

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> —never give up! Or... maybe give up! We talk about strength found in surrendering with Megan Hanlon. Plus, the water isn't fine for Biz.
00:00:37	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz and caller: Woooo!
00:00:38	Caller	Caller	This is a check-in. Tonight, my kid asked me if televisions existed when I was a kid.
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
00:00:52	Biz	Host	Yay for that. Hope you guys all had a great day! Thanks for the show! That made my day better! <i>[Laughs.]</i> Now I'm not the only person in the world whose children act surprised about things that, y'know, either didn't exist or did exist when I was a child. Because all I am at this point is old. To them. They're like, "You're old! What? You're that old?" Yeah. Wow. I wish I knew what you had said. Or if you had just walked away. That just really goes in that long list of horrible things that your children say to you that you're really not allowed to respond to. <i>[Laughs.]</i> If it was a stranger. My children know that TVs existed when I was a kid. But they also know that in my day we had three channels and we had to get up off the couch and go over and flip the dial. Why were there more channels on the dial? There should've only been three! And then we had the remote control that we called a "clicker." And— <i>[Laughs.]</i> And if you stood just right next to the television system touching the rabbit ears, you could pick up TBS! Wow! Oh, you're doing a wonderful job surviving in this century. Good job.
00:02:08	Music	Music	Speaking of good jobs, it's time for thank-you's. Heavy electric guitar and driving percussion overlaid with "Ohh, oh-oh, oh-oh" and "Hey-ey-ey-ey-ey-ey" lyrics.
00:02:22	Biz	Host	I'm gonna start today off with a thank you to people who have figured out better ways to let people know what their mask mandate rules are. Here in California, the mask mandate has lifted for outside <u>and</u> inside! If you're vaccinated. You can go inside without a mask if you're vaccinated. One shop that I went into said if you are not vaccinated, you have to wear a mask. Now, I—this is—this is one of those setups where like it feels like, "Well I don't want people to know that I'm not vaccinated, so I'm just gonna lie with my face. By not wearing a mask." And then for people like me who may never take a mask off ever again, I've—I'm like, "Do people think that I didn't get vaccinated?" <i>[Laughs.]</i> So that's stressful. But then I went into another store that said, "California has recently lifted their mask mandate. We encourage you to do whatever makes you feel the most comfortable." And I thought that was so

nice! Sort of a “masks not required, but we are still mask-friendly.” Right? Like—*[Laughs.]* So it just—just—thank you. Especially to that store. Who figured out a nice way to say it. And to all the people out there who are trying to figure out how to craft these things. So... thank you.

Thank you, teachers. Thank you, all the people who work in schools. School psychologists, school nurses, principals, heads, P.E. faculty. Thank you. Thank you to people who work with the PTA or the WPO or the W... PO or the WTO. They're all called different things. But basically you are parents who are out there trying to help make things happen! Community events happen at your school. And to support your teachers and your families. Thank you for doing that.

Thank you to everybody in the medical profession. You know who you are. You're very tired. And I love you. And I see you. And like I've been saying recently on this show, I just walk around in awe and gratitude for really everyone? It takes so much to keep day-to-day life happening. And I have definitely felt the impact of when day-to-day life can't happen. Because of COVID. Because of restrictions. Or because of any of the things that were happening to us before the pandemic. Thank you everyone for showing up and thank you for staying home if you're sick. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

00:05:26 Biz

Host

Speaking of showing up, I mentioned last week that Ellis had said they were ready for swim classes. And they wanted to start taking them. If you've listened to the show for a long time, Ellis—not a fan of water. Probably the fact that we haven't been near a pool in two years because of the pandemic, some things might've gotten mixed up with his memories. What he thinks a pool is. *[Laughs.]* What he thinks he needs to do in a pool. So we were all very excited that they were showing interest and ready. Ellis is eight. And we have tried swimming lessons in the past, and they did not work. Or they weren't suited to Ellis's style.

So with him saying that he wanted to jump in, as it were, we jumped in. We signed him up for a beginner's class at our local aquatic center. And he just sat on the edge of the pool the whole time with his feet in. *[Laughs.]* I have the saddest little picture! But actually it's not the saddest. It's very brave that Ellis was willing to sit on the edge of the pool and not just run screaming from the entire thing. Turns out, if you are above the age of six, beginner class still means you're jumping right on in that water. I reached out to the aquatic center saying, “Mm... we really need somebody or a class geared towards ‘I'm totally terrified of drowning in water.’” *[Laughs.]* I need one of those!

So it just was like... it was... *[sighs]*. Lessons learned. Y'know. Learned a little something. Ellis learned a little something. I'm still proud of him for showing up and I'm proud of him for being able to tell me how he felt about the entire experience. And... this will not be how we approach it. We'll find another way to approach it. *[Laughs.]* 'Cause y'know, sometimes you just gotta know when to let go. And to not keep pushing something. Which I think ties in

nicely to what we're gonna talk about today, which is the strength of surrendering with Megan Hanlon.

00:07:47 Music Music Banjo strums; cheerful banjo music continues through dialogue.
 00:07:48 Theresa Host 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.

00:07:55 Biz Host If you are married to the host of *One Bad Mother*, we definitely are talking about you.

00:07:59 Theresa Host Nothing we say constitutes professional parenting advice.
 00:08:02 Biz Host Biz and Theresa's children are brilliant, lovely, and exceedingly extraordinary.
 00:08:06 Theresa Host Nothing said on this podcast about them implies otherwise.

[Banjo music fades out.]

