

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.
00:00:25	Biz	Host	<i>[Continues through dialogue.]</i> This week on <i>One Bad Mother</i> —is it too late to make a majorly dramatic shift in my life if I have kids? We'll ask Marni Zalben! Plus, Biz is handy with a knife.
00:00:36	Crosstalk Caller	Crosstalk Caller	Biz and caller: Wooooo! I am on my way to the happiest place on Earth—
00:00:40			<i>[Biz gasps.]</i> Barnes & Noble. <i>[Biz laughs.]</i> I just am so... tired! And my husband slept all day. He slept <u>all</u> day. He came out of our room at 5 P.M. and I just told him that I needed to get out. I just needed—I needed to get out. I needed to leave. <i>[Sighs.]</i> So. He said, "Okay." He took over with the kids. And I am on my way to go sit in the Barnes & Noble's Starbucks and get something hot to drink and eat a giant piece of cheesecake because our Barnes & Noble has cheesecake. And... I'll buy myself a book. That I probably won't read, because when—when am I gonna read it? <i>[Biz laughs.]</i> <i>[Inaudible.]</i> But it feels good to buy a book and have it sit and stare at me on the counter for, y'know, three months or however long. So that's my check-in. Hope your day is going better than mine. Thanks for the hotline. You're doing a great job. Bye! And hotline thanks <u>you</u> . Oh my gosh, I... think you're doing a wonderful job. My first question is, is your husband sick? <i>[Laughs.]</i> Like, what do you mean he was in bed all day?! What do you mean? I mean, I'm gonna do a little benefit of the doubt that maybe he works very long or late or weird hours. 'K. That's fair. But I am glad that you got out. Actually, it's—that's a really hard thing to do, and it sounds like, "Biz, that's so dumb. If you wanna go, go!" But— <i>[Laughs.]</i> It's not! Even if you have a partner, even if your partner's there, it is very easy to just be like, "Fuck it." Or only give yourself a little time by hiding in the bathroom. Not that that isn't valuable, but the fact that you were like, "I need to get out of this house." And yeah! I love Barnes & Noble's! I love all bookstores, especially those that have coffee shops and cheesecake. And! <i>[Laughs.]</i> I was laughing so hard about the book. Right? The, like, "I'm gonna buy a book! And acknowledge that I'll not read this book. No matter how much I like this book. And how interesting it looks to me. The reality is, it will sit on a shelf." I have a little shelf—my dresser, like on the
00:01:47	Biz	Host	

shelf I have six books. They are very different books. 'K? Varying degrees of beach read to, like, written by somebody at Princeton. And Princeton can write beach reads, too! But this is not one of those. And they sit there, and I love looking at them. It's kinda like reading. *[Laughs.]* But anyway, you're doing an amazing job! And thank you for checking in and, y'know, good job taking care of yourself!

00:03:50	Music	Music	Speaking of good jobs, it is time for thank-you's. Heavy electric guitar and driving percussion overlaid with "Ohh, oh-oh, oh-oh" and "Hey-ey-ey-ey-ey" lyrics.
00:04:06	Biz	Host	Like the old song goes, "Second verse? Same as the first. Little bit louder and a helluva lot worse." <i>[Laughs.]</i> That's my song about the pandemic. It's still here. No matter how much I like to walk through the world as if it is totally normal. Beep, boop, beep, bop, beep, boop! Not happening! La, la, la! I can't hear you! I can't hear you! It is still happening. And so I want to acknowledge and say thank you to all the people who are continuing to care for all of us and provide medical services for us. And I want to thank all the teachers and administration and school nurses and school psychologists—here's the thing. None of us are okay. And I feel like with this whole thought of quote-unquote "Returning to normalcy"? And we, as people with children in our house, understand the thought of, "Oh, back to normal!"

We all know that "back to normal" *[through laughter]* is a myth. *[Laughs.]* Like, there's a new normal. There's a different normal. There's something else. But there's no "back to what once was." And as we all emerge and find ourselves in places that feel familiar, we can really feel like everything's A-OK, and forget that we have all experienced and are continuing to experience a collective trauma. And so *[through laughter]* that said, I want to really emphasize how thankful and grateful I am to... everybody who is out there just working to keep things open. I mean, like, really, guys. It's every job. Every person you come in contact with? Has experienced trauma and the fact that they are showing up? Be they teachers, be they grocery clerks, be they stockers, the Amazon guy delivering your boxes—it doesn't matter. They all have gone through something. Just as you have gone through something. And therefore, I am very thankful for everybody still trying. *[Laughs.]* And showing up.

Speaking... of showing up! It is almost the Easter. Yes, the Easter. Many things for many people. In our house, it is a time for me to eat Robin Eggs until I'm sick and puke in an Easter basket. It is a time for us to hide eggs for the children to wake up at five o'clock in the morning to go hunt. And it is a time—this time—for the first time ever! To have the entire family here. Guys, you guys know we don't have a lot of family out here. Stefan's parents are gonna be here. My parents are gonna be here. My sister and brother-in-law are gonna be here. And we got an extra bonus—cousin Jim! Who is my brother-in-law's cousin. So that's exciting. But Easter really serves as a reminder to me that four years ago, I made an Easter bunny cake. Using the 1970s Easter bunny cake mold. And decorating it with beautiful pink icing, piercing blue eyes, a lovely green neck

bow, and then serving it to my children and my friends who had gathered for Easter. Taking a knife... and cutting its head off.

And Ellis losing their mind. I mean... absolutely scarred for life. "Biz, how do you know that he's scarred for life?" How do I know? Because every Easter, they remind me never, ever to make the bunny cake. Ever. In fact, there should be no food in this house resembling a woodland creature. And so once again, I look at my cake pan. I wish longingly to pink frosting the shit out of a bunny cake. But... I can't. At least not this year. Man, that year he goes to college! Whoaaa! I'm just doing it up! But who knows. Maybe one day, Ellis will feel a change. Will feel a shift. Will want to try something else. Even if they have been very committed to not having this cake, one day they might want to have this cake.

