

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.
00:00:21	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> —are we really going to talk about pediatric cancer? Yes! We are. With writer, educator, and Cancer Mom Jessica Phillips Lorenz. Plus, Biz braces herself.
00:00:37	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz and caller: Woo!
00:00:40	Caller	Caller	<i>[Biz laughs.]</i> Hey, Biz! Um, I just completed and passed the certification exam to be a midwife. So now I get to take care of people by delivering their babies, catching their babies, taking care of 'em across the lifespan, and oh! I'm just so happy! I'm so excited and it's over. I was almost in tears in the middle of it 'cause I thought for sure I failed. But I didn't. I passed. And... I did it! And I finished grad school while I had a baby in the middle of it, and I had a toddler through the whole program— <i>[Biz laughs.]</i> —and my marriage is still intact, somehow. And... my dog is still healthy! I mean— <i>[Biz laughs.]</i> I did it! I—I worked in the hospital through the pandemic and continue to do so. And now I get to go take care of people in a different way. And oh, Biz. I am just... <i>[Biz laughs.]</i> I am so thankful this chapter is closed. Because another chapter is opening. Oh! I hope you're having a great day. Bye. You're doing a great job. So am I.
00:01:43	Biz	Host	Well thank you. Thank you. But <u>you</u> are the one who's doing an amazing job. This is great! I wish I was there to give you like a giant "Woo!" hug! Right? Like, did everybody else feel like we needed to be hugging this person <i>[through laughter]</i> as they were talking to us? Like a giant high-five chain that we would just send them down? High five! High five! High five! High five! What you have done is incredible. And I am <u>so</u> glad that you know that. <i>[Laughs.]</i> That makes me even happier than all the stuff that you've done. Is that you clearly know and are letting yourself revel in how awesome you are. I stress out about trying to schedule, like, getting to the grocery store with children in my house. And you have done like—you are—you're amazing! You're doing such a good job! And I know it wasn't easy. I know it wasn't easy. And yet you did it. I want to say welcome to the world of midwifery. And I'm never

having another child, but if I did? I would be absolutely pleased to have you catch mine. *[Laughs.]* That is a—is that official medical lingo? “Catching”? Anyway, I think you’re doing a great job. Thank you for all the work you were doing in the hospitals, obviously during your school and your education. And thank you for now moving into this area that will be such a comfort to new parents who already are just probably losing their mind. You will be a comfort. And a support. And I just wanna say thank you. You’re doing a great job. Which leads us into thank-you’s!

00:03:33 Music Music

Heavy electric guitar and driving percussion overlaid with “Ohh, oh-oh, oh-oh” and “Hey-ey-ey-ey-ey” lyrics.

00:03:46 Biz Host

Thank you, everybody in the medical profession! There, I said it. I’ve said it again. And I’ll say it again and again. Above and beyond the call of duty. More than you need to. And I just really hope that those of us who are not at all affiliated with, like, the medical profession—no matter—and I’m talking doctors. I’m talking the people who keep things clean and sterilized, to the people who are doing all the paperwork. I hope we can all maintain a level of awe and appreciation long after this is over. Talk about the people who have to get the blunt of our frustration. I just want you to know that I really appreciate you.

Teachers? All the faculty at school. All the people who work in administration and in the school boards and the school districts. This is a very complicated time. I see you. Thank you so much for what you’re doing. Thank you to librarians for continuing to offer so many amazing resources to people. As well as your door’s open when possible. Thank you, school bus drivers. Thank you to all the people working in the cafeterias and lunches and preparing food for kids! God, you are working so hard, even during the pandemic, to make sure that kids who needed food—who relied on school and after-school programs for at least one of their meals a day—I just don’t know why I haven’t been thanking you. Thank you. You’re remarkable.

Thank you to all those who work with the homeless, and thank you to all of you who are working with people who are having a hard time getting access to information about vaccines or getting to the vaccines themselves. That is some tireless work and I see you. Thank you.

00:05:52 Biz Host

Now. Brace yourself. There’s a pun happening! I just went through a week of dental hell. Not for myself, for the first time ever. *[Laughs.]* But with my children. Orthodontics are upon us. I finally made appointments and followed through. And... Raiden has gotten only the first, like, the top teeth got the braces. And we have to go back next week for the bottom. And they couldn’t get the wires in because the back teeth don’t have enamel and then so we had to put spacers or separators in the back. And that, apparently, hurts like hell. And so Raiden has just been crying like all night and day and she’s so in pain and I love her and it’s just the worst and I wanna rip them out! I just—*[Laughs.]* It’s just... we’ve been really trying to prepare for this.

And Raiden—there was so much crying yesterday and I couldn’t tell sometimes if it was the pain or if it was the, like... like, some sort of like, “I look like a monster!” There’d be a couple times I’d

catch them *[through laughter]* looking in a mirror, like holding the lip up? And it's different. It's different. You gotta be careful what color ya pick, everybody. *[Laughs.]* I think that they look beautiful. And perfect. You can—as I told them, “I’m sorry; there’s nothing you can do that’s gonna make you not look perfect. I’m sorry. You could put all the braces on your face and it’s just not gonna mess anything up! Sorry! Can’t do it!” Needless to say, I had a rather emotionally-stressful week. Additionally, we had two baby teeth pulled out of Ellis that same week. So I—I’m not a fan of all the dental work. It’s a little triggering for me. So like I said, I have found it very emotionally wrenching.

Which is very straight—and to be honest, I cannot find a good segue *[through laughter]* into what we’re gonna be talking about today with our guest, Jessica Phillips Lorenz. Who is going to be so gracious and talk to us about being a—what they call “Cancer Mom” and pediatric cancer.

00:08:15 Music Music
00:08:16 Theresa Host

Banjo strums; cheerful banjo music continues through dialogue. Please—take a moment to remember: If you’re friends of the hosts of *One Bad Mother*, you should assume that when we talk about other moms, we’re talking about you.

00:08:23 Biz Host

If you are married to the host of *One Bad Mother*, we definitely are talking about you.

00:08:27 Theresa Host
00:08:30 Biz Host

Nothing we say constitutes professional parenting advice. Biz and Theresa’s children are brilliant, lovely, and exceedingly extraordinary.

00:08:34 Theresa Host

Nothing said on this podcast about them implies otherwise.

[Banjo music fades out.]

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

00:08:39 Biz Host

This week, we are welcoming Jessica Phillips Lorenz, who is a writer, educator, and Cancer Mom. Her work has appeared in *Romper*, *Real Simple*, *Parents.com*, one of our favorites—*Mother Magazine*, and a theater festival for babies in Northern Ireland. *[Laughs.]* Jess is a member of the Coalition Against Childhood Cancer, the American Childhood Cancer Organization, Momcology, and Emerging Artists Theatre. Welcome, Jessicaaaaa! That is some mega serious different affiliations.

00:09:17 Jessica Phillips Lorenz Guest

[Both laugh.]

Well—I know. I wear a lot of hats. And thank you so much for having me. I’m really excited to be here. And I like to include things that I do that are not just about having a child? Who happened to have cancer! Because I am a person and I was a person before that and we’re still people. So.

00:09:34 Biz Host
00:09:35 Jessica Guest
00:09:36 Biz Host

No!

It’s shocking. *[Laughs.]*

It is shocking. What is it like to be a person? Wait! Don’t answer that yet. I have to ask you what we ask everybody—who lives in your house?

00:09:44 Jessica Guest

Oh, I can’t believe I am being asked this question!

