

222: Having Adventures as a Family (with Greta Eskridge)



Full Episode Transcript

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Jen Riday

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You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 222. We're talking about having adventures with your kids, even during a pandemic. 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 friends, welcome. I'm so glad you're here because today we're talking about meeting some of our basic human needs. What are those? Well, Tony Robbins has categorized these into six areas that again, and again, and again I go back to. I think these are the best ways to categorize our basic human needs. And these are certainty, having our basic human needs met, that's number one. Number two, having variety, aka fun and adventure, you're going to hear about that in a little bit.

Number three, feeling significant, like we matter. Number four, love and connection, we will be talking about that as well, number five, growth, and number six, contribution.

Now, I'm prefacing this episode with this knowledge because it's important to look at all these areas where we need to meet our needs. I'll repeat them again, certainty, variety/fun and adventure, significance, love and connection, growth and contribution.

We as humans all have a drive to meet our needs in each of these areas. I know all of you are growth minded because you're here listening to this

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podcast. And I'm sure most of you want to make a difference in the world, to make it better, that would be contribution, love and connection, self-explanatory. Significance, that essentially means you want to matter to someone, some of us get significance through money and prestige, others get significance through acts of service, people speaking words of affirmation, lots of ways.

And that second one though, we're going to focus on that today, variety. After we've met our basic human needs of food, water, shelter, those needs of survival, to provide certainty for living, we go up and we start to think about variety. How can we experience more fun? Novelty, newness, adventure, well, that is our focus in this episode today. And I wanted you to understand the bigger picture of all of these needs so you can see that maybe, just maybe during this pandemic you have experienced a little too much certainty.

You'll hear me say in this interview, "We've gotten a little bit too grounded." We are craving fun, adventure and variety, so how do we do that if your state, or your county, or your city is shutdown or your pool isn't open for the summer, or you can't do all the fun things you used to do? Well, we're talking about that in this episode. My guest today is Greta Eskridge, and she's the author of *Adventuring Together: How to Create Connection and Make Lasting Memories with Your Kids*.

It's so important that we find ways to create that fun, adventure and variety, even if we can't do the things we normally do, what do we do though? We just have to think out of the box. Maybe you take up disc golf for the first time ever, which my best friend, Kit, told me to try. Maybe you get out a roll of tinfoil and tell your kids to create a marble maze with it. There's a million ideas, we just have to think out of our normal boxes. And this could be the summer where we create way more adventure and way more fun than we've ever had before.

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How do we define adventure? It's essentially doing something we've never done before, or something that is out of our normal routines. So adventures can be brand new, like walking a new trail, like we did in our neighborhood over this past few months. Or it can be repetitive where you walk the same trail over and over again but the adventure becomes looking for something new on that trail. You've seen a tadpole become a frog, which you're going to hear as an example in this interview.

So all of these things have merit, and I want you to listen to this interview with an ear for understanding how you can make life more adventurous and fun, even during a pandemic. What does that look like this summer and beyond? You've got this, mamas, you've got this for yourselves and for your kids, we just have to do a little creative thinking.

So, with that said, let's go ahead and hear some of this awesome wisdom that Greta's going to share with us today.

Hey, everyone, Greta Eskridge is my guest today and she's a second generation homeschooling mom of four. Her message of deeply connected and intentional parenting began as a blog which blossomed into a writing and speaking career. Now Greta helps parents and kids, create connection in a disconnected world on her website, and speaks around the country through her Wild and Free home school campuses.

Greta's been married for 21 years and lives in California. She's a mom of four, like I said before. And we're going to be talking a little bit about her new book, *Adventuring Together: How to Create Connection and Make Lasting Memories with Your Kids*, especially during a pandemic. So, welcome to the show, Greta.

Greta: Thanks so much for having me. I'm thrilled to be here.

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Jen: I am super excited. I was just lying in bed last night feeling some of the grief of coming to true terms and true acceptance with the fact that, even though 'social distancing' is coming to an end in many states, it doesn't really mean getting back to normal. I was hoping it would mean, and the loss, I guess, of summer. So I'm super excited to talk with you because I bet there's a way to still feel adventurous this summer during a pandemic. So let us know what you've been thinking about how and how you can save us all.

Greta: Oh gosh, there's a pressure. And when I wrote this book I never even dreamed it would be coming out in a pandemic, it's been a huge shift in gears, not just for my family but even for launching my book, it's actually turned the whole book launch into an adventure, a new one.

Jen: Yeah. So why is adventure important for kids in general, even when it's not a pandemic, for example?

