i>[Laughs.]</i> Really caught up with where <u>they</u> should be on nouns and pronouns and—
00:40:40	Biz	Host	Yeah. It's a good reminder. Good nouns and verbs and adjectives. But I think the real joy here is—I've really gotten to just really be myself. Y'know? I think Stefan and I have reserved who we really are as people since we've had children on some level? I know. Theresa's looking like, "You have?" And I'm like, yeah. We hold a lot back. 'Cause we—y'know, we're trying to be sensitive and they're young. But that has gone out the window with Mad Libs, and I have <u>really</u> shown why Mad Libs is fun. You need a noun. "Boobs." 'K? It's <u>always</u> boobs! Or boobies. That's really a plural noun, but okay.
00:41:20	Theresa	Host	No, "boob." I'm sorry. "Boob." Plural would be "boobies." "Butts."
00:41:23	Biz	Host	When somebody wants a gas or a liquid? I'm just gonna let you guys go there. And then it makes Kat cringe and crawl—like, in the most teenage-y, tween-y of ways. Which just really makes us wanna do it more. Because I think that's this relationship. And like this morning, Stefan was leading the Mad Libs and said, "Okay. You can <u>only</u> answer the Mad Libs with words that start with 'P'."

[Theresa laughs.]

00:42:22	Theresa	Host	So that— <i>[Laughs.]</i> "Poop?" We used to be like—I'm like "poo-poo"? "Poots"? I mean, I'm just like, "Come on, guys!" Jiggly? Moist? Damp? So everybody now—and we all just giggle. And it's really nice. And—
00:42:24	Biz	Host	That's so fun!
00:42:26	Theresa	Host	—I'm pretty sure they're learning. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:42:28	Biz	Host	They're learning something!
00:42:37	Theresa	Host	They are. Stefan said, "This is gonna be a fail." And I'm like, "No, it's not. It's gonna make them very popular." <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:42:41	Biz	Host	I love it. I think it's awesome in a lot of different ways. Good job. Thank you.
00:42:42	Caller	Caller	<i>[Answering machine beeps.]</i>

Hi! Okay! I have a genius. And it might be a little dorky, but it's really fun. I got myself some roller skates and I am currently driving my two-year-old around so he'll fall asleep in the car and then we're gonna park in an empty parking lot and I'm just gonna ride circles around my car like a little shark to protect my young.

[Biz laughs.]

00:43:26	Biz	Host	And it's gonna be fun. I'm gonna play some music and do my own thing. As just a woman with a car with a child inside of it and a random parking lot. You're all doing a great job. And so am I. On roller skates! Don't forget, you're a woman with a car with a child in it in a parking lot <u>in</u> roller skates.
00:43:33	Theresa	Host	Yeah. This sounds perfect.
00:43:36	Biz	Host	Oh my god! It's such a good idea! And you know what I really like about this? Is it has put a spin on the ol' shark metaphor that we use.
00:43:47	Theresa	Host	Yeah. I like this shark better.
00:43:48	Biz	Host	This is a happy shark! This is a shark who's moving for themselves.
00:43:55	Theresa	Host	Yeah!
00:43:57	Biz	Host	Yeah!

00:43:58	Theresa	Host	It's so much better than going to a parking lot and sitting there.
00:44:00	Biz	Host	Yeah! Crying.
00:44:03	Theresa	Host	Period. Like, that's it.
00:44:04	Biz	Host	Crying.
00:44:05	Theresa	Host	Yeah. Well I mean you can do that too if you need to, but. You can also cry while skating!
00:44:09	Biz	Host	Yes. I realized my mistake. You're correct. You can do both!
00:44:13	Theresa	Host	You can cry openly!

[Biz makes sobbing noises.]

00:44:17	Biz	Host	Openly <i>[through laughter]</i> in the parking lot. <i>[Singing]</i> Xanadu! <i>[Laughs.]</i> <i>[Regular voice]</i> You are so great! Thank you for sharing that. That's so great. Failures.
00:44:27	Biz	Host	<i>[Dramatic orchestral music plays in the background.]</i>

Theresa: *[In a voice akin to the Wicked Witch of the West]* Fail.
Fail. Fail. FAIL!

[Timpani with foot pedal engaged for humorous effect.]

Biz: *[Calmly]* You suck!