[Biz laughs.]

00:09:53	Biz	Host	Well— <i>[Laughs.]</i> So I will tell you. I live in an apartment. And I—
00:09:55	Jessica	Guest	Good. That's a—that's good house. <i>[Laughs.]</i> House/apartment. And I have two children who also live here. My daughter is ten. She's my CK—my cancer kid—that's the lingo.
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
00:10:18	Biz	Host	And then my son is six. And he's, y'know, he's not a CK. He's just a six-year-old boy. And then I live here with my husband and we have a pet snail. Let's just jump in. Tell us... the history—and we're having you on 'cause you wrote this amazing piece for <i>Mother Magazine</i> and I wanna talk more about that as we go along. But I... let's start with your background with pediatric cancers.
00:10:40	Jessica	Guest	Oh, sure.
00:10:41	Biz	Host	Sure. This sounds fun.
00:10:43	Jessica	Guest	Yeah! Uh, so I'll tell you a little bit about our sort of diagnosis. And I just wanna preface it with saying that... I'm sure there are moms out there listening that are kind of like, "Wait, wait, wait. What were the symptoms?" Right? And I just want to frame this that this was <u>our</u> unique experience. It doesn't mean that everybody should go and try to diagnose themselves. And I'll talk a little bit more about sort of listening to your gut as a parent and knowing when something is really off. But it started when my daughter, Audrey, was six years old. She had just finished kindergarten. And started having some stomach stuff. And, y'know, a bad stomach bug that lasted a little bit too long and then seemed fine. And then came back again. And then went away. As—I mean, a lot of these—
00:11:34	Biz	Host	As they do!
00:11:35	Jessica	Guest	They do. I mean, nothing about this was atypical? It just kind of kept happening. And there were a couple of ER trips where we thought, "Is this appendicitis?" But none of the telltale sort of symptoms—I mean, looking back it's like, "Oh, yes! That's from the book." But at the time there was nothing like, "This is extremely dangerous and alarming." It was just—
00:11:59	Biz	Host	Alright, hold on. None of us have a book. And I mean, like—I wouldn't even—if I was on like, <i>Make Me a Millionaire</i> —whatever a show is in which you have to answer questions—you would be like, "Show me signs of cancer!" I would not—I wouldn't—I don't know <u>any</u> . Except like, weight loss. Right? And that—again—is an incredibly at times atypical sort of response to <u>millions</u> or things. Thyroids. Y'know. Puberty. Whatever.
00:12:33	Jessica	Guest	Right. Okay. I think I say it too—well, I'll get to it. I think there's part of it, as I tell the story, that it's kind of like looking back. "Wait, did I miss something? Was there something I could've done differently?" But it's just me sort of wearing both hats and saying, "No. This is how it happened. And—"
00:12:49	Biz	Host	But you're correct! Yeah.
00:12:51	Jessica	Guest	Right. So a couple of trips to ERs. Bloodwork seemed fine. Everything seemed fine. Until we finally got sort of pushed up to see a GI doctor, thinking maybe this is celiac. Or wheaten. Or gluten—gluten/wheat. Something like that. Or Crohn's or—
00:13:10	Biz	Host	I like calling it "wheaten." Let's do that. But yeah.
			<i>[Jessica laughs.]</i>
00:13:13	Jessica	Guest	"It was a wheaten problem, is what it was."

00:13:15 Biz Host *[Both laugh.]*
 “It was a wheaten problem.” *[Laughs.]* Alright. Yes. Then you get to the GI. Very good.

00:13:20 Jessica Guest We go to the GI. The GI—by this point, Audrey was not feeling well? But we didn’t know how sick she was. And the GI was kind of like, “This is not how any of these GI diseases present. Something’s not right here. Let’s do some scans.” So we went downstairs. Had an ultrasound. They said, “We see something. You need to go to another emergency room.” So we went from a doctor’s appointment to an emergency room, where they gave her an MRI and CT. And they said, “This— *[Laughs.]* This is not a virus. This is not bacteria.” And I was like, “Well... what is it?” And they said—and I mean, in my mind? They must’ve said it was cancer or I think I said, “Are you telling me this is cancer?” And they didn’t know what kind it was, but they said, “Yes.” And... we then were admitted. And we went from a doctor’s appointment to staying in the hospital for 38 days. So it was...

00:14:18 Biz Host Holy... shit.

00:14:20 Jessica Guest It took a few days to get a biopsy and figure out what it was, but her diagnosis is Burkitt’s Lymphoma, and she also had Leukemia so she had a double-whammy. Which means that it’s a blood cancer that was in her lymph system but also had made its way to her bone marrow. And Burkitt’s Lymphoma is the most aggressive form of human cancer, with tumors developing and duplicating in 24-48 hours. So knowing that, it... it makes a little more sense why she didn’t seem that sick and then she was getting so, so, so sick that by the time she was actually diagnosed her lungs were collapsing and we went to ICU. It was really scary. I mean, “scary” is an understatement. I mean—

00:15:08 Biz Host Yeah. I wanna stop. And just... tell you what an amazing job you’re doing. I can’t... that is so hard. That is hard. Like, that quick a thing? I mean, like... can I ask—when—I mean, when did your brain ever have a chance to, like, ever catch—I mean, stomachache. Same day, GI. Same day, suddenly you’re 38 days in. I mean... how do you—there’s no way to catch up, right? Like, I mean, oh my god, I just wanna put you in my lap!

00:15:42 Jessica Guest *[Jessica laughs.]*
 Thank you.

[Biz laughs.]

00:15:45 Biz Host Snuggle me up!

00:15:47 Jessica Guest I do!

00:15:58 Biz Host I don’t know that you catch up. I mean, I feel like from that day we’ve been sort of stumble-running. And I do wanna say, too, for listeners and for you—that she’s doing great today. So I’m able to tell this story.

00:16:00 Biz Host Yeah. We wouldn’t be doing this! *[Laughs.]*

00:16:00 Jessica Guest Right. She’s doing great. She’s three years cancer-free. She’s in survivorship. Like, all of that is there. But the trauma? Is... authentically real. And lives with me and it lives with other cancer families, too. Y’know, I mean, there’s funny things about it, too? Like, y’know, I said we lived in the hospital. It was—my brother had to come and— *[Laughs.]* He—we didn’t have any clothes! You

know? So my brother had to come and he—I needed underwear and so I think he was traumatized and he brought just, like, strapless—I had a strapless bra. That I only wore for like—

[Biz laughs.]

00:16:39 Biz Host “Here’s an evening gown. Does this evening gown work?”

00:16:41 Jessica Guest Yeah. I mean— *[Laughs.]*

00:16:42 Biz Host “I have a swimsuit.” *[Laughs.]*

00:16:44 Jessica Guest So there are some—it was so surreal and so... there’s nothing that can ever prepare you for it. I mean, when—it was horrible. And she was so sick. And then the thing that was going to get her better was this chemo. So we started right away. Luckily, with her kind of cancer and with other fast-growing cancers? This is—you learn a lot along the way. But—

00:17:15 Biz Host I was gonna say.

[Jessica laughs.]

00:17:17 Jessica Guest Unfortunately, my BFA in Theater—

[Biz laughs.]

—comes back around as a BS in Science.

[Biz laughs.]

But—so the way that chemotherapy sort of intersects is that when a cell is dividing, chemo can get in there and kill the cells. So if you have a rapidly-dividing cancer, that was what happened for us. So she started getting chemo. She had very intensive chemotherapy and immunotherapy in the hospital. We lived pretty much in the hospital for about seven months. We would come home for a few stretches between. And so at the time—so she was six. And at the time my son was two-and-a-half.