Which makes me think about big, dramatic changes in our lives. And how we feel about making them. Which we're gonna talk about today with longtime friend of the show and friend of mine, Marni Zalben.

00:09:15	Music	Music	Banjo strums; cheerful banjo music continues through dialogue.
00:09:16	Theresa	Host	Please—take a moment to remember: If you're friends of the hosts of <i>One Bad Mother</i> , you should <u>assume</u> that when we talk about other moms, we're talking about <u>you</u> .
00:09:23	Biz	Host	If you are <u>married</u> to the host of <i>One Bad Mother</i> , we <u>definitely are</u> talking about you.
00:09:28	Theresa	Host	Nothing we say constitutes <u>professional</u> parenting advice.
00:09:31	Biz	Host	Biz and Theresa's children are brilliant, lovely, and exceedingly extraordinary.
00:09:34	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.]

00:09:40	Biz	Host	Our guest really does not need much of an introduction. Because I am so happy to welcome the lovely Marni Zalben, not only a longtime friend of mine, but a longtime friend of the show and the <i>One Bad Mother</i> community. They have been on the show. They have led the Facebook group. They were not completely broken by the Facebook group. And at one point in time, I would've done some introduction about HR and their work in that field, but we're gonna be talking about big changes today. So we're gonna—we're gonna leave the bio a bit of a blank slate, and instead just say, welcome, Marni!
00:10:26	Marni Zalben	Guest	Oh my gosh! Thank you! Hi, friends! Hey everybody!
00:10:29	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz and Marni: Hiiiiiii!
00:10:31	Biz	Host	<i>[Biz laughs.]</i> <i>[Singing]</i> It's Marniiii! She's Marniiii! She cooks and studies and has some kids! I think I made a better version of this up when we weren't recordiiiiing.
00:10:45	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz: Marniiii!
00:10:47	Biz	Host	Marni: It's perfect! Marni? You know what I'm gonna ask. Who lives in your house?

00:10:52	Marni	Guest	Oh gosh. In my house—
00:10:55	Biz	Host	And by “house,” beautiful apartment in Brooklyn.
00:10:58	Marni	Guest	Yes! In Brooklyn. There is myself. There is my husband, Alex. There are two children.
00:11:11	Biz	Host	Ooooh!
00:11:13	Marni	Guest	In this house. A twelve-year-old and a seven-year-old.
00:11:17	Biz	Host	Very nice.
00:11:19	Marni	Guest	Who get taller every day, it seems like. They—really! It’s true.
00:11:24	Biz	Host	Yeah, no. They really do. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:11:28	Marni	Guest	We’ve been noticing this a lot with the seven-year-old recently. Taller every morning. And teeth just falling.
00:11:34	Biz	Host	Just falling out. Just raining teeth. Raining teeth and growing out of pants. And—like, so tall! So very tall. And then because we don’t see a lot of other kids all the time, when we do have another kid over and you see how tall they <u>both</u> have become, and then you think about the last time you were doing playdates regularly pre-pandemic and you’re like, “You were babies and now... now you’re like tall and wearing shirts with opinions on them and stuff!”
00:12:09	Marni	Guest	Able to get your own water?
00:12:11	Biz	Host	Thank you, Jesus! I’m like, “Ya gonna have to get it! Get it!” “I’m hungry.”
00:12:15	Marni	Guest	You know where the cups are!
00:12:17	Biz	Host	Get it! That’s right! Ask your friend if they need something! You’re tall now! You can get that cup! Oh yeah. Oh, very good. And twelve—as people might have noticed that Marni and I both have kids that are very close in age. And so there are many similarities. The main one being, they keep getting taller. But how is your tween?
00:12:43	Marni	Guest	My tween is tween-ing it up. For sure. Extremely tweeny. Doing a way better job of it than I did in a spectacular way.
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
			I don’t know if this is a generational thing? Like maybe there <u>is</u> no more awkward phase? All of the friends—
00:13:03	Biz	Host	I wonder this too! Yeah!
00:13:05	Marni	Guest	Everybody seems to be lovely and I don’t know if it’s makeup tutorials or skincare regimens or what it is—
00:13:14	Biz	Host	Not at our school! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:13:16	Marni	Guest	Oh, alright.
00:13:18	Biz	Host	Makeup? I’m like, they might be watching a tutorial but I’m like, “Whoa!” When I go through car line and pick ‘em up. I’m like, “Hey, tweens—settle. Down. Settle down with the eyeliner! That is... that’s a lot. It’s a lot of it.” And I feel like so old-school, like, Southern and like my mother. Like this weird combo of those two things ‘cause I wanna be like, “You’re so pretty! Why do you insist on making yourself look like garbage?”
			<i>[Marni laughs.]</i>
			Right? Like, “Why are you wearing all of that stuff? Tuck your shirt in or something! You’re in your pajamas for god’s sakes!” Y’know. But I’m like... not me! So whatever. But they—in terms of awkwardness, everybody seems to like expressing themselves however they want without it being like... yeah, I don’t know.

00:14:24 Marni Guest They're just as big mess and they seem totally fine with it. And it's
00:14:26 Biz Host so weird.
It's so weird, but it's so nice!
See, I can't—it can't be true.

[Marni laughs.]

00:14:31 Marni Guest That's where I am.
Maybe it's not true! Maybe I'm just living in some kind of fantasy
00:14:38 Biz Host realm where my kids are not.
Well... I think both of—*[Laughs.]* Both of our fantasies are, in fact,
fantasies. Maybe they are, maybe they're not, but at least it's not us
again.

00:14:51 Marni Guest Oh, so true. And bless them that they don't have to live through the
hairspray and the mismatched socks.

00:15:01 Biz Host Perms.

00:15:03 Marni Guest Ugh. Yes.

00:15:05 Biz Host I'm gonna say perms and very, very large earrings. And I'm gonna
say it—I wore a bolo tie. I wore a bolo tie.

