

Stacy Bellward ([00:02](#)):

Hey, everybody. Welcome back. I'm Stacy Belward, the host of the Connected Families Podcast. Welcome to the community. We are people committed to pursuing God's grace and truth for ourselves, and then daily working to pass that grace and truth onto our children. I'm so glad that you are here today with us. Well, you know, today is a conversation that really no parent wants to have. I'm gonna be talking with two guests about how to help our kids feel safe in a, let's just face it, it's an unsafe world sometimes. My first guest is Katie Wetsell. She is been on the podcast a number of times, but most recently with her son on episode 124, where her son was talking about how parents could support their children that are wired differently. It's a fun episode. You should go check it out. Katie's also a certified parent coach and lives in Nashville, which, if you remember, had a mass shooting at a Christian school just a few months ago.

Stacy Bellward ([01:02](#)):

My second guest is Jody Goldie, who's a licensed marriage and family therapist. She works mostly with parents from a relational neurobiological standpoint, helping them to know what's going on in their kids developmentally, neurologically in their body, and what happens during trauma. Before I invite our guests on, I'd like to frame the conversation for just a second. You know, today we're gonna be talking about trauma responses and how to parent them. We will talk about anxiety and the ways that it shows up in daily life. Parenting with God's grace and truth is messy because we know that sin is also a part of the ways that we as humans respond to life, both our kids and parents, right? Well, sin is also intertwined with our God-given defense mechanism to try and protect ourselves or make sense of difficult things. So it takes dependence on God to help us parent wisely, and we're grateful to be able to learn from others who have walked the road ahead of us. So let's get started. So, Katie, welcome to the podcast.

Katie Wetsell ([02:13](#)):

Hi, Stacy. Thanks for having me again.

Stacy Bellward ([02:15](#)):

So glad to have you back again too. And hi, Jody. Welcome.

Jody Goldie ([02:19](#)):

Hi. Thank you so much for having me.

Stacy Bellward ([02:21](#)):

We're gonna have a deep and meaningful conversation today. I said in the intro, parents, we don't wish that we had to have these conversations about the hard things in life. Do we? Katie, Jody, we don't.

Jody Goldie ([02:35](#)):

Nope.

Katie Wetsell ([02:35](#)):

Nope. I think that's something that struck me with the school shooting, is just dealing with my own anger that I even had to talk to my children about this. I just remember that feeling cropping up <laugh>.

Stacy Bellward (02:47):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative> for sure.

Stacy Bellward (02:49):

So why don't, why don't you just introduce yourself a little bit and tell us a bit about that school shooting and how it affected your family. I know Katie, you're also a certified parent coach and a bunch of other stuff. Introduce yourself.

Katie Wetsell (03:00):

Yeah. Yeah. So my background is in nursing. I was a pediatric cancer nurse, and so dealt with a lot of unforeseen, uh, tragedy there, innocent suffering, that kind of thing. But then also with my family in this recent school shooting, we had some really close friends. One of my kids' best friends, they lost their niece in the school shooting. And so my children had a process it happening to kids the same age as them, but also the loss of some really close friends.

Stacy Bellward (03:32):

And Jodi, why don't you introduce yourself to, how have you experienced helping parents to guide their kids to feeling safe in this world that is just not sometimes so safe?

Jody Goldie (03:44):

Absolutely. Well, I am, like you said, a therapist. And so a lot of what I do is sitting with people who've gone through traumatic events or events throughout their lifespan that are really hard to hold in their bodies, specifically related to shootings. Like, I even hate saying that. It's just so hard and jarring to say that. But have had, uh, a lot of clients who have experienced that and have been a part of shootings or mass shootings in different contexts. And so just trying to guide them through and help them be present with what's going on in their own body, especially when they have children at home that they're trying to take care of and guide going through similar things and trying to make sense of it. So it's that dual, that dual thing that happens where you're just trying to survive yourself and you have a little one or a teenager or an older, you know, child who's, who's trying to make sense of the world. And it's, it's hard for you to figure out how to make sense of the world. So.

Stacy Bellward (04:46):

And I think we can all say it is hard to make sense of the world sometimes, you know, when babies get cancer and when there's school shootings and children are murdered and, you know, we can name all sorts of unfair, unjust, really cruel things that people have to walk through. And some of 'em, the kids here just on the news and some are just really close, like friends of friends and some are in our families and difficult things that our cousins have to walk through and, you know, death of parents. And so it's, it's that thing, you know. So here at Connected Families, we get the questions like, how do I talk about this with my kids? How do I even start this conversation that just feels heartbreaking? And so that's why we wanted to bring you, Katie. You were real close to it this year.