00:17:55 Biz Host Oof.

00:17:57 Jessica Guest And so he—we had been in upstate New York with my parents. And when we had this GI appointment, my son stayed with them. But then he stayed with them. And basically lived with them for several months. And we would see him on weekends a little bit, but it was just like my whole family just felt like we were dashed against the rocks. And just doing anything to survive it.

00:18:22 Biz Host Yeah. Well it’s very much that moment of... like... going from the luxury of knowing where everybody is. “We’re all here! We’re gonna be back!” And then like... being in a situation that calls for you to have to make rapid and changing—pivoting—decisions. Decisions that will—that you don’t just make one and then that’s it. It sounds like it’s a constant decision-making process. And none of them are like, “That’s great.”

[Jessica laughs.]

I mean, outside of saving my child from cancer. That’s a good one. We all know that whatever decision, that’s good. But like, all the other ones are—like, that’s—again, you need to come sit in my lap.

[Jessica laughs.]

Which is a weird thing to say to another grown person. Alright. Here is a question that is a weird question to ask. And that is—whenever like a network or a TV show or anybody portrays a child with cancer, that child has come to full grips, it seems, with cancer. And they are like, a little magical vessel of hope and happiness and, *[high-pitched voice]* “It’s okay! Thank you!” Right? And I think about... my children. And I’m like, I know for a fact—Raider just got braces and they are like on the floor.

[Jessica laughs.]

And they won’t stop complaining and yelling and like life—like, it’s—how was—to me that’s a horrible expectation to put on kids! And so I gotta ask— *[Laughs.]*

00:20:01 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Biz: How’s your—how’d your child handle having *[through laughter]* cancer?

00:20:06 Jessica Guest

Jessica: No, I—I—I’m—right? No, I’m glad you’re asking! And it’s funny that you bring up sort of all the media. Right? Because I think that pediatric cancer is a very quick story to tell. You can see a picture and there’s a bald child and you know—you can kind of just quickly calculate, like, “This is a crappy situation.” And you feel whatever people feel. Empathy. Sympathy. “What would I do?” Y’know, but it’s also—it’s also used, I think, a lot to, y’know, in storytelling to kind of take... there’s the magical child who is—

00:20:40 Biz Host

See? Yeah!

00:20:41 Jessica Guest

Yeah. There’s the magical child. Or I was joking with my husband about *The Undoing*? Did you watch that? It was Hugh Grant. He played an oncologist. A pediatric oncologist.

[Biz laughs.]

But was he a murderer? And the idea was like, “Oh, he couldn’t be a murderer because he’s a pediatric oncologist!”

[Biz laughs.]

So I just thought—but in terms of... she’s a pretty amazing, even kid? And was beforehand. And I think handled it very well compared to how, honestly, like, my other one is a little more— Well, see? That’s— *[Laughs.]*

00:21:16 Biz Host

00:21:17 Jessica Guest

—erratic. And I mean, y’know. He gets—he stubs his toe and it’s like, full-on on the floor. And y’know, I think she started off that way? But she just had to adapt. I mean...

[Biz sighs sympathetically.]

Think about if your kid doesn’t like getting a shot? What kid likes to get a shot? It’s basically constantly getting a shot. And I had to give her shots at certain points. I had to give her chemo. I had no—if there’s one thing I [through laughter] never wanted to do?

[Biz laughs.]

It would be something in the medical field. Like I don't really wanna touch anybody. I don't like gross stuff. And you just have to do it. And y'know, when you—

00:21:53 Biz Host You have to do it! Yeah! You have to!

00:21:55 Jessica Guest You have no choice! You have no choice.

00:21:57 Biz Host I hate that for people!

00:21:58 Jessica Guest And when you were saying before, Biz, about making decisions? There are actually no decisions, either.

00:22:03 Biz Host Oh, yeah. I guess.

00:22:04 Jessica Guest When things are so—when you're so kind of up against the wall, there's not—there's almost not a luxury to think it through. Y'know?

00:22:12 Biz Host Yeah. No. I would imagine. Yeah, I guess so.

00:22:14 Jessica Guest So she... y'know, she handled it, I think, as—as—she's not like the magical smiling kid. She didn't—she was—there were certain doctors she just had no time for? But she loved—we had amazing care. We had amazing nurses. Like, nurses?

00:22:31 Biz Host Just for the record, the bar I set for children— *[Laughs.]* With cancer. Getting through cancer. Is very low! It is very low. My expectations of how great they should be handling it? I'm like—I'm not—I wouldn't expect an adult to handle it gracefully. It's fine! Get your money's worth!

00:22:53 Jessica Guest And y'know, there are things that I really had to sort of let go of. And I was listening to your episode and you were kind of talking about the summer mommy camp stuff and screens and all of that. And I—I'm with you. Now that we're at this point, our schools don't start until September 13th. Like—

00:23:08 Biz Host Yeah. That's ours. Yes. Roughly, yeah.

00:23:10 Jessica Guest But going from sort of having a mindset like I'm in again now, but then all of a sudden to being like, "No. They're in the hospital? They watch TV all the time, mom. You let them watch whatever they want, whenever they want it." And anything that you can do to make the kids comfortable. And it—y'know, living inpatient. Like, living in a hospital, it's not just us. It was like, we had a roommate who was three years old and that child needed to listen to *Peppa Pig* all night. And that was—y'know? It's like a million different worst-case scenario horrible situations? And—

00:23:49 Biz Host Yeah. *Peppa Pig* fucking sucks. I'm just kidding. *[Laughs.]*

00:23:54 Jessica Guest *[Jessica laughs.]* Audrey was like—one of the only things—and it's weird because she doesn't remember a lot of it.

00:23:58 Biz Host But she remembers *Peppa Pig*? *[Laughs.]*

00:24:00 Jessica Guest But she's like, "Ugh. I had a roommate who listened to *Peppa Pig* all night."

[Both laugh.]

00:24:05 Biz Host So. Oh, that kid's doing great. I love it!

00:24:08 Jessica Guest She's got grit.

00:24:10 Biz Host Alright. We've touched on sort of the media portrayal of the children. You are the parent. And in your intro, your bio, you have Cancer Mom written down. And... I—I don't know how I feel about that. Because— *[Laughs.]* Because I am—I'm not a Cancer Mom. And I—but I'm not a soccer mom. I'm not a—y'know, like, the