00:15:17 Marni Guest Oh, I want photographic evidence of this.

00:15:20 Biz Host Oh, I will—alright, everybody! Look forward to Biz with a perm. And
by the way, short hair. Not long-hair perm. Short-hair perm. With a
bolo tie. And a very large, oversized shirt that had cowboys on it.

[Marni laughs.]

00:16:14 Marni Guest I was cooler. I was so cool. Anyway. Speaking of cool, I have
always thought you to be one of the coolest people ever. Especially
because when somebody says, "I went to clown college and I was
a clown—like a professional circus clown," I know that for many of
us we would want to run away screaming, "Clowns!" But that would
be unfair to the longstanding tradition of clowns. And Marni was a
clown! Ahhh! That's like—you ran away and joined the circus!
I did! I did. For four years. I know. It's—

[Biz laughs.]

So part of...

[Biz laughs.]

00:16:26 Biz Host Being a middle child and suffering from imposter syndrome.
00:16:28 Marni Guest Oh, Jan Brady! Go ahead.
Yep. That's me. Is this idea that like... well, I did it so it can't be that
cool or that difficult or that impressive or that—right? It's just
something that I did. So... whatever. Yeah. So I totally forget that
it's like—it's a ridiculous thing. It is—

00:16:47 Biz Host It's a ridiculous thing that you did.

00:16:48 Marni Guest Yeah!

00:16:50 Biz Host Like, Marni, like this is me calling you from the present, the past,
and the future, and saying—*[Laughs.]* "That's so rad that you were
a clown!"

00:17:00 Marni Guest Thank you.

00:17:02 Biz Host So just everybody take a moment for that. And all of that said about
how cool the clown stuff was, there was a long period of time where

00:17:20 Marni Guest you had chosen a career. And you were living that career. You were very good in that career. Tell us all what that career was. I was in Human Resources for a major motion picture company that I still don't name, but you can figure it out if you think about major motion picture companies that had incidents in 2014 that would make me want to not say the name of it out loud.

00:17:35 Biz Host *[Biz laughs.]*
Everybody, take a moment.
00:17:39 Marni Guest Take a moment. Take a breath.
00:17:40 Biz Host Google it.
00:17:42 Marni Guest Absolutely.
00:17:44 Biz Host That is an interesting place to work.
00:17:45 Marni Guest Yes! It was great. And...
00:17:48 Biz Host Yeah, you—if I remember correctly, you liked it! I mean, you enjoyed your—right? Am I crazy that on the grand scheme of liking jobs?

00:17:56 Marni Guest Yeah, I really liked the company. I liked how well it took care of everybody. And that what the company was doing was socially responsible before it was cool and like... necessary for people to see that you were being socially responsible? It was just ingrained in the culture. And I don't know if that's because it is a—I will give you another hint—it is a Japanese company.

[Biz laughs.]

I don't know if the values sort of were non-American in that way? But the people, who they were, having people at the very bottom levels contribute their own ideas, be the unique people that they were—the company really brought together that, y'know, everyone brings something unique to the company. And that was really great. And my boss was excellent. Towards the end, it was just myself and her. For most of my career there it was just myself and her holding down lots and lots of people all over the country.

00:19:06 Biz Host And then you decided to walk away. *[Laughs.]*
00:19:10 Marni Guest I... did! It was not easy!
00:19:14 Biz Host No, okay. This is where I wanna get to, actually. I wanna talk about the ease or not-ease of something like this. Because I think there are—I think—there are sort of different stages when kids get into your house. Right? Like, there's the "I'm about to have a kid come in my house and I am at X place in a job or in my education or in my whatever. Or I'm completely lost and wandering around." Which is very—I've lived in that place many years. So you have that place. And you're like, "Well, can't make a lot of changes 'cause there's a kid that just got in my house." Right? Or maybe you make all the changes. Right? I don't know! So that's a place.

And then there's the before kindergarten. That's a window where there's a lot of demand on parents right then? Because unless you can get good childcare or you have people who can help watch your kids, it's another not—to me it didn't feel like a good place to make big changes. And then once they get into regular—quote-unquote "regular" school—whatever that is—suddenly for a lot of people it's like, "Well, maybe... maybe I can do something different!" Or if you're like me, you're just paralyzed by fear your entire life and you just think whatever I—like, I—everybody knows

this. My mom went to law school when I entered first grade. That is a major shift. That is a huge—and we're all alright! So I—*[Laughs.]* So I guess I wanna hear from you why, and—*[sighs]*. And the process of giving yourself the space and permission to make that change.

00:21:09 Marni Guest I'm still sort of figuring that out. I'm graduating in three weeks! I know! So I don't know—so first of all—

00:21:19 Biz Host Yes. Tell us what you did. *[Laughs.]*

00:21:21 Marni Guest I don't know—well I don't know if you need a content warning, a trigger warning, anything like that.

00:21:27 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Biz:** Okay. We love content—we love content and trigger warnings.

00:21:32 Biz Host **Marni:** So I'm just gonna put this out there. Marni's about to say something *[through laughter]* stick your fingers in your ear and count to ten.

00:21:38 Marni Guest Yes. About three and a half years ago, my mom suddenly passed away. That is a major contributing event to why I decided to go to grad school. Career change. All of that. So in my past—so I've had maybe two past lives? In all of them, I had been working with children. Always been a major part of my life. I was a preschool teacher. So my mom taught classes at the Y. An art class and a music class when I was five. And she taught three-year-olds, and I taught three-year-olds right along with her, starting when I was five. And then from then, y'know when I was in high school I was an assistant camp counselor at the preschool where I went. That age of kid. Preschool-y kid. Always. Always, always. And then I was—as you mentioned—a circus clown. Kids, kids, kids, kids all the time.

00:22:39 Biz Host Kids, kids, kids, kids.

00:22:41 Marni Guest Kids, kids, kids, kids, kids, kids. So my mom actually went to grad school. I have two sisters. We all went to the same preschool. When my younger sister graduated from preschool, the director of that preschool took her aside and said, "You need to go to grad school and become a teacher and I will pay for it if you teach here."