Greta: Well, I think inside all of us there is a longing for adventure. And adventure doesn't just mean that we all need to get on the back of a Harley and ride across the US or strap our kids into an RV and drive from Alaska to the tip of South America, it can be something smaller than that.

But we all long for adventure the same, in that we want something that takes us outside of our regular day-to-day life. And it provides us with something exciting, something new to look forward to, because when our regular routine is shaken up then it gets us out of just going through the motions.

And I think that has become very clear to us during this pandemic, because it is very easy for us to feel like we've fallen into a routine, and we want something to shake us up, we need that. And we might not even under

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normal circumstances be aware of how much we need it. But right now I think a lot of us are very aware, and kids feel that too, it's not just adults, but kids do as well.

Jen: You mentioned routines, and as you mentioned that I thought through what that meant for me and I thought it's a feeling of stuckness when the routines become too routine. There's a phrase in yoga that we need to get grounded. But I think this is our version of getting too grounded.

Greta: Yeah. And I think that the thing is, is that when we step outside of our regular routine and what we do all the time, and our busy schedule, and just all the things that we have to do. We step outside of that, even for just a little bit, it allows us to connect with ourself and then with the other people that we're adventuring with, allows us to connect in a different way.

Because all those other things that are around us distracting us from that connection, and just the distraction sort of fades away, and we can just concentrate on our time together, and that's really important. And it's harder to do when we're just doing our regular everyday thing.

Jen: So you're saying when we do something new, the connection goes better, kind of?

Greta: Yes. Yeah, and that's why I love the idea of connecting through adventure, because when you're outside of that everyday routine, what we're doing all the time, our heads down, we're just going through the motions. We don't even have to really think, but when we're outside of that, it's like our eyes open and we just become more aware.

It's like going for a walk in a new neighborhood rather than the neighborhood you walk your dog in every day. All of a sudden, you're

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looking around and you are more aware because it's a new place, and you want to take the newness in, it wakes you up.

And that's what, I think, adventuring and connection, how they combine because you're outside of that regular routine and you open your eyes and you look around, and you're like, oh yeah, wait, this is new, I don't have to just keep plodding along one step in front of the other, I need to look around and take it all in, and I need to be with this person that is beside me.

Jen: You know, that makes a lot of sense. I just read a friend's Instagram post and she said, "For the first eight weeks of our lockdown it was great. We went on nature walks, every nature walk in our neighborhood. I baked 20 loaves of bread," she said. "Now, I don't feel excited anymore." And that probably matches with what you said, it's not new anymore, and then we're facing like, whoa, we've done eight weeks, but we have to do how many more works of something like this?

Greta: Yes, right.

Jen: So give us some ideas, maybe we can brainstorm together and see what we come up with. Because we have 10 kids between us, how can we experience newness if we're still mostly staying at home? Or, every state is different, I get that, but it seems like in my state there's not a lot to do still.

Greta: Yeah. I mean California, we are locked in still. There are things to do, so I want to share a story because this just happened in our family last week or the week before. I have one son in particular who just needs adventure, he needs newness. And I know that there are some people who the familiarity of routine, maybe not this intense level that we're currently in,

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but generally like the familiarity of routine, and that feels comfortable and safe to them.

But for this one son of mine, under normal circumstances that's not who he is. He craves adventure; he craves new experiences and interaction with new people. So being home as we have been for the last eight weeks has just been almost soul crushing to him, he's really struggling. And so a lot of times by late afternoon he's just grumpy, or mopey, or bickering with his siblings and he's just really struggling. And he'll even be sad, he's cried and said, "I miss my friends, I miss being away from home."

And so we've been trying to just help him, not just to say, "Well, this is what we have to do, suck it up buttercup." But to be understanding of how he feels and to provide him with ways to have an outlet. So that particular day he was really struggling and my husband said, "William, I have to go under the house after work and do something to our internet," or something, I don't even know what it was. And he's like, "Why don't you come with me?" And I think in normal circumstances, William might have been excited about that, but at this point he was very excited.

So he went in his room and put on old dirty jeans and old sweatshirt and found a paper mask and a headlamp and he was just so excited because he was doing something new. And he went under the house with my husband, they came out a half hour later just filthy dirty. William was grinning ear to ear, he found a possum skull, he came out and said, "Everybody, find your headlamps, get some old clothes, you have to go under the house with me."

And the rest of us, I mean we looked at them and they were disgustingly dirty and were like we're good, that is so awesome you had that experience. But it's just that small thing, that the newness of going under

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the house, which you think that is, you know, how can that be a great experience? But because he wanted to do something different and it provided this small outlet, a moment of connection with his dad and the opportunity to do something new.

