

Wonderful! 269: Bargain Bucket Emotional Toolkit

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[theme music plays]

Rachel: Hello, this is Rachel McElroy.

Griffin: Hello, this is Griffin McElroy.

Rachel: And this is Wonderful!

Griffin: Vroom, vroom, beep, beep. Who's got the keys to the Max Fun Jeep? It's... you, dear listener.

Rachel: Ooh, that was really good! [laughs] Was it? It felt good to me, anyway.

Griffin: It felt alright. Your approval means everything to me.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's the MaxFunDrive! And we're driving the Jeep to... and—but you're driving it. You're behind the wheel.

Rachel: Oh, okay. [laughs]

Griffin: We're on the radio. Hold on.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: You, dear listener, are driving the Jeep. The Jeep is the MaxFunDrive. We're on the radio. But that's what it normally is, isn't it? This is not necessarily—

Rachel: Yeah, nothing has changed in that.

Griffin: Nothing has changed, except we are asking you—

Rachel: Except the Jeep doesn't start... unless—

Griffin: Okay. With you. You have the key.

Rachel: Without you—you—

Griffin: The key is money. You—and you supporting—

Rachel: Normally you're just riding in the Jeep.

Griffin: Okay, wait, wait, wait. We're the Jeep!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We're the Jeep. The key is m—money that you use to support us and the stuff that we make.

Rachel: Here's the secret, though. You don't have to really have money to start the Jeep.

Griffin: That's true. The Jeep will start without—

Rachel: Can I suggest?

Griffin: Please. I'm really in the weeds right now.

Rachel: [laughs] Normally you just ride in the Jeep. During the MaxFunDrive we ask you to drive the Jeep.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Everything in the Jeep is the same. [laughs]

Griffin: The Jeep is normal. Let's start here. This is Wonderful! A show where we talk about things that are good, things we like, things we're into. This is the MaxFunDrive, which two weeks a year we come to you, hat in hand, and we say...

Rachel: And we ask you to be a Transformer.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And turn your Jeep... into...

Griffin: Into... art.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: We are on the Maximum Fun Network. We have been since basically the—

Rachel: 2016, I think.

Griffin: 2016, wow. And, you know, we've been doing My Brother, My Brother, and Me since 2011 as part of the Max Fun Network. We've been doing this for a long time. We've been able to grow. We've been able to turn this into our full time jobs.

Rachel: Well, not—I mean—

Griffin: Except for Rachel, but—

Rachel: I do still work full time. But that—

Griffin: Most of us have turned this into our full time jobs.

Rachel: Yeah. [laughs]

Griffin: And, you know, made a company and hired people to help us do video stuff, and make more stuff. We've been able to buy equipment. We've been able to do all kinds of different stuff, pretty much only because people have annually come out to support us and the shows that we make.

Rachel: And can I say, like, as Griffin's partner, uh, lover, friend... I think the addition of staff and people to support this work has changed your life radically. [laughs]

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: We—

Griffin: Radically both in the definition of radically as, like, drastic, but also radically as in, like, hang ten, like, radical. We have people to help us.

Rachel: Yes.

Griffin: Maximumfun.org/join is the link that you go to. If you've never looked at it, never considered becoming a member but you've listened to our shows for a long time and you have the means, please think about going to that link. Maximumfun.org/join. We have all kinds of, like, cool, you know, pledge levels that have some really great rewards. \$5 a month you get over 500 hours of bonus content. This year for Wonderful! We picked back up the Rachel Plays Video Games and she got very, very, very into Stardew Valley.

Rachel: Yeah! Although when we recorded that episode I was a real noob.

Griffin: You were a child.

Rachel: And I was like, "Wait, there's an elevator in the mine?" [laughs]

Griffin: Now you're so deep into it, both the game and the mine. There's other levels too, and we will get into that. But if you like our show and you want to support the stuff in this world that you like, this is a super direct way of doing so.

Whenever you become a member, you choose the shows that you listen to, and then the money that you send in is almost entirely given to those shows. It is a very direct way of supporting the stuff that you like and that you want there to be more of in this world. It means everything to me that we have been able to make this stuff as long as we have at the scale we've been able to make it, because of you all.

So, Maximumfun.org/join. We will talk more about all of the different pledge levels and stuff like that later on. But small—small wonders is a thing we do here sometimes.

Rachel: That's true, we do.

Griffin: Do you have any of 'em?

Rachel: Uh, you know, I'm gonna say... just a blossoming tree.

Griffin: Oh gosh.