00:23:00 Biz Host Dayum!

00:23:01 Marni Guest Right?

00:23:03 Biz Host That's amazing.

00:23:03 Marni Guest It was pretty incredible. Because that age group was where my mom's—there's just something there.

00:23:11 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Biz:** Yep. The magic. The karma. The connection. Yeah. Yeah!

00:23:16 Marni Guest **Marni:** She got it. The magic. The three-year-old—something right there.

00:23:30 Biz Host So when I was eight, nine, ten, something like that, my mom was doing school at night. The whole same thing. And she eventually became the director of Head Start in New York. Like—

00:23:32 Marni Guest Wow.

00:23:47 Biz Host Exactly. So there was that. And all the while I was doing whatever it was that I was doing. Ended up here in HR. And when my kids were going to preschool, I would just hang out there in the mornings. 'Cause my work didn't start 'til ten?

00:23:57 Marni Guest *[Through laughter]* I do the same thing. I do the same thing at the school my kids go. I just hang out and I'm like shooting the shit with kids. Which is—yeah! It's the best. It's great.

The best age. I totally agree! So they'd have to kick me out and be like, "You need to go to work! You need to go now." But I'm—yeah,

sitting in the dress-up corner, reading books and knowing everybody's life story and whatever.

[Biz laughs.]

Loved it. So when the now-seven-year-old was leaving preschool—so my favorite preschool teacher started taking me aside and saying, “You need to go to grad school. You need to be a teacher. You need to get back in the classroom.” And my mom, the whole time, had always just said to me, “You don't want to be a teacher. You do not want to be a teacher.” So she didn't like the politics of it, she didn't like the oversight of it. She loved working with kids; she did not love being a teacher. And then fingers in the ear again.

00:24:47 Biz Host
00:24:49 Marni Guest

Yeah. La, la, la, la, la!

She passed away. Tra, la, la, la. She passed away. She... had a lot of undone things in her life. She was waiting, waiting, waiting, always. And just never got to do a lot of things. Which sucked. And so that made me really examine—I was very good at HR. I am still very good at HR. I'm very good at communicating with people. I'm very good at taking care of people and making sure that everybody's being treated fairly and all of the things that you want in an HR person. I'm very good at it. But I didn't love it. And I didn't love that what I was doing, ultimately, was making money for... not even the people that I was working with! Like, making money for people five times removed from us. And that really started to eat at me a lot. So I went onto Google and I said, “What are some careers that I can work with kids but am not a teacher?”

00:25:52 Biz Host
00:25:53 Marni Guest
00:25:55 Biz Host

Wow!

Right?

Is that a google—mine, lately, I've been like this. *[Claps.]* “Dear Google, what is a job that I will find happiness in?”

00:26:02 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Biz: And then it's very bad choices just come back with that. Narrow it down. Alright. What—

00:26:09 Biz Host

Marni: You just have to narrow it a little bit. Just a— *[Laughs.]* You gotta tell me, what came up—what were the first things that come up? I hope “clown.” But like—

[Marni laughs.]

So not teaching. Things with kids. Like... camp director? I would think? Camp-related?

00:26:24 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Marni: I think... probably up there? Probably! Well, so—

00:26:29 Marni Guest

Biz: Probably? I don't know. What came up? What came up? The thing that I remember—because that's what I'm now doing— *[Laughs.]*

[Biz laughs.]

Is speech pathologist! So the tagline of speech language pathology is, “Helping kids find their voice.” So I read that. Instant crying.

[Biz laughs.]

Just full-on sobbing. *[Laughs.]*

00:26:53	Biz	Host	Crying makes me laugh! Because I have horrible connections with—no, but you’re talking the deep. You’re talking the <u>deep</u> . The <u>deep</u> crying. The like—it’s not just this, but it’s probably lots of other things that I didn’t even realize were connected to this thing and now I can’t stop...
00:27:12	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz and Marni: Crying.
00:27:15	Marni	Guest	From here.
00:27:17	Biz	Host	From deep down.
00:27:18	Marni	Guest	From right here.

[Biz laughs.]

But like, “Oh, that could be a job?! What?! Someone will pay me to do that? Okay!” So I’m still working full-time. Two kids. So I started researching programs and like, “How do I make this happen?” And I found out that I could do it online part-time. So that’s great. I... applied. Got in.

00:27:46	Biz	Host	Yeah. I’m not surprised. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:27:49	Marni	Guest	Well, thank you. And then... yeah! Just kinda—well, in-between that, right before I applied, I said to my wonder husband, Alex, like, “This is what I’m doing.” And it really wasn’t—it was the first time I think—I didn’t ask him for permission. I didn’t ask his opinion. And that was like a <u>huge</u> step forward for me.

00:28:12	Biz	Host	Yeah, no. Sometimes it’s easy to get lost and... with the idea of partnership and having this partner, but I think... in partnered relationships, sometimes one person is very comfortable making decisions or going through the day without thinking about the things that need to go—right? Like, that need to necessarily go into what—right? And that’s—for whatever reason, whatever we’ve done. And so when you’re like, “I want a thing,” it’s hard to not wanna kind of talk it out and get permission. I mean, talk it out, yes. But the—the like, “Is that okay? Can I do that? Can we make that space?” As opposed to, “I’m taking this space. You’re going to have to make this space.” So I just wanna acknowledge... that that’s a big deal. That you got there for yourself. That’s a big deal. So.
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00:29:18	Marni	Guest	It was hard. But—
00:29:20	Biz	Host	Yeah, no! That would be so hard!
00:29:22	Marni	Guest	It was so hard. But he was great, and... then it was like, “Well, how do I tell my boss of—at that point, fifteen years—is she gonna be mad at me?” Right?

00:29:37	Biz	Host	“Are they gonna fire me right now?”
00:29:40	Marni	Guest	“Right on the spot?” Yeah! It was over Christmas break that I found out I got in. So I wasn’t gonna see her for like a week. And I literally made myself sick. Worrying about telling her.