00:44:34	Biz	Host	<i>[Biz and Theresa repeatedly affirm each other as they discuss their respective failures of the week.]</i> Fail me, Theresa.
00:44:37	Theresa	Host	Plenty to choose from over here, as usual. I'm gonna go with... last night— <i>[sighs.]</i> Curtis had the idea that he wanted to sleep with his sister, because he loves his sister and he really misses her during the night when he doesn't get to see her. Which is like such BS. I mean, I'm sure he loves her, but, y'know.

[Biz laughs.]

And Gracie happened to hear him saying this and she said, "Yes! Sleep with me! It will be so fun!"

[Biz makes multiple ominous noises.]

"We will have a slumber party!" And it caught me so off guard—I knew enough to not be like, "Sure, right now," 'cause it was like bedtime. It was so obviously a ploy to not go to bed/ So I was like< "No,, it's a school night." Y'know, "School night" in quotes. But technically it was a school night. "No, it's a school night. We can do a slumber party one night when it's like the weekend or something." Well I forgot that my kids are old enough now that they know how days of the week go? So they put it together that—"Well, tomorrow! Tomorrow night, then!" And I just wish that like instead of doing the thing I did, I had said, "No, everybody in your own bed." Like, "Everybody sleeps in their own beds. Except for once in a blue moon during the summer or on vacation" or something. Like, "No, we're all gonna sleep in our own beds."

I didn't. I said, "Maybe on a weekend. Sure, on a weekend night we could but tonight's a school night." So then they immediately were like, "So tomorrow night we're gonna do this." And I just... I

couldn't... so I just said, "Okay, yeah. Tomorrow night." And they haven't let it go. So last night they talked about it a bunch. This morning they've been talking about it. They're all excited. I think they think they're gonna sleep, like, in the bed together? Like, I'm gonna definitely set up a bed for Curtis on the floor in Gracie's room? But like, I just—it's not gonna go well, you guys. HE's almost four. Sleeping is still hard at night for everyone in our house?

[Biz laughs.]

Like we're just barely getting to a point where people can basically sleep through the night? And I—y'know, I just did this to myself. I feel I did it to myself.

00:46:54 Biz Host

Yeah. I'm sorry. There's a real good chance it's gonna go bad.

00:47:01 Theresa Host

Mm-hm. *[Laughs.]*

00:47:02 Biz Host

You know what stinks? Is our children getting smarter?

00:47:06 Theresa Host

Yes! *[Laughs.]*

00:47:09 Biz Host

Ellis gets really frustrated that he can't tell time yet? And I'm like, "I am never gonna teach you. Ever." Like, ever.

00:47:18 Theresa Host

"Just try and figure it out."

00:47:20 Biz Host

"Figure it out. When you want it bad enough, you'll learn it." So this—it might be the kind of thing where it totally works out and you can just like open the door—whenever they come out, you just open the door and you're like, "No, no, no. Slumber party. You guys all—part of the rules—" You can make up slumber party rules! It's not like they've got a book, right? Like—

00:47:41 Theresa Host

The rule is, "I don't need to hear you. You can't ask me for anything."

00:47:47 Biz Host

Yeah. "You can't—like, you guys are on your own." That can't be good either.

00:47:50 Theresa Host

[Through laughter] So unlikely. So unlikely.

00:47:53 Biz Host

No. So—but I'm gonna pretend that that's what's gonna happen? And that you don't wind up just being like, "I'm coming to your fucking slumber party. Roll over! Everybody go to sleep!"

00:48:04 Theresa Host

Oh my god. That's—that's actually—I wasn't thinking ahead? But now that you say it, that's like the inevitable truth.

00:48:11 Biz Host

Yeah. I know. I only know that from experience. So I am—

00:48:14 Theresa Host

Okay. Great.

00:48:17 Biz Host

You could just set up a movie and walk away.

00:48:18 Theresa Host

Well, it's also movie night. So we're supposed to do movie night and then—

00:48:24 Biz Host

This could work out so well! I actually think this is going to be something.

00:48:29 Theresa Host

Okay.

[Biz laughs.]

I'll... report back.