Rachel: So I still feel like I'm not entirely sure what the difference is between these blossoming trees here in DC.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: But I know that there are a lot of 'em and it's very pretty.

Griffin: Very pretty. Not green. There's a lot of non-green tree...

Rachel: A lot of shades and red, and pink, and white, and our son thinks that they're all cherry blossoms, and I really can't argue with him.

Griffin: Who cares, yeah?

Rachel: 'Cause I don't know, but they're pretty.

Griffin: We were delighted to find that we have some in our yard.

Rachel: Yeah. It's some kind of blossoming tree.

Griffin: I think it's an almond tree. I think that's what we—

Rachel: [simultaneously] Yeah, I think so too.

Griffin: —figured out. Yeah, gorgeous, gorgeous. I will say it does things to downtown traffic that I'm... not wild about.

Rachel: Well, we don't have to go downtown, though, is the thing.

Griffin: I do.

Rachel: Oh yeah? For business?

Griffin: For business.

Rachel: Okay. [laughs]

Griffin: For national security.

Rachel: Whoa!

Griffin: Yeah. Joe's been—Joey bag o' donuts been tapping me big time for national sec—

Rachel: Yeah. He's like, "We need some muscle"?

Griffin: Nat sec, as we call it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Um, I'm gonna say last night the St. Louis Blues played the Detroit Redwings at home in St. Louis, and David Perron was there. He got traded off to the Redwings. He was a staple member of the St. Louis Blues for 11 years.

Rachel: Yeah, it happened, like—

Griffin: He was on the 2019 Stanley Cup winning team.

Rachel: Yeah. It happened kind of under the cover of night, in that I believe it was the off season.

Griffin: It was.

Rachel: So there was no real farewell when he departed.

Griffin: No. He came back, it was the first time that they've played the Redwings since the trade happened. It was a home game and they had this whole beautiful video for David Perron, and he was, like, tearing up watching it from the bench, and it was just a really lovely moment. And that's a thing about sports that I think about all the time. Especially in a super physical game like hockey, about how fucking weird it must be to have been, like, one of the faces of a team, and then come back and then, like, you know, just tackle the shit out of your former teammates. Well, [through laughter] there's not actually that many players left on the Blues, sadly, who were playing with David Perron.

Rachel: Yeah, that's true.

Griffin: But, like, he scored the first goal against the Blues in the game. And, you know, as a fan that must have some sort of conflicting feelings. Of like, "Oh, nice. Nice goal there, David. It's a shame it wasn't for us, but nice, nice goal." Anyway, yeah. I thought that was a lovely little video. It got me choked up.

Rachel: Yeah. Blues did end up losing that game though.

Griffin: In a shootout. They did their best. They got their point, whatever. Um, I go first this week.

Rachel: Great.

Griffin: Really excited for this one, and I think you're gonna like it too.

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: It's a song, and usually when I do a song I will send it to you to listen to first. That will not be necessary in this case. The song I am discussing is by one Lisa Loeb. It is Stay, in parentheses, (I Missed You).

Rachel: Wowww!

Griffin: What a... this song is an all-timer. And I think if you strip away all of the sort of iconic early '90s history that surrounds this song, which I will get into later, it just—it still goes so hard.

Rachel: I feel like it defined, like—people of my generation that had to wear glasses.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: It changed everything for them.

Griffin: Sure.

Rachel: Lisa Loeb was like, "Hey, I wear glasses, and glasses can be fashionable, and an improvement on your face and appearance." And I don't know that anybody was really doing that before her.

Griffin: I would love to get data, I guess from LensCrafters or whoever was in the space, of how tortoiseshell glasses spiked. Like, sales for tortoiseshell glasses.

Rachel: Well, and they were, like, cat-eye, too.

Griffin: Cat-eye tortoiseshell glasses.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: Can't—cannot beat it. The '90s I feel like were unique in that there was just—it was the peak of, like, self unempowerment music? That still is good. Like, still is—like, the music is objectively good, but it's not about, you know, boosting yourself up or talking about what a boss you are.

Rachel: Yeah! Well, and Griffin and I were talking about this the other day. Of like, music videos of the time were very, like, person-forward in that—like, as I recall, Lisa Loeb's video, she's just in, like, a loft space, right?

Griffin: Just her in her apartment. I'm gonna talk more about the music.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay.

Griffin: I learned a lot about this song and everything surrounding it that I found, like, deeply, deeply fascinating. But I know our audience can skew a little bit young. This song came out in 1994. So I'm gonna play it now, because I think there's probably a pretty good chance that there's lots of people who haven't heard it who are listening to this now.

