

Katie: Hey, we're Katie and Caitlin 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.

Caitlin: Each month, we'll bring a new conversation about parenting with helpful resources from our library and beyond. This is "Your Family, Your Library," and we're your librarians.

Katie: Before we jump into this month's topic, we want to remind our listeners, though, we are pretty good at finding resources and we have experiences parenting our own children, we are not child development experts. Our choices don't need to be your choices. There is no judgment here. We're all doing our best with the health and well-being of our families in mind.

Caitlin: That's right. All day, every day. So this month, we are coming to you at a particularly challenging moment, I think, at least for me, in terms of life and parenting, and that is end of school. This is always kind of a hard time because it's a lot of big changes which bring about a lot of big feelings, which I know we've talked about. But it's also like logistically challenging because in addition to, you know, full-time work and all that stuff, there's like a million extracurriculars and then all of the day in there, you know, like the Teacher Appreciation Week, which I appreciate my kids teachers always and forever, they're the best. But it's, you know, it's kind of a lot. And then we just are making a big transition at work where we have been working downstairs while they've been renovating our workspaces upstairs just in this last week, we have moved back upstairs, which is really nice, but it's not nothing in terms of transitions.

Katie: Yep. I mean, the exciting thing is that we're coming to you from our new library living room.

Caitlin: Which could not be nicer.

Katie: I know. It's so amazing. It's like this is like, more than I think any of us could have dreamed of. So it's very, very cool.

Caitlin: We got to really shout out Paul for this one because I think he advocated for this space for us in a way that I could never have been conceived. Like I've never seen it set up like this in the library, we're very, very lucky.

Katie: We are.

Caitlin: The other thing I'm noticing about it is the sound. You sound amazing.

Katie: So do you.

Caitlin: Anyway, we were talking about recording our episode last week, and when it came time for us to actually have our conversation. I think you and I both were like, aye. So Amber suggested that maybe burnout is our topic because I think both of us are. We've been sort of struggling with it for the last four weeks, and I think it was a good fit.

Katie: I find that mine is less burnout like in my personal life and more fully in my work life. And I think part of it is because, like, all this stuff that you're saying, I'm like, "Oh, I haven't even thought about this." I think I'm, like, burnt out that I'm just, like, blacking out on, like, yeah, all that, like, and the school stuff. Yeah. Like, we have, like, half our summer to figure it out with the kids. We're totally, like, flying by the seat of our pants. But, like, I, I, like, literally can't even, like, think about it. I'm just. I'm like, literally day by day right now.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Katie: And it feels really hard.

Caitlin: It is to be like that. Everything is in a box for me, and it's like, hour by hour, like. And I cannot think outside of that box. Like, this is the box from which I am doing my work right now. Do not ask me about what's happening in the next box because I have no idea. I'll deal with that box when I get to that box.

Katie: Yeah. And I think the hard thing is and I'll speak for myself here, but I know in talking with like Caitlin and some of our other colleagues in our department, like, we care so deeply about the work that we do.

Caitlin: Yes.

Katie: And we legitimately bring our whole selves to what we do, that it's hard to feel like this because you not only feel like you're letting yourself down, you are letting colleagues and friends down, but you're also feel like you're letting the patrons down, the kids down who are here. And I know, like when it comes down to it, we still provide amazing services. We're still providing amazing programing. So I think a lot of this like guilt that we're feeling is like truly unfounded and unseen by people. But I think we are at a point now where it's like we can't not talk about it anymore because it's like such a collective feeling at this moment that we're really having to reckon with.

Caitlin: The thing that hit me because I've been feeling, I think, a lot like you've been feeling for a while now, where it's just like moving through the work that we're doing and the time that we're

spending is, is hard and it's like everything's compartmentalized and locked down really tight because if it's not locked down, it's all going to fly out of there like a nightmare of a Jack in the box. And I didn't really have a label for it other than just like, I'm just so tired and I'm so mad and sad and I don't know what to call it. And I think burnout is right. But one of the things that really popped out to me and in one of the articles that you shared was the lack of specificity about what burnout is and the fact that I think that nationally we are in a moment like nationally and generationally, like we are in a moment where I think everybody is to some degree burned out. Yeah. And if everybody is burned out, then none of us are burned out.

