

Katie: We've often heard that raising a family can take a village.

Caitlin: And the library is a part of that village.

Katie: Hey, I'm Katie.

Caitlin: And I'm Caitlin.

Katie: We're Youth Services librarians at Skokie Public Library.

Caitlin: And we each parent a couple of children in our free time.

Katie: Join us each month as we tackle issues and celebrate successes big and small, both in and outside the library.

Caitlin: We'll share resources for questions that most caregivers, including ourselves, have.

Katie: Grab your favorite beverage, pull up a cozy chair and come chat with us.

Caitlin: After all, we're your librarians.

Katie: Find "Your Family, Your Library" on your favorite pod catcher.

Caitlin: Hey, we're Caitlin and Katie coming to you from our library living room. We are here not just as children's librarians, but as people who are parenting our own children.

Katie: And experiencing lots of ups and downs.

Caitlin: Wonderful and terrible, all the things.

Katie: Today we thought we'd talk a little about big feelings. We've all got them some of the time. The question is, what do we do with them?

Caitlin: Yeah, what do we do with them? Katie, you've got it figured it right?

Katie: Uh, no. I wish. A lot of days are very hard and we just go to survival mode. So it's so important to look for those beautiful moments, even when they're hard to see.

Caitlin: Yeah, I agree. We're coming off some days off school, which are really, really fun. Our family loves them. We like having extra time to spend together. But that going back into the school week after you have that little break in your routine. Just it's a--it's a special time.

Katie: No words, no words.

Caitlin: I think I find that in our house, sleep disruptions really make everything wonky, even if you're getting the same amount of sleep. Just that-that disruption in the time that we go to bed makes everything a little bit harder.

Katie: Mm hmm.

Caitlin: So how are, how are you dealing with that stuff?

Katie: It's really hard. I mean, our youngest, who's five, he's still dealing with a lot of sleep problems that you just, there's just seems to be no rhyme or reason for it. So I feel like at this point we thought we'd be out of it, but we are totally not.

Caitlin: And I have some bad to tell you. [laughs] Do you find it cyclical? Because I feel like we went through a phase like that with Desi where we just were like, he's he's just going to be a never-sleeper. That's going to be his thing. He'll probably go in some sort of like Guinness Book of World Records as like the kid who's never slept. And then when he turned nine, he started sleeping. And it was amazing. It was like the skies opened up in the sun or the moon, I guess, shown down on our house. And now all of a sudden we're back in a weird spiral with him where I don't know if it's anxiety or, you know, just we've had some major changes in our household just in terms of like how we're going about our day. We've added a bunch of extracurriculars, and Devin's gone back to work after being home during the pandemic quite a bit. So things have changed a little bit. So I don't know if it's anxiety or just those disruptions that's coming, but sleep has definitely been weird. And so now it's, I find that my own resilience, which was pretty high when he was nine and we were in the every night like bedtime negotiation, I find my own resilience is a lot lower now, I think because I had a taste of what good sleep feels like. So I don't know. Do you have any techniques that work at your house to help with the bedtime stuff?

Katie: I mean, I think it's just especially for Edwin, it's hitting the bedtime, like right on the mark because I thought we would be out of this after he was like a baby toddler. Like, you know, it's like those sleep cycles where if you go past it, then you miss it and he's awake for like another 2 hours. And we actually have kind of like just realized that it's still happening. Like, if he doesn't, if he's not in bed by 7:30 or reading a book and it's lights out, he'll, he'll be up to like 10 or 11. Wide awake.

Caitlin: Yes. Same.

Katie: And I, I don't know, there's just so many things that I was like, you know, we'll make it past when they're like when they're

babies, toddlers, and then I'll kind of be smooth sailing. And that's I mean, I should know better. That's totally not what life is. But-

Caitlin: I know.

Katie: It's like. I feel like our resilience is flagging just because I feel like we haven't been out of the cycle in like five years. And it just, you know, not being able to see that end in sight or feeling like it's possible is really hard.

Caitlin: The big cloud of uncertainty. What's interesting, um, I think about having two kids is seeing how they react differently. Haven's resilience stuff has, she has a lot more meltdowns and that's tricky because she's sort of old enough to be able to regulate, I feel like a little bit better. And I have to remind myself with some frequency that in fact she's still a pretty little kid, and it's hard for me, as, you know, a middle-aged lady to like, regulate my feelings sometimes. So taking that beat and taking that pause and recognizing that what she's doing is age-appropriate and and normal, and actually she's just letting out her big feelings. You know, it's challenging, but I think it pays off in the long run, I guess. It definitely helps de-escalate for sure.