Rachel: And weren't born yet.

Griffin: And maybe weren't even born yet. This is Stay(I Missed You) by Lisa Loeb.

[Stay(I Missed You) by Lisa Loeb plays]

Griffin: So this song was Lisa Loeb's, like, enormous breakout hit. Her career has had an interesting sort of turn now. She—at least personally speaking, I know her for—she makes a lot of great kids music.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: Um, and that has been awesome for us as parents of young kids to, like, have this option to listen to music that is not Cocomelon, but still gets our kids movin'. Um, but this song when it came out just launched her into the stratosphere at, like, an unparalleled scale at the point that she had this big breakout. And we'll cover that again shortly. But before releasing this song, before releasing this album, Lisa Loeb was in a band while attending Brown called Liz and Lisa with another musician named Elizabeth Mitchell. The guitarist in that band was their classmate, one Duncan Sheik.

Rachel: What?!

Griffin: Who was the singer-songwriter behind Barely Breathing and Spring Awakening, the musical.

Rachel: Oh my god, I didn't know that?

Griffin: Yeah, just a wild bit of '90s trivia. And the hits don't stop there. So Liz and Lisa went their separate ways after they graduated. Lisa Loeb formed her band called Nine Stories, which this song was released under Lisa Loeb and the Nine Stories. And they did some touring. They were selling cassettes at shows. Then, while Lisa Loeb was living in New York City, she meets some people in the New York City theater scene, and she gets discovered by her neighbor and friend, Ethan Hawke. She meets Ethan Hawke through this theater scene.

Rachel: Reality Bites!

Griffin: New York. And she's written and recorded a demo for Stay at this point. Originally she wrote the song to submit to Daryl Hall, who was starting a solo project and was, like, accepting submissions for songwriters.

Rachel: Wild!

Griffin: But then he stopped looking for songs, and so she records this demo herself, plays it for Ethan Hawke. He's like, "This is very good. Let me send this on over to my good friend, Ben Stiller."

Rachel: Oh my god.

Griffin: Ben Stiller hears the song and is like, "This track slaps. We're making this movie called Reality Bites. We should have this on the soundtrack." And so they put Stay on the soundtrack to Reality Bites. Can you summarize maybe not the plot of Reality Bites but, like, what it represents for, like, early '90s culture of the time?

Rachel: Yeah! Yeah. I mean, it's a bunch of people who have either just finished college or are, like, college age. They're, like, early 20s trying to, you know, live on their own in the world with these jobs that are kind of not representative of what they want to do long term. Winona Ryder is the focus. She lives with Janeane Garofolo, and they hang in this pack, and Ethan Hawke is in that pack too, and there's this tension between Winona Ryder and Ethan Hawke, and then Ben Stiller plays this kind of, like, corporate sellout guy.

Griffin: Suit dude, yeah.

Rachel: And Winona Ryder is, like, dueling between do I want to be successful with this guy, who ultimately is a nice guy.

Griffin: He's a great dude!

Rachel: [laughs] Or do I want to follow Ethan Hawke who is this, like, brooding philosopher type?

Griffin: The cast for this flick is out of control. Obviously Winona, Ethan, Ben. You got Janeane Garofolo. You got Steve Zahn in the mix. You got Renee Zellweger in the mix. Uh, there's—John Mahoney. Just can't. [strained] What are you gonna do?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Can't go wrong. It is a—it is peak—it is up there with Empire Records for me of just, like, the most '90s-ass movie that does exist.

Rachel: Yeah.

Griffin: And so this song I feel like is intrinsically tied to that vibe.

Rachel: God, that song.

Griffin: In a way. It's so good! I'm watching it hit Rachel in waves, how good the song is. Um, so that—it shows up on the soundtrack, and then it's the biggest song in the country. It reached the top of the Billboard charts for three consecutive weeks. Uh, Lisa Loeb was the first musical artist to reach number one on the Billboard charts without being signed to a record label. She was the first one to ever do it.

Rachel: Wow, interesting!

Griffin: With this song. Nobody else would accomplish that again for 19 years.

Rachel: [laughs] Oh man!

Griffin: In 2013... here's a fun question. In 2013, who was the musical artist and song, unsigned to a label, that hit top of the Billboard charts?

Rachel: 2013...

Griffin: It was a dude.

Rachel: Okay. [pause] I don't know.