Katie: Yeah.

Caitlin: Are we just all angsty?

Katie: No, I get it. It's like the word burnout is so ubiquitous that I think it loses its meaning. It's like, "Yeah, I'm burned out," and you kind of just casually say it. But like reading through what burnout is, I'm like, Oh, my gosh. Like, this is not even something to play with.

Caitlin: Some of the other articles that you had shared was from Anne Helen Peterson. I thought that was really interesting. And then some of the other the articles that you had shared, one of them was from Ann Helen Petersen, who does a lot of writing about social behaviors and phenomena and she sort of broke it down even further into different types of burnout that you can experience. And one of them she called Precarity Burnout. She really got granular with it because Precarity Burnout can look like you are a person who is struggling to make ends meet and maybe you have multiple jobs and you're struggling with child care or elder care or some other, you know, like whatever is going on in your life. And it's like all of those threads, you know, just trying to keep them all tightly held in your hands. Like if one thing goes wrong, it all comes down like a house of cards. And that is so hard. It is such a tight tightrope to walk. So that can lead to burnout really fast and really hard. And then the other kind, which is is like the corollary to that is like, you know, you you're okay, like you're financially okay, but you're really tied to whatever profession you're in and work becomes part of your identity and you're spending so much of your mental energy and or your time in a workplace that your work-life balance gets majorly out of whack and it's really hard to maintain a sense of identity, which also really brings you out or to prioritize like your personal needs, and I feel that.

Katie: Yeah, I am. Yeah. I think it's interesting. I don't know, I, I always felt like I was one of those people who found, like, organizing stuff very easy and, like, organizing my time and kind of seeing my future playing out like, a few months in advance. And now I'm like,

holding on day by day. Like, I can't remember things the way I used to. I used to be able to like, visually see my schedule and now I can't do that. And it's like, it's really, really hard for me to remember how to like, think three months ahead, both work wise and personally. Like it's very hard for me to do both. So I feel like one gets held up on a pedestal and then one like basically falls in to the earth somewhere. And I mean, obviously I want my personal and family life to be held up the most, but it's, I think that's really hard when you work in like a fast paced environment. And a lot of people wouldn't think that libraries are fast paced, but we work like while we're also working day to day, like fulfilling our desk shifts and doing programing and helping our patrons, we're also thinking about programing and developing programing for like four or five or six months down the road. And it's very hard to hold both things at once.

Caitlin: Yeah, and I think it is even a step beyond that too. It's, I think about it like spinning plates, you know, because while we're thinking about that, that sort of programing is concrete programing four or five months in the future because like that's how our programing calendar works. But also we have to remember that in our area we are beholden to young patrons and families and things change and we have to be responsive to how those changes come up. So while we're doing this programing, that that's future programing. We have to remember that it's possible that whatever it is that we're thinking about in this moment is not going to be relevant four months down the line, and that, it's kind of like trying to hold water. And I think I like you, used to be a lot better. I think about visualizing what my schedule was, but now I'm also holding my kids' school calendars and camp calendars in my hands, and those plates spin in a different way. Then the work calendar spins and that gets really complicated where, you know, it's like even before we started recording today, talking to Amber about how it's like, Oh, in two days you have, you know, this poster board do for your kid and you have to print out, you know, these, these photographs that are representative of who your daughter is. And that is not a small ask. I mean, like in the grand scheme of things, it's little, but it's also like, this is your kid.

Katie: It's not something that you want to just like.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Katie: Do unconsciously without like giving it like what she does, You know, justice like that. You want. I don't. Yeah. Yeah, I got it.

Caitlin: Oh, you got a performance next week. You know, we like. So I totally understand why this happens. And I have like zero hard feelings, but, you know, last week we got an email from Desi's school that was like, Oh, these performances that were previously on Thursday and Friday of next week are now going to be on Wednesday and Friday of next week. I know it's like, I get it, I get it. But like I also work

on Wednesday nights and now I can't do that thing. So like, I get it. It's not it's not a big deal. But they cannot plan in the same way that we do. You know, it's like they can try, but stuff comes up and where it's like our calendar is a little bit more restrictive than I think whatever the afterschool club said, you know, your community school is like they can they can play a little bit more fast and loose. Yeah. So it is like, you know, you've got one plate that spinning, you know, at this speed and then you've got another plate that spinning on this, you know, on your foot and it's spinning at this speed. And then it's like, yeah, it's just at some point...

