

00:00:00	Biz Ellis	Host	Hi. I'm Biz.
00:00:01	Theresa Thorn	Host	And I'm Theresa.
00:00:02	Biz	Host	Due to the pandemic, we bring you One Bad Mother 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 good job.
00:00:20	Music	Music	"Summon the Rawk" by Kevin MacLeod. Driving electric guitar and heavy drums.
00:00:24	Biz	Host	<i>[Continues through dialogue.]</i> This week on <i>One Bad Mother</i> —tweens! Ya can't live with them, you can't get them to shower. We talk to Judith Warner about making sense of middle school. Plus, Biz finds things still confusing.
00:00:38	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz and caller: Wooooo!
00:00:40	Caller	Caller	I tried to woo. This is a check-in. I'm not doing very good. <i>[Sighs.]</i> It's the last three weeks of my semester and I don't have enough study time and that's just like... a layer that's there? Always? And the bigger thing is I'm really tired and I'm really lonely. And... <i>[inaudible]</i> in school and working and don't really know how to make mom friends <i>[inaudible]</i> at the same stage as me. And I'm... my husband has burnout. His job and it's hard because then I'm tiptoeing around and it can't be my turn. 'Cause I need it to be my turn some days. But I'm hanging in there, and calling in and hearing that I'm doing a good job helps. So thank you for this. And this show. You guys are amazing and a bright point in these long, long weeks. So you guys are all doing a really good job.
00:01:52	Biz	Host	You are doing... a <u>really</u> good job. It's not just one layer you're talking about, it's multiple layers! This is a good check-in. I think this is a... good thing to check in about. First of all, good job going to school. That's—that's <u>so</u> incredibly difficult to do while also having kids. It's just not something I think that people focus on that much about how much juggling that actually is? And you are remarkable for doing that. And it's also really hard when a partner is going through their own work-related burnout. On top of everything else. But the thing I hear you say the most is—when <u>you</u> need the time—when you need to have the day off—the attention, the focus—and you do! You do deserve that. I sometimes wonder if we are really sitting in the knowledge that everything is more when there's suddenly a kid in your house. And then we've been living in a worldwide pandemic that has taken away from us the basic support systems. It has made everything that once wasn't stressful or a little inconvenient <u>incredibly</u> stressful and inconvenient! <i>[Laughs.]</i>

Ah! It's like always walking around with fire right behind you. Y'know? And you're like that cartoon where there's the gunpowder is leaking out of the bin you're carrying and there's a little spark chasing you. And any minute, kabloom! I think you're doing remarkable? And I am so glad that you checked in. And finding mom friends is really hard when we can't get out to even... be weirdos at the park circling other parents 'cause that was a thing I've done. But I just... hope that you know how amazing you are? And that they will come. Those friends will come. And you are doing amazing.

Also doing amazing are just everybody out there who is working to make this new life in pandemic times possible. We've been doing this, guys, for over a year now. And so it can kinda sometimes feel like maybe we're done? Or maybe this is normal? But it's not. So I just wanna say I still wanna continue thanking the people who are just putting in so much extra right now. Everybody in the medical profession, you're amazing. You really are amazing. And again, I really wanna focus on not just the amazing doctors and nurses, but the people who keep facilities clean. They are like—every time you get in an elevator, somebody was in there cleaning that to make sure it was safe. Now look, they were always in there cleaning it? But now I feel like... they deserve serious even more recognition because it's a matter of safety and health and I think that's just remarkable?

I wanna thank all the people who work in the service industry and have continued to be pleasant to those of us like, "Argh!" Wandering back in for the first time? People at Starbucks? I haven't been into a Starbucks in a year and a half and now I've started to like, "Argh!" Wander in like some sort of, "I don't know how to function in a society anymore!" You guys are all still so nice! And still trying to get to know our names. I just really think that's nice. People working at the grocery stores, you guys have been doing this and holding down the fort, as it were, for over a year. And I really see you and appreciate you. Hey, teachers—how have you guys enjoyed pivoting a shit-ton this year? You have! A lot! And that's gotta be so hard and it's not like you had some sort of free pass for having re-entry anxiety not being prat of your experience. I just want to say I see you. And now finally—I mean, there's so many people. But finally I kinda wanna focus on everybody who's been working so hard on vaccine rollout and making sure that it goes smoothly when people get their vaccines. As well as those who are working on extending help to other countries that really need vaccine support right now. So I see you and thank you.

00:07:18 Biz

Host

Speaking of the coronavirus, I am still really confused about a lot of stuff with it. You would think I would have a better understanding of how things work. I don't! Today, the *New York Times* came out saying that the CDC was now saying that if you are fully vaccinated, you no longer have to wear a mask. Now. Of course there's been like 20,000 pages that follow that. Like, "Well, if the restaurant says that's okay. Businesses can make you wear masks. Cities. States. All of that." There's a huge long list of different ways it's not actually a free-for-all. But my question with all of these daily sort of updates on, "Soon we're gonna be able to do this! And this!" None of those include children. As far as I understand it, our children are still at the same risk that they were when this started. In fact, we actually know a little more now that they aren't totally immune to getting it. They may be a little safer because the adults around them are vaccinated, but I keep seeing these scenarios being tossed around by the news and media and all kinda stuff. Where, "Ah! Hey, everybody! You can have people over to your backyard! And if you're all vaccinated, you can take your masks off!" Okay. Great. Now. What if I have people over to my backyard and we're all vaccinated but our children are there? Do they get to not wear a mask? Do they have to wear a mask? Do they have to wear a mask while I parade around without a mask? 'Cause my

children will have questions about that. Should we keep wearing our masks? I mean, think about it! All the teachers are vaccinated, so the kids go to school—do the kids still wear a mask? I don't know! And I feel like, once again, we are publicly making accommodations to make life great for some adults. *[Laughs.]* Possibly some adults who don't have kids. I don't know. But there're still kids in the world and they have adults that take care of them and I just still feel like there's this gap. And I don't know what's happening. Speaking of not knowing what's happening, I think that ties in nicely to what we're gonna talk about today, which is—tweens! And adolescents. With Judith Warner, author of *And Then They Stopped Talking To Me: Making Sense of Middle School*. Woo!

00:09:53	Music	Music	Banjo strums; cheerful banjo music continues through dialogue.
00:09:54	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> .
00:10:02	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.
00:10:06	Theresa	Host	Nothing we say constitutes <u>professional</u> parenting advice.
00:10:09	Biz	Host	Biz and Theresa's children are brilliant, lovely, and exceedingly extraordinary.
00:10:12	Theresa	Host	Nothing said on this podcast about them implies otherwise.

[Banjo music fades out.]

[Biz and Judith repeatedly affirm each other as they discuss the weekly topic.]

00:10:18	Biz	Host	This week, we are welcoming Judith Warner, author of the new book <i>And Then They Stopped Talking To Me: Making Sense of Middle School</i> . She's also published eight previous works of nonfiction, including the <i>New York Times</i> bestsellers <i>Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety</i> , and <i>Hillary Clinton: The Inside Story</i> . Plus the multiple-award-winning <i>We've Got Issues: Children and Parents in the Age of Medication</i> . She's also a long-time <i>New York Times</i> contributor best known for her popular column, "Domestic Disturbances." A former special correspondent for <i>Newsweek</i> in Paris. She has lived in Washington, D.C. for 20 years and speaks frequently on American family life, workplace issues, and mental health! Woo! Welcome, Judith! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:11:09	Judith Warner	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> Thank you! Thanks so much!
00:11:11	Biz	Host	I love that like—"Family life, workplace issues, mental health." That there is some fun cocktail party discussions. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:11:20	Judith	Guest	Yeah. People run from me. Honestly. At cocktail parties. People say things like, "Okay..." and then they turn and walk away.
00:11:27	Biz	Host	What?! They do? That's so bold of them! That's so bold.
00:11:31	Judith	Guest	I just bum them out.
00:11:32	Biz	Host	Oh no. Come over and sit next to me! It's fine.
00:11:36	Judith	Guest	That's the thing. You have to find your people wherever you are. You have to find whoever's gonna—

[Biz laughs.]