Griffin: [through laughter] It's fuckin' Macklemore and Ryan Lewis with Thrift Shop.

Rachel: Ohhhh.

Griffin: Rarified air at the top with Macklemore and Lisa Loeb!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I love that. I just—the history of this song is so great because it also represents sort of how music discovery was so fundamentally different before streaming music was the order of the day, where you went and saw this new Ben Stiller movie and came out of it with a new favorite song that then became the biggest song in the country, which I don't feel like happens anymore, and for good reason.

Rachel: Are you gonna talk about her music video?

Griffin: The music video's a fucking wild one. It's literally just Lisa Loeb, just strolling around an empty New York City apartment, kind of a... kind of a decrepit almost looking one? It's a weird thing to describe. It almost looks like a... like a museum, an empty old museum, also apartment. Ethan Hawke directed the music video.

Rachel: Oh my god.

Griffin: And in interviews later said that they made it in just over—they made it in two continuous takes. That's it.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: This is not a long song. So I think that total represents, like, seven minutes of footage? [laughs] And then they were done. The song is just her, the song, the apartment, and a cat who is also Ethan Hawke's cat, which is just fantastic.

Rachel: Kitty Hawke.

Griffin: Kitty Hawke. That's the—no, I don't know what the cat's name is. Um, I don't know what else to say about this song, man. Obviously the place it holds in history is very fascinating. But as an object of, like, almost indulgent... sorrow, over loving someone who can't love you back in the way that you need them to, is some of the best anyone's really ever done it.

Rachel: She was really, like, at the forefront of what became this Alanis Morissette movement of these, like, lady power ballads that were just, like...

Griffin: But not—that—but I would push back on that, 'cause I don't think this is a power ballad. There is a lot about, like, talking about how the other person is just full of hot air, and not able to give you what you want. But there's also a lot of, like, "I" statements in this song. Of like, "I did something wrong." Like, realizing that this is also my fault for wanting something from this relationship that it just could not be.

Rachel: Yeah. No, that's true.

Griffin: And I find that really, really... really fascinating about music of the time, and this song in particular. Like, taking apart the music of it, it is very rare, I think, for any song to be instantly recognizable in the first three notes played. But if you hear that bum, bum, bum! You're like, "Oh, shit! This is gonna be Stay by Lisa Loeb." And that is a very powerful thing.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But to have this sort of... I actually have a quote here. So, this is from Rhik Samadder with The Guardian, who kind of summarizes my feelings about the song really well in the closing of an article about it. He wrote, "As a 13-year-old nihilist, I had never been close enough to a girl to be called clever, or naive, or unattractively solipsistic by one. Nevertheless, I had a sense that the bargain bucket emotional toolkit I was in charge of would doubtlessly derail relationships in the years ahead in the manner Lisa was singing about, and the perspective was oddly thrilling. Listening to the song now is like looking into a crystal ball backwards, seeing myself looking into it forwards."

Rachel: Whoaaa.

Griffin: I love that. And it is—that is the place that this song also has in my heart. Because I definitely don't subscribe to the feelings that it espouses, now that we've been happily married for almost a decade. But there was long stretches of my life where I ate that shit up breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And man, you could not have better musical accompaniment for that kind of feeling that Stay by Lisa Loeb.

Rachel: Yeah! I just like—all I'm thinking about now is, like, what followed that, which was like... Natalie Imbruglia, and Jewel, and Fiona Apple. And, like, these singer-songwriter artists who, like, were so, like, beautifully spoken, and... I don't know. It was just so easy to connect to, you know?

Griffin: Yeah. Great song. Great music video. Just literally—[laughs quietly] it's fun to imagine the direction that must've taken place of that music video. Because it's a lot of, like, "Okay, stand in front of the window? Stand in front of the window?"

Rachel: [simultaneously] "Stand over here." I know. [laughs]

Griffin: "Okay. And then when you get to this verse you're just gonna kind of, like, run from one side of room to the other? Just do, like, a little skip? That's great, that's great, that's great."

Rachel: "Lean your head against the window? Uhh, look out the window, now look at me."

Griffin: "Smile. Not that big."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Um... hey, can I steal the audience away and hop back in the Jeep for a minute to talk about the MaxFunDrive with you?

Rachel: Yes please. [laughs]

Griffin: Um... we have different pledge levels that you can choose to support us at. We would ask if you have the means and you enjoy the work that we do and you want to become a very direct supporter of it, Maximumfun.org/join is where you go for that. \$5 a month, you are gonna get oodles of bonus content.