Katie: Yeah.

Caitlin: I don't know, somebody's going to tell you like, oh, by the way, the deadline for camp registration has passed and I [groans].

Katie: That's totally me. Anne Helen Peterson also has a book called Can't Even How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation. And so she is actually an older millennial. I guess Millennials started technically in 1980, but it's really like even Gen X too. And I'm an older millennial too. But I think growing up in the eighties and nineties, it's like, you know, you were involved in a lot of stuff and you kind of grew up thinking like, you know, doing all the things through school and participating in activities, going to college, getting a good career, doing something that you love to do, you know, you'll feel like you're never working. And it's like realizing that that's all like just total nonsense. You know, I became a librarian not thinking I would ever work with kids. And I just kind of did a 180 and went into public libraries and I was like, okay, this is what I want to do. This makes me feel good. This work is what I need to be doing. And it's like you can still feel that about what you do, but that doesn't mean that you're not going to encounter these points where you feel like like you're so burnt out, you know, it's like it feels like the work that we do shouldn't feel like this and why it doesn't. And it's like reconciling that with who we are as individuals and how much we care about what we do and like. The end result of what we do is for the patrons. It's for our families, it's for our kids. And like it's like, where did we go wrong?

Caitlin: Well, I don't think we did. I think it's two different things. Like, I think that all of the things that you said, like you do the you know, you follow the path, you go to the extracurriculars, you go to high school, you go to college, you go to grad school, you get the job, you, you know, have the family and everything just falls into place and it's easier. Well, I think like as a blank, blanketly speaking, like that's how it was for our parents generation. And so, of course, that's what they're going to recommend for us. But the world changed. I mean, finances changed the way that consumerism has changed, like everything has changed and it's different. We don't have the same... It's not it's not as easy. The path is not it's not as

easy as it was, you know, a generation or two ago.

Katie: But it's like I feel like we're repeating in a lot of ways the same things with our kids. And, you know, it's like putting them in as much things as possible, just giving them opportunity. And I think it's obviously out of love and also for our benefit because we are, you know, working parents.

Caitlin: We don't have a choice.

Katie: We don't really have a choice, but it's like it's like I don't want them to feel this. And I know a lot of parents obviously are going to feel the same way. It's like we want better for our kids. But in all this like stuff I've been reading about burnout and especially knowing that it's like an actual medical diagnosis, I think there's also this gray area between burnout and like anxiety and depression. How do we, like, take better care of ourselves and like let our kids see that and hear what we're feeling and what we're trying to do for ourselves?

Caitlin: I'll tell you what I do, and I think like this is what leads to some of my burnout. My personality tends to swing sort of rosy. I want things to work out. I like to feel good. I like to be proud of the stuff that I do, and I like to think that it means something. And then when it doesn't work out or it's harder than it needs to be, when it doesn't feel good, then it hurts like it's painful and it's hard for me. Like I care about it so much that it's hard for me just to let the water roll off my back I think. I keep hoping that the world is going to change, and I keep thinking like I think about college tuition because, you know, in five years Desi's going to go to college and we're not ready in any sense of the word, like somebody has to figure something out. And college can't cost 50 zillion dollars, you know, for my kid to go there like it can't be like that. I went to college for theater before I got my graduate degree in librarianship. And I love my degrees so much. I got so much out of my theater degree. I worked so hard in high school. I, I did the voice lessons and I paid for my own dance lessons. And I did all of these things. I worked really like I worked really hard. I was doing theater, I had jobs, I had all the things. And like to me, that's not nothing and that doesn't burn me out. That stuff that I'm proud of, I'm proud that I did it. And I like having that. And I feel like in some ways that's a gift that I'm giving my kids. I'm showing them that they are capable and that they have all these options that they can do. And it's not me that is making the mistake. It is not me that is messed up for caring. It is the world. It is the way that we are set up as a society that doesn't value the kind of work that we're doing. You know, that is putting all this pressure on health care workers and teachers and people that are like trying to make change and make the world a better place. Like it's not on them, it's on the world, you know, like that's what needs to change.