Katie Wetsell (05:39):

Yeah.

Stacy Bellward (05:40):

And Jody, 'cause you work with parents. Yeah.

Katie Wetsell ([05:43](#)):

Yeah. I, you know, teaching the Connected Families Framework was a great help because the first step is what's going on in me. And so that gave me a guide to stop and consider what's going on in my heart. My brain is thinking, what do I say to my kids? Well, how are they feeling? And just taking a, a moment and a space to find my security in the Lord, um, to talk to him and just slow low and listen that we talk about it a lot. Just to slow down. Like, I have time. This was scary and I'm afraid for my children, but I actually do have time to work this out. I don't have to figure out every single thing to say before I pick them up from school. And so really just taking that slow and careful and prayerful approach, waiting for my heart to be still and for the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom. That kind of patience really counters the rush that anxiety brings <laugh> that makes everything feel like it happens, has to happen right now. And I have to have answers. I have to get them right now, and I have to talk to them right now. But when I go to the Lord, I get a really different speed <laugh>. I, I get that, uh, that assurance that he has me and he's for me and his timing is perfect, and I can wait on him.

Jody Goldie ([07:03](#)):

I love that, Katie, because I think, at least I feel it in my heart as a parent, that when something big happens, I feel like I need to have all the huge conversations right away and make sure I say all the right things and make sure, and sometimes my kids are not ready. They're just not ready to talk about it right then and there. There's a great ministry out of Colorado called Access Ministries, and they, they're kind of thing is, it's how to help our kids interact with culture in a, in a healthy way. And they, they really talk about, like, our relationships with our kids is just one long conversation. It's not, it's not big conversations, it's just one long conversation that keeps happening. And then sometimes we totally mess up and we say really dumb things, or our brains are offline when we're interacting with them. And we say really, really stupid things to them. <laugh>, I know I have, but our brains are actually created to, to repair, like they're created. So when we have a conversation with our kids and we, we mess up or we say something stupid when we kind of break that relationship in some ways, like we, we make mistakes and then we come back to it and we say, you know what, I'm really sorry. Can we try that again? Because I said some really dumb things that repair that happens in us neurologically is actually stronger. It creates a stronger bond than it did before the break. And so I love that God has created our neurology and our relationships to break and repair even stronger. And it's so sweet. And so if you can't have a good conversation right away, it's okay. Try it again in a different way, in a different space.

Katie Wetsell ([08:47](#)):

And I love that you're saying even if you have a conversation and it doesn't go well, <laugh> either way, if you wait or you blow it, there's still hope we can keep going.

Jody Goldie ([08:57](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah. The, the relation just like, there's no closed doors.

Stacy Bellward ([09:01](#)):

I really appreciate that you just went straight to our framework, Katie, and the, the foundation and the what's going on in me. And I can see how in, in some sort of tragedy or hard situations you have more time. Like I can see how parents are hearing that thinking. Okay. Yeah. So when my niece, you know, gets cancer or something and I'm, I'm struggling with that, I'm thinking about the really fast emergency,

like you experienced, like the day you hear the news. I don't know if it was sirens in your neighborhood, <laugh>, we, you know, the sirens of the car, the police cars and all the stuff, like, everything, you know, I, I would imagine you would just feel your heart beating. And I wonder like in that moment, how did you check in with the Lord when your whole body is firing off fast? Yeah.

Katie Wetsell ([09:48](#)):

I was in my car and I could feel it. I, I mean, I can almost feel it now, remembering that flutter in my chest and the tightness and the shallow breathing <laugh>. And yeah, my first question is, is there something to do right now? You know, I'm a nurse, sometimes there is something I need to do right now. I need to jump into action. But there, there wasn't, you know, I asked myself that question and there wasn't anything I could do to change any outcome in that moment. And so I could, what I could do was my own heart and mind work to think through it. I, like I said, I prayed, I believe I even talked to a friend <laugh>, to just kind of process through like, what just happened. I'm stunned, I'm thinking so that I didn't process with my kids. I want to help them process, but I wanted to protect them from my process because I wanted, when I came to my kids to be a safe and strong place for them to work through their questions and thoughts and the information they're sorting.

Katie Wetsell ([10:52](#)):

And so I took that time with myself, with the Lord, and with a friend before I talked to my kids. And then also I was on a text chain where there's a lot of things being said, something's helpful, something's not. And so I was also very careful how much news and, and how much information I did take in because there's a lot of information and not all of it is helpful. Yeah. So kind of guarding my, my heart and my mind also in that time where I was preparing myself to be a safe place to welcome my children. Because my thought was, when I do see my kids, I need to make them feel safe and I can't make them feel safe if I don't feel safe. And so that was my work, that was the immediate work I needed to do.