Katie: Yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about. I feel like sometimes we put on our kids, like we expect more out of them than we should.

Caitlin: 100%.

Katie: It's like you, like you're this age now. You should be able to do that. But like, according to what?

Caitlin: According to what.

Katie: And it's like like you're saying, you know. I mean, I'm 40 years old now, and it's like I still can't, like, regulate myself sometimes. I still can't figure out how to, like, settle myself down or go to sleep when I should. Or, you know, it's like life is hard no matter what age you are. And it's like remembering to put myself in there, where they are, or at least try to.

Caitlin: For sure.

Katie: It always brings me back to like a centered place and I'm dealing with them, which is only fair.

Caitlin: I like that you said centered place. And I think we're going to talk about some some resources that help with finding that centered place. I'm actually terrible at it. I am the worst at mindfulness, but I think we should talk a little bit about some of the resources that

we have in the library. One thing that really helps me with finding that, like being able to take that breath in the moment and help push through whatever freak out is happening in my house is picture books weirdly. And the nice thing about the library is that we have our picture books broken out into neighborhoods. So for those people out there that are thinking about coming to visit Skokie Library to find some of these resources, we have made it extra easy for you. You are in for a treat. I want to call out the the "feelings" picture books that we have. We have categorized them into their own area. It's the "feelings and emotions" picture books in the library. And it is a goldmine. I mean, you can go down there and flip through the section, it's not overwhelming, and find a million different picture books dealing with this topic from kids who are having trouble expressing their anger in productive ways to kids who are really worried about a myriad of things which, you know, I think my kids both deal with and probably all kids deal with. One thing that I really like about using those picture books is that it's a common moment for everybody in the family when you are reading a picture book together and there are those moments within the picture book where you can stop and say, "hey, look at how this thing that's happening in the book is playing out. Does that seem familiar to you or is that something that you can relate to?" And usually it's just this amazing conversation starter that you can call back to when you're in that moment of like, you know, the red mist is descending and it's nothing but limbs when [laughs].

Katie: And I also helps to have that like we always hear about having routines, especially when it comes to bedtime and having a book on hand, especially one that will resonate with you and your family and your child in certain ways can really change, you know, just change everything.

Caitlin: Yes.

Katie: It like starts those conversations that you're not really sure how to have or how to start in like and age appropriate and a way that a child can really approach it and pack away.

Caitlin: Yes. We also have some really great books in our nonfiction section that help in, they're a great introduction to mindfulness. So if you are thinking about working on something that has to do with meditation in your family or working on taking those deep belly breaths that I really find helpful and useful, we have a section in the library that is dedicated to that as well, which is really useful. And I actually brought a book with me because I thought it was relevant to our conversation. I have "Here and Now." It's written by Julia Denos and it's illustrated by E.B. Goodale and it's beautiful. I mean, I think that it's one of those books that you get as much out of looking at the pictures as you do reading the words. It's soft colors, it's leaves flying gently through the air. It makes you think about

breathing. I mean, the cover of the book, it's just a lot of circles, which makes you think about taking that breath in and taking that breath out. And as you're reading through it, there's so much to look at within the book. It's, the first page is right here. "Right now. You are reading this book." And it's just a beautiful poem about mindfulness. The author wrote it as part of her own mindfulness practice. And I love it.

Katie: I love that book. It's so good, so good. And I like books like that, too. It's like we choose them to share with our children, but they're so much for us as well. I mean, there's so much that all of us can gain from reading these books just because it distills everything down into very simple and like easy-to-understand sentences and concepts that I think we all can benefit from in so many ways.

Caitlin: Totally. I mean, being able to put a name to what you're feeling I think is really helpful. Did you bring a mindfulness book as well?

Katie: I do. I if I got a new one, actually, this time. This one's called "Hurry Up: A Book about Slowing Down." And this is by Kate Dopirak and illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal, and I chose this one because it's really something that we can identify with. I mean, this little boy with his dog, it's like, "hurry up and get out of bed. Hurry up and go down the stairs. Hurry up and go out to the school bus. Get to school. Get through your school day," you know. Get out of school, go home, go to all these activities. And then he gets home from school, takes his dog out on a walk, and he gets up to this large hill and it just says, "stop." And it's him realizing, like, wow, like, what a busy day I've had. Things are so crazy. Why, like, all this rushing around? Why don't we just stop and, like, feel and look and see what's going on around us? And so the rest of the book is him just like, kind of relishing the time that he's outside with his dog, seeing the stars come out, getting ready for bed, getting into bed and enjoying that time together is just it's, I mean, I think it's something that we can all identify with every day. It's like every day it's like, you know, getting to this place on time and meeting all these expectations that you have, and things that you have to accomplish. But, you know, at the end of the day, you have to be able to be with yourself and be with those that you love and enjoy that.