Katie: Yeah. No, I hear you're saying like, I mean, I studied Art History in college and French. It's like. I mean, I worked in some art galleries or an auction house, you know, so it's like I it's not like I didn't use it for a time, but it's, like, very obscure. But I loved it. And like, my parents were totally support, you know, they were like, I never felt like, you know, you should really do business stuff or like, you should go to law school and, you know, I mean, my dad was a lawyer and he was like, don't do it. You know, It's just like so I think like, I always felt like whatever I chose was valued by my parents. And I think that was good for me. But it's hard not to like, go back and think about some of your choices and be like, Yeah, that may not have been the best.

Caitlin: Right.

Katie: Like in terms of like thinking about the future, which you're not most people are not doing at like 19 or 20.

Caitlin: Yeah, I don't know. The thing that I really, I really like reading the resources that we read and we will link all of these in the show notes and we will also have a very robust list of books because as I was looking through, you know, some library resources that are, you know, that pertain to burn out or, you know, like sort of mental health and wellness, we do have a pretty nice selection of books that sort of help you reframe the way that you think about work or the way that you think about, you know, your family life and how to create some healthy boundaries and some balance. One of them I'm really intrigued about, I mean, I haven't read it, so like take this with a grain of just me being a librarian and seeing this pop up in my catalog feed and being like, this was all about diet. Like sort of like not just not just like how to cook, but like what to cook to sort of make you feel a little bit more stable and then sort of building some like healthy mealtime routines and, and, um, mealtimes are always a little bit of a, a stressor for us. So we've established that we're both feeling it or both feeling sort of cooked on both ends. What do you do when you feel burned out? What's the solution.

Katie: Personally, if I'm at work leaving on my break to take a walk outside or to go get a coffee or like talk to coworkers which who are also my friends and very, very funny, you know, kind of like commiserate and stuff is helpful. But also, I think too much commiseration leads to cynicism. And it's just like this cycle. So it's hard.

Caitlin: It is really hard. I, I totally agree with you on that front where it's like, it is really nice to know that you're not alone. And I think sometimes talking about it is really it's funny and it is. It's all like 100% of the time. It's necessary, but sometimes it sort of becomes this avalanche. It's like, Oh my gosh, everybody's feeling

this and there's no way out. Like, uh.

Katie: Uh huh.

Caitlin: I actually think you're, you're really right about physically removing yourself from whatever the situation is that you're in. I remember when Desi was a toddler and I was reading all this stuff because he's always been like a highly, like, sensitive kid. And I was reading these gentle parenting articles, and one of them suggested that, like, you cannot negotiate with a child who is in that place. Like, sometimes you just have to, like, physically pick them up and take them out because they're overstimulated. And you know, what I never do is take breaks. I never take breaks. It's like transitions are really hard for me. I know they're hard for lots of people, but like I, it's hard for me to conceive of like getting up and removing myself for 15 minutes and then coming back, even if that thing is really going to help. I think it is like it's super helpful. I just can't. It's like I'm sitting in the chair and I'm like, my brain cannot work that out.

Katie: That is definitely one thing that I've gotten better at, especially from being a parent. I think it took a long time for me to get there, but like when my kids were really young, I found a lot of what you're describing. Like it was really hard to find any like plus to anything. And um, you know, it's like I finally saw a therapist and was working through things and, you know, it's like I have also dealt with depression. So it's like learning that, like it is very important for me to get a change in the environment because I can't emotionally remove myself if I'm not removed from the environment. I can't imagine like not dealing like going through the therapy and like kind of dealing and finding these things out about myself and then like that gave me the space to be able to be like, okay, I think I'm ready to look for a job again and like, get back into that. And I mean, that's why I think it's, like any issues, important about like talking through and like learning about how different people deal with different things because it's like, yeah, some things are not going to work for everybody. But I think there are a lot of things that you can take from your conversations and hopefully some people listening to us today might take some of what we're saying and, you know, try something new and see if something works for them or if you have any suggestions for us or something that you find helpful for yourself. Yeah.

