

220: Conscious Parenting with Katherine Winter-Sellery



Full Episode Transcript

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Jen Riday

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220: Conscious Parenting with Katherine Winter-Sellery

You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 220. We're talking about how to get along with, and connect with kids of all ages during your quarantine and beyond. Stay tuned.

Hi, I'm Jen Riday. This podcast is for women who want to feel more vibrant, happy, aligned, and alive. You'll gain the emotional, physical, and spiritual tools you need to get your sparkle back and ensure that depression, anxiety, and struggle don't rule your life. Welcome to the Vibrant Happy Women Podcast.

Hey my friends. Jen here, and welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women. We're talking about kids today, whether you have toddlers, or teens, or college aged kids, or everything in between. I want to talk to you about quarantine. If you've been quarantining you've probably spent more time with your kids, if they live at home, than you have in a long time, how has this felt for you? Do you enjoy it? Do you find yourself needing an escape? Do you feel more connected and close? Or do you feel more stressed, resentful and frustrated, or all of the above?

I want to start by validating that every experience you have had, every feeling you have felt is valid. It's all normal. We've never been through this before and it's a learning opportunity. You don't fail as a parent. You aren't flawed as a parent. You are a parent. And parenthood means you get to experience all the emotions, make all the mistakes, it's all part of learning.

And I feel like, and this interview is going to kind of validate this idea, I feel like one of the greatest skills parenting teaches us is to let go of control, hopefully. And really learn to see these tiny human beings that are born into this world, so dependent on us, to essentially allow and celebrate them

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becoming independent human beings, beautiful independent human beings. That could be tricky when they live with you though, when you supply everything and they mess up everything and there's a lot of needs trying to be met, especially during a quarantine.

In this interview today with Katherine Sellery, we're talking about conscious parenting. How when kids are resistant or rebellious, that's a response to them feeling like we're not giving them enough autonomy. I know, you're like, Jen, it's a pandemic, what are you talking about, autonomy. We're just trying to survive here.

Well, I know you want to come out of this pandemic, this quarantine time feeling like you had some close moments with your kids that you connected on a heart-to-heart level. You want to have fond memories of this and not just memories of struggle.

Now, we all have the range, we struggle, we have good moments, that's normal. But how can we let go of that need to control, let go of our resentment and frustration and make sure everyone's needs are being met? Needs for safety, needs for expression, needs for free thought, needs for emotional safety.

Well, my guest today, we go in deep in this interview. I share some of my learning journey with my own kids. And I'm happy to report that it gets better, the struggles decrease, I think, knock on wood. Those of you who are ahead of me in the parenting game, I don't know what's next, but I'm feeling calmer and more satisfied, and more connected with all of my kids than ever before. And I think most of it has to do with me learning some of the skills I didn't have yet a few years ago.

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So if you want to be more connected with your kids, you want more peace, you want everyone to feel like their needs are being met, you're going to love this interview. So let's go ahead and jump in.

Hey everyone, I'm talking with Katherine Winter-Sellery today. And she is the CEO of the Conscious Parenting Revolution. I love the sound of that. And the creator of the Guidance Approach to Parenting, along with two colleagues, a program that applies conflict resolution skills to communicating more effectively with kids and adults. Through her work she has taught thousands of parents around the world to minimize misunderstandings and meltdowns. And communicate with more collaboration, cooperation and consideration.

This is the perfect topic for a Covid-19 world. Welcome to the show, Katherine.

Katherine: Thank you so much, and it really is, I call it the Covid pressure cooker.

Jen: Oh, totally. Well, let's totally dive in there. Many, many people listening are home with kids of all ages, from toddlers to teens, to even college age kids. What advice would you have for all of us to start us out?

Katherine: Yeah. So I've been working with a lot of families during Covid. And with everybody back in the house, sometimes with the older kids, that may be away at college, for example, or maybe they go to boarding school or something. And it's bringing back a type of pressure to a family system that probably hasn't been felt for a long time by everybody.

And then for those of you who just are used to having kids go away, or you go to school or you go to your office, that's not happening. And with all of

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the additional sort of like being cooped up together, the patterns that have never really been fabulous are now disastrous. And so it really is where people maybe aren't even speaking to each other. Or the connection is so broken that, you know, it's like a, "Yeah," or whatever. But it's not really like connection.