00:24:45	Jessica	Guest	<p>“Mom” monikers that we all get. I wonder... I gotta—I have to ask you, how does Cancer Mom, like... that moniker feel?</p> <p>Well, I feel like I have to say it? And I wanna say it kind of clearly and early when I meet people. And it’s not necessarily because I want people to feel badly or—it’s not that. It’s like, once this happened in our family, I became her healthcare advocate. So like I said, we lived in the hospital. And you can’t leave a six-year-old at any point during this. So anything—y’know, to explain how she was feeling. To notice with her medications what wasn’t working. All of that stuff kind of fell to me. And all of a sudden I realized, like, “Oh. I’ve gotta run this as the mom.” You can’t just... I mean, at a certain point when they’re—with the diagnosis, it’s so overwhelming for anybody who goes through any kind of health diagnosis. It’s so good if you can have somebody with you to help you because you’re going to hear different things. And then when it was just—so my husband and I would take in information at the beginning. But then it was really just Audrey and I in the hospital, and I had to say, “Oh, oh, oh! Hold on a second. She has an adhesive allergy? So we’ve gotta stop that. You need to get the other one.” Y’know. All of those things. And it really—I had this new sort of job. Which—I mean, we all have this job as parents where you take care of your child. But this was like a full-time different kind of job than... I had ever expected to find myself in. And then just had to do as well as I can. And I also wanted to use it in my intro or my bio as a piece of advocacy! Because... y’know, it’s one thing that y’know we see the image or the St. Jude’s commercial and feel the heartstrings, but there is this sense that, “I don’t wanna go there. I don’t wanna think about that. I don’t wanna know about that.” And I—y’know, kids do get cancer. And it’s not as rare as you think. Y’know, there are a couple of advocacy points that I wanna make, but—</p>
00:26:46	Biz	Host	Please make them!
00:26:47	Jessica	Guest	I hope it’s okay that, um—
00:26:48	Biz	Host	Make them! Make them!
00:26:49	Jessica	Guest	—I connected with a couple of my organizations. So from the American Childhood Cancer Organization—just a reminder that childhood cancer is the #1 cause of death by disease. And over the last 30 years, only three drugs have been approved for pediatric cancer from the FDA. And over 300 for adults. So there is this huge discrepancy in terms of... where research money goes? So yes, it’s a very emotional and kind of sad thing to think about, but there’s also this piece that there’s a component of injustice that is unfathomable. And—

[Biz laughs.]

Because— *[Laughs.]* Because children are so young when they get these treatments—and the treatments are so toxic—there’s a much longer sort of lifetime of potential side effects? Whereas, y’know, if somebody is, let’s say, in their sixties and god forbid they develop cancer? Yes, that’s lousy. But you get a med that can— chemotherapy that can eradicate your cancer? Great. But if those side effects from that particular drug don’t kick in for 30 years, it’s not gonna affect that person too much. Right? But if somebody’s six and they get a medication that might impact their heart function in 30 years, they’ll be 36. So September is Pediatric Cancer Awareness Month. Y’know, I invite people and listeners not to look

away, but to sort of think about it from a medical justice point of view? And that it's not just sort of the sad story. That's there's a lot of sort of amazing things happening. And things are changing, too. I mean, there's a lot happening research-wise and we're so—we're so grateful and so lucky to be where we are. And for me to be talking to you about this. From—I mean, it's like another planet. Y'know?

00:28:46 Biz Host Well, I mean, it's another planet for several reasons. But again, I'm just sitting here... listening to... I really like the idea of the Cancer Mom, y'know, moniker really representing all that you have—without probably raising your hand—had to learn. And I have a theater degree from a medical university.

[Jessica laughs.]

00:29:16 Jessica Guest Yeah, yeah, yeah. Super qualified to do nothing.
00:29:19 Biz Host Me too! Me too! *[Laughs.]*
[Laughs.] Except to act! Really well! In an emergency situation! Nobody touch their head! But like, you had to learn all this stuff. You had to become this full-time advocate. All the while, there's still all the grief and like, "This is impossible as a parent to hold all this," y'know, emotional and mental everything. And I don't—mm! Part of me wants so badly to say you're like a fucking miracle! Right? Like—

[Jessica laughs.]

00:30:19 Jessica Guest What are you, some kind of saint? But we—we also know that that's kind of bullshit on some level, too. Because it separates you from—right? But like, I wanna actually talk about, like... being the mom. Right? Like how people speak to you. How they... y'know... this whole episode, we've already talked about a million things that people have stepped in. And I—I—I—talk to me about that. How people approach you and—

Well in the hospital, they call you "Mom." Because they can't learn everybody's names? And so they know the patient and then they say, "Okay, Mom, how are we feeling today, Mom?" So they start calling you "Mom" because you're basically the patient. And in terms of how people talk to me now, and—honestly, I appreciate your—your saying that. But there's no... I still get so annoyed with my kids? Y'know? Like, that stuff, I think—I think there's this idea of... the gratitude and all that. And I just wanna say, it's there. But they fight. They—even when she was in treatment there'd be things where it's like... y'know, it was cold. She didn't have hair. She didn't wanna wear a hat. I would say, "Put a hat on."

[Biz laughs.]

00:31:20 Biz Host Y'know. And it's tricky because of stupid COVID. Because one of her side effects is being immunocompromised. So also? I appreciate—
00:31:22 Jessica Guest "Put on your fucking masks!" *[Laughs.]*
Put on your masks inside! Vaccinate! Get your kids vaccinated if they're old enough! So that has been tricky? My sort of— *[Laughs.]*
My friend came to visit when we were in treatment. And she was

00:31:43 Biz Host just like, “Oh! I didn’t know you had to do all the mom stuff! You’re still making snacks when they need a snack?”
00:31:44 Jessica Guest You do all the mom stuff!
But that’s the—that, to me, is the hardest. Is that it’s like... you don’t just get to be in this, like, lane of hard times. It’s like you’re in the lane of hard times and then the rest of it is just happening around you.

[Biz laughs.]

00:32:06 Biz Host And that—I mean, in some ways it’s a distraction, but in other ways it’s like... it’s—sometimes it’s just too much. You know?
00:32:08 Jessica Guest It is too much! No, it’s too much!
00:32:10 Biz Host I don’t know what—y’know, it’s—
Well, I think—I think like, the, like, “saint”—the concept of saint. Didn’t most saints like chop off their arms or something? Like, I’m Catholic. I’m pretty sure there were like horrible atrocities that happened in relation to the saints. The idea that that is somehow perfection... and, like, this—you’re right! They’re still kids. They’re still—you’re still a Self who is in a situation in which you wanna yell, “Me! Me! Me! I want to yell and scream or run down the hall or go out for milk or, like...” That... yeah! That—you—that doesn’t get negated! By the joy. That’s still there!

00:32:53 Jessica Guest So, y’know, we did treatment. Then it’s been sort of—I’m kind of circling back to myself now. Whereas, y’know, and that’s sort of where my writing has—writing has been a way to sort of process it for me. But this... idea of, yeah, I’m still in here! Because it’s easy to get swallowed into it? And I mean, I was—it—I don’t know. There’s so much to it in terms of holding the emotion for your children. So I’m sure—I mean, we all—I think the interesting thing about COVID is that I think people can relate in a different way now. Because with Audrey and with Dylan, my son, it’s like, “Alright, we’re gonna go outside! We’re gonna put on masks. It’s okay. We’re not terrified.”

00:33:40 Biz Host Yeah! Everything’s normal!

00:33:42 Jessica Guest Y’know. I mean, so we live in New York City and, y’know, March 2020 was scary. And we live in an apartment. We still had to go outside. So... it’s this... managing your own emotions and not wanting to terrify your children with them... is tricky! Is tricky.

00:34:02 Biz Host Well it’s not just managing your own. It’s two sets of emotions you’re managing. It’s the emotions you’re holding for your children, and your own, like... “I’m a Self. Will I ever find time?” Or “I actually don’t wanna fucking go outside!” Right? Like, “I don’t wanna put a mask on! I don’t wanna—ahhh!” And like, those steps back to finding the stuff that still remain or has changed—and it doesn’t always have to be the same stuff we left behind or that we didn’t have time for. It can always be, like, a new version of that. Something new. I’m like, “I should really get fucking roller skates or start fencing.”

00:34:38 Jessica Guest Oh I—yeah! That’s fun!