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

00:08:12 Biz Host This week, I am very excited to be welcoming Megan Hanlon, who is—surprise—a wife, mother, and sometimes writer. *[Laughs.]* Her work has appeared in *Mutha Magazine*, *Motherwell*, and *Her View From Home*, among others, and will be included in an upcoming anthology from Our Galaxy Publishing. Her blog, *Sugar Pig*, is known for relentlessly honest essays that are equal parts tragedy and comedy. That is probably a tagline of parenthood right there. For her paying job, Megan is associate producer of the *Crazy Good Turns* podcast. Welcome, Megan! Welcome, welcome, welcome. Thank you so much. I am so excited to be here.

00:08:57 Megan Hanlon Guest
 00:08:59 Biz Host I—*[Laughs.]* Know that I already love you and want to be best friends. Really just from the articles I've read and your bio. So we'll jump into all of those things, and start making friendship bracelets. I love it!
 00:09:13 Megan Guest Yeah. Y'know. Just craft.
 00:09:15 Biz Host It's a great idea. I have a small wrist, just FYI. So.
 00:09:17 Megan Guest Oh, good to know! I do too!
 00:09:19 Biz Host If it's adjustable, that's better? But I'll take whatever you give me.
 00:09:21 Megan Guest No, I do think it's good when there's an adjustment to the—but those were always one step beyond my crafting abilities. *[Laughs.]*
 00:09:23 Biz Host

[Megan laughs.]

00:09:37 Megan Guest I just tie it 'til it falls off! Alright. Who lives in your house? Well, myself, of course. And then my husband. We have been married for almost fifteen years. And then we have two children. Our son just turned nine and a daughter who is six. And we also have a very disobedient Boston Terrier. And he is currently locked up in the bathroom. *[Laughs.]*

[Biz laughs.]

00:09:57 Biz Host I'm a little jealous of your terrier. I would like to be locked in a bathroom myself right now.
 00:10:04 Megan Guest He has his own pillow. I gave him a cookie. Things couldn't be better for him right now.

[Biz laughs.]

So he is doing really well. He's happy to be in there, I'm sure.

[Biz laughs.]

00:10:14 Biz Host

I love it. So... Megan. You have written for lots of places. One of the places you write for is one of our absolutely favorite websites, and that would be *Mutha Magazine*. They are just... an amazing place for people to go and connect. And I actually want to start with one of the pieces that you wrote for them called "The Strength of Surrender." This is a piece in which you talk about how we don't always give credit to the strength that it takes to give up. And I would really like to just start with that piece. Talk to me about writing that piece. *[Laughs.]*

00:10:58 Megan Guest

Sure! So the piece is about my mother's choice to surrender me into protective care. Into foster care. When I was seventeen years old. And it was my senior year in high school. And you can read in the piece, it was sort of a long, infuriating and sad story about how we got to that point where I was no longer safe in my home. And I had moved out. And I was living with a couple that I had met at church, and they had a lot of difficult and unwelcoming stipulations that came along with my staying there. And I had said in the piece that it was a place to land, but it was not home. And I kind of needed that.

So the counselor at my school had gotten word that I wasn't living with my parents anymore. She kind of pulled me aside and said, "Hey, what's going on? What can I help with?" That eventually led to me being put into foster care. And it was—it was a choice that my mother had. It was voluntary surrender. Which they had. And I think has always been open in Texas, where I grew up. But most people don't know about it. But my mom had—she was facing eviction and foreclosure. She didn't have water or heat at the time. There was no way for me to do my homework or take my showers. Anything like that. It was obviously somewhere that I couldn't stay. I didn't have any other relatives or friends that could take me in at the time, so I went into foster care. And I stayed there from October through May. It was two weeks before graduation when I left. And so as—I've always remembered that and experienced that from my own side. How it impacted me, how I felt about it. It's a fact. It's something that happened. I'm not—I don't broadcast it? But I'm also not gonna shy away from it because it's part of who I am.

So it's just been recently that I started to think about what was that like for my mom. And I think that happened because I have two kids of my own. I am—my youngest just went into kindergarten this school year, and so I've had to leave her with strangers. With people and trust that she would be taken care of. And then also as indicated in the piece I wrote, my mother died when I was 26. So it wasn't ten years later. And it was around the time of the anniversary of her passing that I really started to think about, what was her life like as a mother? I never really knew her as an adult. I only knew her from me being a child. And those are two totally different relationships that you have with your parents. And so I started to think about how, exactly, did this happen? Did my school counselor call her and say, "Look, this—this isn't a good situation. We're gonna have to move her somewhere." Or did my mom call the school and say, "I don't know what to do, because she can't

stay here anymore.” I don’t have those details. I’ve never had those details.

But I did wonder what it was like for her to maybe feel like the one thing that she was tasked with—which was raising and taking care of a child—y’know, one of the biggest responsibilities you can have—did she feel like she failed at that? Because she was unable to take care of me anymore. And while that is true, she somehow had the strength and the fortitude to say, “I can’t do this” and let go. And see me off into somebody else’s home. Which was—it must’ve been incredibly, incredibly difficult for her. I can’t imagine how hard that was, especially so soon knowing that I was going to leave for college and this was my senior year that she was missing. And I just thought about how much—how much strength it takes to give up. And we often malign people that give up and say, “Well, they quit and they just didn’t try hard enough.” Sometimes you have to give up. And knowing when to do that is... is an enormous source of strength and courage that isn’t talked about enough.

00:15:18 Biz Host

I know that for me, when kids got into my house—and it wasn’t right away. I mean there were some early stages where I was like, “Oh my god, I am so sorry.” *[Laughs.]* To my parents. Right? Like, where you’re like, “Wow. How did you guys do this? Because I’m failing miserably at this. I’m... seeing eyeballs in the boiling water.” Right? “I am so sleep-deprived and crazy.” And then as they got older, and I started—you start getting faced with some of those choices of what to say, how to say it, what are you gonna do in this situation when they do this, when they have lied about this or done this. Right? And I—like, immediately you—for a lot of us you kind of go back to your own experiences. And it really forces you to view your parents in a different way.