And nobody's happy about it, I mean parents are unhappy about it, kids are unhappy about it, and they just need a little support around how to reopen and reboot. And that's where I would start. If it's really feeling like there is just a lot of resentment in the atmosphere. And you can't even remember if you screwed up, what you did, or if they screwed up, like, you know, you're upset about. Or if you do remember, you're just so over it, you want to get on; I would call a family reboot.

I would say, "You know, it's not working right now, I don't know, I'm sure I screwed up, because everybody has. I don't want to like go back and figure out where I'm at fault or you are, or who to blame. And in fact, let's just not do that."

Jen: Blaming, yes.

Katherine: Let's just not do that. Let's just sit down all together and kind of just take a minute. If you feel comfortable, maybe we could all hands. And let's just look in each other's eyes and go around the circle and kind of just acknowledge soul-to-soul that we're here. We're here in our imperfections and we accept that. We love each other just as we are. And we would like to release whatever has happened that got us to the point where we feel like there's a strain in the atmosphere.

Jen: Yes, totally. And just backing up a little bit, what you said, it's like we're in the pressure cooker. I think a lot of us have had maybe slightly

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non-optimal, bordering on dysfunctional relationships in the past. But like you said, this pressure cooker gives us the opportunity to look at it all and say, “Okay, well, we have to change it now, because here we are.”

Katherine: Absolutely. Yeah. I mean to be quite honest, I am so happy we’ve had the pressure cooker, because otherwise families could go for like decades, maybe never address some of the underlying patterns that aren’t working. And if you can create that spirit of, I don’t want us to work on the basis of who’s at fault here, or who’s the problem person.

I want us to just begin to recognize everybody’s doing their best, no matter what that looks like, that if it’s not working, it’s not working. And that what we really need to focus on is how can we be with each other in a way that supports everybody’s needs being met?

Jen: So what’s the first step, do we lay all those needs out on the table? Do we brainstorm?

Katherine: I do it.

Jen: Oh, cool.

Katherine: Yeah. I literally send people that I work with, and certainly in the courses that I run, we like get the list of universal needs out. So that we begin to understand what our needs are, because every single one of us on the planet, I don’t care where you’re from, we have the same basic needs. And we have the same needs for safety and security, and social, emotional, and all the rest of it. But not everybody is fluid in the language of what their needs are. So let’s get grounded and okay, I do have needs, and so do you.

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And then, you know, one of the things that I love for my own sort of non-violent communication training, is that we connect the feeling to what my needs are that aren't being met.

Jen: So what are those needs, if you were to list them all? Just so we know where you're coming from.

Katherine: Yeah, absolutely. So I mean we're talking about our very basic needs, if you're familiar with Maslow's hierarchy, or maybe you remember it from 10 million years ago, like a lot of us, are like, "Oh, I did that in college." Yeah, so you've got your basic needs, which are things like water, air, sleep, food. And we all know when those needs aren't met; the manifestation of the unmet need is grumpy, short tempered.

You know, we can begin to connect the behavior and the feeling to the fact that oh yeah, there's nothing I can do. There's no amount of rewards or punishments that's going to shift the way this is showing up. The only thing we can do is meet the underlying need. If you're hungry, feed someone. If they're tired, have them take a rest. And we've all seen the experience, they wake-up brand new. Like whatever the problem behavior was, it's gone.

And then as we move up we can also begin to see like their needs as a belonging, to feel accepted. And there are needs, as autonomous part of us and we all have these, some of them are stronger than others in certain people. But there's a need for self-direction. And this is the one that I really like to talk about, because the needs for autonomy and self-direction manifest in children as well as adults.

But in children those needs are trampled over all the time. And when they are, what we see happens is it gives rise to someone being resistant,

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retaliating, rebelling. And these are all the outcome of unwittingly have trampled over someone's needs for self-direction. The trick is how do I honor their needs for autonomy and self-direction and mastery, and at the same time meet some of my own needs, maybe for cooperation?

Jen: So why do you think we as parents, and it's cultural, it's been going on for years, when there's a shift happening, why psychologically do we feel this need to control? Where is that coming from?

Katherine: Yes. Well, I love that you ask that question, because I believe that the need for control comes from an underlying negative bias. That the so called "bad behaviors", how they affect me is what we focus on, if it makes me feel uncomfortable, if it makes me feel embarrassed. The focus isn't on the person who's manifesting the behavior, and probably I wonder what's going on for them. The focus is on how that then makes me feel.