00:34:40 Biz Host Fencing? Now—

[Jessica laughs.]

I immediately *[inaudible]*. Fencing at 50. This is absolutely what I need to fucking do. But like... it morphs. And I think what is hard to

like... see or learn or for others or for ourselves is that like, "Ah. I'm going back to do this. Oh! Now I have to go to X, Y, and Z! Okay. I'm back. And we're gonna—No. No. No. Stop. And now I'm gonna come back to—ah, fucking forms!" Right? Like, it's really hard! And I'm sure—

00:35:14 Jessica Guest

Oh, the forms.

00:35:16 Biz Host

Yeah. The fucking forms. Alright. I think that actually will lead us into what we can talk about last, which is—because I'm listening to this and besides wanting to snuggle you like my cat Steve—I'm just picking you up like in a weird [*inaudible*] stomach—how does that make you feel? [*Laughs.*]

00:35:36 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Jessica: I'm—y'know, when COVID's over I'm up for snuggling. [*Laughs.*]

00:35:41 Biz Host

Biz: Yeah. I'm just gonna lay on people when COVID is over. How can people support—like, I guess two things. One, the sort of dark side of people, like, taking advantage. Right? Like, isn't—I mean, there is some gross stuff out there and I think it's just as important to talk about so that we're all aware of it. And then... we'll go to someplace kind of nice. Which is, how can we help people—what should we never say? How can— [*Laughs.*]

[*Jessica laughs.*]

How many of the things have I said today should we never say?

[*Both laugh.*]

00:36:21 Jessica Guest

To somebody. Bring us home, Jessica! Do it! Alright. So—so I think because the story of childhood cancer is so easy to tell with this picture, um, there—and people do feel bad and the way to help often is fundraising and money and supporting that way. The pediatric cancer community is notoriously preyed upon. Which I didn't know? Until—and this is—so, it's gross and it's just—it's hard to know that this is out there. But so for example, the first time that it happened and I experienced it firsthand—so I couldn't work. Financially, basically, every family is just dashed on the rocks, too. Because even if insurance covers your stuff, I mean, it's almost like abstract how much things start costing at a certain point? Where it was like— [*Laughs.*]

00:37:15 Biz Host

Yeah! Yeah! [*Laughs.*]

00:37:16 Jessica Guest

It's like, "Oh, that's—that week was \$87,000. And that doesn't even include the doctors." Y'know. So that stuff? Is abstract and one thing. But then there's parking and groceries and then there's daycare for your other child and all that other stuff. And if you lose an income or if you lose the only income, people need to be supported financially. And so we were the gracious recipient of a GoFundMe. It was actually a different organization called Lotsa Helping Hands. And then GoFundMe is another one. So there are a few of these kind of platforms, and I'm sure you've all seen them and you've seen them. But someone took our picture—took a picture of my kid, copied the story, and then started another one on a different platform. And were raising money. It was like exactly what my brother wrote at first. It was exactly what was written. But someone found it. And was like, "Wait." There was just something that seemed a little off and they were sort of—it was—there was

something—it was Australia or it was a different country. It was Australians. No. *[Laughs.]*

00:38:20 Biz Host Oh! Australia! God!

00:38:22 Jessica Guest They're always just stealing your cancer kid's fundraising pages! *[Laughs.]*

00:38:26 Biz Host "What? AU address?" *[Laughs.]*

00:38:28 Jessica Guest I think it was something like, "But they live in New York!" Y'know.

[Biz laughs.]

But otherwise we never would've known about it. Because—

[Biz gasps.]

00:38:40 Crosstalk Crosstalk So that was the first. So that happens to people.
Jessica: Um, people also—

00:38:43 Biz Host **Biz:** That's great. That's great. That's just what you need.
In the middle of all of this.

00:38:44 Jessica Guest Yes. So then that was a horrible thing to—one of my brothers took care of that for us. We were very lucky to have a strong family and friends that came in. Because we needed it and they were—they showed up for us. So that happened to us. And then what happened last summer was I got—and this I write about in the piece. But someone wrote to me who I didn't know and said, "Hey, I think someone is using a picture of you and your kid for some kind of scam." And they didn't say it that way; I had to sort of dig through and figure it out. But basically, someone took a picture of us from an article that I wrote and they said that my daughter had died and her last words were to me that my husband had cheated on me.

00:39:32 Biz Host Are you fucking kidding me?

00:39:35 Jessica Guest That's what it said in this. It's Quora, which I don't really know. They do posts. Anybody can post. So somebody copied and so they plagiarized part of my article but then they said that my kid was dead and then they said that. So it was so horrible to read that and see that and really it was just like, "Give us your credit card number and we'll help you find out if your partner is cheating on you." So it was just this really gross... we were bait for some kind of scam. And I think because in the picture she's bald and that's like, "We're never gonna use a picture of her again." And, y'know. That wasn't—that wasn't fun. I don't recommend that.

00:40:18 Biz Host It's less worse that he's cheating on you. Right? Just as a woman and as a partner. But y'know, it makes it bad if you've got a child with cancer. Now that guy—

00:40:30 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Biz:** Now he's in trouble.

00:40:34 Jessica Guest **Jessica:** Right. Oh, now he's really the worst. Oh yeah. And then all these strangers—like, hundreds of thousands of people saw this! And were saying, y'know, "That guy—" and saying all these things about, y'know, my husband was reading it when we found it. And he was like, "They think I did this! I didn't do—" Y'know. It—yeah. It was just—I think it was, "What could be the worst thing that would make people really wanna find out if someone was cheating?" *[Laughs.]*

00:40:55 Biz Host Congratulations! You're the worst thing! *[Laughs.]*

00:40:57 Jessica Guest I know! It's an honor. *[Laughs.]*

00:40:59	Biz	Host	So weird! That's horrible. That's so weird. Alright.
00:41:04	Jessica	Guest	So people—people scam. And that's... gross. And yeah.
00:41:09	Biz	Host	Yeah. It's gross. How do we help?
00:41:11	Jessica	Guest	How do we help?
00:41:12	Biz	Host	How do we help?
00:41:14	Jessica	Guest	So if there's somebody in your community—someone who you don't know too well—and because pediatric cancer isn't that rare? I think everybody kinda knows somebody. Right? Or has heard of someone. And I did a little informal poll with some of my peeps—my Cancer Mom peeps—and so many people talk about the generosity that they received. And things like meal trains, which can be great. They were not great for us. Because we...
00:41:43	Biz	Host	You weren't home!
00:41:45	Jessica	Guest	We weren't home. And then it was—it was stressful. For us. So everybody's different. There's not one way to help? There's a lot of ways to help. So kind of know—we live in a place where we don't have a yard! But maybe someone—maybe you know of a neighbor who is going through this. Go mow their lawn.
00:42:04	Biz	Host	Mow their lawn.
00:42:05	Jessica	Guest	Mow their lawn! Maybe they—you know them well enough that you could take their pets. It doesn't always have to be financial? But money helps. Gift cards. To whatever. Food places. Grocery store runs. Things like that. What doesn't help too much—and some people have expressed this to me and it didn't help for us to have to say—if someone says, "What can I do?" That's not always the most help. And I've definitely said that to people when they're—
00:42:34	Biz	Host	Oh, yeah! I say it to people all the time! And it's—unanswerable!
00:42:38	Jessica	Guest	It's—it's—and it's not meant in a bad way! It's just... it's—if you think of yourself as a mom and all the things that you have rolling all the time. Right? It's almost like you wanna duplicate yourself. So cleaning somebody's house for them or having a cleaner come. We had friends who had a cleaner come? And I came home from the hospital one day and my house—my apartment was clean? And I just burst into tears. I was—they didn't really ask? They were just sort of like—I mean, they told me ahead of time, "We wanna do this for you." It's very hard—I'm not somebody who likes to ask for help? It was very humbling to be the recipient of generosity and help. But we really needed it! And now I feel this obligation and this want to support other people in a way. So y'know, if you can't help with food or with giving some kind of money gift for somebody? It's something else that's good? You can donate your blood. You can let someone know, "Hey, I know you're going through this. I just donated blood." Or, "Is there a place you want us to donate blood?" Because you can sometimes donate blood for a specific child to use?
00:43:50	Biz	Host	Oh. Wow!
00:43:52	Jessica	Guest	We had a friend who I didn't even know well at the time! Donated four times. For us.
00:43:58	Biz	Host	Wow!
00:43:59	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Jessica: It—which is—It was so nice! People are so nice!
00:44:04	Jessica	Guest	Biz: Isn't that nice? That's so nice! That's so nice! It's so nice. So you can donate blood. You could—this is a really easy thing that probably everyone should do. You can register to be a bone marrow match? It's called BeTheMatch.org or something. If you are a person who doesn't look like a lot of people