And I agree. I think we live in a society in which giving up is frowned upon, and has definitely a connotation to it that is loaded. I think women—especially mother—really. *[Through laughter]* Really get it. I mean, like, “What? You don’t like it? You didn’t like childbirth? You failed! You don’t enjoy it? You don’t enjoy not sleeping ever again? You’ve failed! Oh, is your body not quite right anymore? Ya failed if you don’t like it!” It—*[sighs]*. It makes sense that as your children got older that this would be something you had to process. And go through. And... I guess one of my other questions regarding this specific experience for you was... what was that process like? We all have things in our growing-up—like, we all have things that we have to forgive for our parents. We have to try and understand. If we—if we can. That’s a hard thing you did! That’s a hard thing you did. Good job! But that’s hard.

00:17:28 Megan Guest

Thank you! Thank you.

[Biz laughs.]

I cried. I cried writing it. I cried trying to step into her shoes and picture her, y’know, sitting at the breakfast table and looking out the window into the literally the cow pasture that was next to our trailer. And trying to figure out, what was she—what was she thinking? What was she feeling? If it were me, what would—how would I think and feel about it? So I definitely cried. There were absolutely tears. There were tears when I sent it to *Mutha Magazine* and they

agreed to print it, because I was concerned that people would look down on my mother and say that she failed. And judge her for this decision that she made. But I have never been—I wasn't then and I'm not now angry with her or think that—think of her as a failure or think that she—for one minute I don't think she did anything other than make the best decision she had out of an array of really crappy decisions. Those were—those were her only options. And—

00:18:33 Biz Host

I gotta say—what a gift and what grace you have given to women who have had to make hard decisions. Like this.

00:18:45 Megan Guest

I think—and they're all hard!

00:18:47 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Megan: There's—they're—there is no easy decision in parenting.

00:18:52 Biz Host

Biz: They're all hard! Yeah! They all suck! Yeah! *[Laughs.]* No! No! It's always—and it always comes with a big suitcase full of, "What if? What did I...? Could I?" Which ties into your next piece. I mean, you started the "Surrender" piece by mentioning that when it came to having your own children—the fertility issues that you had, having to reach a moment for yourself that was, "I am quitting this. I am giving this up." Right? And then you do this amazing piece about "The Unknowable Weight of Origin" in which you worry about the "what is" and "what if" of motherhood. Given that your children were conceived with the help of an egg donor. And will you be enough? And I—to put those two pieces, A, how far apart did you write those pieces? Because as a reader who read them back-to-back, there is some major crossover. I mean, those are a lot of threads! But just, ooh! *[Laughs.]* I've been in therapy for a long time, so I understand.

[Megan laughs.]

You pull one thread, you pull all the threads." Oh, is everything connected somehow? Surprise!" I guess my first question is, how close were those pieces together? And my next question is—it sounds like you might've gone through this process of stopping—of letting go, of giving up, whatever word you wanna do—before maybe coming to terms with your mom's choices. Does that make sense?

00:20:26 Megan Guest

Right. I think it does make sense. The pieces were written probably about... eight or ten months apart? And one was around the anniversary of my mom's death and then the other one was written more in the fall. And my mom's birthday and my daughter's birthday both occur in November. The date of my mom's death and my son's birthday both occur in February. So the fall/winter season is kind of a lot for me. *[Laughs.]*

00:20:55 Biz Host

That's a lot! Whoa! *[Laughs.]*

00:20:57 Megan Guest

Is kind of a lot. Lots of feelings. Lots of things to go through. Lots of ups and downs with putting things together that are both happy and tragic. And it's a really tough time for me. So one of the ways that I process and get through that is writing about it. And I absolutely knew and thought when I was writing that piece on surrendering, I thought, well what are some times when people give up? And it's not what they wanna do, but it's for the best. And things like divorces and the thing that came to my mind automatically was fertility treatments, because I had been through that myself and I had had to reach that point where I said, "I can't continue to do this. I can't—I've exhausted all my options and I have to be done and let

			it go.” And so that was one of the reasons that I absolutely did include it. And—
00:21:51	Biz	Host	That’s also hard! I just—you’re doing a good job! I’m just also pointing out that like—not that <u>you</u> need to hear it. But that’s hard. And I think we carry around stuff like that without... I don’t know. I really like it when people are like, “God, Biz, that is a shitshow you’re going through. That’s hard that you’re still functioning!” <i>[Laughs.]</i> And so—“That you will even cross the street!” Right? So I just wanna say to you—that is also hard. Because there is so much bullshit tied in with... women’s bodies. And... motherhood and fertility and... <i>[dramatically]</i> failure. <i>[Regular voice]</i> Whatever that shit is. And it’s hard to go through the experience and it’s hard to make the choice to stop it and consider other options. And I—
00:22:45	Megan	Guest	Absolutely.
00:22:47	Biz	Host	—just wanna say. You’re doing a good job.
00:22:49	Megan	Guest	Thank you. It’s, um—it’s an incredibly comforting thing to be able to tell somebody else, “I don’t know what to tell you, but it sucks. And I don’t know how to help, but I will sit here with you and we will have a drink together and we’ll cry together and we’ll talk about how much it sucks.” And that is what I go for on my social media. It’s what I go for on my blog. To say, “Look, I don’t have any answers. I am not a positive person.”
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
			“I am not a glass-half-full person. I am not gonna tell you that this is gonna get any better and that it’s all worth it.” I’m not. But I will sit here and go, “Y’know what? That is shitty.”
00:23:28	Biz	Host	That is shitty. Yeah. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:23:29	Megan	Guest	“I agree with you.” And just that validation is so, so important. One of the things—I had a really, really tough transition into motherhood. And later on I came to recognize it as pretty bad postpartum depression. But at the time I just thought, “This is really hard.” And I was talking to a friend of mine about—just about how much I didn’t enjoy it. And I kept waiting for it to all be worth it. And it was just so hard. And I—y’know, I said, “Am I the only one?” Much like you, Biz, I said, “Am I the only one who feels this way?” And my friend looked at me and she said, “Y’know, I think most people feel this way. The difference is you’re honest about it.” And so then I started looking around for the other honest people. That we could be honest together. Let’s come be honest together and not sugarcoat this and not use all the flowery, pretty language about how beautiful and wonderful motherhood is. Because it is, but it also isn’t.
00:24:27	Biz	Host	Well, right! You get to have both. Both get to exist in the same place without negating one another. Yes. Joy. They’re very funny. They do things that I am very pleased with. Also, tired. Not a Self. Like, don’t wanna hear another voice. Don’t want—right? Like, but—right? And you’re not a monster for feeling the one way and you’re not a saint for feeling the other. Right? But that doesn’t mean that that pressure isn’t... there. All the time.
00:25:07	Megan	Guest	Yes. And there is a similar dichotomy that I wrote about in “The Unknowable Weight of Origin,” where the very thing that made me their mother also put a wall between us. And made me “other.” And I will never forget—my son was an infant. We were going to see a specialist about something that thankfully turned out to be nothing,