Jen: We've also created this collective idea of what is correct and not correct. Yow you should behave and should not. And we don't even go beyond the fact that, oh, my gosh, you're engaging in a wrong behavior, I must punish. A good parent will punish right now, right?

Katherine: That's it, that's exactly it, yes. And so if we begin to just kind of take a step back from what we know to be our pattern. And it's way beyond us, it's societal, it's the collective consciousness. If we take a step away from that just for an instant, and we begin to sort of really deeply sense into, do I have a negative view of children?

Jen: Oh boy.

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Katherine: Do I have a negative view of children? And is that true for all children or is it true for just my children, or now I'm this judgmental about all children?

And we have been bathed in an approach that looks at the behavior that causes us discomfort as being bad, wrong, and intentional. And that they could have done better, and they should have done better. And because they didn't, they did it on purpose. And therefore they need to pay a price for that, because we believe kind of in this behaviorist approach that we reward what you want more of and you punish what you don't. And then they're going to change their behavior.

And I don't believe that, because what we know from the research is that three out of four disruptive behaviors, 75%. So if you got a bunch of behaviors you don't like, 75% of them are a result of power being used over the other person. They are retaliation, rebellion and resistance. It happened because of how I approached the behavior that I wanted to talk about.

Jen: Wow, isn't that interesting? So you said that question, "Do I have a negative view of kids?" And I think about that mommy needs wine culture.

Katherine: I love that, yeah, yeah.

Jen: It's baked in that your kids are annoying, it's baked in, right, don't you think?

Katherine: Well, that's the thing, is that that is also true, that we experience a child doing a meltdown in public as embarrassing. And it's embarrassing, there's no way around it, and at the same time, when we have the shift in our perception that the person that's having the meltdown is suffering. That they're not doing it to get at me, they're not doing it to be

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manipulative. They're not doing it to get, you know, what they want. So I think this is like the crux of the issue.

When I see the meltdown, because they didn't get what they want, for example, is it manipulative? Or is it actually a true expression of something inside of them that's experiencing struggle? If we can shift the no to me as something other than disrespect or disobedience, and begin to look into the no as, okay, it's a yes to something inside of them and I wonder what that's about. And if I can get curious about the yes internally in the child, or the other person, then okay, now I'm going to just take a pause around, I know my own experience of this, what's their experience?

And if I can do that, wonder, have a little compassion that this is really tough on them, they don't know how to meet their needs, and at the same time, listen to the outer voices in their world. How did they learn to manage that? It's a really tricky dynamic. But to me the most important thing we do as parents is we keep our children connected to their inner voices.

Jen: Yes. Oh my goodness. Instead of squash them. So then really you said, "75% of the disruptive behaviors are because the parent is squashing what they want or feel," essentially?

Katherine: Yeah. I mean 75%, it's about how we approach the no, let's make it simple.

Jen: Oh, okay.

Katherine: When we get the no and if we come from the world where a no is disrespectful, if we come from that world where, you know, how dare you? You know, I'm the mother because I said so. I'm the father because I said so.

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Jen: So essentially you're saying how dare you want something?

Katherine: Yes. How dare you have your own perspective? Yeah, like because children are not supposed to be allowed to do that.

Jen: Or to think that to the world.

Katherine: Yeah, they're not allowed to have their own needs, where their needs are – it's okay, they can be there, you just better subjugate them, that's all.

Jen: But think about society, it's so baked in. I don't know how we make the shift. But I know I'm grateful for people like you who are helping us, because...

Katherine: I think we make the shift by looking at children as people too. So if we assume children are people too, then we start to afford them an opportunity to speak about what's happening inside of themselves. Without making them wrong for it, and opening up the door for authentic conversation, which allows them to also feel acknowledged, heard, seen. And when they feel acknowledged, heard, seen, they feel like they're mattering. And that we all know, right, is so important. Brené Brown talks about that all the time.

So the need to feel like you belong and that you matter is pretty much linked to the ability to recognize and hear your perspective. So perspective taking is a family that's willing to go around the table, and regardless of age, listen to what's going on inside of the other person. And basically say, "Hey, you know, you're going to have a perspective that's truly unique to you. And I know you want to please me," because a lot of kids do just want

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to please. “But I’d really be interested to hear what your perspective is. And if it’s something different from mine I would like to honor that.”

And have us enter into a conversation about how your needs matter and so do mine. And how my behavior or your behavior may be getting in the way of each other meeting our needs, and what can we do about that?