So normally we might not consider that as an option, but if you think outside the box and you're willing to let your kid get dirty, go in the attic, go under your house, explore the back corner of your property that you've never been to before. Just sort of things that you normally would not consider doing around home, you never know what adventure's waiting.

Jen: Yeah, I love that. I used to have this belief, and I think it comes from society, and I've since rejected it. And the belief was that every family has to go to Disneyland or Disneyworld to be a good family. But that kind of is an extension of the idea that you can't really have true family connection unless you're on vacation. And so even before this pandemic I was really exploring the idea of how much fun can we have at home or in our county, or even our state, because my family travel doesn't travel distances super well.

But you're saying we can experience the same effect even in our own homes if we just try to find new things to do or experience or see, maybe?

Greta: Right. I have a whole chapter in my book about this, because I feel like what you just said is sort of a problem with the message we've been fed about connecting with our kids and connecting as a family. That if it's not a grandiose adventure it doesn't count, and that we have to meet this criteria. And I even talked about in this chapter that I felt when I was writing the book, am I really qualified to write this book? Two of my kids have never even been on a plane because, like you, we don't travel much. I went on my first backpacking trip when I was 42.

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We've never taken our kids to Iceland, or even the Grand Canyon, do we qualify as real adventurers? But I think if instead we just – we start comparing ourselves to the Instagram accounts that are these massive adventurist families and we just say, “Well, what does our family need and what are the adventures that will bring us together?” Then we take the comparison part out of it, it really helps us recognize that there are things we can do together that will meet our needs, and we don't have to be like everybody else.

Jen: Yes, that's so important. And then how do you recommend we figure out what that adventure looks like for us, letting go of the false beliefs, like you have to be on vacation to have an adventure, like you said?

Greta: Well, I think you have to be creative; you have to think outside the box. So for example, another way that my family's adventure together and one that I've been doing since I was a little girl, because my family also, growing up we didn't travel very much.

And we had to do a lot of things around home, reading books. And I know that some people, you can say, “Well, that's a copout.” But honestly, I still recall the books that my mom read aloud to my brother and I, and we visited places through the pages of a book that we've never got to see in real life, most of them I still haven't seen in real life. But they're still such a part of my experience, and the connected experience with my mom. But also just my own feeling like I got to enjoy this experience, travelling or having some sort of exciting moment through the pages of a book.

Another would be to just simply, like you said earlier, explore your own town. And I can remember when I was a kid one of the things my dad would do is we would put the bikes in the back of the van. And he would drive us to some part of our town that was rural, that we hadn't explored

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yet. And just the experience of bike riding in a new place, it's like that whole idea of walking your dog in a new neighborhood, suddenly you're looking around. And it's not the same and therefore it just feels more exciting and you're just glad to be there.

So even just in your own home town where you live you can search out newness, it just takes a little bit more effort.

Jen: I have a funny story to go with that. We have lived in the house we're in right now for 10 years. And there's, two miles away this amazing trail that goes miles and miles, and people bike it and walk it. And we have never even been on the thing; it took a pandemic for us to finally go over. But it's exactly what you said, there were sections of that trail that made me feel like we were in a different state. We found a coyote skull, kind of like your possum skull.

Greta: Oh, cool.

Jen: Like it's climbed a rock formation, and we really could imagine it wasn't Wisconsin anymore. So I think that's true what you just said.

Greta: It's just real easy for us to discount the places around us and say they don't count and we have to go somewhere far away for it to really matter. But I know from personal experience, that's just not true. In fact my kids and I, we hike together every week, and we have places that we go to again and again, and even seasonally they change. I mean I can imagine where you live they really change seasonally because California, we kind of only have two seasons. But if you look close we do have seasonal changes.

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So at one point the pond, before it dries up for the summer, it'll have tadpoles, and then we'll go back a few months and there is frogs, and a few months later the pond has gone. And so even doing things repeatedly, if you train yourself to look for the change, and you teach your kids to be curious and to look for small differences. That's a really wonderful life skill as well, to really look around you and to be observant and to appreciate the small gifts and not just the big things as well.

Jen: That reminds me of a place we love to travel that's just across Lake Michigan, that's between Wisconsin over to Michigan. So it's called the Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes, up at the very top of Michigan. And we visited my husband's uncle there, and my greatest memories of that place are all these trails, and we walk them every time we go. But it's kind of like what you said, looking for the change, but also you start to create a memory and a tradition around it, and then it becomes even more special.

And then to think you can do that right in your yard, why do we have this fallacy that we have to drive 12 hours up around the Upper Peninsula of Michigan? It takes forever.