in the world—if you’re a minority, especially—there are fewer people who look like you? There are fewer matches out there. For bone marrow. There’s a lot that people can do. Just little kind of micro things that people can do to be helpful. Yeah.

00:44:33 Biz Host What I like about that is—because I think we’ve all experienced—I mean, I know we’ve committed whole shows to, “I don’t know what I need.” Y’know? Like, don’t come in, “Oh, there’s an hour! Go do something for yourself!” Right? Like, I don’t know what that would be. I don’t know what it looks like. I really like the idea of, like... “I am going to buy you some new jeans. Point to the ones that you want.” Right? Like, “Just point. Thank you. I am going to—would that make you feel better? Good. I’m gonna give you food. I’m going to—” Y’know, I think... I think that those are really... good ideas. And it sounds like... one of the other things we can do is to not be terrified of you. What do you think?

00:45:24 Jessica Guest Oh my gosh. Yeah! I think—I think there’s sort of a fragility that people—and I mean, rightly so. And there can be a phase of that where it can be very hard to relate to the rest of the world. Right? But I think... it was amazing to me. People who—again, who I didn’t know very well—they stepped forward! People who we knew very well? Some people stepped back. And there’s not a judgment on that. I think there’ve been times in my life where I’ve done both things. And people would send, y’know, send a text—“Hey, check your email. There’s a gift card coming.” Or—and I mean... that—those things made a big difference. They made a big difference.

00:46:06 Biz Host Well what also makes a difference is you coming on to talk to us about it. And... we have to stop talking. Which is—

[Jessica laughs.]

—always impossible for me to do. And Gabe’s giving me the eye.

[Jessica laughs.]

But I wanna make sure a couple of things. One, we’re gonna link everybody up to where they can read one of your latest pieces, which is on *Mother Magazine* where you are talking about this image. The idea of the image and getting ripped off and this experience of somebody using your images. Which is... great.

[Jessica laughs.]

Uh, the piece is great. What it’s about is a nightmare. As well as all of the links that you have already spoken about on the show. And they will all be posted in the show notes. And I just wanna say how much I appreciate people who go through things like this? Don’t have to then go out and help the rest of us. ‘K? I mean, you don’t. And that’s okay! That’s okay. People shouldn’t be expected to. So the fact that you are? I just want you to know how much I appreciate that. And if tomorrow you never wanted to talk about this fucking again?

[Jessica laughs.]

That would also be fair. Right? Like, y’know. You don’t have to be a Cancer Mom forever. *[Laughs.]* Right? But—I mean, you will be,

00:47:44	Jessica	Guest	because... god. That's—but that's a personal inside thing. Not a— [Laughs.] Not in the bio. But I just—I see you. And you're doing a— you've done and you are doing a remarkable job. So. Thank you. Thank you. You—you are, too! And I really—I was a listener before. Right? So this idea of seeing other people going through things. Just from a parent's side. I really felt I tried to bring that with me into the hospital. Into, y'know, that people are doing a good job. I would say that to parents in the hospital. So thank you for giving us a language to just support others. No matter what they're going through.
00:48:17	Biz	Host	Well, you're welcome. And... to boot, no one actually has to go out and be nice, either!

[Both laugh.]

00:48:38	Jessica	Guest	If you're going through something! God! You get to be horrible! It's—it's fine! We'll all be here waiting for you. [Laughs.] When it's over. Alright, Jessica! Thank you so much, and again, we'll link everybody up to this. And... thank you so much!
00:48:39	Biz	Host	Thank you!
00:48:40	Jessica	Guest	Yayyyy!
00:48:42	Music	Music	Byeeee! [Laughs.] "Ones and Zeroes" by "Awesome." Steady, driving electric guitar with drum and woodwinds.

[Music fades out.]

00:48:59	Music	Promo	Inspiring keyboard music plays in background.
00:49:00	Biz	Promo	<i>One Bad Mother</i> is supported in part by Billie, home of the award- winning razor. I... love my Billie razor. Such a good razor! You wanna know how good a razor it is? I just got a second one... for my tween! And it was like so nice to have this really nice razor? Don't suffer another second paying a pink tax for a bad shave. Go to MyBillie.com/mother to get the best razor you will ever own. Billie is half the price of other razors, plus free shipping always! Just go to MyBillie.com/mother . Spelled MyB-I-L-L-I-E.com/mother . That's MyBillie.com/mother .

[Music fades out.]

00:49:52	Biz	Host	Genius fail time, me. Genius me!
00:49:55	Clip	Clip	<i>[Dramatic, swelling music in background.]</i>

00:50:09	Biz	Host	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> Okay this is really good! [Laughs.] So—it's day two of braces. And again, we don't start school for another week or so. And Raiden has now shifted from the pain of the separators to the, like, tween-y angst of how they look with braces. Showing them Marcia and the <i>Brady Bunch</i> braces episode did not help, for some strange reason. [Laughs.] Anyway. They're moping around this morning, and complaining—out loud—as tweens are wont to do—that they look awful with braces. And they're gonna go back to school and it's going to be awful. And then it hit me... I realized it. I said, "Raiden, masks!" And they looked at me and they were like, "What?" And I said, "You will be wearing a mask at school! In fact, every time you leave this house you wear a mask! What a great
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time to have braces!" *[Laughs.]* "You don't ever have to show them!" And like, their face lit up and Stefan was in the kitchen and was like, "Whaaat? Masks!" And we were all like, "Masks! Masks! Masks!" And I just felt like an absolute genius? And also—everyone out there with braces? Wow! This is another, like— *[Laughs.]* This is a pro. This is a little "tick the box in the pro column" of wearing masks to school. You're welcome.

00:51:42 Caller Caller

[Answering machine beeps.]

Hi! I'm calling with a genius for me and my Lefty! 'Cause this morning, we were hanging out, eating breakfast, and all of a sudden I notice on our ceiling one of those giiaaant centipedes. One of the biiiig motherfuckers that look like they could take you down. They've got legs for days. And let me tell you, those little assholes are not my friend. So I look up. And I go, "Hm." Which is my signal to Lefty that means, "Something's going on." And he looks up, and he goes, "Hm." Which is his way of saying, "Oh, yeah. I see that asshole."