Stacy Bellward ([11:33](#)):

Judy, what would you say? Like, can you say any more from a therapist standpoint of what it, what is the work that parents need to do to help themselves feel safe to show up in that way for their kids?

Jody Goldie ([11:46](#)):

Yeah. I think Katie, I love what you did. It's beautiful. I think it's, I think that's the best gift that you can give your kids is for you to be in a calm, regulated space, right? We, we talk about flipping our lids, right? If you've, I'm sure a lot of people are familiar with Dan Siegel's work.

Stacy Bellward ([12:06](#)):

Explain that.

Jody Goldie ([12:07](#)):

So the idea is like when you're in your window of tolerance or you're in your calm, you know, kind of calm alert like state and your, your brain is completely online and connected to your top brain where your adult brain is, like all the things that you need for adulting and executive functioning. If that's all connected, you're in a really good space and you, your top brain is online. You can actually regulate your kids, which is really interesting. You can't regulate other adults because our brains can't do that. I mean, they, they can to a certain extent, but not deep regulation. But our kids, we actually can, they need our top brains to be online to help give their nervous systems a place to land. Mm-hmm. And so I think

when you can kind of feel, and like Katie, I bet when you were in the car and you could feel the flutter, like that's when your lid is about to flip and your brain is gonna go offline.

Jody Goldie ([12:58](#)):

Because that's that state of panic that says, I'm going into survival mode. I'm just going to, I'm, I'm gonna, you know, freeze, flee fight. I'm gonna go into dissociation. I'm gonna do whatever I need to to survive this right now. But I love that you kind of checked in with yourself. Cause one of the ways to, to pull our brain back online is to look inside and see what's happening in our body. So to really notice what we're experiencing, notice what's happening in our body, we can, another thing is to connect with the Lord that actually helps our top brain come online. Because there's so much calming stuff that happens when we connect with the Holy Spirit and just to, to help like regulate using, breathing, like doing all the things that we kind of know or distracting. Like, I mean, there's so many little like things that we do, right.

Jody Goldie ([13:46](#)):

To get our brains back online. But to the best thing that we can do for our kids is to be in that regulated state because their little sponges and their bodies can feel when we're not regulated. I'm sure as a parent coach, you see that all the time. That when you are working with parents, if they're not regulated, their kids pick it up and they start ramping. Right? And so if you go into that conversation ramped with your, your lid flipped your top brain offline, then it's really hard for them to stay in their bodies mm-hmm. And have their nervous systems calm and be able to connect with what they're feeling and what they're experiencing. 'cause they're actually trying to take care of you and regulate you <laugh>. And it's like kind of not, not helpful, you know,

Stacy Bellward ([14:30](#)):

Definition of chaos, Jody.

Jody Goldie ([14:32](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I'm like, I don't, I don't think I need to describe that to anyone in the atmosphere. Everybody gets that, but.

Stacy Bellward ([14:39](#)):

We all know. Yes. We get that.

Jody Goldie ([14:42](#)):

Absolutely. But like for you, Katie, to kind of really check in to reach out for that social engagement of a friend, to help them like kind of help calm you and then move into your kids, I think is such a beautiful, again, gives them that safe landing place where they have a calm regulated space to kind of fall apart and do what they need to do. That they're gonna be held, they're gonna be caught, that their nervous systems can be held in, in safety.

Katie Wetsell ([15:13](#)):

I was especially thinking about how school doesn't feel safe anymore.

Jody Goldie ([15:17](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Wetsell ([15:18](#)):

And I was like, I, I trust our school. You know, I tried to, to encourage them about what our school's doing and how much I trust them and know them, but I really can't control their safety at school. But I can help home be a safe place. That's where my, my sphere of influence is for sure. I have a lot of power over how much they feel safe and protected at home and not all. And that's why I'm so thankful for God <laugh> and that I can point them to God for the safety beyond what I'm able to provide. But yeah, I just kept thinking

Speaker 1 ([15:54](#)):

Say more about that, Katie. Like let's talk about that and just how our own faith undergirds our own feeling of safety and then how we talk about that with our kids. Both of you have mentioned like the Holy Spirit helps us not flip our lid. You know, Katie, you talked about just the presence of the Lord in that moment. How do we bring our, our faith into this in a very authentic way?