00:48:35 Biz Host

[Sighs.] Okay. So we have not taken—we have three cats. One of them being Onion, old, always had a sensitive stomach. And before the pandemic— *[Southern drawl]* In the times before the COVID— *[regular voice]* he was on these like steroids to help with his stomach. Because he either has cancer— *[Laughs.]* Or Irritable Bowel Syndrome. He too old for us to try and investigate that. And the steroids were working well. And it was time to go back for a

checkup, and to get a new prescription. And we had not gone since the pandemic.

And I called our vet and our vet has always had an unusual process of appointments. You just show up and wait. There's no scheduled appointments. You show up and you wait. It's usually not that big of a deal. They've made no changes to that since the pandemic. So apparently there's a sign-up sheet that goes out at 7 A.M., and then it goes back out at like 12. And you just have to come and get one of the slots. And there's no way of knowing how many slots will be there each day, and—so I'm like, I—I—I really didn't wanna do it! I didn't wanna go! And I'll tell you why! Because A, I always take the vet—I always do the vet run. 'K? I've done the vet run with babies. I've done the vet run with two children. I have done the vet run with two children and three cats. And Onion no longer can travel without pooping and vomiting like a minute into the car ride. 'K?

So that's really rough on Onion. It's really rough on us. It's not good. So Stefan said he would take 'im. So he gets up early. Gets Onion into the carrying case. Gets there and within ten minutes I get a text that says, "There were only four slots and they're all filled and people are literally sitting here in folding chairs." Like, camping chairs. So now he's gotta come home. Onion is miserable. The carrying case is so bad. It's really bad. And Stefan is broken. This was what broke Stefan for the pandemic. And it threw him so out of whack. And it threw—

00:51:18 Theresa Host
00:51:19 Biz Host

He thought he had it.
He thought he had it? And the fail here is—*[sighs.]* I knew. Like, I knew this could have happened? And I knew I was asking him to do something that probably would not have ruined my day and several days after, right? It wouldn't have. Right? Like it's just not who—my fortitude is, I would have been pissed, but I would have turned it around into like getting extra chocolate that day. Right? But for Stefan... I mean, days, guys. It was days. He was so mad at the process. So—felt so bad that he'd somehow hurt Onion. Y'know. I mean, all of this. So yeah. I feel kinda bad. I mean, look. Whether I went—I mean, I don't know. I just—you know who your partner is and you know you're supposed *[through laughter]* to help your partner and I should—I knew that this would've been—should've been something I did.

00:52:22 Theresa Host
00:52:32 Biz Host
00:52:34 Caller Caller

It also just feels like a fail when you're in that situation. For everyone. Like, I'm so sorry.
It was no good.
[Answering machine beeps.]

Hi! I'm calling with a fail. I really needed to hear that I was going a great job because I really don't feel like it right now. Last night my one-year-old, who's starting to walk and standing in the tub, which is super not safe, fell in the tub and busted her gum. Not her lip! Her lip would've been fine. Her gum. Where she has a new tooth coming in. And it might be cracked. We can't tell yet. So I just have to wait for that. And then this morning I went to go pick up my one-year-old and I had to walk past my almost-three-year-old and I fucking stepped on my almost-three-year-old's finger. And I'm pretty sure I broke my daughter's pinky. I suck. I feel terrible. I just... this is normal, right? I suck. Okay. Thanks for the show. Bye.