--find the thing that you say funny rather than just disturbingly dark. Y'know. I find it funny, but.

00:11:48 Biz Host When we talk about tweens, that sounds like that'll sum up tween talk 100%. But before we get into that, I wanna ask you what we ask our guests, which is—who lives in your house?

00:11:58 Judith Guest Well, my husband, Max, and—thanks to COVID—my daughters, Julia and Emily. They're 24 and 21. And then—well, two dogs. Grady, who is a Sheltie and is very old—sixteen-and-a-half—and Pickle, a Chihuahua. And then a turtle. *[Laughs.]* Lily.

00:12:18 Biz Host *[Biz laughs.]*
Whose turtle was it?

00:12:19 Judith Guest Emily's.

00:12:21 Biz Host Okay. And if it wasn't COVID, would the turtle be living with Emily?

00:12:27 Judith Guest No. I don't think so.

[Biz laughs.]

00:12:42 Biz Host Although it's hard to say. This time of year, maybe Emily would've been back anyway? Y'know? For the end of the semester. I'm not sure. But Emily would very much like not to live with Lily anymore, but Lily is probably gonna outlive all of us. Yeah.

00:12:45 Judith Guest Oh yeah. Turtles are a time investment. *[Laughs.]*

00:12:50 Biz Host Yeah. and she has just a foul temperament? You try talking to her--

00:12:52 Judith Guest Wait, Emily or the turtle?
[Through laughter] Both!

[Biz laughs.]

00:12:57 Biz Host No. I didn't say that. The turtle.
Okay. Fair enough. I—look. Turtle's gonna live a long time. I would probably have the same temperament that a turtle has. I mean, turtles—why are they supposed to be happy all the time?

00:13:07 Judith Guest I don't know. She tells me to fuck off at least once a day.

00:13:11 Biz Host Does she? And she's like—*[Laughs.]* "Fuck off, lady!" It's just like having a tween! You have grown kids that are currently in your house because of the COVID, but I have noticed that—'cause I'm getting to see you over Zoom—that your wall behind you is covered in children's artwork. Not artwork done by college-age students, but by very much younger—much younger. Tell me about this thing!
[Laughs.]

00:13:41 Judith Guest I guess part of it is that I've been overwhelmed ever since these went up, and I kept waiting to have a calm moment—
[Biz laughs.]

--so that I can think about what to do with them. And then of course while I've been waiting for that calm moment after the past—I dunno—thirteen, fifteen years—all this other art has just piled up everywhere of theirs. And so that really overwhelms and stresses me. And then I feel like, how do I make decisions? It's like some kind of terrible *Sophie's Choice* thing.

[Biz laughs.]

How do you decide whose artwork comes down or which pieces and y'know. It's just—it's honestly it's too much for me.

00:14:24 Biz Host Yeah. No. Just—you can—it's okay. Live in the shrine that you made to yeah indecision. I love this. I would just like... like, I'm also tempted to just be like, "Get a leaf blower and just walk in. And then whatever stays—survival of the fittest."

00:14:41 Judith Guest That's a really good idea!

00:14:43 Biz Host You're welcome. It's part of my parenting book, *How To Get Rid of Your Kids' Art*. Buy a shredder and set up a therapy appointment to deal with how soulless you've become. *[Laughs.]*

00:14:56 Judith Guest *[Judith laughs.]*
Y'know, we had a fire during which we—it was just in the kitchen, but I had to get rid of everything.

00:15:00 Biz Host You could've put all the art in there!

00:15:03 Judith Guest But I saved the art! *[Laughs.]*

[Biz laughs.]

00:15:10 Biz Host I—yeah. I don't know.
Wow. That's—that's telling. Alright. I actually think it's very poignant, given talking about tweens, because I have a tween. And that kids' artwork—there definitely comes kind of a moment where your kids are making you sweet art. And a moment where you no longer have anything to hang up on the fridge or the wall. There's this day... where it's not coming in as much. *[Laughs.]* In fact, maybe you're rooting through their room for some art! I'm just kidding. I'm not rooting through my children's room. I guess I wanna start with just when did you realize that sort of thing was happening in your house?

00:15:55 Judith Guest Oh, probably—you're saying it just now. I mean, I actually think that you put your—you hit the nail right on the head of why it's difficult to take the art down. Right? Because it marks the passage of time. Because it marks their passage into adolescence and young adulthood and all of that is so much more challenging, right, than the early childhood years. So there's a lot of that, probably, not wanting to part with all that. But in terms of—y'know, it's funny. The parental mourning, y'know, nostalgia, sort of melancholic feeling that often accompanies their kids going into middle school? Getting to early adolescence. What you described. Y'know, going from basically making you all this art with hearts all over it, y'know, to not making you art at all.

[Biz laughs.]

And sort of reluctantly remembering Mother's Day or that kinda thing. Y'know, it's well-documented that that's a really, really difficult time for parents. And it's been remarked upon by psychologists for a long time. And we don't tend to recognize it, though. We don't talk about it. I don't remember anyone talking about it.

00:17:06 Biz Host I'm listening to you say that—those words—just came out of your mouth. But I can't think of that being something that's addressed. When I think middle school and growing into adolescence, I think a lot about the experiences that the child might be going through but not... the... god. I cannot believe I'm gonna say this, because I always thought I would really look forward to these years 'cause ha, ha, ha, ha? Hilarious. Somebody slam a door in my face, please.

There is a weird moment of sort of grief! Of... and it's really different for everybody. I've got friends who are experiencing it very—where I'm like, "Oh, that—that's weird? I'm good with that." And it's almost like back at the beginning days! Where you're like, "Oh, your baby does that? Huh. Okay." *[Laughs.]*

00:18:08 Judith Guest Yeah! It's... there are a lotta things that become more and more tough. I actually was looking up—as you were speaking—I was getting up the manuscript of the book because there's this quote I love but I couldn't remember. And it's 1994 that these child development experts—Reed Larsen and Maryse Richards--called the switch "the deflation of childhood happiness." Which I think it such a great phrase, right?

00:18:32 Biz Host Well, that's depressing. *[Laughs.]*

00:18:35 Judith Guest Oh, sorry! *[Laughs.]* No! I think it's beautiful! I think it's beautiful.

00:18:39 Biz Host No! It is. It is a great phrase. Is that in regards to the parents' view or the kids' view? Because for the kids it's like, "Welcome—"

00:18:49 Judith Guest Parents!

00:18:50 Biz Host "—to the—" good! *[Through laughter]* Because if I was a kid and heard that I'd be like, "Thanks."

00:18:54 Judith Guest No. I think that's--it's in the eyes of the parents. They seem them going from being these happy-go-lucky kids, right? To sort of having the weight of the world on their shoulders because they become so much more aware of what's going on around them. And then of course the social stuff ramps up and that causes a lot of angst and it's often really painful for the parents to see that. And it seems like something is—sometimes it seems like something is really wrong, but it isn't necessarily. It's just that they're growing up. Y'know. And I think if you have—

[Biz laughs.]