Katie Wetsell ([16:16](#)):

Yeah. You know, one verse for me that I go to over and over and I offer people <laugh> when I can see they're feeling something. I felt like this too is Psalm 46:1, that God is our refuge and strength a very present health and trouble. And when I think about those aspects of who God is, that God is our refuge, a refuge is a place you can run into and you can be safe when you feel weak. It's a place you can go in and you can collapse. You don't have to fight, you don't have to run anymore. You don't have to defend, orchestrate, anything, <laugh>. Yeah. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> and rest and be vulnerable because you're protected in that refuge. But then God is our strength. So not only has, God given me a place of safety when I feel weak, he's also given me strength to get up and go fight the battle again. Right. To face those threats with his power and that I'm, he's not sending me out there to do it alone. He's a very present help and trouble. So I just have this image in my mind when I read that verse of running into this big brick tower. It looks like one of those English castles in my mind, <laugh> And running into this tower and collapsing. And then the Lord nourishing me and strengthening me and going out with me. And that helps me face my fears. It helps me face my fears from, it helps me face my weakness. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, it helps me face this unsafe world that not only am I in, but these precious, beautiful, vulnerable children are walking into.

Katie Wetsell ([17:55](#)):

So I'm gonna go somewhere really deep. Katie, the hard question, I was asked it, I think kids ask it right? When, you know, when I, when I would say something like that, there was maybe once this happened, but it was like, yeah, but how could God let that happen? God didn't keep them safe. They were hurt or they were killed. Right. These are the, these are the hard questions that our kids will ask us about that. So let's land there for just a minute, ladies. What do you say to your kids when they push back on that?

Speaker 2 ([18:27](#)):

So Stacy, I will say that mm-hmm. I like to lead with questions when I don't know what to say. Especially

Stacy Bellward ([18:34](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Wetsell ([18:34](#)):

Right. Can God still.

Stacy Bellward ([18:36](#)):

Good strategy.

New Speaker ([18:37](#)):

Yeah. Do you think that can still be good when bad things happen? Mm-hmm. Right. It's God's still good when you skin your knee. Is God's still good when this loved one passed away? And if God says that he is good and that he protects our life, then what does that mean if people still die? You know, if God is, God gives us peace, yet we still feel pain, what does that mean? And so those are super deep questions and, and so there's some freedom I give my kids and myself to not totally understand it all right now.

Stacy Bellward ([19:06](#)):

Yep.

Katie Wetsell ([19:07](#)):

But like Jody mentioned earlier, let's keep having this conversation because, you know, a lot of times young kids are gonna have a hard time understanding what spiritual life is and the whole, that whole concept outside our physical being, but our spiritual being as well and all that, it, it may be developmentally difficult. Mm-hmm. You know, I really believe even in the hard things that have happened in my life, that God is still good. Yeah. And he is still for me, and he still protects my life, even though there's been these hard and painful things. But let's keep talking about it. So.

Stacy Bellward ([19:41](#)):

Yeah, I love that.

Katie Wetsell ([19:42](#)):

There are theologians that have way better answers than I could give you right now. That's why I feel a little tongue tied.

Speaker 1 ([19:48](#)):

I think it's okay to say I don't have all the answers. I don't understand how it all works together. One thing that I've said over, you know, various hard questions that my kids will ask me about faith and how it integrates into these things is, you know, God created the Garden of Eden that was perfect. The way it is now is not what he created. This was not his best plan, but he's working with it and he makes all things new and he makes things beautiful. And so, even though we have these effects of sin, and sin is ugly, and sin causes separation and hardship and pain, and just wrecks things in all the ways, you know, God is, God is still able to work through that and we can look forward to heaven,

Katie Wetsell ([20:35](#)):

Redemption that's what I would say now that I've had heard you. Yes. That's the hope is that Yeah. It's not the end of the story. Our pain is not the end of the story. Yeah. End of our story is redemption and reconciliation. That's what I would say. Now that you've helped me think it through <laugh>,

Jody Goldie ([20:51](#)):

I love it. You're like, I got it!

Speaker 2 ([20:54](#)):

Think for me group chat.

Jody Goldie ([20:55](#)):

Yeah, totally. <laugh>, it's a hard one because I think like it really depends on, you know, where your kids are at developmentally. And like Katie was saying, like, what's appropriate for them to talk about. But I love like being able to say like, I don't know mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I really wrestle with that too. And, and for, for people that I sit with and for kids or whatever, to, to be able to say, I don't know. I know. Like, and I don't know if this is a comfort to anyone else. So I'll, I'll throw it out. And if it's not like, okay, but actually one of, one a verse that has actually really helped my heart, because I do, I work with a lot of darkness obviously, and, and people who are in slavery or trafficking and and things like that. And it's just painful or school shootings, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, they make no sense. And one of the, and I have the verse here, Jeremiah 19:5, they have built the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal. And this is God talking something that I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind.

Stacy Bellward ([22:01](#)):

Hmm.