Jen: Yeah, how can we meet everyone’s needs, not just mine as the parents? Yeah.

Katherine: Yeah, exactly.

Jen: Oh, interesting. Okay, I can imagine this conversation right now. I’m thinking of my 15 year old son.

Katherine: Okay.

Jen: I sit with him and he would be open. I would say, “What do you need?” He’d say, “Nothing, I’m fine.” And so if we pressed it we would get to the place where he would say, “I’d like unlimited screen time.” How do I handle that one?

Katherine: Well, here’s the thing, you know, needs and wants are different. So this is where you have to give people a need list, because what I’m wondering is what is the screen time doing for him? I mean it is actually a solution to meeting an underlying need, right? So there are lots of ways to meet those underlying needs, this is one of them. And everybody is using screen time differently.

Some people actually, so a lot of kids are using it for community and connection, because they’re networked with a bunch of buddies. So they’re

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using that screen time really to have fun with, play with, and create community, which I don't believe any parent on the planet doesn't want their children to do. Some of them are actually addicted, and that's different than creating community, right? That's like a dopamine reinforcer, I think, you know, if I'm not mistaken, I haven't truly studied all of the addictive patterns within the screen time situation.

Some of them are using it as a coping mechanism. I mean this is where, you know, there's no one answer. Some of them maybe are staying alive because of it. So if they're being bullied, if they're having difficulty, they need a way to actually manage their world internally. And until they have skills to do it, this may be what they've found supports them.

Jen: Yeah, that makes sense, yeah.

Katherine: So I'm working with some people right now where I know that they have a problem with a child who's got a problem around, I think, it's a real coping mechanism. But until he has another way to support himself, you don't want to take the crutch away.

Jen: Correct, yeah, I hear you. Wow, that's interesting. So it's not essentially giving them everything they want. It's talking about what do they really need and how can we meet it in a way that everyone's needs are met. I love that, that's really cool.

Katherine: It's not about being a doormat. So this is really a distinction between, and I think this is where most people go. But if I don't assert my authority, let's call it authority, they'll just go crazy. And I'm like I don't believe it, because everybody has within them also the desire to take care of themselves too.

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But if they're in reaction to your power, and it's an autonomous child, they are now, it's impossible for me to do what you want me to do. I can't even do it even if I wanted to do it because it would be as if I'm saying, "You have power over me, you win, I lose." And they won't do it.

So if you take that aspect of the dynamic out of the picture, and I mean I just had this wonderful experience with somebody I'm working with the other day, who really had this conversation with their child. And said, "Okay, you're 18 years old, and you would like to have more power and control over when you drink, and what you drink, and where you drink. And I want you to have an internal locus of causality." Because that's my whole story is we want children to feel a sense of internally their own measure of enough, not to find it by someone else controlling them.

So I want you to find your enough, and I'm going to work together with you on a week by week basis and let's just give you a little bit more space so that you work this week around finding your enough. And let me know what you think. Let's check in next week.

Jen: Oh, I love that. You're like a guide rather than a dominatrix.

Katherine: Yeah, exactly, guidance. Yeah, yeah, right.

Jen: I love that. So that's funny, you said when parents want it, a lot of times kids want the opposite if they're feeling controlled. I have an almost 17 year old and we've gotten past this problem now. But when he was younger, and he was acting out more, he did say to me once, "You know, mom, whatever you want, I want the opposite." And I thought, whoa, that's big. But that says a lot about where our relationship used to be, I think.

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Katherine: Beautiful, I mean how gorgeous that he could say that to you. So, you know, somebody who's that revealed and open and able to express that, obviously there's a lot of trust there too. Because you couldn't say that in a really rough parent child dynamic, right? The child would be put in a position where they psychologically wouldn't feel safe enough to even express that.

So it's so great when our children can be honest with us. I just reflect on my own childhood. And I think about the conversations that I tried to have. And there was no audience for those. So I really just learned to do as I was told, to behave, to be the overachiever, to work out, you know, the dynamics so that I wasn't in trouble. But it did mean that I had a completely separate internal world than the one I could share outside of myself.

Jen: Ah yeah, right, because that was the safe place for you?

Katherine: That was the only place, yeah, exactly. So, you know, one of my favorite authors is Alice Miller and *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, for me was seminal work in my life.

Where I began to understand the dynamics of what she calls a parent cathecting the child. And when a child is cathected, they basically push their own needs aside and service to their caretaker. Because they learn that it is the one taking care of them, whose unconscious needs that were not met in their own childhood, are now being unconsciously put upon the child. So that the child feels responsible for making the parent feel a certain way.