Caitlin: Yes, I, I read something somewhere that talked about how when you become an adult, it feels like life goes really, really fast. And I think that that's part of it. I think that that book is hitting on it because we are so accustomed to going from one thing to the next thing, and also because we've built routines into those that when things feel fast and they feel rushed, it makes everything kind of feel the same. And the key to feeling like you have a really long life is to do exactly that, to like stop and actually be aware of where you are in the moment and what is happening and how you're feeling in that

moment. I can't wait to look at that book. It looks really beautiful.

Katie: It's so good. It's so good.

Caitlin: And I think it's just kind of a fun thing to do with your kids when you're out walking around to just to notice things, notice things about where you are and what's happening. I think that's really cool. We noticed as we were driving home yesterday that we could see the moon even though it was still daylight out. And that was that sounds really nerdy, but it was really pretty cool.

Katie: No, I love it. It makes you realize how small we all are in this big, wide world.

Caitlin: Yes.

Katie: Bust a move at the library. Every Tuesday, you're invited to dance along with our Youth Services librarians during the Library Dance Party. Learn more in our show notes and we can't wait to cut a rug.

Caitlin: I think I want to go back to something that we were talking about earlier, where we talked about being able to name the feeling. And I think that picture books are a really good way of helping us do that, too. And I think that especially when you have really small kids, being able to identify the feeling that they're having helps both you as a parent like coach them through that emotional moment and it helps them to recognize what it is that they're feeling. And there are some really great picture books out there that help with that. I think in the board book section at the library here, finding any book that shows human faces and helping, you know, even your little baby, just pointing out, you know, the different emotions that they're feeling within that book is a really helpful thing. At least it was helpful for me and my family and then books like "The Feelings Book" by Todd Parr or "Ice Cream Face" another one that I found, it came out last year. I think it's a really sweet book about a kid who gets to go to the ice cream store and he gets to order some an ice cream cone for himself. And it goes through a whole bunch of different things that you might feel when you're waiting in line and things that, for some kids are really challenging, like the concept of waiting in line. Waiting is hard. I hate waiting. If I am in line and I do not have a book or my phone with me, I feel like I'm in purgatory. I feel like I'm going to explode out of my skin. I do not like being alone in my head.

Katie: Yeah, I feel that.

Caitlin: So I think like having a book like that where you can point at the picture and say, oh, you know, look at this kid. It looks like they're about to have a meltdown. And your kid can say, "oh, yeah,

they look really mad or they're really sad." But my favorite part of the book is this whole spread where the kid gets the dreaded brain freeze and he makes an ice cream face, which I showed it to my kids and they immediately started laughing. They recognized the feeling right away, you know, your eyes are bugging out, your tongue is out and your brain is just ringing. It's worth it enough that you keep going back for more of a brain freeze is really unpleasant.

Katie: Yeah oh my gosh, it's one of the worst feelings in a lovely experience of eating ice cream. Like, it's like the happy, sad,

Caitlin: Beautiful and terrible.

Katie: Yeah.

Caitlin: But one thing I think is great about the book too, is that it shows that you can have a sense of humor about feelings, even when the feelings are not great.

Katie: Yeah.

Caitlin: And I think you brought a book that highlights that too.

Katie: Yeah. "I Want to Sleep Under the Stars" by Mo Willems. I think we've all heard that name for sure. And if you haven't met any of the unlimited squirrels, they're amazing. This is one of our favorite books to share at home. It's squirrels speaking the truth, and trying to do the right thing, but mostly just figuring out along the way. But one of the things I love about it the most is he has this really clever thing called the emoticorns.

Caitlin: Emoticorn?

Katie: Yeah. So it's acorns with emotion.

Caitlin: [laughs] I was picturing like a unicorn.

Katie: So as the story goes on, the author will have the emoticorns, like at the bottom or the top of the page, and it's like a happy face or a frustrated face or a mad face. So it kind of goes along with the feelings that the squirrels are experiencing during the story.

Caitlin: Oh, I love that.