00:53:43	Biz	Host	Ughhh! Y'know. No one likes to play fail calls. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like this. But here's the thing. It is normal. Y'know? We go back to the very beginning. I remember Ellis's arm—like, I'm trying to get out of the car <u>and</u> I'm holding him? And then the door slams and slams on his arm and I felt like... like, yeah. I think about the woman with the—
00:54:11	Biz	Host	Biz: —the baby in the baby thing—yeah!
00:54:16	Biz	Host	Theresa: With the baby carrier falling off the bench? Yeah. Yeah! And like, babies are rolling off of beds and rolling off of changing tables and no! No! I'm not like, "Let's have a big rolling-off-of-the-changing-table party."
00:54:25	Theresa	Host	Theresa and Biz: It's horrible!
00:54:28	Theresa	Host	Every single one of them is horrible!
00:54:29	Biz	Host	Are scary and—
00:54:30	Theresa	Host	Yeah. So scary. Yeah.
00:54:31	Biz	Host	And I think there is such a shame-based culture around things like—y'know, <i>[with a judgmental sneer]</i> "You're a parent. You should never have let—you're a monster! Every minute of your child's life should just be perfect and every minute of your life as a parent should be diligent!"
00:54:48	Theresa	Host	And your intuition—like you should just <u>feel</u> how to care for your child and prevent all injuries.
00:54:56	Biz	Host	Oh, I know. There was like one time I turned around and didn't realize that Kat was behind me, and bumped into her and she fell right in the trash can. Guys? This was like a year ago.
00:55:07	Theresa	Host	Yeah.
00:55:08	Biz	Host	Okay? This wasn't even like a baby. Right? And I'm just like—and she laughed. Thank god they get older and they laugh at you. But you're already gonna feel like shit when this happens? Don't add to that the feeling that it somehow takes away that you're a good parent or that anybody else things you're doing a shitty job. Everybody has inadvertently or accidentally...
00:55:34	Theresa	Host	Well, I mean, fingers get stepped on. That happens. And when toddlers are taking baths—like, learning to take baths, sometimes they stand up in the tub and sometimes they fall. And I mean, you can be as—
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
			—careful as you can possibly be. And you are! And still, you can't always break a fall. Like, you can't always—even if you're right there. You can't always stop your kid from getting hurt! They just do get hurt. It's really, really hard. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:56:08	Biz	Host	Yeah! <i>[Laughs.]</i> It really is hard! I fucking hate it. I hate it. I hate it.
00:56:12	Theresa	Host	Yeah. Your kids will be okay. You're doing a really good job.
00:56:15	Biz	Host	Yeah, you are.
00:56:18	Music	Music	"Mom Song" by Adira Amram. Mellow piano music with lyrics.
			<i>You are the greatest mom I've ever known. I love you, I love you. When I have a problem, I call you on the phone. I love you, I love you.</i>
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:56:40	Music	Music	Inspirational keyboard music plays in background.

00:56:41	Theresa	Promo	<i>One Bad Mother</i> is supported in part by Grove Collaborative, which delivers healthy home, beauty, and personal care products directly to you.
00:56:51	Biz	Promo	I have spoken about Grove before. I am really trying to make an effort to buy products for my home, especially when it comes to cleaning, that are environmentally safe as well as don't stink. I mean like literally it was the kind of thing where I was thinking, "If I just take this bottle of detergent and pour it right down the drain, is it gonna kill a fish?"
			<i>[Theresa laughs.]</i>
00:57:18	Theresa	Promo	I mean it! I like overthink this stuff! Making the switch to natural products has really never been easier. For a limited time, when <i>One Bad Mother</i> listeners go to Grove.C-O/badmother , you will get to choose a free gift with your first order of \$30 or more. But you have to use our special code.
00:57:36	Biz	Promo	Go to Grove.C-O/badmother to get your exclusive offer!
00:57:42	Theresa	Promo	That's Grove.C-O/badmother .
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:57:50	Promo	Clip	Music: Light, rhythmic keyboard over drums plays in background.
			Tre'vell Anderson: Hey there, beautiful people! Did you hear that good, good news?
			Jarrett Hill: Something about the baby Jesus?
			Tre'vell: Mm! He's coming back!
			Jarrett: Or—do you mean—
			<i>[Tre'vell laughs.]</i>
			Jarrett: —the fact that Apple Podcasts has named <i>FANTI</i> one of <u>the</u> best shows of 2020?
			Tre'vell: I mean, we already knew that we was hot stuff, but a little external validation never hurts. Okay?
			Jarrett: <i>[Through laughter]</i> Hosted by me, writer and journalist Jarrett Hill.
			Tre'vell: And me, the ebony enchantress myself—
			<i>[Jarrett laughs.]</i>
			Tre'vell: —Tre'vell Anderson.
			Jarrett: <i>FANTI</i> is your home for complex conversations about the grey areas in our lives; the people, places, and things we're huge fans of but got some anti feelings toward.
			Tre'vell: You name it, we <i>FANTI</i> it. Nobody's off-limits.

Jarrett: Check us out every Thursday on MaximumFun.org or wherever you get your slay-worthy audio.

[Music ends.]

00:58:36 Promo Clip

Music: Laid-back drum and keyboard plays in background.