Caitlin: Yeah, I thought it was sort of, you know, like not uplifting but helpful to read in that Psychology Today article that there isn't a simple cure like it is just it's definitely not as simple as like, you know, drink more water or whatever, like it is. Generally speaking, it requires some sort of sea change, you know, like something big has to shift, whether it's in your personal life or your professional life in order for that burnout to kind of lift. And it's

possible. It's totally possible, but it is not as easy as just like, you know, go to the gym.

Katie: It takes work.

Caitlin: I really do think that you're right that, you know, standing up, going outside, walking around the block, you know, that makes a difference.

Katie: Are you ready for summer reading? Get a jumpstart on your summer reading with activities, book talks, giveaways and more. Find more information in our show notes. .

Katie: I would say, when I was a kid, like, I felt a lot of anxiety, which may or may not have been burnout, I don't know. My, my oldest son Orson is in third grade and he is starting to kind of...I'm seeing some of how I was when I was a kid and him, he's really hard on himself and, you know, I mean, we really try to talk with him like we don't have like expectations of, like, you need to do this. You need to do that. I just want you to feel good doing it, you know? And his teacher, he started at a new school this year, and his teacher has definitely seen it as well. And, you know, play out in the classroom, play out on recess type stuff when like, he's playing soccer with friends and he's like, you know, missing shots or whatever. But that said, it's like he has noticed, like from the beginning of the school year to now, it's gotten a lot better. And like we've noticed that too. And like, I think that first meeting with the teacher where, you know, he let us know that this was happening and it's like, we know this is happening too. And like, we're not those type of parents. Like we don't have these expectations for him. And he's like, well, it's good to know that, like we're on the same page. We, we want the same thing for him. And like, and it's gotten better over the year. And I think like, I don't know if I would call it burnout because he was so young. But I mean, I guess young kids get be burnout, too. It's like when Orson was in first grade at the public school near us. And then, you know, I just personally, like, socially, he wasn't doing as well. And we could tell he wasn't feeling great. And so he decided to do the homeschool for second grade until he could find a better situation for him, which we did, like just like doing the research for this pod, this podcast and, like thinking through it. I'm like, maybe that was like a little bit of a burnout.

Caitlin: Maybe.

Katie: You know, it's like it was a new school. It was a new style of learning that then he was used to like in preschool and kindergarten. Also, we were still in the pandemic. I mean, there's just there's so many variables. We had just moved. He didn't have trouble with friends, but it was like, I just think there is a lot of factors. And so I think where he is now and knowing that and seeing that he's doing

better, you know, it took a long time to get there. But each kid's going to be different. And like some of the times like just like I'm speaking now, it's like I'm kind of seeing this retrospectively.

Caitlin: The last four years have been absolutely bananas. I mean, it's been nothing but like torrential transitions, like nothing but like, you know, everything's kind of up in the air. And I think, you know, you're like me. I think in the you try to sort of internalize and absorb a lot of like the brunt of, like what that feels like the turbulence so that it doesn't impact your kids. And I think that for the most part, my kids are unscathed by that. But like, it comes out, you know, like Haven has some perfectionist tendencies to like, like Orson. And we think that they're done. We think that we sort of moved on from that, you know, like we've done a lot of work on like it doesn't have to be just one way. There's lots of different ways to do things, and it doesn't have to look like just one thing. And then like every once in a while it comes out again and we get the like, I'm stupid. I'm, you know, and I know we've talked about this in other episodes where like, these are not words that we use in our house. This is not, this is not how we parent, but like, it's in her, you know, and I think it generally manifests when we're going through like, big feelings times. And when you think about the last four years, like, what has it been id not just like an earthquake of, you know, shaking up everything. You know, Haven's kindergarten to third grade experience has been radically different than Desi's kindergarten to third grade experience. Just radically different in every aspect. The kids in her class are different than the way that the kids in Desi's class were, and that has an impact on their emotional health. And, you know, the way they move through the world, the way they see things. Yeah, the way that they self-regulate. So I get it. Like I don't know, you know, we do the same thing with like Desi has that homework anxiety too, but he gets like very anxious about it. Last night I asked him, you know, just like, let's just check in, let's see how it's going. And he's like, why do you have to look at him? Like, when is it ever that bad? I mean, it's fine. Like, what do you think I'm going to do? I don't know. We don't live in like, you know, like the kid in the basement kind of house. I'm not like a gingerbread witch. Like, I'm not going to bake him. like, I don't know what he thinks is going to happen. I gosh, one time I asked him, I was like, what do you think? Like, what does it feel like if I get very mad at you or if you get in really big trouble, like quote unquote all caps. And he was like, you take away my computer time. I was like, buddy.