00:29:53	Biz	Host	Oh, Marni.
00:29:55	Marni	Guest	So I couldn’t sleep. I just— <i>[makes wobbly noise]</i> , and then we were coming back from break and I was like, “Okay, I’m all ready.” And she took two days off. <i>[Laughs.]</i>

00:30:05	Biz	Host	Oh, goddammit! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:30:07	Marni	Guest	I know!
00:30:08	Biz	Host	Back to sobbing.
00:30:10	Marni	Guest	I know!

[Both grunt painfully.]

My stomach hurts!

[Biz laughs.]

But yeah! Then I sat her down. Y'know, I did—catch up in her office, “How was your break? Great. Fantastic. And also, here’s what’s going on with me.” And she was like, “Well, I mean, two years’ notice is pretty great! I don’t think I could ask for more than that!”

[Biz laughs.]

She was awesome. And I was like, “Look, some of the classes will be during the afternoon. I can go to a WeWork or whatever.” And she was like, “Use the conference room! What are you, crazy?” ‘Cause we had a fifteen-year relationship at that point.

00:30:48 Biz Host

Well, yeah! There was no question of your ability to get the job done and make time for this. Right? That sort of history is a gift. I’m glad that it allowed you to do this.

00:31:02 Marni Guest

Thank you. Yes. Me, too. It really was a series of like—things that worked out pretty well.

00:31:08 Biz Host

Yeah! Good!

00:31:10 Marni Guest

Um, yeah.

[Biz laughs.]

So that was great. We were all in line. Then... so that was January of 2019.

00:31:18 Biz Host

Oh, what happened, Marni? What happened after that?

00:31:22 Marni Guest

Well, sort of everybody moved to an online program whether they wanted to or not!

00:31:26 Biz Host

Ohhhh! *[Laughs.]*

[Marni laughs.]

Ughhh. True.

00:31:31 Marni Guest

Yeah, so that was interesting. So it’s an online program. That means that people from all over the country. I have sixty people in my cohort. I’ve met one of them in three years.

00:31:40 Biz Host

Wow! Wow!

00:31:41 Marni Guest

They’re supposed to be two weeks throughout the program where everybody comes to New York and hangs out in the lab and does things together and that didn’t happen. And—oh, speaking of changes? We moved in the middle of it.

00:31:55 Biz Host

Yeah, you moved in the middle of all this, too. Yeah. That was—that’s relaxing. It’s relaxing. Yeah.

00:32:02 Marni Guest

Uh, it was. It was very calm.

[Biz laughs.]

Because it went so smoothly!

00:32:06 Biz Host

Oh, as moves do. If I know anything about moving, it’s “easy” and “smooth” is definitely the word.

00:32:16 Marni Guest

Even when you’re not in the middle of a pandemic, moving is craptastic.

[Biz laughs.]

00:32:23	Biz	Host	But the pandemic? Ooh! Mwah! It's just—yes!
00:32:28	Marni	Guest	Ugh! It was great.
00:32:31	Biz	Host	Alright. Pandemic. Moving. Work. And... school. And people are still in your house.
00:32:39	Marni	Guest	People are still in the house. We're all getting along. <i>[Laughs.]</i> It's pretty great! It's pretty great. We—moving definitely helped with that. Because yeah, then all of a sudden—March of 2020—I'm in school and working full-time. Alex, working full-time, podcasting, doing whatever. Writing. All of it. Kids? School from home. And in the apartment that we started all of this in... one table. And one table. And it was everything. Table and a coffee—there was a coffee table, as well.
00:33:16	Biz	Host	Oh, Marni! There was a coffee table.
00:33:18	Marni	Guest	<i>[Laughs.]</i> There was a coffee table. I almost forget about our annex.
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
00:33:30	Biz	Host	The coffee table. So yes. Moving... was pretty necessary. I wanna get back, though, to the life-change-y things. Because... I mean, the thing about moves and global pandemics, y'know, and big changes, is that to me those are all things that for me would make me go, "This is a horrible time to do this. I need to be focused on X, Y, and Z. Whatever's the easiest. Whatever keeps things, y'know, familiar and reliable." And so we touched on getting to that place where you can say—not ask—say what you want. But how are you processing or what, for you, was the process like in terms of... the other sort of elements that I think people with kids in their house might go through? And it's different for everybody 'cause it's about who your kids are and who you are and who your partner is and blah, blah, blah. But like... I wrestle with... worry that any change I make will have a bad series of effects. Right? Like, and that's my own personal, like—don't worry, everybody. In the therapy. But for you, did you have worries? Did you have concerns? How did you work through them?
00:34:56	Marni	Guest	Yes. I worry about everything. All the time. Constantly.
			<i>[Biz makes pained grunting noise, then sobbing noise.]</i>
00:35:09	Biz	Host	I know. Crying, what? <i>[Inaudible.]</i> That sounds so nice! I know! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			<i>[Marni laughs.]</i>
00:35:13	Marni	Guest	Yes. So when it started, most of my classes were during the day, which meant the kids were completely unaffected. Their lives remained the same. It really is only in the past couple of months that I am unavailable. But I'm unavailable during the day, for the most part. And still can put the seven-year-old to bed most nights. I'm trying very hard to be as participate-y in their lives as I was before. And frankly, I hate to say this, the pandemic has sort of helped in that way? I'm not expected to show up to school events. I'm not expected to be in places that I can't be.
00:35:58	Biz	Host	Yeah, that's true.
00:36:00	Marni	Guest	So I was definitely worried about that at the beginning of the program. But I think I have talked to them enough through it to say, y'know, in a little while I'm not—it's just gonna be for a short time

and then school will be done and things will be different again in a different way. Y'know? So I've been sort of preparing them for that. And preparing Alex for that, as well. It's like, "I can do this now. I will not be able to do this later. I can do this now for the next three months, I cannot do this." 'Cause it really just kicked in—that's the beauty of this part-time program, was like... it's part-time! And I happen to be very good at organizing and scheduling and compartmentalizing and like...