And this actually is a dynamic that I believe is so common, that parents are looking for their children to make them feel proud.

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Jen: Oh. Well, so it sounds like you're saying, parents need to fix themselves instead of their children, is that true?

Katherine: Exactly, that's exactly what I'm saying. Is that so much of the, I believe pain in family systems, is a result of a parent who's not aware of the fact that they are using their children to meet their unmet needs.

Jen: So, for example, a parent who wants their child to have all the A's, what are they trying to meet as a need there?

Katherine: Well, I think for that particular one, although they're not aware of it, what they're looking for is to feel a sense of I'm great at parenting, look at my child, right?

Jen: Yes. Oh, I have to...

Katherine: They give me face, they give me, you know, a sense of feeling proud of myself, because see how good I did at that.

Jen: Yes, it's so true. There was an article that came out maybe a year or two ago, I can't get the title exactly right. But the title was essentially My Parenting Secrets for How My Kids Turned Out. Like she was attributing all their success to her kids, and at that time I was really struggling with my two oldest kids who really wanted more freedom even though they were only, you know, 14 and 16 at the time. And I shared with a friend, I said, "This is – I don't buy any of this." I have done all the same parenting things as her and with a way different outcome.

Katherine: I am so glad you said that. It reminds me of a conversation I had with a friend of mine, who, you know, our kids were kind of born right along each other. And my first child is a believer. And so what that means

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is that his sense of self, his self-esteem comes from, you know, is everybody okay with me? You know, are you okay? You know, dad okay? Is the world okay? And when the outer world is not okay, he self-adjusted to create that...

Jen: Oh, that's sweet.

Katherine: ...sense, well, it seems so great.

Jen: That's like...

Katherine: It's unbelievable.

Jen: Yeah, that seems like everyone's dream child. But we know that's not the reality, but it's beautiful for you.

Katherine: It's not the reality. Oh, God, it made it so easy, and we used to call him Saint Sam.

Jen: No, no. Like you know, I have six kids, I have none of those.

Katherine: Oh my gosh.

Jen: None of those. So what's the other category, what's the name of it?

Katherine: Yeah, the minute you started talking was like, oh, you didn't get one of those.

Jen: No, I didn't.

Katherine: So the believer is, we'll call it a people pleaser, right?

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Jen: Yeah, oh, right, yeah.

Katherine: So the believer is pleasing other people. And so they are experienced by parents and others as truly just being angels. But they do that at the expense of knowing how to assert their own needs, because if they do it can cause a reaction in the world around them. And they don't feel okay around that. So it's hard for them to find the balance of wanting to make other people not upset, and at the same time stand for themselves. So Sam got good at being able to say, "Mom, I have something to say to you, and I'm worried that it's going to make you upset."

Jen: Oh, that's, yeah, that is really sweet, he's center hearted, yeah.

Katherine: So perfect. So, he knew how to like say something that was going to come down the pike, was going to make me... So this friend of mine was like, so happy when I had my second child, because she was so autonomous. And she was prepared to actually disappoint and assert herself. I was so like pleased with myself and, you know, what a great parent I was. And then I realized, oh my gosh, it had nothing to do with me, he's a people pleaser.

Jen: Yes. This reminds me of Gretchen Rubin's categories of obliger, rebel, questioner and applauder.

Katherine: I like that, yeah, totally.

Jen: Oh, so your daughter's more of a questioner?

Katherine: In my parlance we would just call her self-directed. You know, she had like – her drama inside was so strong, that it was very difficult to integrate external outer voices. You know, which is the opposite of the

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belonger. The believer is so focused on the external voices, it's hard for them to integrate their internal voice.

And so they actually, in service to the other, put their own needs aside all time. And eventually that resentment flow does explode, by the way. But with the autonomous child, their ability is actually the opposite. They're so connected to their self-directed self. How do I integrate the outer voices?

Jen: Yeah, what's the answer?

Katherine: How do I work with that outer voices? The answer, I think, is actually to be able to always be aware of providing choice, so that it's no longer demand language. Because if you're using demand language with an autonomous child, even when it's dressed up as, "Would you please," but you have no space within yourself for a, "No, I don't think I please you right now." Then, you know, you then get angry. And, you know, that just results in the primary problem getting lost and the reactions and the secondary problems as a result of how you dealt with the primary problem.