Greta: Well, the name sounds really cool, I will give you that, I love that name of that spot. It makes me want to go.

Jen: And I know what the sleeping bear is, I'll just tell you, it's bunches of sand washed ashore from Lake Michigan, and it became a big sand dune, a huge sand dune that looks like the shape of a bear. So the Native Americans earlier named it the Sleeping Bear Sand Dune, and then it became a National Park, so there you go, now you definitely want to go, don't you?

Greta: Yeah. I do, actually, I really do.

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Jen: But back to the topic, I bet there's a really cool sand pile somewhere near your house.

Greta: There are, we live close to the beach and there are some cool dunes that we love to visit. But yeah, I love that you mention the thing about making memories, because I think part of connecting through adventure is – like repeated adventures are something special too. And it's a different kind of the newness, but there's familiarity because it's something that you are doing the same again and again.

And you have to look, you know, like each experience will be a little different, but it will also have something that was the same as last time, and that creates a connection too, because you are stirring up old memories. You're making new memories, those connections, they just last and you pull, you're like, "Remember when we were here last time and this happened?" And you're bonding through that experience you had last time, all while making a new one to talk about the next time you're back.

And those are just so great for our kids to be able to revisit, not just from year to year, or six months to six months. But through the course of their whole life to look back on and to just pull the comfort and the joy that comes from those kinds of connections.

Jen: Totally true, and I was thinking the other day, just like we always want to return up north to the Sleeping Bear National Park, because of the memories. I thought in a pandemic, if we walk these trails enough, our kids are going to want to come home all the time and visit us when they're adults, to recreate the memory. So I'm going to create that story and hope it comes true.

Greta: Okay, [inaudible], I really do.

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Jen: I know people aren't as stationary and sedentary as they used to be, people will drive, but we can hope, so I bet your kids are going to come visit you to do your trails too.

Greta: I hope so, and my adventurist son, my most adventurist of the four of them, the one that wanted to climb under the house. He just had a birthday, and on birthdays we always share words of affirmation about the birthday person. And one of the things we shared about him was that he always makes sure to say goodnight to each person, hugs them and say, "I love you," before he goes to bed.

And I said, "I think when you grow up you're going to be the one that calls all your siblings and says, "Hey, we all need to go to see mom and dad, and we all need to hang out together because, you know, it's been too long."" He's very relationally driven and I see that as he'll be the ringleader of the siblings, pulling them all together wherever we are.

Jen: Perfect. And you've kind of given him his duty, his orders.

Greta: Basically, I was basically like really brainwashing son, you will call your siblings when they don't call us.

Jen: Yes, that's good. Well, tell us more about what's in your book that can help us with adventuring.

Greta: So, of course I talk about why adventure matters, but even more why connection matters. And I think a lot of parents, we just feel, whether our kids are little and we're thinking to the future and wondering what it will be like when our kids get older, and how we'll connect with them. Or, we have, even we have pre teens or teens and we're starting to see the pull of

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busy schedules and friendship and technology, all these things vying for their attention, pulling them away from deep connections with us.

So wherever you're at, just that feeling that we have as parents, wondering how do I stay connected with my kids, and why connection is really important, not just when they're little, but through from the beginning to the end. And even I always like to think about being a parent, like having a long term vision and we were just talking about. So that my kids do want to come home and they do want to spend time with me even as an adult.

Last year I got to go on a trip of a lifetime with my dad, we went to Greece and Turkey for – I don't know, about 10 days. And we were part of a tour and he invited me to go and I didn't think I could possibly make it work, I had never left my family for that long. I had never travelled that far from them. And my husband was really encouraging and he said, "I think you really need to go do this, you need this time with your dad." And it was one of the most amazing experiences I've ever had and it was especially meaningful because I did it with my dad.

And I thought, wow, I hope when one of my kids is in their 40s and if I have the chance to say, "Hey, will you come on a trip like this with me," that they would say yes. And so I wrote the book with kind of that long term vision that we're not just trying to connect with our kids when they're little, or through the difficult teen years. But that we would grow connections that would stand the test of time and be able to be with our kids when they're grown-ups.

Jen: That's a beautiful sentiment, wow, yeah, that is kind of why we want connections, because one day we'll be alone, will they come back? Yeah, will they go travel with us?

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Greta: And then just as far as just some real practical things of how you can adventure with your kids, you need indoor adventures because you live in a place where there are long winters. We don't have that here but occasionally it rains and we have to stay inside. And so – I like to say that for the people who actually do experience winter. But yeah, so the indoor adventures and adventures that help you grow, that stretch you and just ideas for different things that you can do in those areas.