00:19:32 Biz Host Sorry! So I know! This is why people run away from me. But--

00:19:37 Judith Guest No, no, it's good! I'm ready. Look, I'm here. Looking at you. *[Laughs.]* No, I see that. Yeah. No. But y'know—especially if you have a super-smiley child, it's a shock to see them become more serious! But I felt that very acutely with my older daughter. But then you think about a teenager and adult who is walking around kinda goofy and smiley all the time wouldn't—y'know, that's not the way--

00:20:00 Biz Host That would also be weird. *[Laughs.]*

00:20:01 Judith Guest It is! Yeah! Exactly! So.

00:20:03 Biz Host I wanna get more into what—like, some of the research you were doing in the book. But before I do that, I gotta ask you—we haven't done this on the show in a really long time. But we used to sort of play this game of, "Before kids/after kids." Right? Like I was really sure about a lot of things before kids got into my house. Right? "I am never doing this" or "I am gonna think this is so great" or "They're gonna love it when I play guitar." Right? *[Laughs.]*

[Judith laughs.]

Like, all that stuff. And then you have kids and you're like, "Here is the iPad and just stop yelling at me about the guitar music." Right? So I... before children... and even when my kids were really little I was like, "Bring on—" I am not an infant person. I don't do babies. I'm not a baby person. That's not my area of comfort. I mean, they're nice. But like—not my place. I was like, "Bring on the tween

and teen years. I am so ready to watch some teen angst.” To all of this kind of stuff—slam the door, call me horrible things, storm out. I can’t wait. And then my child dressed themselves in an outfit that I thought was—just made them look awful. And they wanted to do this thing with their hair. And I realized maybe... maybe I was not as cool as I thought I was. And I had to really force myself to think about what my parents let me do! Right? They let me be as awkward as I could possibly walk through the world being, by choice. Right? And so—did you—what did you—did you have preconceived thoughts of, “Ah, yeah!” *[Laughs.]* “That’s gonna be sweet!” *[Laughs.]* Or “It’s gonna be awful!”

00:21:47 Judith Guest

Y’know, it’s funny. I was thinking—I was trying to think what—I think I didn’t at all know what to expect. I knew it wasn’t gonna be anything like my home growing up. And I mean this is sort of heavy, but this is the truth. This is what came to mind for me. Before my older daughter was born and even through the early years of both of their childhood—maybe through much of their childhood—I felt so strongly that I never wanted to make them feel like they were valued for their achievements. That was just probably the most important thing to me. That they know that they were valued for who they were on the inside and that externals really didn’t matter so much. And then they get to eleventh grade, and all of a sudden it’s like, “*[Gasps]* You don’t have any leadership positions on your—”

[Biz laughs.]

“—and what about raising these grades?” And I remember saying that—I don’t know. I guess I talked to somebody who brought up the leadership thing and I said something to my older daughter, and she was like, *[through laughter]* “You are asking me to go back on everything—every value you’ve ever taught me. Through my lifetime.” And I was like, “Yeah, but... yeah.”

[Biz laughs.]

Y’know? So—*[Laughs.]* I mean, it’s like deep down I still believe what I believe ‘cause I know that it’s right and there really is no happiness to come from valuing yourself for externals ‘cause they can be taken away so easily. It just doesn’t make you happy. But at the same time, sometimes I wondered if I didn’t set my kids up for... success the way other parents did. By not pushing them to be competitive. By—just a lot of things like doing things that I thought were right? That sort of went with my principles. Sometimes living in D.C.—and this sounds like a humblebrag and I don’t mean it that way—but I would literally think, like, “Oh, life would be so much easier for them if I just hadn’t said that.” Y’know?

[Biz laughs.]

00:23:48 Biz Host

And I really don’t mean this as a humblebrag. I honestly don’t. No, I know that you don’t mean it as a humblebrag. Because you’re—I am a person with kids. So I know what you’re saying. I know exactly what—I see you. Because that’s—I think for everybody... it’s something different? But it’s the same. It’s the—y’know, and it comes not just at the eleventh-grade hour. It comes

at five. At, y'know, at twelve. At seventeen. At thirty-two, where you're looking and you're thinking, "If I had, or if I hadn't, would they be better prepared? Would they be different? Would they—" And y'know, it—*[sighs]*. If I'd sleep trained instead of doing this then maybe my child would be less of a picky eater. I don't fucking know. Right? But it's just... this... built-in... sort of narrative that's been given to us that we're supposed to really beat ourselves up about stuff that's already happened! So I just wanted to say, maybe you did! Maybe you shouldn't *[through laughter]* have done that to your children. I don't know! But it's done. All we can do is what we think is best at the time. And this ties in to the middle school thing so well! Because I think--

00:25:12 Judith Guest

Well, it does. Even—yeah. I'm thinking about it in terms of the middle school thing because y'know I never thought of myself as weird. I always thought of myself as really pretty mainstream. Y'know. You could probably already disabuse me of that because the turtle talks to me? But I did! I never thought I was in any way out there. And I realized in middle school—when my daughters were in middle school and they weren't like everybody else. And I thought, "Oh my god, maybe I should've—I should've said more things like, "Well what's everybody doing?" Because I'm an only child. I was an only child. And I think when you're an only child very often you're like—

00:25:46 Biz Host
00:25:48 Judith Guest

[Biz laughs.]

Well that's it. That explains it! *[Laughs.]*

Yeah! Exactly! No, you're in your head all the time. So I did start thinking about this at that age because that's when you see the social hierarchies forming and everything. And you think like, "Oh, how come—" I remember thinking, "How come they can't be fake?" 'Cause I would think about how I got through being that age. And it was by being just totally fake.

00:26:10 Biz Host

Okay. Let's shift into this. Because I think the book—you go into not only the history, sort of, of how we viewed adolescence—and I love that really it wasn't until recently—*[Laughs.]* In the grand scheme of things that we started actually trying to learn about what was actually happening. And then it's almost at times... less about what's happening to them and what's happening—I think about that sort of notion that, y'know, "Back in my day, we had it great! Back in my day, we did—" Y'know, "I used to walk to school when I was two years old!" Like, whatever. "And I was such a great person." But I think with adolescence, I don't ever wanna be like, "Back in my day we would get sent to work in factories when we turned twelve." Or get married. Like, that's not—*[Laughs.]* I'm alright. I understand we might have adjusted really far the other way as well? But it is about our experiences sometimes being placed on our kids. So I—that's a lot. Let's go back and start with sort of the history... like... how does knowing the history of this help me not be super uncool in front of my kids' friends? Solve that. *[Laughs.]*

00:27:28 Judith Guest
00:27:31 Biz Host
00:27:32 Judith Guest
00:27:33 Biz Host
00:27:35 Judith Guest
00:27:41 Biz Host

Well that's impossible. There's nothing you can do for that.

Oh, dammit!

So just forget it.

Just be super cool. *[Laughs.]*

No. I mean—*[Laughs.]* You're gonna be—I'm sorry to tell you. You're gonna be uncool no matter what.

I know. Oh, I know. I just rev that up.

00:27:44 Judith Guest And that's okay! 'Cause you don't wanna be the mom in *Mean Girls*. Isn't it *Mean Girls* with the terrible mom?