Jesse Thorn: I'm Jesse Thorn! On the next *Bullseye*, we've got the one and only Ted Danson. We'll talk about his new show, *Mr. Mayor*, about *Cheers*, and about the secret to success in comedy.

Jesse: I mean, I feel like one of your signature comedic moves at this point in your career is gazing? You do a lot of interesting gazing?

[Ted Danson laughs.]

Ted Danson: I also love this! Gazing! I love that! And if I'm not, I'm gonna start. 'Cause that's great.

Jesse: That's *Bullseye*! Find it on MaximumFun.org, NPR.org, and wherever you get podcasts.

[Music ceases.]

00:59:17 Biz Host

Well, it's that time again, friends. Time to settle in, remind yourself that you are not alone, and that you are doing a good job, and maybe just to brush Theresa's hair. Let's—*[singing]* Softly, I brush your hair, Theresaaaa! *[Regular voice]* In my mind. Let's listen to a mom have a breakdown.

00:59:44 Caller Caller

[Answering machine beeps.]

Hi, *One Bad Mother*—I am—this is a rant. I am on my way to get late-night fast food because I need to eat my feelings because I spent another day—another of many, many, many days in the last ten years—single parenting my four children because my husband is too depressed to... be with us. And we are all home all the time. Just like everybody else. And it's so much. And my kids... all have anxiety or ADHD or sensory processing disorder or... all of it. And it's just so much. And I have everybody's feelings all the time. And we're talking about possible hospitalization for my husband and I just... I don't wanna go to the hospital. I want to be the one who goes! *[Sobs.]* And sits in a bed and watches TV and gets food and just sleeps for like a week. And then maybe I could come and handle this. It's been so much for so long. And I'm doing the best that I can. But it's more than I can do. Thanks for the Hotline.

01:01:25 Biz Host

First of all, you are doing a really amazing job. You are not alone. Y'know... *[sighs.]* The weird thing about doing a show like this is sometimes focusing on the things that aren't—*[through laughter]* harsh reminders of where we are right now? You know what I mean? Like, oh, we talk about, y'know, fails and try and keep some sense of normalcy. But it's not normal. And a lot of us are at home all the time. With mental illness. And... when you said "I just wanna be the one who gets to go?" Ooh, I felt that. I felt that hard.

01:02:15 Theresa Host

I did, too.

01:02:16 Biz Host

I know Theresa did. I know!

01:02:17 Theresa Host

I did too, and I did, too.

01:02:19 Biz Host Theresa's eyes were like, "Yes!" And it's—Theresa and I were just kind of talking about this the other day. And that is... having to be in crisis mode all the time. You're supposed to be in crisis mode? For like, a short period of time.

01:02:40 Theresa Host For the length of a crisis, which—

[Biz laughs.]

—we think of as being like—what, a week or two? Sometimes extending onto a month or two.

01:02:50 Biz Host Maybe. Right?

01:02:51 Theresa Host Yeah. We don't think about it as many, many months. Sometimes if you have kids? A lot of kids with a lot of needs? Your crisis may be years long. You said you've been parenting for about ten years. So...

01:03:05 Biz Host Yeah.

01:03:06 Theresa Host Yeah.

01:03:07 Biz Host That's a long time to be... in that mode. And I think we can either forget that we're in that mode and think we're now doing things normally? *[Laughs.]* And our body is like, "You are soooo wrong." *[Laughs.]* Right? Like—or our mind is like, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Not happening." And I think the trick—and I mean, I don't know. We can maybe all feel differently about this. But I think the trick that crisis mode plays on you is that you can't give yourself that time. Right? Like, whatever that thing is. And... and this is a really shitty time to have crisis happening in our lives. 'Cause we can't call on our friends or family or the resources that we might have in a different time to help? So...

01:04:09 Theresa Host Mm-hm. Biz, you said it all. I also just—I was thinking about you and all your kids and... I was just having this moment the other—I mean, I'm not in your situation. I just relate to some things that you said. And one thing that I was reminded of when I was listening to your call was— *[Laughs.]* The other day, two of my kids were having really strong reactions to totally different problems and really needing help at the same time. And that happens regularly! Y'know. And I was just—and it was just me at that moment. And I was just sitting there thinking, like, "This is just so... like, impossible sometimes."

[Biz laughs.]