So, a simple thing like, "Could you pick up the dishes," can turn into, "I hate you mommy." So I mean it's like, whoa, how did we get to that? Because they didn't ever hear it as a request, they heard it as a demand. And so just even the simple things of chores, picking up their dishes. Working together with them to actually have conversations around, "Hey, there's a lot of stuff we need to do in the house, I don't have the bandwidth to do all of it. I really need support. Would you guys be willing to support me?" And then people opt in, because they want to.

You know, Marshall Rosenberg said that, "Really making a contribution is one of our highest needs within us." There is a need within us to contribute, if we can get out of the way with the language that we use that's controlling.

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And representing that that isn't already present, that you have to make people do it, then the river flows, life moves, it'll happen. I'm sure people are out there going, "Oh, that's complete baloney." But it's true.

Jen: No, it is true. You know, we have six of those autonomous kids.

Katherine: Amazing.

Jen: They have loud drum beats. My husband and I are the same, so we're all just eight autonomous people. But we figured it out, with these two oldest kids and their rebellion, we eventually came to the place where my husband and I agreed, we're going to treat them like they're already in college. How would we interact with a college kid that eliminated the control?

It's really interesting now, with the 16 year old two years later, if I ask for help, he does something interesting. He wants to make sure it's still just a request and not a demand. So he'll hear me and he'll say, "Hmm, no." Like he's being playful, and then we'll walk away and just like mess around on his phone for five minutes. But if I'll leave the space he'll come back and do it then. It's like a little game. But he wants to make sure it's a gift and a choice, and not a demand.

Katherine: Beautiful. Well, I mean you're the master. I mean eight autonomous people in a space together. And I always say, "Autonomy should not be confused with self-centeredness."

Jen: No, they just know what they want, and what they want doesn't really ever match up with social demands or parent demands.

Katherine: They will choose to be considerate because they choose it.

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Jen: Correct, exactly.

Katherine: And if there's anything in the atmosphere that gets in the way of it appearing as though this was my choice, then they can't do it, period.

Jen: True, yeah. That's the same son who said, yeah, "If you want it mom, I don't want it." But now if I'll ask and let him leave and then make sure I don't say, "Hey, where you going?" He'll come back and do it. And then I'll say, "Oh, you're the best," you know.

Katherine: Thank you, yes, thank you so much.

Jen: But I have to tell you, I went through lots of pain and struggle to figure this all out, so.

Katherine: Of course, we all do. I mean, and for me I thought, you know, I'd been running parenting courses already and I thought, oh, I'm so prepared for my second child. And then what I had was a complete wipeout. I realized, oh my goodness, I have to start all over, because what I was working with before was a child who's a believer. And now I've got this autonomous person in my life, who even though they're so small, they are so connected to their inner voice.

And it's not going to be about anything I've ever experienced before. There was no room for this in my own upbringing, where I didn't grow up in a family where children mattered too in that sense. Children were certainly not separated and individuated. In fact, separation and individuation was really like completely forbidden.

Jen: But then for me too, a little bit of shame there if you got too crazy, yeah, that's interesting.

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Katherine: Yeah, punishment was often a result of that bringing forward of voice. Like there just was no room for that, there was no room to bring forward of voice without it being seen as disrespectful, you know, even insubordinate if we wanted to use that word. Like there was a role you played. And it was about doing as your parents told you.

Jen: Yeah. Well, so thinking about Covid-19 right now, I think a lot of kids and family are experiencing a lot of emotions. For example, my 10 year old has had anxiety patterns. And I've noticed she's been really picking at her skin lately. So that's a signal to me that she's feeling more anxious. What can parents do to be aware of emotional needs? And they have their own, you know, mommy needs wine, right? But what do parents do to balance all of the emotional needs during this time?

Katherine: You know, I mean we've all heard name entertainment, and Brené Brown again, who I love and adore, following her and her work. She talks about emotional granularity. And she even has a list of 30 emotional words that she says everybody needs to learn. So, you know, that's something I also share in the courses I run is those words.

And what I love about something she also promotes is that how what I'm feeling inside shows up on my face, could be different than how it shows up on yours. And so what I recommend everybody do with their kids, really regardless of age is take the 30 words and then take your camera out. Take your iPhone or whatever phone you have with a nice camera and have them hold that word up, so that they then register it on their face. So feel into yourself, what does it feel like when you're feeling anxious?