00:27:47 Biz Host No, I don't wanna be the best friend! I don't wanna be the best friend. I've already told my daughter that several times. "I'm not your best friend. I'm your mother." Anyway. *[Laughs.]*

00:27:55 Judith Guest Yeah. So that's just a lost cause. But I think—well what I found really interesting in looking at so many things. I mean, I loved learning about the history. But it's that people have been saying the same things about kids this age. Adults have been. Ever since they started spending a lot of time with them, which they didn't do until the mid- to late-nineteenth-century for most people. And then they—because kids would go out and start working. Y'know. Either for other people as servants or in the fields and that kind of thing. If they were really wealthy they would go to boarding school. The boys, at least. At a pretty young age. And also the early adolescence was later because the age of puberty came later. And so there wasn't so much of a gap between puberty and marriage, basically. Right? So y'know. And then that, too, started to change in the nineteenth century because of more food and less manual labor. At least for middle-class people in cities. Who were also the people who saw the value of having their kids stay in school longer. And before that, if a kid stayed in through—all the way through sixth grade and was there all the time, that was pretty good. So you have these families who start having to spend much more time together when their kids are 11, 12, 13, 14. And 15. And immediately you get the same complaints! "This is the worst time in someone's parenting life." Although it was always mothers.

[Biz laughs.]

"Y'know, the kids are obnoxious. They're awful." And then once they start going to school together in junior high school, there are the same fear again of bad influences. Kids who you don't know from the neighborhood who come from further away. From families—you don't know what the families are like. You don't know what kind of—again, what kind of influences are coming into your kid. And complaints about media! And at the time, early on it was radio or motion pictures. Y'know.

[Biz laughs.]

00:30:00 Biz Host The talkies!

00:30:02 Judith Guest Yep! These were the sources of corruption! But parents talked about them the same way they talk about social media now. So it was really—it was fun to see that, and it was also fun to look back and also focus on the present statistics and see that every generation of parents is terrified that their young adolescents are getting up to all sorts of new, scary, terrible things that they couldn't even imagine. And it's just not true. Y'know. It never was true, really. And I guess it was true for people our age. *[Laughs.]*

[Biz laughs.]

00:30:39 Biz Host But, y'know.

00:30:40 Judith Guest But we're different. *[Laughs.]*

00:30:40 Judith Guest We were like the pinnacle of badness? And everything has gotten better and safer and just less pseudo-grownup since then.

00:30:52	Biz	Host	<p>Well it's interesting. It's impossible to have kids in your house—I think what's unique about middle school is as adults, I think it is the first window into our personal memories that are really concrete. I mean, they may have been distorted with time? But I have vague notions of being seven or in second grade or like whatever. But like, <u>middle</u> school... I really remember... more of the elements than I do anything else. So now that my child's entering that, I only see those things. And it's so funny 'cause I was a good kid, but I was also a risk-taker. And so I can remember doing things that I think, "Aw, Jesus, I hope my kids don't do that!" Or if they do, God I hope they have the sense to pick up the phone and call me! <i>[Laughs.]</i> Right? Or they know how to get home! On their own! Just whatever it is—I just hope they know. And of course the only way they're gonna know is if I tell them. But I think... like, a product of our generation that I don't think was there before—when I was a kid, Judy Blume--that was about it. 'K? 16—like, these are sort of the resources—<i>Seventeen Magazine</i>. Right? These are the resources that were available for me to understand what being a teen was about. My oldest—by the time they were in fifth grade—had already read <i>Nightmares of Middle School</i>—like, a <u>million</u> books on middle school. Because we all grew up and started writing about how horrible middle school was! And every TV was about horrible middle school. <i>[Laughs.]</i> So my—Kat's always like, "Is it gonna be—" Like, last night literally we're sitting on the couch and they turn to me and say, "Am I gonna be okay?" <i>[Laughs.]</i> "Am I gonna be okay?" And I was like, "Just asking that question means you are going to be okay. You are—it's gonna be awkward. It's gonna be awful. There's gonna be some ups. Some downs. All that. But that's like... that means you're <u>doing</u> it right." Did you find that now... kids already have a preconceived idea of what nightmare—<i>[Laughs.]</i>—nightmares await them? Have we ruined it again? <i>[Laughs.]</i></p>
00:33:30	Judith	Guest	<p>I'm trying to think. I'm not sure they do. 'Cause I think they look forward—I think kids always look forward to getting older. At least up to a certain age, right? I mean—so I don't think they necessarily do. I also think they know—I mean, y'know, they are so much more with it than we give them credit for being. Often. Right? So I don't know the newer books on this, but the clique novels. Y'know. That my daughters read for fun and that we used to listen to as audiobooks sometimes in the car.</p>
			<p><i>[Biz laughs.]</i></p>
			<p>Everybody knew they were ridiculous. I mean, they knew just as much as I did that they were parodies of horrible girls. Y'know. And I felt like, "Y'know, it's interesting—" Because my younger daughter, who's the one with the really dark sensibility, <u>loved</u> <i>Anne of Green Gables</i>. Y'know? And that's the story of a girl around—y'know, going through these ages, too. I think the problem is actually for us as adults is the eyes that we look at them with makes—and we overreact, I think, as a result? Because we remember what things felt like to us and we assume it's gonna feel the same way to them. We just sort of lose the distance. And that's too bad.</p>
00:34:42	Biz	Host	<p>I'm almost kind of mad that it doesn't feel the same way. Sometimes I'm worried I'm gonna be mad--</p>
00:34:47	Judith	Guest	<p>Oh, god, I'm so glad.</p>

00:34:49	Biz	Host	Right? Like... how—why are you not reacting the way that I reacted? For better or for worse! That sounds so messed up!
00:34:56	Judith	Guest	Oh, I'm so glad. They have so much more equanimity than I did. I am so glad. Yeah.
00:35:01	Biz	Host	I watched mine navigate the first of a big friendship kind of blow-up thing? And it was <u>so</u> respectful of boundaries? And I was like--
00:35:11	Judith	Guest	Oh, well that's good!
00:35:12	Biz	Host	"What?!" I was like this, "What is even happening?" I was like, "Look, baby, you just need to be prepared that you could go to school today and that this and this might happen. Just be prepared! It won't happen, but if it did—" and like— <i>[Laughs.]</i> None of it happened? But my parents—I told my parents and they were like, "No, that was the right thing to do was to prepare them for the worst." <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:35:35	Judith	Guest	That's so funny. 'Cause I think—see, I think it depends on the kid. Right?
00:35:40	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz: It does. Oh! Everything depends on the kid.
00:35:44	Biz	Host	Judith: It <u>totally</u> depends on the kid. Yup.
00:35:47	Judith	Guest	And it depends on the parent! Yeah! That's the problem with parenting stuff. I mean, by and large. Right? And that's why—in the things that I write—I like to interview a lot of people and then have their stories be there and their voices. Because at least that way I feel like you're more likely to find something that speaks to you if you have a lot of different voices than when you have kind of 'one-size-fits-all' ideas. 'Cause it just doesn't work like that!
00:36:09	Biz	Host	Well I think what's also nice about how many voices you include in the book is that the sort of reminder that there is no one way to do it? But that does not mean we don't share commonalities, right? That there aren't things—so I—actually I would like to maybe wrap up on what did you find that people found the hardest? What did you find was the hardest thing?
00:36:33	Judith	Guest	Definitely—as parents, you mean. Not as middle schoolers themselves. Yeah.
00:36:36	Biz	Host	Yeah, yeah, yeah. Not as kids. Who cares. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:36:40	Judith	Guest	As parents, watching their kids struggle socially. Watching them go through a hard time socially. And especially if they—the kids—got depressed or something like that. It's like agony. Y'know. Just agony. It's one thing to go through it yourself and it is horrifically painful at that age, but to have it happen to the person you love—or the people you love—the most in the world? Y'know, that was the pain of it. And then also feeling so isolated with the pain. Because they—people weren't really talking about that kind of thing. And parents at that age tend to really want to keep up a good face in a way that they don't when their kids are much, much younger and there's more solidarity around not sleeping or whatever. So y'know they end up feeling just alone and even maybe ashamed and wondering what's going on in other people's heads. And I think if the book can make people feel less isolated with their angst when they have kids that age? Then I think that would be a great thing. Because so many of us, I know, felt like that. When our kids went through middle school.
00:37:48	Biz	Host	Well, congratulations on getting out on the other side of it.
00:37:52	Judith	Guest	Thank you. Thank you.