And I wasn't—I wasn't like, panicking. I wasn't feeling a lot of stress. I was almost just being an observer of the situation and thinking like... "This is kinda—like, I can't really help you both at the same time right now, so I'm just gonna sit here with you, I guess?" Like, we do a lot of just sitting and like... breathing and reflecting? Like, there's really very little more than that that you can do. And even that takes a lot of energy. Like, it really does. And I don't blame you for wanting to go lay down and watch TV and be in bed. And eat food that gets brought—I mean, and no—all the sympathy in the world for your husband, too! Depression is real. We're not—we're not talking about this as like, "Oh, that's gonna be a nice, relaxing vacation for him." That's a really serious situation! And a scary situation. That he's dealing with. It's just that when you're looking at the circumstances and you're thinking about what you want for yourself... it's so hard not to make that connection. And so painful!

01:06:10	Biz	Host	You're doing... you're doing... <u>beyond</u> remarkable, actually? This is... <u>really</u> difficult. What you're having to balance. Right now. And... we see you. And... it's... we're just here for you because it is a lot. We're here for you in your "a lot" ness.
01:06:39	Theresa	Host	Yeah, we are.
01:06:41	Biz	Host	Yeah. You're doing a good job.
01:06:43	Theresa	Host	Yes.
01:06:44	Biz	Host	Theresa? You are doing a good job. I think you're wonderful. And—
01:06:54	Theresa	Host	Thank you. I think you're wonderful and I think you are really nice friend who—everyone should know—
01:07:01	Biz	Host	Oh, they know.
01:07:02	Theresa	Host	—brought me a special treat earlier this week.
01:07:05	Biz	Host	Oh, yeah.
01:07:07	Theresa	Host	Biz made a special, non-holiday-related batch of fudge for me.
01:07:12	Biz	Host	I did. I did!
01:07:13	Theresa	Host	And it was—it was the best. That's probably the real reason I felt so great this morning. Not the contacts.
01:07:19	Biz	Host	Theresa: That stash of fudge that I can—yep! Sneak in there any time I get a chance.
01:07:26	Biz	Host	Biz: Fudge for breakfast! <i>[Laughs.]</i> If you follow us on Instagram, you'll see some of the fudge-related Instagram posts. <i>[Inaudible]</i> Which may be—as I suggested at the top of the show—maybe fudge can be a new #FudgeParenting hashtag. Maybe that is something that—
01:07:44	Theresa	Host	Yeah. It's a different—it has a different purpose than cake purpose. A different context. Different purpose.
01:07:51	Biz	Host	Wait. It's not... fudge parenting. It's fudge therapy.
01:07:55	Theresa	Host	Fudge therapy.
01:07:56	Biz	Host	Fudge therapy. Or fudge masturbation, 'cause it's really just about yourself.
01:08:00	Theresa	Host	Fudge care.
01:08:02	Biz	Host	Fudge— <i>[Laughs.]</i>
01:08:04	Theresa	Host	Self-fudge?
01:08:08	Biz	Host	<i>[Biz laughs.]</i> I gotta tell ya, I am looking—
01:08:10	Theresa	Host	Fudge-self?
01:08:10	Biz	Host	—forward to the hashtag #FudgeMasturbation. Now! You're welcome. Get ready for that t-shirt, everyone.
			<i>[Theresa laughs.]</i>
01:08:25	Theresa	Host	Theresa? You are doing a really good job. Thank you for showing up here every week. I really appreciate it. Thank you for showing up every week and I look forward to next week.
01:08:29	Biz	Host	Oh yes. I'll talk to you then!
01:08:31	Theresa	Host	Okay! Bye!
01:08:33	Biz	Host	Bye!

Wow, is it just me or are we accidentally learning a lot more *[through laughter]* these days on this show? There is some synergy happening when it comes to where we start with our check-ins all the way here to the end. One? Mental health—very important. Very important to talk about. To be aware of. To be supportive of. And to

not feel bad about. To be aware of others who are dealing with it in their homes or themselves and to remember to ask for help and offer help! I was so impressed by our check-in caller who, y'know, asked for help! And got it! Over a couple of those days that they needed it. And I think we've said—look. Everybody is so struggling these days that it feels imposing—more imposing than normal—to ask for help. And we've said, "No, no, no. Ask for help, and then be honest about if and what you can offer in terms of help." Y'know. A good example would be, I have told Theresa—I can hold it. I mean, I can't fix it, but you're welcome to text or call and just bleeecccch vomit it all out. I can hold that for you. That's—I got that space. Right? So let's be really mindful of that as we're going through it.