Rachel: Yeah. Hundreds upon hundreds of hours. And this is not just this year's content. This is content dating back.

Griffin: For all shows for as long as the MaxFunDrive has been doing. Other BoCo we've done this year for My Brother, My Brother, and Me, we got special guest Matt Doyle to do a read-through of episode 400, live from the blue carpet of Jimmy Buffett's Escape to Margaritaville.

Rachel: I listened to that the other day. It is still laugh-out loud funny. Like, how funny you guys were on the carpet, just in your, like, adrenaline-fueled jokes, and then to have you all read each other's...

Griffin: Each other's bits, and have Matt Doyle—

Rachel: [through laughter] So funny.

Griffin: —read... Matt Doyle, who we did not speak to at the event, but that Justin thought every person was, reading what Al Roker said to us to completely melt our asses down.

Rachel: And you say reading, but what struck me, and I was not expecting, is that he performs these people.

Griffin: Really will.

Rachel: Like, he commits to "Okay, they're talking to this person. How would this person sound? How can I make myself sound so I really capture that person.

Griffin: Masterful performance. Completely unhinged. At \$10 month you get the BoCo and you get one of 37 reusable stickers, and a letterpress Max Fun membership card. Olivia Fields illustrated 37 gorgeous restickable stickers.

Rachel: Yeah!

Griffin: And I've read that a few times now. [quietly] I have no idea how it works.

Rachel: I don't actually know either, but I have seen in it action. And it's like, "Oh, I want to put this on my water bottle. No, I want to put this on my computer. Wait, this is so easy!" [laughs]

Griffin: When I'm drinking I'll put it on my water bottle, and then I'll move it back to my computer whenever I work! Each of the stickers represents something from each of the shows on the Max Fun Network. Ours says "What's your small wonder?" And it's very cute. I like it a lot.

Rachel: Yeah, it's very cute. And I will say, too, as much as i am a supporter of our sticker, when you donate you can choose any sticker.

Griffin: Yes. True.

Rachel: Max Fun is all about supporting all the shows, and so not only can you choose all the shows you listen to, but you can also choose whatever sticker you want.

Griffin: At \$20 a month you get all the stuff I've talked about already. You also get the Max Fun culinary kit, which includes the Max Fun family cookbook, designed by Tom Deja, and features recipes from all of your

favorite Max Fun shows, and a jar of bespoke Maximum Flavor spice blend. We submitted my mom's old recipe for Chicago beef. It's like a Chicago style Italian beef sandwich, which is just a big, wet, sloppy mess. It tastes so fucking good.

Rachel: We did work on it right after we had watched The Bear, and so I think we were very conscious of, like, this is good. I don't know if this is real.

Griffin: It's not real. We called it Chicago beef growing up, but there's no... whatever it's called. Giardiniera?

Rachel: It's very good, though.

Griffin: It's fuckin' great, yeah. We made it before we put it in the cookbook, and it completely rules. We have other levels that you can choose to support us at too, but all that matters, if you can, if you have the means, your support is why these shows honestly—why they still exist, and why we have been able to do them as long as we have, why we've been able to add more shows to the network.

This life that we live and the stuff that we are able to make is only possible because of the Maximum Fun Network. I know we do—we do ads here and there, although full disclosure it's a really tough time for advertising in all spaces, but especially the podcasting space. Eagle eared listeners will probably notice that we don't really have many ads on Wonderful! Anymore.

Rachel: No, it's true.

Griffin: And so it is through the MaxFunDrive that we are able to do this thing. Just full stop.

Rachel: Yeah, and to make—I mean, Max Fun gives us the freedom to make the kind of content we want to make. I think a lot about how when we started this show, we were, like, a Bachelor/Bachelorette watch podcast.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: And it was fun, and it was arguably more popular than the show we do now.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: But when we decided to pivot, Jesse Thorn was incredibly supportive. And I think our listener number went down, but our donations went up. And I think that was largely because the community we have that listen to our show, like, appreciates what we do and is supportive of us, like, being happy doing it.

Griffin: Yeah. So one last time, Maximum Fun—I say one last time. We'll probably talk about it again at the end of the show.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: But Maximumfun.org/join is where you can go. If you enjoy the stuff that we do and you're able to chip in, you know, five bucks a month. It is life changing for us in a very direct and material way, and we really do appreciate you. If you're already a member and you've been listening to maybe more shows or more of the shows that you like, you can also upgrade your membership and get those different sort of pledge level rewards, and yeah. Thank you. Thanks a bunch. Do you wanna do your thing now?