Jody Goldie ([22:01](#)):

And I love this verse, and I believe it, it appears elsewhere too. But this idea that this is so abhorrent that it did not enter God's mind, the disgusting things that are happening. And there is something about that, that it's so like, gross that he didn't even, he couldn't even conceive of it. That really, I don't know, it really comforts me. Yeah. And it, it, and so whenever somebody's like, I don't understand, I'm like, I think it's probably good that you don't understand. Like, I think it's probably good that you don't understand how somebody could be this evil or could do something. And, and not every, like, not every shooting is out of evil, obviously it's out of like mass pain, right? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. But like, but there is an evilness that, that we can't understand and that even God can't comprehend. And that, I don't know, there's something that's actually quite comforting to me about that.

Stacy Bellward ([22:57](#)):

I'm going to throw it to a commercial right now, you guys, but we've got some questions. I want to get a little bit more practical about how to talk to our kids, how to prepare our kids. You know, I think sometimes even just the school shooting drills that they have to go through at school makes their heart race and makes, you know, brings up a lot of trauma feelings. And so we just wanna get into the kind of the nitty gritty of how to parent through some of this, this stuff. And so we'll do that in just a second.

Stacy Bellward ([23:24](#)):

Hey friends, thanks for listening in today. This is definitely a conversation that I wish we did not have to have, but I know that it's important and we do want to come alongside you to be a helpful resource as you walk through the hard things that this world is throwing at you.

Stacy Bellward ([23:40](#)):

Well, if you're finding this conversation valuable, would you share the podcast with a friend? I can do that right now. <laugh>, we appreciate it and I think they will appreciate it too. One way that you can support Connected families is to rate and review and subscribe for the podcast. All of that helps. Well, finally, I wanna make sure that you know about our Thursday parenting tips email. Tips maybe make it sound a little bit too small. The Thursday email is filled with all relevant topics, often pain points for parents that are thought through with Bible first, research and brain science informed, and really very practical suggestions that you can use right away. Well, if you're not getting the Thursday email, tap on the show notes to find the link to sign up. I think you'll find it very helpful and a great resource for your parenting.

Stacy Bellward ([24:31](#)):

Okay, back to my conversation with Katie and Jody, thanks for being here today and just joining me in this conversation as we're talking about trauma, the hard things. You know, the times when our kids are wanna feel safe, they're not feeling safe, and we wanna come alongside them in helpful ways. So maybe let's talk a little bit about fear, because I think maybe I'm setting you guys up for this question, and maybe the answer is obvious, but is there different kinds of fear? Is fear different? You know, the big trauma when it's super scary and then when it's little Jody talk about fear in a child's body.

Jody Goldie ([25:10](#)):

Well, fear is a primary emotion. So it's one of, it's one of like the seven or eight, you know, neural circuits in our brain. That's a primary emotion. And, and everything else is kind of like a, a flavor off of those, those primary emotions. And fear is one of 'em. And so I, I think it's an important thing that God put in our body in order to keep us alive and keep us aware. Right? But then when that fear, like kind of we were talking about earlier in the show, when that fear isn't held by an adult nervous system or a, like a calm adult, like, I think our role as adults is to really narrate the world to kids and help them understand it. And when they don't have that holding space for them, for their little bodies, you know, when they are in fear, then they can't calm down and they can't make sense of the world.

Jody Goldie ([26:03](#)):

And because of how their brains work, uh, especially when they're younger, oftentimes when things are really hard, they start to think it's their fault. Um, and, and like, if you think about magical thinking, some kids even think that they have caused things to happen. And like, I thought a bad thought about that person, and now he's dead. I think I caused him to die, and that's a very common thought. Or I caused my parents to divorce, or I caused this to happen. And so our jobs is to be that regulated nervous system and and brain to come in and say, what are you thinking? What's going on? And to ask a lot of questions and help them understand that we are, we can be a safe holding space for them, them, and then to translate what is going on in the world to them to help them understand all these really hard things that are too, too much for their developmental space to make sense of. And that even goes for teenagers. Like teenagers need that even, you know, even after, like, they leave the home, if they leave at 18, like they still need that safe space to land and translate. And so, yeah. So I think fear in a little body and a teenage body, like it just means that they become really dysregulated, anxious, nervous, it's too much for them to hold, and they need the, the parent or caretaker or caregiver to kind of translate what's going on in the atmosphere. So Katie, you've seen this like so much.

Stacy Bellward ([27:29](#)):

You know, I think sometimes parents don't always know, aren't always able to label the behavior as fear can look like all sorts of things. So could you speak to that and just how might that internal struggle of not feeling safe show itself? What could that look like?