Katie: You don't even know.

Caitlin: Yeah. I think things are easing up for me a little bit. Like, I think like once we get out of this, like, end of school moment where everything's sort of. I'm in the middle of the tornado watching all the. It's like all the plates that I've been spinning are, like, off my hands and flying around me right now. And it's going to be okay.

We're, we're going to...

Katie: It will. It's going to be okay.

Caitlin: I do think, being honest, talking with your kids. Yeah. Being honest and letting them see, I think letting them see be scared or be vulnerable is like, totally okay.

Katie: Yeah. I mean, I feel that was really hard, at least for my parents. And like a lot of parents in the boomer generation, I just didn't grow up like that.

Caitlin: No, me neither.

Katie: Grow up talking about feeling, you.

Caitlin: Walk on eggshells.

Katie: You didn't grow up airing your family stuff or what's happening in your personal life or, to people.

Caitlin: Keep it inside.

Katie: But I think like that if you're just talking with your kids and like, you know, just showing them like, this is what I'm feeling, you might be feeling this too, even though you're a kid and I'm an adult, or, you know, someday you might feel this and it's like, you know, having the conversation is the first step and then talking about how you're feeling. Because when you're talking with them and I at them, I think that's going to make it easier for them to talk to you when they really need you, but also for when they get older to keep that conversation going.

Caitlin: Yeah. Haven and I went to see Frog and Toad at the Chicago Children's Theater this weekend, and we have been, looking forward to this for about eight months. Haven was...she for summer camp last year, she did Frog and Toad.

Katie: Oh, yeah, I remember that.

Caitlin: And so she when she saw that Chicago Children's was doing it, she was like, I want to go. And I was like, we're definitely going. So I bought us these tickets like three months ago, you know, like we have been anticipating this moment and they put it on my calendar. So 11 o'clock on Sunday. This is a little gift from past me. I'm going to just preface this story by saying, I gave myself a little gift that I forgot about. So we get in the car at 10:30 to drive down to the theater, and I pull up my Google map and they're doing work on the highway, and I see that the time is going to get up there at 11:05. And I was like, crushed, like devastated. And I'm like, this is

another moment where I'm like, I have to, like, actively parent in this moment because she is going to feel so bad about this. Like, I cannot tell you how much anticipation, like the two of us, like we've got matching shirts to go to this show, we like, I like crocheted us both little like headbands. So like Frog and toad eyeballs on them and like, like we were so excited and then realizing that we're going to be late. And this theater, like they had sent us like, notes beforehand that was like, make sure you're on time and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And so we're on the highway and it's backing up and it's backing up, and I'm watching that time rack up, and I'm realizing that, like, we're maybe not going to make it. I was so angry that I hadn't like, I'm so bad at transitions, Katie. Like, I just if I am sitting on the couch, it is so hard for me to get up off the couch and move to the next thing. I don't know why I have this in me, but I do. It's always last minute with me. I just have such a hard time getting places on time. So anyway, we get it. We get in the car and I realize as we come to a full stop, like kind of pull over and I'm like looking at the tickets that it starts at 11:30. But the conversation that we had prior to that, we had about ten minutes where we both were just like devastated. And I was like, you know, I apologize, like, I'm really sorry. This is, I should have looked at this more carefully. I didn't know that the highway was going to be as backed up as it was. I thought half an hour was going to be plenty of time. It should have been. And you know, this isn't the end. You know, there's, they're going to mount this play again. Like we can go other places to see it. We have options. You know, we're still going to spend the day together. We're still going to it's still going to be me and you. And that's what's important. And like the end of it was super happy. But even in that moment she was like okay like she was sad and she was like it's okay. You know like we're still going to be together. That was all to say like that's not that's not how it would have gone down when I was a kid.