Rachel: Yeah. Should we get out of the Jeep?

Griffin: Yes. Let's get—

Rachel: Or just leave it, like, idling?

Griffin: We're gonna ghost ride the Jeep.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: So we're gonna let the Jeep run, and we're gonna sort of walk alongside it.

Rachel: So, I like to think of the MaxFunDrive as like sweeps week, you know? Like, I wanna bring something that's, like... maybe a little sexy.

Griffin: Okay?

Rachel: Just really get the listeners, like, you know...

Griffin: Fired up.

Rachel: Just, like, ooh, this is the content I crave.

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So my topic this week... and mom and dad may want to fast forward...

Griffin: I'm terrified.

Rachel: It's hugging. [laughs]

Griffin: This is gonna get our first explicit tag on iTunes.

Rachel: [laughs] I'm pretty sure due to your swears we have that tag.

Griffin: I don't swear that much on this show, do I?

Rachel: Not anymore. I feel like you used to. We've had children you've really cleaned it up, I think.

Griffin: Yeah. It still weirds people out, including my family members, that I do not cuss in front of our kids.

Rachel: Yes. Yes.

Griffin: But that's only because I'm a very anxious person, and I do not want to have a talk with, like, specifically Henry's teacher about some bad—some foul language.

Rachel: Well, and also the look I would give you I imagine would be pretty...

Griffin: Pretty wilting, yeah.

Rachel: [laughs] Hugging is an interesting one for me. Like, I almost want to say instead of—

Griffin: This is so wildly out of character for you!

Rachel: I know. I know. I almost want to say hugging, colon—

Griffin: Me.

Rachel: Or hugging, parentheses, (with your lover). [laughs]

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: I do not like a procedural hug.

Griffin: No.

Rachel: I don't like, like, when you are entering or exiting a party and there is the expectation that you will hug everyone. I don't like being backed into a hug corner. And because of that, I am always surprised at how much I enjoy hugs.

Griffin: [through laughter] Yeah?

Rachel: [laughs] I think when a hug feels like a currency, you know? Almost like here is your entry—

Griffin: Here's your hug, and your hug, and your hug. Yeah, sure.

Rachel: Yeah. Like your ticket for entering and exiting an environment. I don't like it. But a lot of times at the end of a day...

Griffin: Mm-hmm.

Rachel: Griffin and I will have been apart most of the day.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: And when I say apart... [laughs]

Griffin: You mean, like five—

Rachel: I mean four feet away.

Griffin: —like, two layers of drywall.

Rachel: [laughs] We will come downstairs. Our children will be largely crazy.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Uh, and we will hug. And I will think, "This is really good!"

Griffin: This is good stuff.

Rachel: Every time. I'm like, "Oh, wait! I like hugs!" [laughs]

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: It's like a real, like, uh... oh, gosh. Green eggs and ham situation almost, where I'm like, "I don't like hugs."

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: "Wait... I do like hugs."

Griffin: Am I Sam I Am in this...

Rachel: I don't know. We're doing a lot of confusing—

Griffin: [simultaneously] ... instance? Just sort of pestering you?

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: I love those hugs. I will say, the other type of hug that I dig on is the "I haven't seen you in a while" hug.

Rachel: Ohh.

Griffin: Like, any time we see the fam, like at a tour or holiday, something like that, that's good hugs. Um, I like a "Haven't seen you in a while hug," but I am in the same boat of, like, when I show up to a party or I'm about to leave, I have a little panic of like, "So am I supposed to hug everyone or what?"

Rachel: Really, you do? I thought that was just me!

Griffin: No. I—I do, because I don't know. A hug feels, uh—a hug feels very familiar. I have a lot of hang ups, I think, [through laughter] about sort of... uh, levels of vulnerability in friendships that probably influences this a bit, but yeah.

Rachel: Yeah. So I—one thing—

Griffin: Who invented hugs?!

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Tell me now. What scientist—and it was 1971. No one was hugging before that.

Rachel: You know, you talk about science. There actually is some science, unsurprisingly maybe. But what I was interested in is this kind of what they call cuddle nerves. [laughs]

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: So, uh, Berkeley, University of California Berkeley has a, like, whole institute. And there was an article in 2021, Four Ways Hugs are Good For Your Health. Gentle physical touch stimulates cuddle nerves that lead to beneficial changes in the brain. That's not all the title. That's what I read,

and then the subtitle. Anyway, they talk about how touch consists of two systems. One is what they call fast touch, which is just like, "Ooh, this is hot."