00:25:42 Biz Host but I guess there was a checklist that the nurse was going through before we saw the doctor. And she had listed me as “mother-other.”
00:25:44 Megan Guest No!
00:25:50 Crosstalk Crosstalk And so—yes. And so the doctor came in—the doctor came in and was going through everything and—
Biz: *[Laughs.]* That’s a t-shirt.

00:25:55 Megan Guest **Megan:** “Okay, you’re a nonsmoking household. You don’t feel unsafe.”
“And you’re mother-other.” And I—it didn’t hit me until years later just how demeaning that was. And how undermining that was, that I had to explain, “Yes, I gave birth to him. I carried him in my womb. But we used donor eggs. Because of this whole saga of cancer and a diminished ovarian reserve and—” This horrible story.
00:26:22 Biz Host It’s also none of ya business. This is how we had a baby. This is how a baby came into our house!
00:26:27 Megan Guest Exactly. Yes. And how—however you came to it, here I am. And, y’know, to be referred—he didn’t mean anything by it. I know. But for years, I haven’t forgotten. I mean, that was—that was more than eight years ago now, and I haven’t forgotten being referred to by a doctor as “mother-other.” Even though—

[Biz laughs.]

00:27:11 Biz Host —I literally pushed him out of my body. So it’s—it’s the same sort of—the same dichotomy of, it is wonderful and it is—I am thankful that I have these children. But then on the other hand, my fight to be “mother” did not stop when I gave birth to them.
Right. But now, see, that’s so interesting. ‘Cause that is—when I’m reading that piece, I was like—I kinda also—everything you say in it about the wall, the feeling, the like... “It’s not my DNA. It’s not my, y’know, they don’t look like me. They’re not gonna—I know those aren’t my eyes.” Right? Like that kind of thing. I’m reading all that and I’m like, “I hear you and I see you.” I also wanted to say... be nice to yourself. *[Laughs.]* But that’s an easy thing to say on the outside. Because it’s your... it’s the experience you’re having. And I feel like the work is also your own work on “what is ‘mother.’”

00:27:56 Megan Guest Right?
Right. What does it mean to be a mother? What does it mean to be family? What is nature versus nurture? And there have been things that my kids have done or said or ways that they’ve looked at me that I have—I have just been stunned to say—but yeah, but that’s not possible that they could’ve gotten it from me. And some of it really amazes me. Some of the things I had mentioned in the essay I wrote was, my daughter has these long, luscious eyelashes.

00:28:24 Biz Host Lovely eyelashes! Right!
00:28:25 Megan Guest And my mother did, and I do, and people have commented on it my whole life. And I remember posting on Facebook when we were going through all the infertility, I remember saying, “It would be a crime not for me to pass on these eyelashes.”

[Biz laughs.]

[Through laughter] And then—sure enough!—she comes out and she has these long, dark eyelashes that are just beautiful framing her big, blue eyes. And I think, y’know, that’s just kind of a—kind of

a little nudge from god saying, “Y’know, I see it. I know you wanted it and so here’s a little kind of a gift.” Another thing I mentioned was those two—y’know those two bumps? Or, uh, two little divots on the back of your pelvis? Right underneath your spine?
 00:29:09 Biz Host It’s where our tails were! I’m just kidding. *[Laughs.]*
 00:29:10 Megan Guest Right! Exactly. Sort of. So there’s two little dots. I didn’t know that—I figured everybody had them, because I have them. Turns out that’s not true. It’s genetic.
 00:29:22 Biz Host I’m literally touching my back, everybody.
[Megan laughs.]
 00:29:27 Megan Guest As she’s talking about it. I’m like, “What’s happening?”
 Right. Me, too. So everybody, right now, touch yours—those are called your Dimples of Venus. We’ll do a little anatomy lesson. Those are called your—
 00:29:33 Biz Host I got dimples but they ain’t Venus. Anyway. Whoa! Zing! Zing!
[Megan laughs.]
 00:29:38 Megan Guest Anyway, go ahead. *[Laughs.]*
 Those might be somewhere else.
 00:29:40 Biz Host Those are in lots of places. *[Laughs.]*
[Megan laughs.]
 00:29:42 Megan Guest Yes. So those are genetic, just like the ability to roll your tongue into a circle is genetic. And I didn’t know that. It’s something that one day when I was looking up, “What are those things called?” I found out—
 00:29:55 Biz Host When you were beating yourself up about whatever choice you made. *[Laughs.]*
 00:29:58 Megan Guest Exactly! *[Laughs.]* But both of my kids have those!
 00:30:01 Biz Host Oh my gosh!
 00:30:03 Megan Guest And I have honestly never looked at my husband’s naked butt more than I have to? So I—
[Biz laughs.]
 —y’know have never noticed whether he has them. But somebody did! And passed them on. Because both of my kids have them. And every day when I get them out of their baths and dry them off, I think, “Oh, well look, that’s another thing that we share that was improbable, but is some kind of a reassurance from a higher power that says, ‘These kids are yours. They are connected to you. You are more their mother than anybody else.’”
 00:30:35 Biz Host It’s so interesting. I have spoken to a lot of parents. And I also look at my own—the things that I carry around with me when it comes to questioning my role or who I am in connection with these children. Y’know? But we’ve heard stories of, “Well if it’s a c-section, I’m not connected to my children. It’s not the same.” Or “If I had drugs in childbirth, it’s not—” Oh, honey, I was shot like a deer running through the woods.
[Megan laughs.]