Katie: And it's a really funny but genius way of including that within a story in order for you to be able to have those conversations with the kids and then the kids are able to identify the faces like, you know, what? What do you think the squirrels are feeling? You know, what is the the acorn and how does the acorn feel? You know, it's just like a really great opening for having that talk.

Caitlin: Intro to social emotional development.

Katie: Totally.

Caitlin: That's awesome. Yeah, I love that. We were having a moment last night when, I took Haven to swim lessons and she realized that she forgot her swim bag. And so she she was wearing her swimsuit so bare minimum, she was able to go to the lesson, but she had forgotten her towel and she'd forgotten a change of clothes and she'd forgotten her goggles. And I think both of us were a little frustrated in that moment. But, you know, at the end of the day, it wasn't that big of a deal. But we found that, I found that what ended up happening was she immediately went to this place where she got really down on herself and she was like insulting herself and kind of calling herself names. And she was really upset that it had happened. And it was, it was sad. I mean, I didn't like seeing her that way. I forget stuff all the time. I mean, which is something that we talked about in that moment. Like, I am a very forgetful person and it's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to be human. It's part of what makes you a person. And also, if you did everything perfectly all the time, you'd be pretty boring. So that was a nice moment, but it reminded me of a book that I really love, which is "After the Fall" by Dan Santat. It's, it offers some really great opportunities to show that broken things can be fixed, that problems that feel really insurmountable can be worked on. And progress is progress. It is. It's a beautiful book. And it reminds us, too, that even if you're broken for a little while, you don't have to be broken forever. So I think that picture books can offer us opportunities, you know, to sort of dive into that social emotional development, to identify the big feelings that people are having, to find resources within yourself to calm yourself down with a mindfulness book, and also to remember that feeling, those big feelings doesn't make you bad or weak or messy. It just makes you human. And there's opportunities to feel better. I love books.

Katie: I know. Oh, you know, I should read that with my sons, but particularly with Orson. Orson is Havens age. Yeah. And we've been doing that without a lot to, um, you know, I'll be like, did you remember this? Or, you know, did you do this thing that we talked about doing? And he'll be like, Oh, you know, I can't believe I did that. You know, I hate myself. And I'm like, Hold on a second. Like, this is not, like this is not what I meant for this to be. It's just like, you know, it's okay, yeah. Like it's okay to forget things. It's okay to make mistakes, but it's like it hurts my heart so much to hear him talk to himself like that. Because, you know, that, you know, as adults, I mean, it's like we say those things in our head all the time and like in different variations. And it's just really hard to hear your child say that to themselves. And it's like that awareness that's still coming through. They're eight years old. Yeah. It's like they're still getting to know themselves and like, how to be in the world and



how to be herself. And it just is it's tough.

Caitlin: It is tough. And it's interesting to see that I don't know if Orson is like this, but Haven still has. You remember when they were toddlers and like, Haven would look in the mirror and I would be like, What do you see? And she'd be like, I see a beautiful girl. It's like, Yeah, you do.

Katie: It's Haven!

Caitlin: Exactly. She still has those moments of just absolute confidence where she'll be like, I'm a really good artist or I'm awesome at math or whatever. But simultaneously she'll have this like, you know, I am stupid or I'm bad or something like that, which is weird because I mean, those really aren't words that we use in our house. I mean, that's not like we make a concerted effort, I'm sure you do, to to not to not bring those words in. So it's kind of interesting to see like how that development happens, because for sure, like you said, it's in my head too. Like where does it come from and how does it take root and how do we as grown-ups fight that? Because I would rather have her look in the mirror and say, I'm a beautiful girl.

Katie: I know. We should all do that, right?

Caitlin: Yeah. Yeah, I guess we probably should, too, huh? You are a beautiful girl.

Katie: So are you.

Caitlin: What's better than hanging out with your favorite youth librarians? How about hanging out with your favorite youth librarians with S'mores and a campfire? Join us on Friday May 5 for campfire fun at Skokie Public Library. Find more information in the show notes.

Caitlin: So what's kept you going this week, buddy?

Katie: Well, this past week, Orson and I were able to take a trip and we were able to spend time with my dad and two of my brothers and my nephews, my sister-in-law.

Caitlin: Wow.

Katie: And it was just amazing and Orson got to see things that he's never been able to see before. We went to Washington, D.C., and we went to New York City where, I used to live there and I have two brothers that still live there. So it was just it was so nice. I have to say. I was a little apprehensive just because we hadn't been traveling at all. We haven't been doing a whole lot outside of our normal existence here, and it felt so much better than I could have

imagined. So it was like a very welcome and very enjoyable time together.