Katie: Yeah. Well, pulling out the lens from like, our nuclear families into, like, what we see in the library the past four years. I think, like, behaviors change not only for kids, but for parents.

Caitlin: Yes.

Katie: And I think that it's fair to say that that adds to our burnout a little bit because it's it's really difficult to manage and to find ways that make it feel good for people to, like, be reminded of certain things, like in a public space that like make it easier for us to do our job, but also for like people who are in our library to feel safe and welcome. I mean, it's just it's like a daily thing. And, yeah, it's hard.

Caitlin: One of the really nice things I think that's happening in our area is that, you know, we have a new director of public services who's I think really got her eye on institutional health and well-

being. And I think she's really making it a priority to, you know, look at libraries because this is not unique to us. This is libraries everywhere. Like I think if you ask any public servant at this moment, like, how are you doing? Like 100% of them are going to be like pretty frickin' burned out, like feeling pretty rough. And I think it's all of the things that we talked about, and a lot of it is what you just mentioned, where it's like we are public facing and the public is not 100% okay. And we know that because we are the public too, and we are not okay. You know, it's like my resilience is definitely lower than it used to be. And so maintaining that threshold of like what is acceptable and what is proper in the workplace, when you know somebody is behaving in a way that's like, you know, five years ago, this is not how you would have comported yourself in a public space. It's exhausting. You have to work that much harder to hold that line. And I think everybody's feeling it. We're all tired. So I think, you know, having conversations with somebody outside of our universe— or outside of our library who's, you know, looking at us with an objective, you know, with an objective lens and saying, like, you know, this is what the world looks like post-Covid. It's different, you know, and we've just been through all of this stuff, you know, this like earthquake of turbulent changes. And during Covid that rock got lifted up and we saw all the creepy crawlies underneath, you know, like all the ways that like, our social safety nets don't work for us and all the ways that like, there is, you know, institutional racism and classism and, you know, just cruelty that is baked into society. And, okay, we see it, like it's you can't pretend like it's not there. How are we going to fix it? And then we just put the rock back down like that rally unsettles me like day to day. And I think working with the public, it's like we go to work and we know that we don't feel 100% good, and we know that there is violence and unrest all over the world, and our kids are doing lockdown drills, and we have had some scary incidents happen at the library, which thankfully turned out to be nothing. But, you know, we updated our security protocols as a result of it. All of these things are inside of us. They don't go away just because we put months behind us. Like, where does all of that stuff go?

Katie: Yeah, well, and I think it's like you have all these things behind you. You have the things that are in front of you, and then you also have the things that are months ahead of you.

Caitlin: Yep.

Katie: And it's like you're trying to reconcile all those things in a moment. And that's really hard. And that's when I think that's when I feel extra burned out.

Caitlin: Yeah.

Katie: And I think that's where I've been.

Caitlin: I agree with you. And then I think it's like not quite knowing how to fix, you know, like we talk a lot about like what we did to come to some sort of like ground level like agreement societally, like this is how we treat each other and like, getting to that place is different because I feel like we're all on such radically different pages, too. And like, how do we reconcile that? Like, that causes burnout? For me too. It's like, I don't even know how to talk to people to, like, get us on the same level. Like, this is my expectation for like how we behave in public. And your expectation is completely different. And I don't know how to do this other than like, you know, like some sort of, like, harsh, you know, like, this is our mandate. Which is not really what we're about in public libraries.

Katie: No. Not at all.

Caitlin: It's very tiring. And then we get like, I don't know, it's like.

Katie: Come as you are, except if you're this, that.

Caitlin: Right? Right. Like we want to see you don't come realize your full self and like, we want to see you and let you be seen for exactly who you are. But can you kinda not be that? As long as you're not a jerk.