And when they're doing that you see what their face looks like. And you take that photograph of them and you create a deck of cards. So that when they're really upset and they cannot kind of sense within, what is the word

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that would support me naming entertainment? You put the deck of cards out and they can look at the deck and then they'll see the face that they identify with. And they'll point at it and you're like, "Ah, so you're frustrated, you're anxious, you're discouraged," you know, whatever it may be.

So learning a vocabulary of feelings is as important as learning a vocabulary of needs. So then if you can say, "So what are you needing?" You know, then you're back into the territory of oh yeah, my feelings do manifest when my needs aren't being met. And we break the pattern of thinking it's about something out there. So something out there, the situation is the stimulus, but not the cause.

So when we break the pattern of, okay, this event stimulated the needs within me not being met, which gave rise to the feeling. We're starting to create a new connection of okay, so the feeling is a signal. And it's like the phone ringing, Marshall Rosenberg says, "It's like the phone ringing." You connect that call, the feeling to the underlying unmet need. And then you can start to work with those needs in the sense of, okay, well, what would give rise to that need being met?

And again, there are millions of ways to meet needs. So it's a roadmap. And if you start to provide your children with the words, the needs list, so they begin to have words around the needs. And they begin to have a sense of, yeah, it's this need within me. These are the feelings that come up for me when the need isn't being met, I do feel anxious.

But it's no longer about this thing outside, like the test that I have to study for. It's about, okay, so that was the stimulus that gave rise to this feeling, which we're going to connect to your underlying needs. "So now maybe, you know, would you be open? We can start to wonder about what are some of the ways that those needs could be met?"

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So you're focusing on meeting needs as opposed to changing feelings. Because I never like to start with, "You need to feel different." I like to start with, "Oh, so there's a feeling there." Something in you, and this would be the dis-identification with the feeling part. So that somebody is no longer identified with I am just an anxious person.

The vocabulary becomes around something in me is anxious. And I'm beginning to wonder what that's about. I think I'd like to be with that part of me. And I'd also like that part of me to recognize that it can be the way it is for as long as it needs to, that there's nothing wrong with it, that I accept it, and that I can be with it. And when it starts to be, I can be with it then you already begin to realize, I'm bigger than what's bugging me.

Jen: It's okay to feel, even if it's uncomfortable.

Katherine: It's okay to feel, and it's okay to be with those feelings, and to have curiosity about those feelings. And just as you begin to do that shift in your own way of languaging it, something in you is feeling the parent can say. Then the child already begins to be the observer of the feeling.

Jen: Yeah. Oh, that's beautiful. You know, going back to the idea of the card deck, the deck of emotions. As you were describing that, I thought, you know, with my kids, we've done flash cards to learn how to read. Flash cards to learn times tables, you know, flash cards to learn the notes on a music staff. What a brilliant thing. And why we as a society haven't figured out, we need to understand emotions in the same way, you know.

Katherine: And I would just throw out this as well, because I've noticed over the years. When parents get really frustrated, you know, why can't they just get up and do, you know, make their bed, pack their little backpack. Get their shoes on, get dressed, have their, you know, this

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whole sort of like morning routine, which can be the bane of so many people's existence.

And I say, "Well, some people aren't auditory sequential. Sometimes you have a visual child. So why don't you take pictures of them when they're doing it right, you know, putting on their shoes, packing up their lunch, getting ready? You know, all the little things in the morning, brushing their teeth, and make that little deck of cards." And then you give the deck to them so they can see it, rather than have to focus on auditory all the time.

And you also break that power struggle around the parent who's controlling, tapping their foot, trying to make it all happen. There are just a number of different things that when we begin to sort of go into, well, I wonder if they need support around structure? I wonder if they need support around seeing, rather than hearing? I wonder if, as you just open that field up, a whole bunch of things can begin to shift about how we deal with so called problems.

Jen: Yeah, oh, that's beautiful. So many nuggets of wisdom here, I'm going to definitely going to go back and listen and see what I feel like I can work on next. But if you were to take all of this great advice and narrow it down, just to one statement or a mantra that our listeners could think over the next week or two to apply this, what would that be?

Katherine: Everybody's always doing the best they can. And that, you know, see your children beautiful.

Jen: Oh, I love that; see your children beautiful, I love that. So if people want to learn more and really tap into gaining more of these skills, where can they find out more?