00:31:36 Megan Guest Just—"Epidural me with a gun!" Or if they were adopted. Or... if
 00:31:40 Biz Host there was an egg donor. Or if there was a surrogate. Right? Like,
 00:31:41 Megan Guest there are constantly these questions I think—and I just hate it! I
 think I'm only bringing this up because I kinda hate it, because
 we're all doing our best to be the parent. And isn't that enough?
 It should be enough. And I want it to be enough. I mean, there—
 I want it to be enough! *[Laughs.]*

00:32:06 Biz Host There are a million ways to feel like you are falling short. And on
 top of the normal ways of, y'know, "I'm not feeding them healthy
 enough. I'm ignoring them too much 'cause they're driving me nuts.
 Or I am not exposing them to enough of the world so that they
 understand things." On top of that is also, "Oh, and we don't share
 any DNA." And—
 Yeah, I know! I'm like, you gotta—but you still—see, this is where I
 am... an older woman.

[Megan laughs.]

00:32:55 Megan Guest I tell people I was raised Southern and Catholic, which means I
 don't wanna know anything but I like to think I know lots of things.
 So to me, look. I get the science, everybody. No one has—you're
 welcome to write me an email if you would like. I get the science.
 But you also put all those things together in your body. *[Laughs.]*
 Then you pushed it out! And I'm—like, I'm like, "I don't know. I feel
 like that's above and beyond." *[Laughs.]* That's like above and
 beyond in the process. I understand the DNA thing. But I also am
 like, "I don't know. It was your kitchen. Your pots."
 Exactly.

[Biz laughs.]

00:33:18 Biz Host Yes. And I tell my kids that—I try to tell them that they are extra-
 special because it took three people to make them instead of just
 two. And make it seem like this wasn't a bad thing, but talk up the
 positives of—you had three people that made you, and that makes
 you awesome because most people only have two.
 See, but this is the talking about it. This is why the talking about it is
 important. Because... when we talk about these things and
 normalize that this is additionally a way to get kids in your house,
 that we can lose the stigma of people even considering that it might
 be bad! I mean, like—*[Laughs.]* Y'know. Like, I try and spin the
 positive. It's all—it should—we shouldn't even—like, that wording
 comes from us constantly being fed bullshit. Sorry, guys. I am very
 angry today. I am having one of those days, everybody, so watch
 out for the wrap-up. But like, it's... it's true! I also think you've done
 such—at least in the essays that you've written—*[Laughs.]* I don't
 know what you do in your house on your won. But—

00:34:10 Megan Guest You can't even imagine.
 00:34:12 Biz Host I'm sure. But I'm gonna just assume that you're really good at this.
 But the way you lay out how you talk to your children about where
 they come from and like how they were born and conceived and...
 and you acknowledge that it's currently appropriate for this age and
 then one day it may be more and here and I... how—*[Laughs.]* How
 much pre-thought did you put into that? Or did that like—I mean,
 did you like—*[Laughs.]* Because I'm always trying to figure out what
 to say to people and to my children. And people. *[Laughs.]*

00:34:47	Megan	Guest	<p>I... there is very little that I don't give an enormous amount of thought to.</p> <p><i>[Biz laughs.]</i></p> <p>That's just the way I'm built? And when we decided to go this route, we agreed that I didn't ever want there to be a before and after for my kids. I didn't want them to say, "And <u>that</u> was the day that my life changed."</p> <p><i>[Biz laughs.]</i></p> <p>I'm sure they will have that, but at least about this subject, I didn't ever want there to be a before and an after moment where suddenly they found out that they weren't as related to their mother as they thought. So I bought books. I bought books intended for very young children. And I thought, "Well how can I remember to do this on a regular basis so that they don't forget?" So I thought their birthdays were as good a time as any, because we were talking about them anyhow.</p> <p><i>[Biz laughs.]</i></p> <p>And that's when it all happened. So I bought a book that had a rabbit. A rabbit family that wanted babies and they couldn't make babies and so then suddenly another rabbit shows up at their door with a little basket. And gives them the extra part that they need. So I remember my son once told me that he knew where babies come from. That God creates everything and that a rabbit shows up and gives you two pieces of a cookie and that's where babies come from.</p>
00:36:11	Biz	Host	Makes as much sense as anything else sometimes! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:36:14	Megan	Guest	Right. It's like, that's—that's close. Close there.
00:36:17	Biz	Host	Yeah! Really close! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:36:19	Megan	Guest	<p>So I told him on his birthday. His birthday was last month and I told him—now we've ditched the books because he's old enough that that's a little bit too babyish for him. But I said that we tried really hard and it didn't happen for a number of reasons, and so there was a very generous woman that gave us a little teeny-tiny bit of herself. And he said, "Oh, I remember that from the rabbit book." So despite whether I think they're listening, they are listening.</p> <p><i>[Laughs.]</i></p> <p><i>[Biz laughs.]</i></p> <p>At least to bits. Bits and pieces of it. So y'know, I want them to understand that they—we took a bit from this woman and a bit from daddy and the doctors mixed them together and then they put it inside my belly and then that's how they grew! And then the gory bits we've left out.</p>
00:37:09	Biz	Host	Well, sure.
00:37:10	Megan	Guest	<p>For when they're older. But I think there will be a day when it crosses their mind that what that means. That, oh, "That means that I didn't get any DNA. I didn't get any genetics. Any cells. From my mom." Now, I have read research that little tiny bits of the baby's DNA will float in the mom forever. And like—</p>

00:37:33 Biz Host Yeah! You've got some of theirs!