Katie Wetsell ([27:47](#)):

And I believe Jody did mention about, you know, uh, blight or freeze or fa you know, that some of the reactions, and I think that's a helpful way to kind of think about it. Sometimes when a child feels afraid, they're going to fight for a sense of control to feel like they're in control of their, uh, find some sense of control in their environment. When something feels outta control and scary, some kids will fight to avoid what they're afraid of. Some kids will just really go internal and maybe it may be really subtle and maybe really, you know, start to, to, to lie about things or, you know, steal things or hoard things or some, some kind of call it like internal behavior where it's, it's less obvious, but they're more withdrawn basically. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I would say for my kids, I, I've kind of got all of the above as Ryland, you know, Ryland was in the podcast with us and he has OCD and so some of the magical thinking, um, there can be compulsive behaviors that show up more if, if you have a child with OCD, you can see some of those things come back up.

Katie Wetsell ([28:57](#)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And so watching for that, so, uh, you can identify when your child might be struggling more. So one, just getting to know your child and their style <laugh>. Yeah. And thinking, okay, something big just happened, I might see these behaviors or this behavior I'm seeing could be related to this big scary thing that happened. Or maybe I need to dig, is there something big and scary that happened that I don't know about that? You know, I don't always know when my child has the active shooter drills. Maybe that happened at school and one of my kids tells me everything that happens at school, <laugh> and some others don't. You know, I might have to dig to find out. So just staying curious, being slow to judge our children, to judge their behavior has just bad or disrespectful.

Stacy Bellward ([29:40](#)):

That's a game changer right there, isn't it?

Katie Wetsell ([29:42](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Being slow to judge and just digging, what might this be connected to that's not obvious right now. Yeah.

Jody Goldie ([29:50](#)):

I think thinking of all those behaviors that kick up, like I love how you, you're like, yep. Like those stress responses are gonna kick up behaviors, but a lot of the behaviors that are seen as disruptive are often regulating behaviors. And if we can just think of our kids as trying to regulate themselves to go back to feeling calm again, then it doesn't feel like they're trying to do something to harm us or annoy us or whatever. It's like, oh, something's going on, like Katie said, that I need to be curious about. And I love mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I love that stance. It's beautiful.

Stacy Bellward ([30:26](#)):

So like lying is they're trying to regulate themselves?

Jody Goldie ([30:31](#)):

Possibly.

Stacy Bellward ([30:31](#)):

Well, okay. Okay, I'll take it from the experts, <laugh>, everybody.

Jody Goldie ([30:37](#)):

and that's where you get curious, right? It's just, just to take it from like a, a positive, like a, you know, like a positive framework of like, possibly, like it's oftentimes we, you know, classic parents. I know. 'cause you know, when when something's happening with my kids, I go into a stress response and, and then I, curiosity shuts down. Right? That's just what's naturally gonna happen. But if we can like, remember, wait a second, wait a second. Wait a second. Wait a second. Pull my brain back online. And let's try to be curious. Even, even with lying, even with stealing to say like, so what's, what's going on? Is there something, how are you feeling? Or what were you feeling when you said that? Like, what was, what was going on inside of you? Or, or getting to some of those questions around it. Like staying curious. Yeah.

Stacy Bellward ([31:25](#)):

Yeah. So stay curious. So, so the next kind of direction I wanna go is when something happens. Now I know we've mentioned school shootings. We've talked about like childhood cancer, it, so many things that are making kids feel unsafe, right? I mean, the gamut, a cousin who just got a diagnosis, I mean, it could, it could really not feel like trauma to me. It's like, you know, this is normal, but the kids take it that way. Mm-hmm. I can remember when my kids were little and for one of mine news was too much. It ha And we just decided we're shutting it off. We did not watch the news. It was not on during dinner time. Remember those days, way back when maybe. And we, and we turned it off. That was just causing her to feel too unsafe. She was concerned about that. Okay.

Stacy Bellward ([32:15](#)):

So when we're sensing that our kids are feeling unsafe for whatever, the small, the big things, how should parents respond? I know Jody, you guys were both saying, be curious, ask questions, but what do you say? What don't you say? Like, give us a little bit, bit more meat around this.

Katie Wetsell ([32:32](#)):

As I think about the payoffs, I don't want to get stuck in a cycle of having to reassure my child every time they feel a little unsettled, right? I wanna build up confidence in my child. So when I speak to them, when I give them answers, I want 'em to stick and I want them to build. And so sometimes when a child is really fearful or anxious, they'll ask the same question. They'll seek the same reassurance over and over. And so for one of my, my youngest child, she started all of a sudden had never asked before, started asking about if we locked the door every night. And so I, I would started out just limiting the number of times I answered the question. And then when I realized like this was happening repeatedly, I started going a little bit deeper to lay those blocks down <laugh>. So again, maybe it wasn't the best to give her reassurance at the beginning, but like Jody said at the top that we can adjust, right?