Griffin: [muffled laughter]

Rachel: Or like "Oh, there's a bee on me." Like this instant, like, "Oh, I feel something. I need to respond to potentially avoid harm."

Griffin: Okay.

Rachel: And then there is a population of recently-discovered nerves which they call C-tactile afferents that process the emotional meaning of touch.

Griffin: Okay. I get pretty emotional if I see a bee on me, so that's a fast touch I think.

Rachel: So the cuddle nerves are activated by a specific kind of stimulation: a gentle, skin temperature touch.

Griffin: Ahh.

Rachel: It creates kind of a neural input that signals the rewarding pleasurable aspects of [holding back laughter] what they call social tactile interactions.

Griffin: That's great.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: That's a really fun way of describing... touching—touching a person.

Rachel: Before I go, uh, would you like to have a social tactile interaction?

Griffin: [snorts]

Rachel: [laughs] So yeah, there are signals sent via the spinal cord to the brain's emotion processing networks, which contains neurochemical signals, which have proven health benefits.

Griffin: I do not like thinking about my brain in this way. I like to think of it as just one big thing that's like, "Oh, a hug, huh? Cool."

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: "Lovin' it."

Rachel: So this is—we're talking about oxytocin, uh, which plays an important role in social bonding, slows down your heart rate, and reduces stress and anxiety.

Griffin: Good.

Rachel: Man, I love that oxytocin.

Griffin: Me too, man.

Rachel: For me, like, that is what I am getting from a hug. Especially, like, when we enter this environment after being in an adult world most of the day, and our children are very needy and very loud. [laughs quietly] The hug, the oxytocin from that hug is like, "Oh, okay. [takes a deep breath] Okay." [laughs]

Griffin: Well, also, as a... as a parent... and this has only been intensified since we doubled our offspring quota, um...

Rachel: [laughs] Which the bosses love, by the way.

Griffin: The bosses are wild about it.

Rachel: The line graph.

Griffin: It is so easy to forget your... human... your humanity.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It's so easy to forget yourself, and your own needs and wants.

Rachel: When you have particularly young children, I will say. I would like to think this is temporary.

Griffin: This is not—and it's not—[stammering]—I feel like a lot of, you know, shitty comedians talk about being a parent in this way of just like, "It fucking destroys you." That's not it. It's that you—it really requires all of your focus and attention to do the stuff that your kids need you to do, and so you don't leave any of that for your—there's very little room for, like, introspection at all. And so when we hug while we're just racing around with our kids, it's like, "Oh yeah!" Like, "I am also a per—I am also a person. Cool!"

Rachel: [laughs] Uh-huh. I will say that when we hug, inevitably one or both children will come over and join the hug.

Griffin: Yesterday we were hugging on the couch, the only time that that really happened—it's not like we're constantly canoodling. Rachel sat down next to me on the couch and hugged me. Gus climbed up on the couch and started pushing me away and literally said "Okay, okay, okay, okay!"

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: It was really, really... brutal, and hysterical. "Okay, okay, okay, okay. Alright, pop. Okay, okay, okay, okay."

Rachel: [laughs] Um, there also is a release of endorphins, which is that immediate feeling of pleasure.

Griffin: Yeah. That fast touch.

Rachel: [laughs quietly] Oh no. No, this is the slow touch. The C-tactiles are the slow touch.

Griffin: Maybe for you.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Not the way I do it.

Rachel: [laughs] Okay. So you're saying that our hug is like a bee landing on you.

Griffin: It is!

Rachel: Okay.

Griffin: A sexy bee.

Rachel: [laughs] The fan art for that I think would be...

Griffin: I mean, there are—probably from, like, the whole sort of Bee Movie universe, there's probably lots of sexy bee fan art.

Rachel: [sighs] God, you're right, you're right. And Halloween costumes, too.

Griffin: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: There's also a lot of, like, suggested long term benefits to health. I think largely because of this hormone thing. Like, you know, counteracting things like cortisol, like these stress levels that are addressed by other hormones that—like, the oxytocin for example as i mentioned earlier. Um, and that it just suggests basically that, you know, physical touch is valuable to you, not just in the moment but long term.

Griffin: Yeah.

Rachel: Now, this is what I appreciated about this article. At the very end it says "Of course, not everyone craves a hug." I was like, "Good! Good! What are we supposed to do?" [laughs] What if Griffin goes out of town and I don't have a hug for five days? It says that giving yourself a hug has also been shown to regulate emotional processes and reduce stress.