00:37:35 Megan Guest Right. And so that connects us. And they were physically in my body, and that was sort of the compromise that we came to of, if I can't make enough eggs for IVF to be successful, then at least I can still participate by carrying and giving birth to the kids.

00:37:54 Biz Host Honey, you participate every day. *[Laughs.]*

00:37:57 Megan Guest Well... yes. That is true, too.

00:37:59 Biz Host I mean, it's a little like—I think, retrospect, it's a little like, "Well that was a very short in a package thing." Now, this is way—wow. We're—*[Laughs.]* I could take about eight extra people magically showing up on my door with cookies right now.

00:38:17 Megan Guest That would be—I would take that, absolutely. Yes.

[Biz laughs.]

00:38:23 Biz Host No more extra babies, however. No—none of those.

00:38:26 Megan Guest Noooo more of those. Oh, yeah.

00:38:29 Biz Host But cookies I would take. I could eat them in the bathroom with my dog.

00:38:29 Biz Host I like the idea of this bunny story suggesting that Girl Scouts are secretly—

[Megan laughs.]

00:38:39 Megan Guest —surrogates. Bringing cookies and helping rabbits have—

00:38:43 Biz Host They might be a little bit young to be surrogates? Y'know.

00:38:45 Megan Guest That's true. That's true. But—

00:38:47 Biz Host There might be some legalities to that that we should look into.

00:38:47 Biz Host Yeah. I'm just thinking if I wanted to start a weird conspiracy theory—

[Megan laughs.]

00:38:53 Megan Guest —this could be it.

00:38:54 Biz Host That's right up there!

00:38:58 Megan Guest That's right up there! It's as believable as the rest of the theories that are out there.

00:39:02 Crosstalk Guest It really is. Yes. So this was—it was planned. We definitely—

00:39:02 Crosstalk **Biz:** Well, see that—*[Laughs.]* You've had a plan! You didn't give up! *[Laughs.]* No! You just chose a different path.

00:39:11 Megan Guest **Megan:** I definitely wanted to have a plan of how—well, that's why it's the conspiracy theory. I didn't. No.

00:39:11 Megan Guest And that's the one we stuck to, and I want them to understand that it doesn't make me love 'em any less. It doesn't mean that we're not still connected. We have a saying that I taught my kids that there's family that you choose. And that comes from—both my parents are gone, and I have another family who is very dear to me who helped step in and raise me when my mother no longer could. And they were—they sent me off to college. They paid my college entrance fees and helped me move and came to my wedding and so they're sort of our surrogate family. And so we call them Grandma and Grandpa. And so they said, y'know, "Your parents are dead. How can they be our Grandma and Grandpa?" And I said, "Well there's family that you're related to. That you're born into. And then there's family that you choose." And one day not too

long ago, my son mentioned something about this and could that be possible. And my daughter said, “No, just like Mama said, there’s family that you choose. They can be related to us.” So once again, they’re listening. Be careful. They’re listening.

00:40:17 Biz Host That’s a good one.

00:40:19 Megan Guest And so we—we chose them! They were very, very planned. And we’ve given a whole lot of thought to how to handle that, because if you—if you don’t... you can get—be caught flat-footed and say something that you don’t intend or give them the wrong impression. And—

00:40:36 Biz Host And let’s save that for all the other things that they’re gonna ask us. *[Laughs.]*

00:40:39 Megan Guest Right. Because that’s going to happen when we talk about sex. When we talk about—*[Laughs.]* When we talk about how exactly the baby gets in there.

00:40:46 Biz Host Not a bunny! Knocking on your door! It’s not a Girl Scout! It’s not a cookie. It is definitely... something else.

00:40:55 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Megan:** Something else. And there’s plenty of awkwardness left.

00:40:59 Biz Host **Biz:** Well, we’ve got a long list—
Long list of books we can highly recommend. *[Laughs.]*

[Megan laughs.]

00:41:08 Megan Guest To just leave laying about the house. That’s how I did it. I was like, “Oh! How did this book get here?”

00:41:10 Biz Host “How did that end up there?”
“Whoa! Goodbye!” *[Laughs.]* Well, thank you for joining us. Everybody? We’re gonna link you up to where you can find all of these articles. You can find out more about Megan. You can find her blog. As well as the podcast that you produce. You help associate produce.

00:41:27 Megan Guest Sure! That would be great!

00:41:29 Biz Host Yeah! Who doesn’t wanna also listen to more podcasts, everybody?! Thank you so much.

00:41:34 Megan Guest Thank you.

00:41:36 Music Music “Ones and Zeroes” by “Awesome.” Steady, driving electric guitar with drum and woodwinds.

[Music fades out.]

00:41:53 Music Promo Cheerful ukulele with whistling plays in background.