Katie Wetsell ([33:36](#)):

We can see what's not working and adjust. And so I just had a conversation with her and I said that God gave you parents to keep you safe, to love you and keep you safe. And do you think, how much do you think I love you? How much do I wanna keep you safe? And we have locks on our doors. Do you think

I'm gonna lock 'em to keep you safe? Yeah. Do you think I'm gonna do that just some nights because I just love you sometimes? Or am I gonna do that every night? 'cause I love you all the time, you know? And so really try to build up that relationship and that trust and that you can rest because you are my child. Hmm. And she, even when she was getting some news from classmates and even teachers, <laugh> were telling her details about the shooting that she couldn't do anything with.

Katie Wetsell (34:27):

They weren't, it wasn't information that was helpful to her. There was nothing she could do. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I just told her like, you don't need to know because this is what the adults who are making policies and procedures and all that, they're the ones that need to know. 'cause it's their job to keep you safe. You're a kid and you, that's not your responsibility. It's ours. And so I was again, trying to help her parse out what she needed to know and what she didn't need to know. <laugh> mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And it wasn't like, you can't know, but just like there are people who care about you, who it's their job in your school, in your home, in your community Mm.

Speaker 1 (35:05):

That are gonna be taking care of that. And so some of it was finding out what her burdens were and unburdening her and reinforcing trust in the adults.

Stacy Bellward (35:16):

Yeah. That's good. So you started with just the quick answer

Katie Wetsell (35:20):

Yeah. <laugh>.

Stacy Bellward (35:21):

And then you, and then as it kept coming, you realized, oh no, this is much deeper. And, and the quick answer didn't fix the much deeper question of her heart that she was asking. Right. What would you add to that, Jody?

Jody Goldie (35:33):

I think like, I love that. It's just super helpful. And I think along that line, so just noticing how we're questioning our kids in that. So we use something called competency-based questions, which means basically like when we ask questions about where, where are you feeling yucky, where are you scared? Tell me about the fear. It actually leads your brain in a pathway to flip your lid because you're going into the fear. So when you're talking to your kids, really help them build competency-based questions. Meaning building where do you feel safe? What does your body feel like when it's safe? How do you feel like we can, we can do things to make it feel safer? What can you bring with you? What can you, like, you know, all of these things. And so it takes your brain in an upward trajectory to help you kind of think about things in a, in a bigger, calmer way. And so really problem solving with your kids. And I've learned that my kids are actually the most genius problem solvers. <laugh>, you know, if we're trying to figure something out and I ask those kind of questions, they're like, oh yeah, you know, I'd feel a lot safer if I could bring this one water bottle with me to school and if I could, you know, have access to this or if I could bring this. And so I feel like kind of helping build those questions of safety instead of the questions of fear.

Katie Wetsell ([36:59](#)):

Yeah. 'cause when we're afraid, uh, it's a lot of times, especially if you have a kid who has anxiety, they overemphasize the negative, right? Yeah. And all they're seeing is one is a threat. Right? And so that's what one of my kids, that's thunderstorms. And not until after the shooting, and we're still kind of dealing with it <laugh>. But ever since the, the school shooting thunderstorms have been an issue now in our house. And so I'll say, okay, I want you to start looking for all the things that tell you you're safe. What can you see right now that tells you you're safe? Well, there's a window, right? There's a roof over my head. What's your room? What's, is your room wet or dry? <laugh>, you know mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And so, so instead of me just telling him he's safe, like you said, I love the competency questions is that's the building up again. Let me, let me show you what you can do, how you can use these beautiful eyes God has given you to see all the safety too. I'm glad you can tell the risk when there's a thunderstorm. I want you to be inside <laugh>. Yeah.

Stacy Bellward ([37:59](#)):

Yeah.

Jody Goldie ([38:00](#)):

Widen your peripheral vision and to see like all the other things that are going on. Yes. Not just the threat.

Stacy Bellward ([38:07](#)):

Super good. This conversation has been so great. I wanna kind of end it today with a question that I think parents also have. So, you know, when, when kids are feeling the threat, I could imagine, Katie, you, you can confirm this or not, I'm sure Jody, you can too. But they wanna change routine. I don't wanna go to school. I can't go to school. I'm not gonna go to school. Bedtime all of a sudden becomes very scary thing. Katie, you talked about thunderstorms, that's different. But like, you start getting all, all of these requests, and I'm sure that parents are just like, I, I don't wanna go in that building either. Do I need to change schools? Do I, you know, how much do we rearrange our, our family's life because of the fear and, and the feeling of unsafety? So either one of you just jump in there.