Caitlin: Oh, that's awesome.

Katie: Yeah.

Caitlin: How did he do with the travel?

Katie: He was great. Like, I, I was very, very happy with how he handled, like, being on the plane. And we also took Amtrak for one of our parts of the trip. And I mean, he was helping me through on the plane because I am a very anxious flyer.

Caitlin: Are you? Yeah.

Katie: And like taking off in that until you reach that like 37,000 feet or whatever, I am like a mass.

Caitlin: Is that where the ding happens?

Katie: Yeah. Ding ding.

Caitlin: Like from "Say anything?" Once the ding happens, you know, you're okay.

Katie: And then we hit turbulence a little bit too. And I don't do well with that. So I was like, grabbing on onto his leg or, you know, like holding on to the armrest. And he's just like, "mom, are you okay?" You know, and he was just like, comforting me and, like, like getting me through it. And it was just like moments like that that you don't have and like, your day-to-day all the time. It was just like it was interesting to, like, be in those experiences and like, see, like how like big here like, you know, we're talking about like also how small they are. So, but like how much like growth there's been like, like the person that he is like, you know, in the world. Also, for me as his mom, I don't know, it was like that was really special.

Caitlin: It's nice when you get those like pull back the curtain moments, I think where you get to see how the stuff that you've been like reinforcing your kids with sort of plays back to you where like, you know, you he checked in with you like he noticed that you were feeling nervous and he had the emotional wherewithal to be like, hey, are you okay? You know, how can I support you? That's that's really cool.

Katie: But then on the flip side, we were walking through one of the museums we visited [laughs] and he he was like, I think it was partly being tired and partly being hungry, but he was like, so mad. He had being like, why are you following me around? [Caitlin laughs] I

thought we are like here enjoying this museum together, but okay, I get it.

Caitlin: Well that's shocking because I am really great when I am hungry and tired.

Katie: I know, I mean, hello.

Caitlin: That's what I do my best social work. I love hanging out with people when I'm hungry.

Katie: He gets his hangriness from his mom, that's for sure.

Caitlin: That's very funny. Yeah. Oh, my gosh. We just had an amazing weekend, too. We've been, like I said it when we first started talking, it's been sort of a disregulated time for us because we added in like a couple of different lessons for the kids. And just we've had like PTA meetings and not PTA, but like meetings at school. And then I've been staying late at work, so like our work-life balance is way off and it has been for the past, I'd say like month. And we had this day on Saturday where it wasn't like that. We went, we took a super long walk, we got hot chocolate. We were joking around and laughing. We went to see a show in Chicago and then we went to play at Maggie Daley Park. And then we came home and we made dinner and we ate. And then we all watched a movie together, and it was the best. I mean, it was the best. I love my family so much. It was really, really, really fun.

Katie: I'm just like picturing you all in my head right now.

Caitlin: Yeah. I mean, it was just a golden day. It was. I also got the Wordle in one on that.

Katie: Wow, what word was it?

Caitlin: It was, like, "trait" or something. It was just it like, popped into my head and I was like, I'm just going to try this. Or maybe it was "flare." I don't remember what it was. Now I only remember the feeling of accomplishment, like, all right...

Katie: That is superior.

Caitlin: What comes will come. The rest of the day doesn't, it's not going to meet this moment right here, so. I stared off on a real high note. I know. It was a great day. Real great day. Katie, it's been super fun hanging out and talking about books and kids with you.

Katie: I have loved this so much, thank you.

Caitlin: I think we've probably solved all the problems, so this

probably won't be the end of our podcast, right?

Katie: One and done.

Caitlin: One and done. I mean, what else is there to be said? My family is fantastic. Your family is amazing. We are both very beautiful girls, we've got it all. I hope that. Well, we have developed a book list that will accompany this podcast that you can check out that will include books for the youngest readers. I've been up through, you know, middle school age kids, and also some resources for adults. I know that there are some people that take a great deal of comfort in reading a parenting book. I am one of those people. You can learn so much. The last one I read filled with post-it notes. It was like taking a college class. It made me feel very, very accomplished. It will be in or it will be on our list.

Caitlin: Thanks for hanging out with us as we perpetually try to get our ducks in a row and our squirrels herded. The struggle is real and it's always something different.

Katie: If there's something you'd like us to chat about on a future episode, or you'd like to learn more about a topic we would love to hear from you, send an email to the podcast at Skokie Library about info and we will see you next time.

Caitlin: See you soon.