00:41:54 Biz Promo *One Bad Mother* is supported in part by KiwiCo. Why do flowers bloom? How do caterpillars turn into butterflies? Spring brings along new curiosities and a chance for kids to connect with the world around them. KiwiCo delivers monthly science and art projects that celebrate a child’s natural curiosity and sparks a love for lifelong learning. And as a bonus, these Kiwi Crates make it a lot easier as a parent to help answer these questions for your children. The great thing about KiwiCo is they’ve got different crates for different stages and ages. Projects that are suitable for kids under five all the way up to adults, baby! Stefan is currently working on one of the Maker’s Kits, and he’s doing a coiled rope basket. Step into spring and celebrate the season of discovery with a KiwiCo subscription. Get 30% off your first month free, plus free shipping on any crate line, with the code “badmother” at KiwiCo.com. That’s

			30% off your first month at K-I-W-I-C-O.com , promo code "badmother."
00:43:06	Music	Promo	Inspirational keyboard music plays in background.
00:43:07	Biz	Promo	<i>One Bad Mother</i> is supported in part by BetterHelp online therapy. Relationships take work, especially the most important one you have in your life—your relationship with yourself! Therapy has been the most <u>critical</u> element of me reconnecting with myself as a Self. BetterHelp is online therapy that offers video, phone, and even live chat sessions with your therapist, so you don't have to see anyone on camera if you don't want to. It's much more affordable than in-person therapy and you can be matched with a therapist in under 48 hours. Give it a try and see why over two million people have used BetterHelp online therapy. This podcast is sponsored by BetterHelp, and <i>One Bad Mother</i> listeners get 10% off their first month at BetterHelp.com/badmother . That's B-E-T-T-E-R-H-E-L-P.com/badmother .
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:44:10	Theresa	Host	Hey, you know what it's time for! This week's genius and fails! This is the part of the show where we share our genius moment of the week, as well as our failures, and feel <u>better</u> about ourselves by hearing yours. You can share some of your own by calling 206-350-9485. That's 206-350-9485.
00:44:30	Biz	Host	Genius fail time. Genius me, me!
00:44:33	Clip	Clip	<i>[Dramatic, swelling music in background.]</i>
			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> !
00:44:47	Biz	Host	Okay. I will! I... went to the store. It's Easter! It's not anywhere near Easter, guys. But the Easter candy is out. And long-time listeners to the show know that long before I buy candy for my children— <i>[Laughs.]</i> I gotta get myself the Robin Eggs! And I got myself the little carton. I don't know why it's in a carton. I'm not sure why eggs come in a carton. But I like it, 'cause I can just open it up <i>[through laughter]</i> and pour it down my throat like a glass of milk! It's really made my day, having these Robin Eggs within arm's reach. I'm doing a great job! <i>[Laughs.]</i> <i>[Answering machine beeps.]</i>
00:45:25	Caller	Caller	Hey, <i>One Bad Mother</i> . This is a genius. It's a genius that's been called before. Asking for what you need. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:45:37	Biz	Host	Yes! Yes!
00:45:40	Caller	Caller	My five-year-old is really struggling with pickups from preschool because we get her kind of like smack in the middle of the extended-day hour. And she started freaking out about not wanting to leave her project. So yesterday, on Monday, I called the school. On my way, driving over there. And I asked them if someone could give her a heads up that I'm coming! And... the director who I talked to said, "Oh, they're outside now on the playground. I will bring out her bag and make sure that the class doesn't go inside until you get here!" And... I could have cried!
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>

I literally said, “I love you.” *[Laughs.]* To the director. ‘Cause I do. Thank you, directors of preschools right now. *[Sighs.]* And all the time. But especially for looking out for my kid. And it was so easy! To just ask! It was actually kinda hard to ask. It’s hard to make that call. Literally the first thing I said was, “I hope this isn’t too much to ask.”

[Biz laughs.]

And then I asked. And guess what? It wasn’t too much to ask and she was really happy to do it because she wants to make things easy for my kid, too. *[Sighs.]* I’m doing a great job! So are you. And I love you guys.

00:47:11 Biz

Host

[Biz laughs.]

I love you. I also love your preschool director. I love your child. I love everything about this. Asking for help! Asking for help! This is something we can all do! Really regardless of if we have kids living in our house. It is okay to ask for help. You did not ask the director of the preschool to come help paint your fence. Or help you move heavy furniture. You asked them for something that was within total reason. And what a difference it made. Not only did it take down your anxiety of going into the situation—because man, I hate going to pickups or whatever where I know I’m probably walking into a trap. Some sort of yell-fest. I’m about to be yelled at or something blargh, right? So... in asking, that got to go away. And it really helped your kid! And you’re right! They do wanna help your kid! They do!

It’s like back a million years ago when I called the vet and I said, “I have a screaming child in my car. I can’t take them out and put them in and get the cat. Will you come out to the car and get my cat?” And they said, “Yes we will!” Because they’re not assholes! Right? It’s not just that we didn’t marry an asshole. We are probably not surrounded by assholes. Okay? So I—I just—good job! You are doing such a good job. And thank you for calling this in and reminding us all. Failures.

00:48:53 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.]

00:48:58 Biz

Host

Biz: *[Calmly]* You suck!

Fail me, me. Okay. See, now, if Theresa was here, Theresa would get all over me about this fail. But... *[sighs.]* I still feel like shit that Ellis isn’t swimming. I do! I do! I—y’know, like, look. I’ve worked through all this. I know. Should I have shoved him in when he was like, four? Should I—y’know, we did some lessons when he was really little and then we had to stop for whatever reason and then... started again and like... it just... it just wasn’t something that ever happened and I... tried my best. But... it didn’t work. And seeing him sitting on the side of that pool, I—I do somehow feel like I’ve failed. On some level. And that sucks. I know. I know. But... doesn’t mean I don’t feel that way.