Katie Wetsell ([38:55](#)):

Yeah. So I will answer this as the not therapist in the room. What really helped me was thinking of this concept that we talk a lot about in Connected Families. The "just right challenge". I want to be careful to not reinforce anxieties, right? So I want to, you know, there are things, there are fears that are legit that we need to work around and we need to confront and answer and come up with a safety plan, you know, so that we learn from it, of course. But also to not let that bleed over into things that are not threats. And I want to continue to build my children's trust that when I tell you you're safe, you'll find out that you're safe <laugh> mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And so finding that just right challenge where I'm still the leader, I'm still the trusted source for when they're safe or not. And we work together. I listen to their fears and concerns and we look at them together. But sometimes I know when our kids have big fears and a, and a big expression of them, I too have caught myself being like, oh no, they can't go to school. It'll be too much. Yeah. And I'm right there and, and they're with them <laugh>, but I have to pull myself out. And then Jody, now I'm just thinking and you, it's my, you know, upper brain <laugh>.

Stacy Bellward ([40:16](#)):

Yeah.

New Speaker ([40:17](#)):

Think wait a minute, they're really afraid that they're not safe, but are they, and, and lead with that. And so I, I'll just share a quick story. Maybe within a week of this happening at the school shooting in Nashville, we, my husband and I had planned a date night out and our oldest two are teenagers who will stay and help put to bed the younger two. And so we'll go out around bedtime and, and come back later. But after this happened, our younger two burst into tears when we talked about going out for a date and they panicked. And, you know, we tried to reassure them that didn't work. And I thought, okay, something big has just happened, didn't happen in our home, but it's showing up in our home. And so trying to respect where my kids were at and processing that threat, but also knowing they're safe right here, right now in my home with their siblings, they're safe.

Katie Wetsell ([41:13](#)):

And so what we did was we compromised and we went out for our date and came back in time for bedtime to put them to bed. And we still went out on our date. We still had them be home with their teenage siblings without us so that they could see that they were safe and experience it, have the opportunity to face that discomfort and find out that their parents are trustworthy, even if it was a little uncomfortable. But we compromised that, that was right now, that's harder to do when I go to sleep and close my eyes and I'm all alone. That was one time we did adjust Right. Challenge where we made a small adjustment and overcome without being overwhelmed.

Stacy Bellward ([41:52](#)):

We love just right. Challenges and that whole concept. Yeah. This has been a fantastic conversation with you, Katie Wetsell and Jody Goldie, thanks for being with me today. Do either of you have any final thoughts?

Katie Wetsell ([42:07](#)):

I just wanna encourage parents to reach out to someone like Jody, Goldie, <laugh>, maybe not specific, whoever is in your area, whoever's accessible to you. Um, a lot of times these things bring up our own fears and our own traumas and tragedies and unanswered questions and uncertainties and find that it's hard to really understand someone else's experience until we understand our own. And that goes for parenting too. And so I love parent coaching as a parent coach. I love doing it. And it goes great, but sometimes parents need to do a little more work in their own story. And I just am so thankful for therapists who are so skilled at helping parents go deeper there. And that is such a benefit to their children.

Jody Goldie ([42:54](#)):

Yeah. I would probably say the exact same thing, Katie, that like, the best gift that we can give to our children is for us to heal. And a lot of us are carrying around histories and stories that are really painful and they show up in our bodies and they show up in the way that we parent our children and we get to heal like we can. I have clients that are in their late seventies and their brains are healing and it's beautiful and it's, there's always time to heal. And if even if you're a parent of adult children, we can pass that healing down to our children by the way that we interact with them. It's never too late mm-hmm. To heal. And so I agree.

Stacy Bellward ([43:36](#)):

That's good. That's good. Thanks Jody, for being on the podcast today.

Jody Goldie ([43:40](#)):

Thank you so much for having me.

Stacy Bellward ([43:43](#)):

And thanks Katie for being on again. It was good to have you.

Katie Wetsell ([43:46](#)):

My pleasure.

Stacy Bellward ([43:47](#)):

I'm so thrilled to have these two ladies with us. I know that Katie is taking clients now and Jody's filled up, but the therapy center that she's with does do referrals, so we'll have links in our show notes if you wanna get hold of either one of these wonderful ladies. Well, thanks for tuning in today. Friends, we are a listener supported organization over 43,000 parents like you. Listen to this podcast every month. Individual donations make the work to equip and encourage families possible. For more information about Connected Families, follow us on Instagram or Facebook or go to [connectedfamilies.org](http://connectedfamilies.org). I will see you next time.