[Biz laughs.]

Putting all the things in the boxes and making sure that everything gets done without overlapping into other things.

00:37:01 Biz Host Here's a question. So how do you feel now, as you are so close to having completed graduate school? How... how do you feel?
00:37:18 Marni Guest So... I'm gonna say 50% so excited. So ready to be doing—

[Biz laughs.]

—the like, [gasps] I can do this thing! I have these skills! I've done fairly well! That means that I really can do this and that's so exciting!

00:37:37 Biz Host Yeah. You didn't get into it and go, "Oh, shit! This is awful!"
[Laughs.]
00:37:43 Marni Guest [Through laughter] Exactly. But also, 50%... I just left eighteen years of very solid vacation time. Relationships. Stability. 401k. All of that. I left it all.

00:38:05 Biz Host I know!
00:38:07 Marni Guest Wasn't that stupid?! [Laughs.]
00:38:09 Biz Host Not stupid, just scary! It's like going through a haunted house! It's scary!

00:38:14 Marni Guest Yeah, exactly! Who would do that?
00:38:15 Crosstalk Crosstalk **Marni:** Why would you do that? Right? Marni would do that.

00:38:18 Marni Guest **Biz:** Marni! Marni would do it!
00:38:21 Biz Host Of course Marni would. Ughhhh.
[Singing] Marniiii! She likes to take a risk with her life! Marniiii!
She's a mom and a wife! What? What year is this? Anyway. You are also a mom and a wife. I'm just saying.

00:38:34 Marni Guest I am both of those things.
00:38:36 Biz Host It's not the principle portion of the TV show that is *It's Marni*.
00:38:42 Marni Guest Oh, it's a big portion.
00:38:43 Biz Host It is. But y'know. This is more about Marni making it in the big city.

[Marni laughs.]

00:38:50 Marni Guest Okay. That is terrifying.
It is! And I am—I would consider myself one of the most risk-averse people around.
00:38:57 Biz Host Yes. I would consider you—well, except for that whole "running away to the circus" thing.
00:39:02 Marni Guest Even that, though! If you met the people, you—it's not that—I mean, it was a big business and they have a very nice track record of keeping people very safe!

[Biz laughs.]

00:39:13	Biz	Host	So okay. Actually, I just wanna wrap up with this. And that is... for both of those feelings existing, when I heard you announce that you were doing this... I thought it was the bravest thing I'd ever seen. I thought it was... so amazing? And inspiring. And... I—I know that it is a circumstance that is yours. Right? It's your series of things. But I wanna emphasize that the choices you make have an impact on the community around you. And I also want to tell you how lucky the world is going to be to have you working with their kids, working through—I don't know what the words are 'cause I am not a speech pathologist with children!
			<i>[Marni laughs.]</i>
00:40:26	Marni	Guest	Working through their talkie-talkie problems.
00:40:27	Biz	Host	Thank you.
00:40:29	Marni	Guest	Yeah. Don't be scared. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			Well that means a huge amount. And I—really, when people say things like, "I couldn't have done this without the support of my children and my family and blah, blah, blah, blah, and my friends—" It's 100% true. I could not have done this!
00:40:44	Biz	Host	Oh, is it?! Dammit! I thought it was like—I thought it was like, "How do you make jam with kids? You ignore your kids and you make jam." Right? Like— <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:40:52	Marni	Guest	But this is—no! I—it truly is, like... having the support from my friends. Having the support from the other people in the program. Having the support of my family. Is... <u>huge</u> . And when I told everyone, just having this confidence from outside of <u>me</u> , I couldn't have done it without that. I do not—it would not have been possible. Because I am proud of my children in a ridiculous way. Right? Like, I'm proud of them. They do things that amaze me all the time. To hear from <u>them</u> that they are proud of <u>me</u> ?
00:41:36	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Biz: Ahhhhh! Cry, cry! Crying! Goddammit!
00:41:43	Marni	Guest	Marni: <i>[Laughs.]</i> Ah-ha! I gotcha! Yup!
00:41:50	Biz	Host	I got you! Ha haaa! It is ridiculous. Like— Now, wait. Do you mean—do you mean that if we allow ourselves to be complete people in the world... that is actually—has good, positive results on our children?
00:42:02	Marni	Guest	Yeah!
00:42:04	Biz	Host	No!
00:42:06	Marni	Guest	Because—
00:42:07	Biz	Host	I'm doing this very wrong! <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:42:09	Marni	Guest	No, you're not! You do amazing things all the time! And... your kids see you do it. And you are modeling for them how to be a complete person who can do things. You do them!
00:42:23	Biz	Host	Just hoping that—not to raise total assholes. That's...
00:42:27	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Marni: I mean, I haven't seen them in a while, but I am 100% sure they are <u>not</u> .
00:42:35	Marni	Guest	Biz: Well, <i>[inaudible]</i> I'm pretty sure they are not <u>now</u> . <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:42:37	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Absolutely not. Biz: Not at this moment. Well, I am—
00:42:41	Biz	Host	Marni: No. Never gonna happen. I am—I am so happy on your behalf to have that experience with your kids. And... thank you for coming on and sharing what you've