And then that—blech—ties into this whole learning thing! This spin on the idea of what self-care is... none of us are ever gonna put our fucking oxygen masks on first. We always gonna try and put it on our kids first. I mean, even though we know we're not supposed to. But like, it's just our instinct. And this is how it can feel when it comes to general—we all know we're supposed to be taking care of ourselves so that we can take care of our children. Especially now more than ever. And we alllll suck at it. Okay? We all do. Let's just say it out loud and accept it.

01:10:50 Biz

Host

And then, from there, start trying to recreate what self-care is supposed to look like and what we're supposed to be asking for. And I love this idea of, y'know, "If you need permission, do it so that your children will learn how to fail from watching you fail!" Look at that! Boom! Now you have to try something new! Now you have to do something! Right? And this pressure of telling somebody that I'm learning the banjo—especially at this age—feels like I'm an imposter. And I feel like... there's part of me that felt embarrassed to tell people, and just like a bunch of—just a bunch of garbage baggage that I've been carrying around. And I think whenever we wanna try something new or we admit what our self-care is, it can feel like... like we're revealing something very... secret. *[Laughs.]* And everybody's gonna—everybody's gonna laugh at you, Carrie! They're all gonna laugh at you! Right?

I'm not sure that's the case! I think people don't give a shit. Just like they don't give a shit about how we parent. Right? So like, I think maybe we should be out trying things. Not feeling the pressure to be good at it. Not feeling the pressure to love it and then get rid of it. I mean, I'm trying to teach my kids right now that what they're exploring about themselves? Doesn't mean they're like trapped in it forever. Right? Like, and it doesn't mean—like, just 'cause you wanna do ballet—one day, I know we're—y'know, putting resources in—none of my kids take ballet. I'm using this as an example. Okay? But we're putting resources into it. We're blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. If you wake up and decide you don't wanna be a ballerina, I'm not gonna get mad at you! Right? So why would we get mad at ourselves if we try something and it turns out we don't like it?

I don't know, guys. All I know is that it's still really hard. Right now. And we're all looking for something to help alleviate the stress. To maybe spark something in us that is joy. And—or provides us a break. And I think... we deserve it? And... I think... it's not

			embarrassing? And I think... we <u>might</u> actually have some space to try it? And... y'know, I—yeah. I see you! You deserve it! So here's the thing. You're doing a really, <u>really</u> good job. Trying new things or fucking not trying new things. Okay? You are doing a good job getting through this. Every day. Whether it is the monotony of it, the struggle of it, the chaos of it, or even—you can find some joy in this, too! You can find that you have found a way to connect differently to the people in your lives or to things that you care about. That is good, too. You're all doing a good job. Let's try to be there for ourselves. Let's try to be there for each other. And I will talk to you next week. Bye!
01:14:28	Music	Music	"Mama Blues" by Cornbread Ted and the Butterbeans. Strumming acoustic guitar with harmonica and lyrics. <i>I got the lowdown momma blues Got the lowdown momma blues Gots the lowdown momma blues The lowdown momma blues Gots the lowdown momma blues Got the lowdown momma blues You know that's right</i>
01:14:53	Biz	Host	<i>[Music fades somewhat, plays in background of dialogue.]</i> We'd like to thank MaxFun; our producer, Gabe Mara; our husbands, Stefan Lawrence and Jesse Thorn; our perfect children, who provide us with inspiration to say all these horrible things; and of course, you, our listeners. To find out more about the songs you heard on today's podcast and more about the show, please go to MaximumFun.org/onebadmother . For information about live shows, our book and press, please check out OneBadMotherPodcast.com .
01:15:21	Theresa	Host	<i>One Bad Mother</i> is a member of the Maximum Fun family of podcasts. To support the show go to MaximumFun.org/donate .
01:15:44	Music	Transition	<i>[Music continues for a while before fading out.]</i> A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:15:46	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
01:15:47	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:15:48	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:15:50	Speaker 4	Guest	—Audience supported.