00:37:54	Biz	Host	<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
00:37:59	Judith	Guest	You did it! Your children are no longer adolescents. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:38:03	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Yeah, but you know—writing the book allowed me to move on, period. Judith: From stuff that I was holding onto. Yeah. It really did.
00:38:08	Biz	Host	Biz: Well I was wondering about that. Yeah. I would imagine-- Yeah. I would—well, now you need to write a book about art on your wall—
			<i>[Judith laughs.]</i>
00:38:20	Judith	Guest	--and choices you made that may affect your children as adults. So I look forward to those two books! Uh, no, thank you. I don't think so. Thank you. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:38:24	Biz	Host	<i>[Biz laughs.]</i> Alright. Judith, I appreciate you coming on so much. The book is really... it is helpful. It does help sort of ground you in "It's not just you." Y'know? I mean, I think every stage of parenting has that moment of feeling completely alone? And while it may not be better or worse? It's different than whatever came before it. And it's nice to know that it's normal. So... I will make sure that everybody knows where they can get the book and find our more about you. Thank you so much! You're doing a remarkable job, actually. You're just great!
00:39:11	Judith	Guest	Well thank you so much. It was so great talking to you. I really enjoyed it. And thank you for having me on and talking about the book!
00:39:17	Biz	Host	Absolutely! Alright! Have a good day!
00:39:20	Judith	Guest	You, too.
00:39:21	Music	Music	"Ones and Zeroes" by "Awesome." Steady, driving electric guitar with drum and woodwinds.
00:39:38	Music	Promo	<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:39:39	Theresa	Host	Cheerful ukulele and whistling play in the background. <i>One Bad Mother</i> is supported in part by Billie, the award-winning razor for days when you want an extra-smooth shave.
00:39:44	Biz	Host	Well, everyone? It's summertime. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Pandemic or no pandemic, it's time to expose ourselves!
			<i>[Theresa laughs.]</i>
00:40:28	Theresa	Host	And if hair removal is your thing, Billie is the way to do it. Hair removal is my thing. And sometimes there may have been a build-up of me not removing hair from my legs. And some razors I use, you just <i>[makes harsh "kkkskk"-ing noise]</i> over and over and over again. But not with Billie! One and I am done! It's so nice! And weird that I'm talking about how great a razor is? But I gotta tell ya—it's the little things. And that razor makes shaving a <u>pleasure</u> . So guys, get the best razor you'll ever own! Go to MyBillie.com/mother!
00:40:34	Biz	Host	Look. It is just \$9 to get your starter kit. Plus free shipping, always. You can go to MyBillie.com/mother .
00:40:47	Theresa	Host	That's spelled MyB-I-L-L-I-E.com/mother .

00:40:58 Theresa Host *[Music fades out.]*
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 better about ourselves by hearing yours. You can share some of your own by calling 206-350-9485. That's 206-350-9485.

00:41:18 Biz Host *[Singing]* Genius fail time! Ding-dong, who's there? Theresa is here!

[Theresa laughs.]

00:41:27 Theresa Host It's so nice to see youuuuu!
00:41:31 Biz Host That was kind of like a knock-knock joke? But our version.
00:41:35 Theresa Host It's a ding-dong joke! *[Laughs.]* It's our version.
00:41:36 Biz Host It's a ding-dong special.
Ding—*[Laughs.]* It's what my college band name was. Alright.
Theresa?

[Theresa laughs.]

00:41:45 Theresa Host How are you?
I'm fine.
00:41:46 Biz Host Yeah, no. Yeah, me too. We're "fine."
00:41:49 Theresa Host We're "fine."
00:41:50 Biz Host We are "fine."
00:41:51 Theresa Host We're fine!
00:41:53 Biz Host With that said, genius me!
00:41:55 Clip Clip *[Dramatic, swelling music in background.]*

Biz: Wow! Oh my God! Oh my God! I saw what you did! Oh my God! I'm paying attention! Wow! You, mom, are a genius. Oh my God, that's fucking genius!

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

00:42:09 Theresa Host Okay. I'm so fine that it's been—

[Biz laughs.]

--no problem at all to keep up with all the different stuff that all the three schools are trying to cram into the end of the school year. Which I get. It's not their fault. They have to cram it in. How else are things gonna function? One of the things that I really honestly did not do fine with was Oscar, my first grader's, school was having their spring fundraiser. And it's a super cute little pledge-a-thon to get out and get active and you just set up your little page and you ask friends and family to donate and whatever. But it was one of the things! Like I've talked about before! Where I saw the emails and I just... it was at max capacity. I could not do it. And day after day I was thinking to myself—

[Biz laughs.]

--"this might be a thing that I just never do. I just never click the link. I just may never get to it." And we were deep into the week and Oscar said, "There's a thing going on. Am I—I'm supposed to be—" and I was like, "Oh, yeah, we'll do that." But no. I was thinking to

myself, "We're never gonna do that." Well. Last night was Thursday night, the night before the last day of this.

[Biz laughs.]

And you know what? I thought to myself, "I'm gonna just do it. I'm in under the wire here. I love this school. I care about this school. Even my bare-minimum, last-24-hours, last-ditch effort to show up for this is meaningful." And I did it and it did not take very much time. It probably took ten minutes. And it felt... so good. To not just let that pass by, but to actually just... do something. Do a thing towards it.

00:44:04	Biz	Host	That actually is really genius. I mean, the genius is—even though it was like the last minute? Saying, "I'm gonna still do this." Right? Not beating yourself up. Not overthinking. Just, "You know what? I love this school. I wanna support it. I'm just gonna do it." I think that that is... it's really remarkable. Because lots of times I would've been like, "Well, I've just ruined that."
00:44:32	Theresa	Host	Yeah. I came close. Yeah. Yeah.
00:44:34	Biz	Host	You came close! I believe you. But it's really good when we then go <u>past</u> the "close" mark.
00:44:40	Theresa	Host	Yeah! You can be late! It's that thing of, "You made it! You can be late! You can be late." You can still just do it. Yeah. Yeah. We made it.
00:44:49	Biz	Host	Oh, I love that. You made it. Well, you are doing an amazing job.
00:44:53	Theresa	Host	Thanks, Biz.
00:44:55	Biz	Host	So both of my children had to go to the orthodontist. This was our first time in for Ellis. Second time in for Kat, who went in like two years ago and then I was like—for example, if following up with the orthodontist was an email— <i>[Laughs.]</i> I never followed up. Y'know, two years later. But some of those teeth just fell on out, so that was helpful. But we go. New—different orthodontist. Go in. And look, the genius is... I don't usually do the dental trips? That's usually something just early on Stefan and I made an agreement he would do all dental trips. But orthodontist, I was like, "I can do this. This is not—I can do the orthodontist." And they had to do, y'know, a lot of scans of the mouth? And I just have to say... Ellis was <u>so</u> great.
00:45:58	Theresa	Host	Wow.
00:45:59	Biz	Host	And on several occasions would say, "I need a break." And the assistant who was doing the scans would say, "Okay." And he'd be like, "Yeah, I just need to take some breaths and catch my breath and okay! I'm ready now." Right? And he did this repeatedly? And I—y'know, that is a skill that I want my kids to know.
00:46:22	Theresa	Host	So important. It's huge.
00:46:24	Biz	Host	And I'm not sure that's one that I've talked a lot about with Ellis but I've done it a lot with Kat? And I just... I was just <u>really</u> happy? To witness it. I'm going to take credit for it. And what kind of sucks is that I can see the older place, like where Kat is now, where they just pretty much stayed silent through the whole thing even though at one point--
00:46:54	Theresa	Host	Yeah, because they felt pressured. Yeah.
00:46:55	Biz	Host	Right. As opposed to when they were younger they used to speak out. But now I think they—yeah. They didn't. So I'm like, "As long as it's floating around in there somewhere." Right? So I'm taking credit for my children being able to communicate the space that they need.