Katie: Yeah.

Caitlin: Oh, man, that's not right. We can't do that. It's complicated. We're too complicated. And, and I think that's burnout.

Katie: That's burnout.

Caitlin: What are we going to do about it? Gonna do some cardio.

Caitlin: You're outside the summer, and so are we. Our bookmobile and book bike can be found around Skokie at community events or local parks. Say hi if you spot us we'd love to chat with you.

Katie: Caitlin.

Caitlin: Yes.

Katie: What kept you going this month?

Caitlin: a couple of things. One, I started crocheting again.

Katie: Oh, my gosh, I'm so happy for you.

Caitlin: Oh my gosh, me too. And it's like, it's kind of just in time

because I was like, aggressively crocheting before the holidays, and I really enjoyed it. And then I, I stopped because we were moving and all that stuff, and I didn't realize how much I missed it. So I started that up again and it feels amazing. And also just hanging out with my best girl. She's been a hoot and a half and we spent the whole day together this last weekend. You know, we went to the play and then we went and played at a park and was she played at the park. I was like, I'm not climbing on that structure for anything. And then we stopped and got fancy ice cream. There's, down by the Chicago Children's Theater, there's this ice cream place, I think it's called Cone, and it's like gourmet ice cream. But they had Sesame Street flavors, so I got Oscar the Grouch. I love Oscar the Grouch. Have a rotten day. And Haven got Cookie Monster, which I tasted it.

Katie: Is it like cookies and cream?

Caitlin: Yes, but it was neon blue and it tasted neon blue. It was kind of revolting.

Katie: How does it taste neon blue.

Caitlin: I cannot.

Katie: Like chemically?

Caitlin: You just have to taste it. Like if you tasted it, you'd be like...

Katie: I'm not sure I want to.

Caitlin: No you don't. You don't want to. but if you tasted it, you would know exactly what I was talking about.

Katie: I was talking about.

Caitlin: It's, like, super sweet. She loved it. I mean, it's for kids. Yeah, like super sweet and then it had Oreos in it.

Katie: Okay, so, like, weird.

Caitlin: I mean, probably not.

Katie: If you're not.

Caitlin: If you're nine, you're like, oh my gosh, it's like mana from the heavens.

Katie: Yeah.

Caitlin: for me it was a pass. But the, the Oscar the Grouch was,

amaretto. Yeah, yeah, it was like an almondy. I don't know, it was super good.

Katie: That sounds really good.

Caitlin: Yeah. I did not have a rotten day. I had a great day. How about you? What's keeping you going?

Katie: so one of my brothers, my older brother is Brian. He lives in New York. He commutes on the commuter train from, it's not really upstate, but it's Westchester County down into the city. He's a musician on Broadway. So like every, he's on the train like nine hours a week. So he read a lot. And he's one of those people that, like, reads a book so fast, which I'm not one of those people, but he's like always asking me for books suggestions and, and so we end up having these, like really great text chains of like talking about books and, making suggestions to each other. And it's a really nice part of our relationship that like, it kind of pops up here and there, like it's not always happening, but like I always appreciate his take, and we have similar tastes in books, so it feels like it's always felt good to me. Like that's why I love being a librarian, because I love like making book lists. I love giving suggestions to people. But it's always nice when like something that you loved or like something that you really think someone else is going to love because you know them so well and they're like, wow.

Caitlin: Your brothers seems really cool. They seem like super nice, and invested in you.

Katie: They're good people.

Caitlin: They come and visit and stuff.

Katie: Yeah, yeah. They're sweet. Yeah. So that's in keeping me going.

Caitlin: Yay, yay for books and yay for brothers.

Katie: Yes.

Caitlin: For real, and gourmet ice cream.

Katie: That's it for us this month. Remember to keep in touch with us. We'd love to hear from you. Email us at podcast@SkokieLibrary.info.

Caitlin: And don't forget if you enjoyed this episode or previous episodes, rate and review us on your favorite pod catcher.

Katie: This has been Katie and Caitlin with Your Family, Your Library. Produced by Amber Hayes and sound engineered by Paul Knutson.