Griffin: Oh, that is nice.

Rachel: Yeah. I think that's why, like, the weighted blanket thing has become such a phenomenon, is like that pressure.

Griffin: I don't know where to put... which arm is supposed to be...

Rachel: I know, I had a hard—I tried it too when I was reading that I was like, "Where do I put my hands?"

Griffin: I like it vampire style.

Rachel: Oh, really?

Griffin: Where you kind of, like, put your arms over—like, cross 'em over your chest and put 'em on your shoulders.

Rachel: Interesting. I would try that but I would, I think, bump the microphone.

Griffin: Probably. It's a sort of pro microphone user technique.

Rachel: [laughs] To be able to hug—

Griffin: [crosstalk] how much I can move around the mic without touching it.

Rachel: [laughs] You did just touch it.

Griffin: [unintelligible]

Rachel: The other thing I will say also is that the article says even stroking your pet—which, that phrasing.

Griffin: Not good.

Rachel: Um, can have benefits for health and wellbeing, with oxytocin levels increasing in both the pet and the owner. So fear not, those of you that have not found your life lover like Griffin and I. There's a lot of hugging opportunities and hormone level increasing opportunities for you too.

Griffin: Great. Very—I'm sure they're very excited to hear that.

Rachel: [laughs] Uh-huh.

Griffin: One last time, Maximumfun.org/join. This really is the last time for this week. We are gonna do this again next week 'cause it runs for two weeks. But then for the rest of the year, we're not gonna bug you about it.

Rachel: Yeah. You won't have the Jeep anywhere near you.

Griffin: Nope! Jeep will be in a completely different—it will be back in the garage.

Rachel: Or you'll be riding in the Jeep.

Griffin: We gotta—we gotta stop.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: With the Jeep. But please, please think about supporting us. Don't wait. If you go now, you'll—you know, you won't forget about it. Maximumfun.org/join. Check out all the different levels. Check out all the different, uh, you know, bonuses that you can get for it, and support the art that you like. Um, yeah. Thanks to Bo En and Augustus for the use of our theme song, "Money Won't Pay." You can find a link to that in the episode description.

And thanks to Maximumfun.org. We just talked about them for a long time. But for having us on the network. This is a good time of year to check out other shows on the network, if you've never done that before, 'cause everybody's putting up their A game. Oh, shit! Rachel and I were on an episode of a great show on the Maximum Fun Network.

Rachel: It's Go Fact Yourself, and it's up this week.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: As we record this. And it was really fun, and I have heard from listeners of the show that they all really enjoyed it.

Griffin: Yes.

Rachel: Griffin and I had a great time.

Griffin: I think we talked about it on this—this podcast before, but they ask you about areas of expertise and then bring surprise guests on the show to talk to you about that thing.

Rachel: In preparation, I listened to the one with Justin and Sydnee.

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: And Justin got to talk to John Linnell from They Might Be Giants.

Griffin: So dope.

Rachel: And Sydnee got to talk to an actor whose name escapes me from Grease 2.

Griffin: Fantastic.

Rachel: And so that just gives you a little hint as to the type of people we might get to talk to on our episode.

Griffin: Yeah. I saw a screenshot that they sent us afterwards of my face reacting to the reveal of my surprise expert, and it was, uh—it was very, very—a very pure expression of delight.

Rachel: [laughs]

Griffin: Maximumfun.org. Go check out the shows. Maximumfun.org/join. Go become a supporter of the network. And that's it! We'll be back next week for our second MaxFunDrive spectacular. We got lots of streams we're doing on the McElroy Family YouTube channel.

Rachel: Yes!

Griffin: I think this will probably be out after we do our Stardew Valley stream later today. But it—

Rachel: And all that stuff is on YouTube, so if you miss it while it's happening, you can—

Griffin: Right. So the video on-demand will be there, of me hopefully, if all the tech stuff we can figure out, exploring Rachel's farm, so that'll be fun. And that's it. Thanks for listening.

Rachel: It's been... fun? I feel good about this.

Griffin: Me too.

Rachel: Um...

Griffin: I'm feeling really good about this.

Rachel: I think going forward we should continue...

Griffin: Yes!

Rachel: ... to do this.

Griffin: For sure! Can't stop, won't stop.

Rachel: Mm-hmm.

Griffin: Mustn't stop.

Rachel: Mm-hmm. And, in closing...

Griffin: And, in closing... Amen.

Rachel: [laughs]

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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