[Biz laughs.]

And so. Instead of freaking out in front of our four-year-old—because I don't—like, she's allowed to be afraid of what she's gonna be afraid of, but I don't wanna give her what I'm afraid of? She goes, "What?" And we point it out. And we say, "Look! There's a centipede on the ceiling! Oh, wow! Yeah! Look at those legs! Ah, yeah! They're—it's really moving around! Uh-huh!" And we talk about it. And we stay completely calm. And Lefty and I are texting each other the ways in which we are freaking out.

[Biz laughs.]

So we are able to express the fact that we are freaking out because "this fucking centipede is huge and it's right over—this is right over us! While we are eating breakfast!" And then? It falls down.

[Biz gasps.]

And you know what we do? We go, "Huh. Yeah. It fell down."

[Biz laughs.]

Now I need to find it 'cause Lefty got to go to work, Mini got to go to daycare, and I'm still on summer vacation for one more week. So I get to spend the day trying to find that little asshole and murder it.

[Biz laughs.]

Or get it outside. I don't know. *[Makes freaked out noise.]* They are not my favorite. And Lefty and I are geniuses because we were calm even though we were freaking the fuck out.

00:53:57 Biz Host

Uh, okay. You are a genius. Because I thought for sure—I gotta tell ya, to me the genius moment wasn't the initial reaction to the centipede. Okay? You guys staying calm—that was very good. I highly, highly approve. Big round of applause. To me the genius

was when it fell from the ceiling. And landed—that you guys didn’t just start screaming. That you didn’t—I mean, it’s very noble of you. To want to not pass on your fears. I’ve tried that many times with my children, and apparently they’re just gonna have their own fears. Goddammit! “You are not afraid of spiders! Stop it!” *[Laughs.]* Those monster centipedes are a nightmare. And I salute you. And would go into a haunted house with you and your Lefty any day of the week. Because... nerves of steel. You are incredible. And you’re doing a good job. Failures!

00:55:07 Clip Clip

[Dramatic orchestral music plays in the background.]

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

[Timpani with foot pedal engaged for humorous effect.]

00:55:13 Biz Host

Biz: *[Calmly]* You suck!

Fail me, me. Okay. This is not—this is not good. I really wish Theresa was here! *[Laughs.]* ‘Cause this is one of those, like, “Oh, it’s even worse when you just kinda say it out loud to yourself or to Gabe.” I mean, that’s weird. Uh, okay. Raiden... as I’ve said multiple times on this show today—got the braces. And the separators. And they really hurt. So we were giving him Tylenol. And then because of all of my experience, I know that you can sometimes alternate Tylenol and Advil. Like, an ibuprofen and acetaminophen—back and forth. They won’t interact but it will add some additional pain relief. So I went out and now—also—FYI. This is the advice of my dentist and their orthodontist. Okay? So blah, blah, blah. Always check with your doctor, especially with medicating children.

So I run to the store and get Advil, and bring it home. And I got the little gel caps that are little mini blue pills. And Raiden took one. And it was helpful. And they were on the kitchen counter and this morning, I was like, half-asleep. And Stefan was in the shower. And Ellis had already come in and crawled in the bed and was like, I dunno, bouncing on me or something. And suddenly Raiden comes in and says, “My mouth still hurts. Can I take an Advil?” And I said, “Yeah. Absolutely.” And she said, “It’s the little blue capsules.” And I said, “Yeah. Yeah. Do you know where they are?” He says, “Yes.” And I said, “Okay.”

We all start to wake up. And I go into the bathroom and— *[Laughs.]* That’s where I see the Claritin pills. For Claritin. Which are also small, blue, like, gel pills. And I said, “Did you take this pill?” And Raiden was like, “Yes.” And I said, “That is the wrong pill. This is Claritin.” “Yeah, I thought it was weird that it said Claritin.” “Well...? Okay. Okay.” And then Stefan came in and Stefan was mad. Ooh! I don’t like it when Stefan’s mad! He just—and by mad, I mean gave me a seriously disappointing frustrated look? *[Laughs.]* And I just was like, “Alright. This is on me. I thought Raiden knew they were in the kitchen.”

‘Cause we’ve always been, like, really clear about medicine. You can’t take medicine even from a friend’s parent without them checking with me. And like, y’know, the kids have always been so

good at this. And... I just... I should've said, "Bring it in." And instead we had to have a whole 'nother discussion about bringing things in and confirming. And yeah! I... really felt bad. She was— Raiden was like, "Is it gonna do anything?" I said, "It's gonna help you not have a runny nose and not have a reaction to grass today. So that's good." *[Laughs.]* Ohhhh. Bad.

00:58:29 Caller Caller

[Answering machine beeps.]

Hi! I'm calling with a fail. Uhhh... I feel like this fail has been years in the anticipation. Just waiting for this fail to happen. And yesterday, it finally did! And I feel like all I need to say for you to visualize what's coming is that, um, we have a bidet. On our toilet.

00:58:51 Biz Host
00:58:53 Caller Caller

Dun-dun-DUN! *[Laughs.]*

Yeah. Got that before kids.

[Biz laughs.]

It's staying in our house. My kid is three. We've been doing the potty-training thing for a while. And she just a couple week or four—who knows—ago, discovered the bidet. So that's cool. But um, yesterday we finally had the moment that we've all now—I feel like with me, you're all seeing this coming—

[Biz laughs.]

She's just running around being a crazy kiddo. Running around the house. In the bathroom, I hear the water come on. I'm like, "Oh. She's playing in the sink." And then I'm like, "Wait. She can't reach the sink without the stool. It's not in the bathroom right now." Yup. The fountain—there was a fountain. My bathroom got showered. Still looking at the saved toilet paper with the plastic thing we put over it to keep the cats from it.

[Biz laughs.]

I am doing a terrible job. You are doing an amazing job. And... yeah! That's—that's all I got. Bye! I love the show so much! Thank you.

01:00:13 Biz Host

Wow. Wow! How... international of you! *[Laughs.]* You have a bidet! Of course that is something you got before you had children. *[Laughs.]* Of course! Uh, I gotta tell you—in this fail—which—and this is a fail. One, it is a fail because you knew it was coming. Yeah. You had a bidet and then you had a child and you knew eventually this day would come. And they would either be playing in it or drinking out of it like a fountain at a playground. 'K? That was a fail. A very... exciting fail. To say the least. Obviously, bidets enter our house pre-children. In most cases, to be honest, I have never in my life seen a bidet in person. That is how fancy you are. You are so fancy! To have a bidet. What are you, millionaires? What are you, rich? This is exciting. Anyway. Yeah. You shoulda seen that coming and you did see it coming and yet it still happened, so yay. But there is a hidden genius in here? And I am like, "What plastic thing did you put on top of the toilet paper to keep your cats from tearing that up?" 'Cause that's genius! That's what I wanna know about. But yeah. You have water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink. Yeah! There ya go. Enjoy

drinking from the firehose, my darlings. I'm sure I could come up with some sort of... clean in-and-out joke, but I'll leave that to all the rest of you. You're doing a horrible job. Having fancy toilets. [Laughs.]

01:01:49 Music Music

"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.*

01:02:15 Music Promo
01:02:16 Biz Promo

[Music fades out.]