00:47:10	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Theresa: Advocating for themselves. That's what they're doing. They're advocating! It's self-advocacy. Yeah. It's so huge. Good job.
			Biz: Getting out of their mouth. Yes. They're advocating. Yeah. They're advocating. Yes. So...
00:47:18	Biz	Host	Thank you.
00:47:19	Caller	Caller	<i>[Answering machine beeps.]</i>
			Hi, Biz! Hi, Theresa! I'm calling with a genius moment. It is a very small genius moment. But I am proud of it! So I'm gonna share it. This morning I... was getting ready for work and I have a twenty-month-old. And yeah, I was trying to keep him busy while I'm trying to finish getting ready. It was very difficult. So I asked him to put ice cubes into my tumbler for my cold brew and he sat there and he put the ice cubes into my tumbler! The trick is that he licked every single one of them as he put it in.
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
			But that's okay. I think... maybe pre-motherhood that might've bothered me, but any more that's not really a thing. <i>[Laughs.]</i> My gross-o-meter doesn't work anymore. So. <i>[Laughs.]</i> Anyways, I just thought I'd share. I'm doing a great job and so are you. Bye!
00:48:15	Biz	Host	It's less of a trick and more of a, "Your kid's licking all your ice cubes." But— <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like that— <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:48:21	Theresa	Host	I think it's like a "...congratulations?" overall?
00:48:24	Biz	Host	Right. The genius is—you no longer get grossed out. And what that does is allows you to just move on in your day. Right? Like, pre-kids, something might gross us out. We'd have to stop and redo and like... be late and prolong and now it's just like, "Lick 'em and stick 'em." And I--
00:48:48	Theresa	Host	It's fine!
00:48:49	Biz	Host	Yeah. I love this. This is--
00:48:50	Theresa	Host	Plus, toddlers—I mean, toddler spit is like... I mean, they're just so cute and little. I dunno.
00:48:56	Biz	Host	It's—toddler spit's like fairy juice.
00:48:58	Theresa	Host	It is. It absolutely is. Good job.
00:49:02	Biz	Host	Yeah. Good job. Wherever fairy juice comes from. Failures!
00:49:06	Clip	Clip	<i>[Dramatic orchestral music plays in the background.]</i>
			Theresa: <i>[In a voice akin to the Wicked Witch of the West]</i> Fail. Fail. Fail. <u>FAIL!</u>
			<i>[Timpani with foot pedal engaged for humorous effect.]</i>
			Biz: <i>[Calmly]</i> You <u>suck!</u>
			<i>[Biz and Theresa repeatedly affirm each other as they discuss their respective failures of the week.]</i>
00:49:13	Biz	Host	Theresa! Fail me, Theresa.
00:49:17	Theresa	Host	Okay. There's— <i>[sighs]</i> . There's parts to this. But essentially, the kids were into Bionicles for a time. We got a couple Bionicles. I think we maybe had three total? This was years ago. And when they were like a little too young for Bionicles but they wanted them so bad? And then they forgot about Bionicles and they didn't care.

And then the Bionicles that we had kind of fell apart or got mixed in with the Legos or got mixed in with this and that and they made no sense anymore. And—

[Biz laughs.]

00:49:57 Biz Host Trash! *[Laughs.]*
00:49:58 Theresa Host Yeah. Threw it in the trash. So cut to today. We still have a few Bionicle pieces floating around, and now my kids are back into Bionicles. But now Bionicles cost a million dollars. You can't get them anymore!

00:50:16 Biz Host Ding-dong! Guess who's back? Bionicles! *[Laughs.]*
00:50:19 Theresa Host I mean, it's—I'm so annoyed that I didn't keep them 'cause now it's like I'm looking at eBay and the used ones are worth so much money.

00:50:31 Biz Host What?!
00:50:32 Theresa Host Yeah!
00:50:33 Biz Host It's a fucking Bionicle!
00:50:36 Theresa Host I know! It's a Bionicle! I know. I don't understand it either. I really thought it was like such a disposable thing that it would just always be easy to get. Not right now!

00:50:48 Biz Host *[Biz laughs.]*
It's like cryptocurrency. *[Laughs.]* Wow. Well I hope you just told them, "They gotta be around here somewhere!"

00:50:59 Theresa Host *[Theresa laughs.]*
Totally! That's absolutely what I told them.

00:51:05 Biz Host *[Biz laughs.]*
"I guess we'll—they'll—they'll show up."
Sometime. I dunno. "Keep better track of your toys."

00:51:18 Theresa Host Well, Theresa—*[Laughs.]* That's—you're doing a horrible—god! That is such a kick in the pants fail.
00:51:19 Biz Host It is!
00:51:20 Theresa Host I'm sorry.
00:51:22 Biz Host Yeah. Thanks.
00:51:24 Theresa Host Ugh. Yeah, you're welcome?
00:51:26 Biz Host Yeah.
Yeah. Alright. I'm going to preface this fail with, "We don't have a new cat." *[Laughs.]*

00:51:33 Theresa Host Oh no. Okay.
00:51:35 Biz Host Okay. So there is a very beautiful cat that walks around the neighborhood. I like to think of this cat as the Fonzie of the neighborhood. But we've seen this cat in different spots on walks. But it's never really been in our yard. 'K? Well, three days ago it started hanging out not only in our yard, but on our porch. And it is a very nice baby! It is a good baby!

[Theresa laughs.]

And loves to, like, “Lemme show you my belly!” Clearly friendly with humans. And the kids are like, “Ahhh! *[Inaudible]* the cat!” And I’m like, “Look. We’ve seen this cat all over the neighborhood. I am sure that this cat belongs to somebody?” It had a flea collar on. But I also know that there is a woman somewhere in our general area that puts flea collars on stray cats.

00:52:31 Theresa Host
00:52:33 Biz Host
00:52:34 Theresa Host
00:52:35 Biz Host

Oh my gosh. Okay.

Yeah. So--

That’s interesting.