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Katherine: They can go to my website, theconsciousparentingrevolution.com, you'll see that I'm giving a free webinar on Thursday this week, 7 o'clock Mountain Time. And, you know, depending on where your listeners are, just figure out what time that is for you.

And actually specifically on Thursday I'm going to talk about, you know, if you do sense that there's some resentment in the atmosphere. That may have been there before but was manageable, but with the Covid it's now just not manageable. We can go deeper, and that's what I'll be doing. And then...

Jen: Are you teaching that class every Thursday?

Katherine: I've been teaching it every week. And, you know, the day does change, and the time too, because sometimes I'm building in a space for my European clients, so. But if you just pop in every week and you sign up for the webinar, then whether you make it or not I can be notifying you about future ones.

Jen: Where do they go to?

Katherine: And I have some great blogs, by the way, my blogs are fabulous. So you can see the blogs. There are some things in the media section. I have three TED Talks, so people are welcome to go to the TED Talks and listen to those. And I think those will support everybody, going a little bit deeper. And understanding how these dynamics can show up in so, so many different ways, on the playground at school, in your own life, your dynamics, your conversations that go way beyond just those with your children.

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Jen: Is that all at the consciousparentingrevolution.com?

Katherine: It's all there, yeah, if you just go to consciousparentingrevolution.com, you'll see the TEDs. And, oh, yeah, I think maybe we were saying earlier, by the time this is released I'll have a free eBook. And that's also going to be, and this'll be super, super helpful, if people are trying to support themselves at creating the shifts and the dynamics that they want to have in their family. Getting closer, feeling connected. If you feel like you've been fired you can get rehired.

Jen: Yes, you can, I've done it, everyone.

Katherine: Yes, you can. I did it too. So, you know, we all have our own experiences. And so yeah, we can all get rehired. And I would also say, be gentle with yourselves. Have some self-compassion, because every one of us is doing the best we can.

Jen: It's so true, it's beautiful. I am so grateful for this work you're doing in the world, thank you.

Katherine: Thank you. Thank you so much for having me today, I really enjoyed chatting with you.

Jen: I loved it, thanks again.

I learned so much from this interview and it got me thinking. You know, we spend a lot of time helping our kids learn math, and reading, and piano, and music, and baseball, and softball, and all the things. But how little time we spend on emotional awareness

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Do your kids even know what they're feeling and how to describe it? Do they have the tools to process feelings, to talk about feelings? To know that you as a parent are listening and that you care to help them feel those feelings and meet their emotional needs.

Well, to help all of us get better at this skill, we're going to be doing a 30 day Helping Kids Handle Emotions Challenge. This is your opportunity to talk about emotions, to help understand what your kids have been feeling. To help them learn how to talk about it. To give them the tools to feel these uncomfortable emotions without lashing out or feeling frustrated, for all of you to feel seen and heard and valued. To make sure that all of your emotional needs are met.

It's a beautiful process when a child and an individual, for that matter, can feel like they matter, that they're emotionally safe and heard and understood.

So if you'd like to give that gift to your child, and in process, to yourself, because you'll learn a lot too, join us for June in the *Vibrant Happy Women Club*. Enrolment is open now, our challenge begins on June 1st. I will give you a workbook that you can write in and keep as a resource forever with all of these emotional tools that will help you with your kids so much. Help you with connection and love and acceptance, all of the emotions that make parenting so much more rewarding. And to help kids to be so much better behaved, I have discovered.

So go figure, well, we're going to do this and I would love to have you with us. You can sign up for the *Vibrant Happy Women Club* where we'll be doing this all month long for June by going to jenriday.com/join. We would love to have you with us.

[Vibrant Happy Women](http://jenriday.com/join) with Jen Riday

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Well, I will be back again next week. We will be talking a lot for the next few weeks about parenting, and boundaries, and love, and connection with our children. So we can make June an amazing beautiful month of love and connection. No more will we need to say, "Mommy needs wine," because we're going to have more tools at the end of the next several weeks to feel like, hey, we can love and connect easier. We can all meet our emotional needs, we don't need to numb with our Netflix, or alcohol, or food, we can just all feel safer. That is our goal.

So I will see you again next week, until then, make it a vibrant and happy week, and I hope to see you in the club. Take care my friends.

If you enjoy this podcast, you have to check out the Vibrant Happy Women Club. It's my monthly group coaching program where we take all this material to the next level and to get you the results that will blow your mind. Join me in the Vibrant Happy Women Club at jenriday.com/join.