Cheerful ukulele with whistling plays in background. *One Bad Mother* is supported in part by BetterHelp online therapy. It doesn't matter who you are. Life can be stressful. Especially, for example, let's say you've got kids in your house? [Laughs.] Or maybe there's been a pandemic? [Laughs.] There's one or two things to be stressed about. Look. And at the same time, you might not be feeling down and out and depressed? Or like you're at a total loss? But—when your stress is high? You probably could use the chance to unload. Get it out! BetterHelp is a customized online therapy that offers video, phone, and even live chat sessions with your therapist. And it can be more affordable than in-person therapy. Look. Just—see if it's for you. The podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp, and *One Bad Mother* listeners get 10% off their first month at [BetterHelp.com/badmother](https://www.betterhelp.com/badmother). You can have your first session in under 48 hours at [B-E-T-T-E-R-H-E-L-P.com/badmother](https://www.betterhelp.com/badmother).

01:03:28 Promo Clip

[Music fades out.]

Music: Down-tempo drums with synth plays in background.

Jesse Thorn: I'm Jesse Thorn. This week on *Bullseye*, David Byrne on the Talking Heads, easing back into live performance, and the magic of doo-wop.

David Byrne: You don't get it very much, people doing dippidippidip-dip, whoa, whoa, numahnumahnumahnumah. You don't get a lot of that. [Laughs.]

Jesse: Listen to *Bullseye*, from [MaximumFun.org](https://www.maximumfun.org) and NPR.

01:03:53 Promo Clip

[Music fades out.]

Music: Mellow, rhythmic synth plays in background.

Speaker: Hey, podcast fam! We'd like to get a better idea of who you are and what you care about. So we have a quick favor to ask. If you have a few minutes to spare, please go to [MaximumFun.org/adsurvey](https://www.maximumfun.org/adsurvey). There, we've got a short, anonymous survey that will take about five minutes to fill out. Plus, if you finish it, you'll get a 10% discount on merch at the MaxFunStore. MaxFun shows have always relied on support from our members and always will. This survey will help keep the few ads we do run interesting and relevant to you. That's [MaximumFun.org/adsurvey](https://www.maximumfun.org/adsurvey). A-D-S-U-R-V-E-Y, all one word. And thanks for your help!

01:04:34 Biz Host *[Music fades out.]*
 Alright, everybody. It's time... to listen to a mom have a breakdown.

01:04:41 Caller Caller *[Answering machine beeps.]*

This is a rant. I am 41. And I am pregnant with my fourth child. And I would like to say, "Fuck you." Fuck you to every single person—family and friends—as we enter into the second trimester and I'm telling people. Everyone who feels it's their need—their right—to tell me, "You know it's a high-risk pregnancy, you being 41." Fuck you.

[Biz laughs.]

01:05:28 Biz Host I am a healthy person. This is my body. This is my choice. Fuck you. Doesn't help. Doesn't help. That's all. All I needed to say. Thank you.

That's enough! That's enough to say. That's all you did need to say. First of all, you are doing a great job. And you know what you need to hear? "Congratulations. How are you? Can I get you something?" *[Laughs.]* "Would you like a nice gift? How can I support you? You are amazing!" Yeah. This falls right into that category of things you just aren't supposed to say to people? And I—no one apparently has ever written these things down? *[Laughs.]* So we just keep saying them over and over again. And I gotta tell ya—as a woman who had my second at 40, but going back at my first, Raiden, I was already pregnant and wasn't called anything. But then I became 35. Yeah, I think that's the math. Or 36. Something like that. Bad with dates. During the pregnancy, suddenly... I... was... what do they call it? Like, geriatric or something? Like, some horrible name. That basically means "old, old! We hate old people! And you can't do anything anymore!" And I'm like, ahh, eh, not sure that's true. Because again—I don't know. Do we know anything about women? *[Laughs.]* And their bodies? Anyway, that's a different rant for a different day and really my rant, not yours.

Your rant is incredibly valid. And it's really, like... *[sighs.]* Really a kick in the teeth when you're getting it from family members and friends who have already watched you go through this three times! Obviously, you can have a baby! *[Laughs.]* Right? Obviously, you are a smart-ass person. Who makes choices. And... is able to think about all the concerns and all the risks and all the challenges that you may or may not have. You've already done this! You don't need everybody else to remind you of this! You are capable of that!

And I don't know. I just—I think you're wonderful. And I appreciate you calling this in and sharing it, because—as always—most of the time when we stick our foot in our mouth, it wasn't intentional. These things don't always come from a place of hate or... like, a desire to make you crazy or feel bad. But, that doesn't mean they don't. And so we all have to... let this be a reminder to just be mindful. Like if you know you're gonna go see your friend who's 41 and having a baby, prep! Prep yourself! Talk it out to yourself in the car or on the subway. Be like, "Congratulations! How can I support you? What can I get for you?" *[Laughs.]* "Would you like my seat?"

Here's \$20." [Laughs.] I mean, there's just so many other things we can say. And... in creating a safe and supportive environment for each other, we're gonna find that it's a lot easier to really hear each other. And start supporting each other in really stronger and more profound ways. I think you are remarkable? I think you're remarkable. And... we see you. I see you. And... you are not alone. And you're doing a great job.

01:09:23 Biz Host

Alright, everybody. I think the big takeaway for the day? Is—let's be really careful how we frame each other? How we... sort of put each other into categories or boxes or narratives that may not be even remotely true? Like, we all walk through this world constantly being confronted with things that we don't know a lot about. That make us nervous. That are scary. That... any number of things! That make us feel like we're judging ourselves or we should judge ourselves. And the way— [Laughs.] Our brains think sometimes the best way to handle that is, is to just... displace that on the other person. [Laughs.]

I remember back in the day when we first started the show, we were talking to different parents who had kids with a variety of needs. And/or wired differently. All these different things. And people coming up to 'em and saying, "I don't know how you do it. You must be an angel. You an angel?" [Laughs.] And they're all like, "No. I'm fucking tired. And I'm not doing it." It's like coming up to anybody with kids and saying, "I don't know how you do it." Well, we're not doing it. Okay? It's like a displacement of your own discomfort? [Laughs.] And I am the queen of that, so I'll be first in line. To try and work on taking a step back. Taking a breath.

Again, it's like with the pregnant woman. We just need to each and every person we meet, [through laughter] we need to just be saying, "What can I do? To help today? What do you need? You need a Coke? Some new water? Fifty bucks? What can I do? You wanna go ogle Amazon or something? [Laughs.] You wanna start an Instagram account?" There are a million different things we can say to each other besides something deeply personal and possibly offensive. [Laughs.] And sadly, we don't know what that always is until we do it, so... learning, learning, learning. You are all doing an amazing job. It is weird. And sometimes wonderful. And sometimes hard. And sometimes the best. And you get to have both. You're all amazing. And I will talk to you next week. Bye!!!!

01:11:56 Music Music

"Mama Blues" by Cornbread Ted and the Butterbeans. Strumming acoustic guitar with harmonica and lyrics.

*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.*

[Music fades into background of dialogue; resumes after speakers are finished.]

01:12:20 Biz Host

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. *One Bad Mother* is a member of the Maximum Fun family of podcasts. To support the show go to MaximumFun.org/donate.

01:12:49 Theresa Host

[Music continues for a while before fading out.]

01:13:12 Music Transition

A cheerful ukulele chord.

01:13:13 Speaker 1 Guest

MaximumFun.org.

01:13:14 Speaker 2 Guest

Comedy and culture.

01:13:16 Speaker 3 Guest

Artist owned—

01:13:17 Speaker 4 Guest

—Audience supported.