--this could be that. Or it’s just a flea collar. I sent it to the neighbors that I knew, saying, “Have you seen this cat? Do you know whose cat this is?” A lot of people being like, “Oh yeah, that cat likes to hang out in our yard!” Right? *[Laughs.]* And then somebody said, “It might be a cat named Whiskey whose owners let that cat be outside all the time. But we’re not sure.” So I tell that to the children. And I said, “Maybe you guys can make some signs. We’ll put ‘em up this weekend, see if anybody recognizes the cat.” So that is the current status of this cat. I am not failing because the cat certainly isn’t being fed cat food at this point. That cat has not been named Penelope.

00:53:33 Theresa Host
00:53:34 Biz Host

Oh my god.

That is for sure. That cat is not getting a water bowl. That cat has not walked up to our side door and gone, “Meow!” *[Laughs.] [Slowly and emphatically]* We do not have a new cat.

00:53:54 Theresa Host
00:53:55 Biz Host
00:53:56 Theresa Host
00:53:58 Biz Host

Wow.

Yup. I just don’t even wanna--

This is next level.

I don’t even wanna identify this as a fail or anything? I’m just gonna say—this goes in a new special category called, “We do not have a new cat named Penelope who is getting fed twice a day.”

[Both laugh.]

“And hangs out all day.” In fact, he could be outside my window right now.

00:54:21 Theresa Host
00:54:22 Biz Host
00:54:24 Theresa Host
00:54:27 Biz Host
00:54:31 Caller Caller

Wow.

Not our cat.

Biz, this is—this is really something else.

You’re welcome, everybody! This... this is something.

[Answering machine beeps.]

Hi! This is a fail. I’m calling because this afternoon I decided to take my kids to the park. We’ve been inside the house for about three or four days straight without leaving the house so I decided, “We’re going to the park.” The kids were fighting it. They didn’t really wanna go so I had to bribe them. “Okay, we’ll have popsicles at home after we get back from the park.” So finally I get them to go to the park and get there. We’re at the park. Within the first minute my kids see some grass and they say, “Oh, can we go run in the grass?” Kind of taller grass. And I say, “Sure. Go run in the grass.” They run in the grass and my five-year-old—he’s wearing shorts. And he starts crying and rubbing his legs and say they itch. And so I take him out of the grass and say, “Don’t worry, you’re fine”—

[Biz laughs.]

--'cause he wants to go home. And he's like, "They're itchy" and I'm like, "You're fine. Let's go do something else. Let's go look at some flowers or something. You're fine. You're fine." He keeps complaining. Finally I look at his legs and he's got these red bumps, like hives, all over his legs. Turns out that I think he—the grass—the tall grass is stinging nettle? Which can give you hives. So we went home. He's fine. Threw him in the shower. Cleaned him off. Put some cream on his legs and he's fine. But wasn't quite exactly what I planned for our afternoon out. So anyway. I feel kinda defeated, but you're doing a good job and overall so am i. Thank you. Thanks for the show. Bye.

00:56:15 Biz Host
00:56:19 Theresa Host

Ohhh. That sucks.

It really, really sucks. And I'm impressed with your level of acceptance? And not catastrophizing this situation? 'Cause it does really kind of feel—like, when you're going on three or four days at home and it takes a bribe to go to the park? This really does feel like a fiasco. And I'm impressed that you're just like, "Yeah. This was not what I had in mind, but here I am. Doing my thing. Doing the best I can."

[Biz laughs.]

00:56:49 Biz Host

And you're doing amazing.

Yeah. You actually are. I feel like there's a topic somewhere in there of, "It's fine." *[Laughs.]*

00:56:56 Theresa Host
00:56:58 Biz Host

Oh, I know.

[Through laughter] "It's fine!" Like, it'd be fine. It's fine. You're fine. I mean, "Walk it off! Walk it off, Elizabeth!" Is what they used to yell to me with my fractured wrist. "Walk it off! Look, she's taking her base." No she's not. She's coming through the dugout crying. Anyway! Memories. Listen. For the sake of this segment, you're doing a horrible job trying to get your children—let's just pretend that the fail was bribing? Can we—no, that—*[Laughs.]*

00:57:30 Theresa Host
00:57:33 Biz Host
00:57:35 Theresa Host
00:57:37 Biz Host

It just has a general fail-y quality. Overall.

It does. Yeah. This is more of a--

Things did not work out.

"Oh, it did not work out" fail. It's not "you do not have a new cat"-level fail?

[Theresa laughs.]

00:57:47 Music Music

But it still feels rotten.

"Mom Song" by Adira Amram. Mellow piano music with lyrics.

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.

00:58:10 Music Promo
00:58:11 Biz Host

[Music fades out.]

Inspirational keyboard music plays in background.

One Bad Mother is supported in part by Boll & Branch. Boll & Branch's ultra-soft organic sheets are transparently sourced and produced in safe, fair conditions. And you'll feel a difference and know you're making one!

00:58:25	Theresa	Host	I feel like as I've gotten older, I— <i>[Biz laughs.]</i> --care so much more about my bedding and my bed than ever before? Boll & Branch make truly soft, comfortable, amazing sheets. I also appreciate that it comes <i>[through laughter]</i> in a beautifully-presented box with ribbon. This feels like a very special thing.
00:58:49	Biz	Host	To experience the ultra-comfortable sheets, choose Boll & Branch.
00:58:53	Theresa	Host	You can try them worry-free for thirty nights with free shipping and returns.
00:58:58	Biz	Host	And our listeners get an exclusive 15% off your first set of sheets with promo code "badmother" at BollAndBranch.com .
00:59:09	Theresa	Host	That's BollAndBranch— B-O-L-L-andBranch.com . Promo code "badmother."
00:59:17	Promo	Clip	<i>[Crash of thunder and sound of rain.]</i> Speaker 1: We have wasted this world. Our magic put a storm in the sky that has rendered the surface of our planet uninhabitable. But... beneath the surface? Well that's another story entirely. <i>[Magical sound.]</i> Music: Synth-heavy, mid-tempo music with driving beat. Speaker 1: In a city built leagues below the apocalypse, survivors of the storm forge paths through a strange new world. Some seek salvation for their homeland above. Others seek to chart the vast, undersea expanse outside the city's walls. And others still seek—what else?—fortune and glory. Dive into the Ether Sea, the latest campaign from <i>The Adventure Zone</i> . Every-other Thursday on MaximumFun.org or wherever you listen to podcasts. Music: Chill music with rhythmic beat plays in background.
01:00:04	Promo	Clip	Speaker 1: The 2021 pin sale has begun! Thank you so much to everyone who participated in the MaxFunDrive. This is the last year for a while that we'll be doing pins for MaxFunDrive. And the fifth year that we'll be selling pins and donating all proceeds to charity! The past year proved what we already knew—that having access to the internet at home is a necessity for work, school, healthcare, and keeping in touch with family and friends. So the proceeds from this year's pin sale will go towards EveryoneOn, a nonprofit working to bridge the digital divide. We're grateful that with your support, we'll be able to help low-income folks gain access to affordable computers, internet services, and digital literacy programs. The sale will run until May 28 th . Folks at the \$10 monthly level and above will have access to all of the pins from the drive. That's 38 pins—one from every show on the network! We also have a special 2021 MaxFunDrive pin that all members can purchase. Go to MaximumFun.org/pinsale for more info. And to learn more about Everyone On and support them directly, you can go to EveryoneOn.org .
01:01:16	Biz	Host	It's time, everyone! For a mom having a breakdown.
01:01:23	Caller	Caller	<i>[Answering machine beeps.]</i>

Hi, ladies. This is a rant. I just... I don't know what's going on. I'm in the cold Northeast. It's trying to snow today. I have three kids and I just... I feel like I haven't had it in me for a while now. And... I don't know. I'm feeling kind of lost. I made them cry 'cause I yelled at them that I think I'm raising terrible people. And that's what scares me the most when they don't listen is that I'm afraid they're going to grow up to be terrible people. And that made the eight-year-old burst into tears and I just was like, "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. That wasn't very nice. I'm just scared. I'm scared. This is hard, parenting." But I just... I just feel myself radiating so much negativity. And I don't want them to pick up on that and feel that, too. And I don't want to feel it. And I just don't know. It's just the same old thing. Fuck this pandemic. *[Deep breath.]* That's it. Thank you. Bye.