00:49:59	Caller	Caller	<p><i>[Answering machine beeps.]</i></p> <p>Hi. I'm calling with a fail. I just went to go pick up my two-and-a-half-year-old from school. And she's not there. She's not there, because she's at my mom's. She's at my mom's because that's where I dropped her off this morning after her doctor's appointment when it was too late for her to go to school. This is the second time I've done that this year. It's only February. So.</p> <p><i>[Biz laughs.]</i></p> <p>I'm gonna go get her from my mom's, and I'm pretty sure her teachers think I'm crazy.</p> <p><i>[Biz laughs.]</i></p>
00:50:41	Biz	Host	<p>You're doing a good job. I'm doing an okay job remembering to go pickup my kid, but having no idea where she actually is. Goodbye!</p>
00:51:07	Music	Music	<p>Yeah. That—I mean, it's a glass-half-full, glass-half-empty sort of patting yourself on the back that you're experience. Yeah. You didn't know where your child was. That—we don't have to say much more about that. You... are a failure! <i>[Laughs.]</i> No you're not. "Mom Song" by Adira Amram. Mellow piano music with lyrics.</p> <p><i>You are the greatest mom I've ever known. I love you, I love you. When I have a problem, I call you on the phone. I love you, I love you.</i></p>
00:51:29	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p>Music: Ukulele strums in background.</p> <p>Jesse Thorn: Hi! I'm Jesse Thorn, the founder of Maximum Fun. And I have a special announcement. I'm no longer embarrassed by <i>My Brother, My Brother, and Me</i>. You know, for years each new episode of this supposed advice show as a fresh insult, a depraved jumble of erection jokes, ghost humor, and—frankly, this is for the best—very little actionable advice. But now as they enter their twilight years, I'm as surprised as anyone to admit that it's gotten kinda good. Justin, Travis, and Griffin's witticisms are more refined. Like a humor column in a fancy magazine. And they hardly ever say "Bazinga!" anymore. So. After you've completely finished listening to every single one of all of our other shows, why not join the McElroy brothers every week for <i>My Brother, My Brother, and Me</i>?</p>
00:52:25	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p> <p><i>[Radio static in background.]</i></p> <p>Ben Harrison: <i>[Old-timey radio announcer voice]</i> Maximum Fun is a network by and for cool, popular people! But did you know it also has an offering designed to appeal to nerds?</p> <p>Adam Pranica: <i>[Old-timey announcer voice]</i> A show for nerds? On Maximum Fun? The devil, you say!</p>

Ben: It's true! It's called *The Greatest Generation*, and they review episodes of a television program for nerds! Called *Star Trek*. It reviewed *TNG*, *DS9*, and are now reviewing *Voyager*.

Adam: Hey! *Star Trek*! My daughter enjoys that program!

Ben: Well if she enjoys that and she enjoys humor of the flatulent variety, might I recommend she subscribe to *The Greatest Generation*?

Adam: Hey, are you calling my kid a nerd? Why, I oughta—

Ben: Welp, gotta go! [Sound of footprints retreating as though running away. Become a friend of DeSoto by subscribing to *The Greatest Generation* on MaximumFun.org today!

00:53:14 Biz Host

Alright, everybody. Woof! It's been a show. Let's... snuggle up and listen to a mom have a breakdown.

00:53:25 Caller Caller

[Answering machine beeps.]

Hi! [Tearfully] This is a rant from not a mom yet, but someone who wants to be a mom. Just having a bad day. My husband and I have been trying for six years to have a baby, and... am I too old for this? I'm 41 now! Am I too old for this? I—everyone that I know either has kids already or has decided not to. And I feel alone. And I feel like, why am I even trying anymore? But my god, I want a kid so bad! Am I too old for this? It's—it's so hard! It's so hard! Thanks for listening. Bye.

00:54:10 Biz Host

I want you to know what an amazing job you're doing. I... there is... very little space for me to answer any of those questions. That you are asking. But what I do wanna do is make sure that you feel heard. And you just got heard by a lot of people, many of whom are dealing with similar feelings. I really want you to know that you are not alone. And... that this is really hard. I mean, that's... it can feel like you are alone. It can feel like... everybody around you has figured it out or... it was really easy or... they got really lucky. And the question of, "Am I too old?" rattles all of us. At different times. I do not think there is ever a time in which we are too old to have a kid in our house. 'K? And I just want you to know I think you're amazing. And I see you. I see you.

00:55:49 Biz Host

Everybody? I—[Laughs.] Look. I wish the lessons changed. I wish we learned something really new every week. But we don't! We seem to—[Laughs.] What's that thought of, "Am I paying attention to the synchronicities in my life? Am I paying attention to the messages that the universe is trying to send me?" Well, the message seems to be—listen to each other! Share your experiences! If it feels like you're not supposed to talk about it? That's the wrong thing! And if you think you're alone, you're not. Alright? There is no one way—easy way—everybody's doing it this way, way to get a kid in your house. There are also no easy decisions.

And also, when we see somebody doing something that seems scary and unnatural to us, it doesn't mean that it's bad or wrong. Or that we might not find ourselves facing a very similar situation in which we have to make a very hard choice. I really love Megan's piece about the strength of surrendering, and it gives me so many

different things to think about when it comes to how I'm walking through the world. And it reminds me of the invisible pressures that I put upon myself that I'm not really sure who's putting them on me outside of myself. Everybody? You're doing a remarkable job. 'Cause you also are walking through all this. It's very hard. No one's great at it. *[Laughs.]* But that doesn't mean you're not finding joy in it, and that you aren't doing a good job. Because you are. And I will talk to you next week. Bye!

00:58:11 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.*

00:58:35 Biz Host

[Music fades.]

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.

00:59:04 Theresa Host

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

00:59:27 Music Transition

[Music resumes for a while before fading out.]

00:59:28 Speaker 1 Guest

A cheerful ukulele chord.

00:59:29 Speaker 2 Guest

MaximumFun.org.

00:59:31 Speaker 3 Guest

Comedy and culture.

00:59:32 Speaker 4 Guest

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