			been doing, because it is... it's just another important story in the "we are not just our kids, but there are kids in our house." And, y'know. It is kind of all tied together, whether we want it to be or not. And big decisions are scary and hard and good job making them.
			<i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:43:15	Marni	Guest	Thank you!
00:43:16	Biz	Host	You're welcome!
00:43:17	Marni	Guest	Eee!
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>
00:43:19	Music	Music	"Ones and Zeroes" by "Awesome." Steady, driving electric guitar with drum and woodwinds.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:43:36	Music	Promo	Cheerful ukulele with whistling plays in background.
00:43:37	Biz	Promo	<i>One Bad Mother</i> is supported in part by Dipsea. Whether it's a warm cup of coffee, basking in warm sunlight, or listening to a sexy story, pleasure is all around us. With Dipsea, your sanctuary is waiting. Escape into a world where pleasure is your only priority. Dipsea is an app full of hundreds of short, sexy audio stories designed by women for women. Dipsea is just another tool that we have in taking care of ourselves. For listeners of the show, Dipsea is offering an extended 30-day free trial when you go to DipseaStories.com/badmother . That's 30 days of full access for free when you go to D-I-P-S-E-AStories.com/badmother . DipseaStories.com/badmother .
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:44:40	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.
00:44:59	Biz	Host	Genius fail time. Genius me, me!
00:45:04	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>
00:45:18	Biz	Host	Okay! This one's kinda dumb. Any game that requires scoring— <i>[Laughs.]</i> Be it minigolf, be it a version of charades that we have that we were trying to play with Ellis the other day. Any game involving scoring, we've stopped scoring. And we play for fun. Fun! <i>[Laughs.]</i> And honestly, it makes it more fun for Ellis. I mean, the kid's eight. We don't need to, y'know, train them to be an assassin until they're at least twelve. So, y'know. For now we'll do things for fun. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
00:46:00	Caller	Caller	<i>[Answering machine beeps.]</i>
			Well I just have the tiniest little genius you've ever heard. And that is that I have—oh my goodness, hold on. <i>[Small child vocalizes in background.]</i>
			<i>[Biz laughs.]</i>

I mean, he's right here, isn't he? So he was eating peanut butter on pita—or rather, he wasn't eating peanut butter on pita. And then all of a sudden I called it peanut butter pizza and he ate it! So hey! I'm a genius! Woo! Have a great day! Thanks so much! Bye!

00:46:31 Biz Host That's amazing. That's amazing. You're doing an amazing job. I also always love to hear people mid-parenting. I'm—y'know, if that is not an example of constantly being interrupted and not being able to—that call was 36 seconds, everybody! And a good portion of it was being interrupted. So double-good job. You... are a genius. Failures!

00:47:00 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.]

00:47:06 Biz Host **Biz:** *[Calmly]* You suck!
Fail me, me. Okay. I'm on a roll. Between the toes and everything else? Okay. Ellis really hates it when we make red beans and rice for dinner. Red beans and rice. Raiden loves it. I love it. Stefan loves it. Ellis doesn't eat 98% of the meals that we make. So, y'know. We are moving on. Somewhere in the last... two or three years, we were setting the table with everybody's meals and down go the red beans and rice and Ellis is like, "I can't—" Like, really upset as if I have put down a bowl of vomit. And I am sorry. This is a vomit-heavy episode. He looks at it and he starts screaming that it smells. The smell is so bad it's gonna make him sick. He can't look at it. It's gonna make him sick. "I can't eat," it's gonna make him sick. And we are like, "Aaahh! Well we want to eat our dinner!" And he's like, "It's gonna make me sick!"

Alright. We start stretching out the time. Red beans and rice used to be our go-to, like, sometimes once-a-week kind of meal. It's very easy to make, the recipe that we make which is probably insulting to chefs everywhere. But it had been a while. In fact, a couple weeks ago Stefan was like, "Oh, we don't need anything from the store. We've got stuff for red beans and rice." And I was like, "God help us. I just don't even like—like, I'm already stressed out thinking about the fact that you're gonna make it. But fine." Stefan makes the red beans and rice two nights ago. He totally fucks it up. *[Laughs.]* I don't know how. There was like a rice issue. But anyway, it was more of a red beans and porridge. And it was delicious.

And on that evening, we all sat down in front of the television to eat dinner, so no one was looking at each other or really able to see each other's food. And I thought, "This is great! Look at me enjoying red beans and rice and maybe this means Ellis is over it." The next night is leftover night, and we had red beans and porridge, leftover, to eat. And... we put it down on the table and— *[Laughs.]* Ellis loses his mind. Including some lovely, like, dry heaving? And I'm like, "That's not real. You're not—that's not real! Stop it! Stop it!" Whenever somebody dry heaves I'm like, "Stop it! You're just gonna make you really sick! Stop it!" Anyway. Basically, we all got really mad. In fact, I did one of those very, like, aggressive—not

passive-aggressive—like, aggressive. Like Stefan started heading out to eat on the porch and I was like, “This is exactly why I said we shouldn’t make a food that at least one member of our family hates!” Anyway. It was relaxing. And... I don’t think we’ll ever eat it again. Because I let an eight-year-old control my life.
[Answering machine beeps.]

00:50:15 Caller Caller

Hi, Biz. This is a fail. I just bundled up my daughter because it’s still winter here in Chicago and we raced to school to pick up my son and ran into the dad who’s picking him up to go to a playdate today. Yep! I scheduled a playdate. I told teachers that he’s going home with this other family after school, and I still rushed to school to pick him up even though I knew he had a playdate. So that was real helpful for getting me all that extra time after school, wasn’t it? Ugh. I fail.

00:50:58 Biz Host

Oh, this is just a big fail sandwich. Not only are you barely able to function as a person in terms of remembering things, you also had to put effort into getting your very young child dressed for cold weather. *[Through laughter]* Which is really awful! I mean, there are some—some kids are just like, “Yayyy, put me in a jacket!” But a lot of children really don’t like it. They don’t like it like my kid doesn’t like red beans and rice. So... way to forget something about your child’s schedule. Because you are president of their schedule. Way to follow through with it by getting your child completely dressed, heading to the preschool, and timing it just so you could see your fail unfold before you. It—that’s just beautiful! So you’re doing a horrible job, and we’re gonna kick you out of the PTA. *[Laughs.]* Is that a thing? *[Laughs.]*

00:52:05 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.*

00:52:29 Promo Clip

[Music fades out.]

Music: Funky synth music plays in background.

Speaker 1: MaxFunDrive 2022 starts in just one week.

Speaker 2: *[Echoey]* Monday, April 25th!