01:02:45 Biz Host Oh, man. You're doing a great job. And Theresa and I are both kinda doing the head-nodding—we really see you. There's a couple of things happening here. One—you're done! Your bucket is way full. Any little thing that gets poured into that bucket makes the whole thing tip out. We can't get better--or whatever the fuck "better" means but I can't think of a better word for it—if we're constantly in a state of... tipping/filling, tipping/filling. Like you never get it down to empty. You never even get it to manageable where you can handle things as they come in. Right now it's this place where everything that gets added on or any new thing that you have to run into is just... there's no space for it! That leads to the *[sighs.]* I know exactly what you mean about the negative feeling and I don't want my kids to pick up on it and y'know--

01:03:51 Theresa Host Which is itself a vicious cycle. Like... when you're feeling that way and then you're feeling bad for feeling that way and then you're feeling worse. Then you're just feeling worse! And then you're feeling bad for feeling worse. *[Laughs.]* It's--

01:04:04 Biz Host Yeah! And then you beat yourself up for not being able to feel better! "Why can't I just feel better?"

01:04:09 Theresa Host There's a certain point where... I mean... you're doing so much! And you're doing all you can do. I feel like we're so used to just being better? And taking on more and doing a better job? When at a certain point what we really need is support. And to have things taken off our plate and more time. And I'm not talking about time to be better. I'm just talking about time! To be a person! Like, to be... a Self, as we've said on this show. Just time and some support and some help with some things. Which the pandemic has made so impossible. Or at least made so much harder. And I just have a lot of... compassion for you right now? Because it really is—I just see it as really unfair. That you're in this situation where you're feeling bad like you're lacking in some way. And what's actually happening is you're just working really fucking hard. All the time. And you're at the same time being robbed of the opportunity to feel any sense of pride in how hard you're working and what an amazing job you're doing.

01:05:34 Biz Host Yeah. Can we get that on a t-shirt?

[Theresa laughs.]

Because that is super fucking accurate. I know the sensation of feeling bad at snapping or yelling at the kids—again, a whole 'nother topic could be "I'm raising monsters." Right? Like this notion

of... I panic with that same thought lots of times. For a variety of reasons. Either the kids do something, say something, don't do something, don't say something, and then a week later they're great! And I'm like, they're gonna be president! You know what I mean? And then the next week I'm like *[laughs humorlessly]*.

[Theresa laughs.]

Ugh! Ugh! Oh well! *[Laughs.]* Oh well! I don't know! I guess my point is, that is something else we gotta not beat ourselves up about. Because when you're full and you're tired and you're getting no space, that is something that happens. And... the best we can do is apologize to our kids and my theory that I'm holding onto for dear life is that if I'm telling them that I love them, and I am, y'know, more *[through laughter]* than they're hearing me say, *[screaming]* "Get out! Go to your room, for god's sakes!" Right? Like, then that's gonna balance itself out in the long run. You are doing a remarkable job. You deserve support. And you deserve some space for yourself. I'm just... saying that. *[Laughs.]* You fucking do. And you are doing a really good job. Theresa? You are also doing a really good job. And... I don't know if, when you say such powerfully true comments to our listeners, if there's any space in there for you to hear it for yourself?

[Theresa laughs.]

			But if I could repeat all those words right back to you, I am going to do that.
01:07:46	Theresa	Host	Thank you. That's really nice.
01:07:47	Biz	Host	Yeah. Because you're amazing and you are working <u>really</u> hard. And I see you.
01:07:54	Theresa	Host	Thanks, Biz. I see you, too. And you're also working really hard.
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
01:08:00	Biz	Host	Thank you. Alright, Theresa! I will talk to <u>you</u> next week!
01:08:06	Theresa	Host	Alright!
01:08:08	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz and Theresa: Byeeeee!
01:08:09	Biz	Host	What did we learn today, everybody? Well, I gotta tell ya—a couple of things. One, really more of a reminder that this is <u>incredibly</u> hard. Having kids in your house. In that it is just one layer of <u>many</u> layers? That we find ourselves under every day. And yet for some reason think that—don't see those layers as a culmination of why we feel so fucking broken and haggard. Right? We're like, "Oh, it's just this little—" No, no! No, no, guys! You have multiple things on you making you feel broken and haggard. And at different stages we all find ourselves in that place where there is no room for one more thing in the bucket. You guys know I love a bucket metaphor. There's no more space. Every time something new comes along, it's tipping. It's spilling. So I just... I just need you to know that you're not alone when it feels like that.

And if it ever feels too much—as always, in our show notes, we've got links to resources that are a starting place for help. 'Cause guys, it's been a fucking pandemic! It's still a pandemic! So I *[groaning/panicking noises!] [Laughs.]* I just—I just feel like I'm losing my mind trying to figure out how I'm supposed to feel about

where I am a year and some change into this. And I don't know where I am. We also learned that if you've got little kids in your house, one day they will become older kids in your house. [Laughs.] And they may be different than you were! When you were that age. And that just like—it's so funny. Just like the fucking TV shows where you're like, "I'm gonna show my kids *A Charlie Brown Christmas Special*. No I'm not! Oh my god! Everybody's so mean in that! I can't ever show my kids that!" And I'm like, "What? You watched it as a kid and you thought it was great. How come now as an adult, through adult lens, you think it's really the worst thing to show your children?" This is that same lens that's gonna play into the middle school years. Right?

Like just 'cause some kid even remotely looks like a kid that you knew, that might trigger something for you. And so we have to be mindful of the lenses that we look through while our kids are walking through the world. Not us walking through the world. Oh, god! They're autonomous beings! This is a nightmare. And finally, we've learned that you guys are doing a really great job. I just wanna take a moment to say thank you. MaxFunDrive is over. We had a remarkable turnout of new, upgrading, and boosting members to support this show and make this show happen. And as always, just a huge thank-you to those who have been supporting us for years! For eight years, for five years, for one year. That sustained support makes it so we know we can keep doing the show. So I just want you to know... how... grateful and thankful we are for your support.

Now. Everybody? You're doing a great job. Decisions have not gotten easier. Support hasn't returned to the way that it was. School and childcare—those are still kind of a crapshoot with what's happening and is available to you? And again... we never know what somebody else is just coming from or going through. And... to give them and ourselves a little space and a little grace to not be our best all the time. [Laughs.] Okay? We don't have to be. You're all doing a great job, and I will talk to you next week. Bye! "Mama Blues" by Cornbread Ted and the Butterbeans. Strumming acoustic guitar with harmonica and lyrics.

01:12:28 Music Music

*I got the lowdown momma blues
Got the 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.*

01:12:53 Biz Host

[Music fades somewhat, plays in background of dialogue.] 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.

01:13:21	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 .
			<i>[Music continues for a while before fading out.]</i>
01:13:44	Music	Transition	A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:13:46	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
01:13:47	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:13:48	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:13:49	Speaker 4	Guest	—Audience supported.