Speaker 1: We’ll have exclusive MaxFunDrive gifts, awesome episodes, bonus content, and you know what else? You’ll just have to tune in.

Speaker 2: *[Echoey]* We have some tricks up our sleeve! Sleeves? Tricks? Is it plural?

Speaker 1: We’ll catch you next week, the greatest time to support the podcasts you love. MaxFunDrive starts on Monday, April 25th.

Speaker 2: *[Echoey]* Don’t miss it!

[Music fades out.]

00:53:05	Promo	Clip	<p>Music: Cheerful symphonic movie music, as though from a 1950s romantic comedy or sitcom, plays throughout.</p> <p>Hal Lublin: If you're sick of constantly arguing with the people closest to you about topics that really aren't going to change the world, we're here to take that stress off of your shoulders. We take care of it for you on <i>We Got This With Mark and Hal</i>.</p> <p>Mark Gagliardi: That's right, Hal! If you have a subjective question that you want answered objectively once and for all time, for all of the people of the world, questions like—who's the best Disney villain, Macro PC, or should you put ketchup on a hot dog? That's why we're here!</p> <p>Hal: Yes, I get that these are the biggest question of our time. And we're often joined by special guests like Nathan Fillion, Orlando Jones, and Paget Brewster. So let Mark and Hal take care of it for you on <i>We Got This With Mark and Hal</i>. Weekly, on Maximum Fun. Alright, everybody. It's time to snuggle up and listen to a mom have a breakdown.</p>
00:53:52	Biz	Host	<p>[Answering machine beeps.]</p>
00:53:59	Caller	Caller	<p>This is a rant. I'm on my way home from work. This is probably something you've heard of ten billion times, this fucking mommy brain shit. I googled it. <i>New York Times</i> says specifically that it is meaning that the fancy-pants part of your brain is screwed, and I have a PhD. Very competitive job. Competing with all these single dudes. All my work is fucking fancy-pants shit and I can't even remember the name of the town that my dad lives in.</p> <p>[Biz laughs.]</p>
00:54:41	Biz	Host	<p>So it's really fucking annoying. I don't know how I'm gonna progress in this job. Ugh. It sucks. Thank you. Bye.</p> <p>You... are doing an amazing job! That brain situation is <u>real</u>. I give you extra credit for finding the <i>New York Times</i> article, 'cause that's fancy-pants. Also, I really like that you are using the word fancy-pants, which I am sure is some sort of official academic lingo. You're right, though. Y'know, here's the thing. This is a fair thing to rant about, and I think it—I would love, actually, to go back and talk about super brain, mommy brain, whatever, in the future. Because it is <u>truly</u> a thing that we do not talk about with seriousness as a society. We make a lot of jokes about, "Oh, it's just mommy brain! Oh, this is why women shouldn't rise in corporate America, 'cause their brain goes crazy when they have their baby!" [Laughs.]</p> <p>Y'know? I mean, it goes along with that whole, like, they can't 'cause of their period or whatever garbage. It is scientifically a fact. Everybody loves it when I try and do science and facts. It is scientifically a fact that when you make a human being with your own body, you do lose part of your brain. You gain new brain functions. A lot of those have a lot to do with survival. And it doesn't mean you've lost all of that information. It doesn't mean that it's all gone forever? It just means that for a while, just as if you had gotten hit by a car and were waiting for your leg to heal, no one would make you run a marathon. I think that we should be really</p>

mindful and—[sighs]. I mean, there's no fixing it. But I do think if I ever led a job, job, job-job kind of job-job? And I had—[Laughs.] And I had people who had had children? I would be pretty loosey-goosey when it came to my fancy-pants requirements and expectations. Because none of it means that you are not as brilliant and as capable and as smart and as amazing as you have always been. It just means that our brains are literally altered and so it takes us a little extra time to go find the stuff we need to find rolling around in there.

Man, that wasn't scientific at all. I should probably go read that *New York Times* article. The bottom line is, is that frustration that you feel? Is very real. And it brings up a lot of feelings for me in terms of feeling less-than or condescended to or any of those things. And it can be very frustrating when you are surrounded by people whose bodies will not be affected the same way that yours are. So... I don't know. I guess let's just all keep that in mind when it comes to supporting each other out there! Especially new people who actually made babies with their bodies. I think you're doing a really remarkable job. And I think we should rant about this as long as is needed. You're doing a really good job.

00:58:13 Biz Host

Well, I think it is obvious that the road to trying to figure out what is a Self, if I am a Self, if you are a Self, if any of us are still Selves, is long. That is a long road. I mean, I think I have gone through phases of trying to keep that process separate? Trying to struggle to keep my self-identity separate from my kids and my family. I think I have at times tried the complete opposite, merging it. I have tried trying to find some sort of balance. And every time, there's something that works and there's something that doesn't. I just hope that everyone will join me in remembering that this is always and will always be a process. And there is no getting it quote-unquote "right."

Whatever was normal, is supposed to be normal, is a new normal, will always change. [Laughs.] And that all of us are where we were two and a half years ago on some level in terms of whatever we're carrying around, and now we're carrying it around with the trauma of the last two years. And really the trauma of the pandemic is just one part of what we as a country and we as a world and we in our smaller communities are going through. There's just so much. So I wish for us peace and I wish for us grace and I just encourage us all to continue to give standing ovations to every person we come across on the street. With that said, I will talk to you guys next week. Byeeeee!

01:00:19 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.]

01:00:44	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 .
01:01:13	Theresa	Host	<i>One Bad Mother</i> is a member of the Maximum Fun family of podcasts. To support the show go to MaximumFun.org/join .
01:01:36	Music	Transition	<i>[Music resumes for a while before fading out.]</i> A cheerful ukulele chord.
01:01:37	Speaker 1	Guest	MaximumFun.org .
01:01:39	Speaker 2	Guest	Comedy and culture.
01:01:40	Speaker 3	Guest	Artist owned—
01:01:41	Speaker 4	Guest	—Audience supported.