And then one of my favorite chapters is actually the benefit of misadventure, when things go wrong and how those are sometimes some of the best experiences. Because they help us grow, not only as individuals, but they help us grow as a family. And it's an opportunity for our kids to see us struggle and to invite them into the struggle and to say, "Hey, this is hard, can you pray with me, or can you pray for me?"

One of our family mottos is, "It will make a great story later," and being able to remember that in the moment and to trust that it is true. And then in a little while to look back and say with laughter or whatever, to be able to say, "Oh gosh, remember that, when that happened, it was so terrible and it was so tough and then we made it through, and look we were resilient." And also it's funny to look back on later.

Jen: That's so funny. I grew up on a farm and some of my strongest memories are misadventures with like crazy mama cows or pigs that got out, yeah, that's funny, I like that. Our brains are like a little on high alert when that happens so that we remember them better.

Greta: Right, right. And one of my greatest moments I felt like as a mom was my sons had gone on a camping trip with Boy Scouts and it was like September, which we never have rainstorms in Southern California in September. So they didn't pack their ponchos, which they should have, but

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they didn't, because they wanted – it was backpacking, they wanted less weight.

They didn't pack their ponchos and so all of a sudden we just had this tremendous storm come in, and I'm thinking, oh my gosh, I didn't send seasick pills for my one son, he gets motion sickness, he's probably throwing up. And it's going to take longer; they're going to be going in the dark, trying to find their campsite. It's pouring rain, thunder and lightning, they don't have ponchos. And I just felt so bad, I felt like I hadn't made sure that they were adequately prepared and I hadn't done my job as a mom.

They came home and I said, "How was it?" And they're like, "Oh man, it was the worst, the mud was so terrible and kids were sick on the boat." And one of my kid boys said, "I had to stand in the boat and the waves were huge and I was trying to pee." And he said, "It was like being on a Star Tours ride at Disneyland." And he was [inaudible], and then he's like, "I couldn't get it in the toilet." And he goes, and I was just laughing and I just kept thinking this is going to make a great story later. And I just felt like, oh wow, like they really do listen, it's sinking in.

And they can hold on to that knowledge that in the middle of a misadventure it's going to be okay.

Jen: I think I'd like to leave it right there, in the middle of this big pandemic misadventure, it is going to be okay as well.

Greta: It is. It is.

Jen: What memories, our brains are really going to remember this, just like everyone remembers the great depression, there are good memories that come of it. So everyone grab, Greta's book, *Adventuring Together: How to*

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Create Connection and Make Lasting Memories with Your Kids, it is really good and inspiring. Greta, thank you so much for being on *Vibrant Happy Women*.

Greta: Thank you for having me, it was great to talk to you. I can't wait to come visit the Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes, when I can travel again.

Jen: Okay, yeah, yeah, pick me up on your way. Okay, take care, Greta.

I'm so glad Greta and I had this conversation because I've been thinking ever since, what am I going to do this week to create more fun and adventure in my life, for myself and for my husband and I together and for our kids? Speaking just of the kids, here's what we're going to be doing this week, maybe it will give you some ideas. I would love your ideas, so email them to me at support@jenriday.com.

Here's what I have, I'm going to get out some tinfoil, for each kid, a tube of tinfoil and they can create marble tunnels or even waterfall tracks. I did this with my kids probably a decade ago and was super fun. You go outside and let them create little mazes from top to bottom with tinfoil, then you trickle the water down or run a marble down it and see how that works. We're going to do bike washes and car washes, trail walk again, social distance bowling, if we can find an alley that's open. We're going to get out our baby pool and our new sprinkler and we're going to keep gardening.

Now, a word about gardening, here's what I've been thinking, pre Covid-19, our society, at least in the US, for many people was busy, stimulating, scheduled, fun, adventurous, almost to the point that it was too much.

So what happens when we have constant stimulation? It's almost like a drug user who becomes so flooded with dopamine that their brain starts to

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reduce the number of receptors for that dopamine. So they have to constantly strive to get a bigger and bigger and bigger hit so that they can get the dopamine they need, because there's less receptors in their brain to pull that dopamine up from the synapses. Well, we were doing the same things, I think, sometimes.

My second son would often say, "I'm so bored." He had just completed about three or four adventures in one day.

And so my theory is part of why the pandemic has been so hard, we suddenly have had way less dopamine flooding through our brains with less adventure. So what happens? Well, when a drug addict quits their drugs they have to spend about two months re-growing more dopamine receptors because there's a regular normal amount of dopamine in their synapses, their brain wants to pull some of it up. They start to grow new receptors for the dopamine. That means it takes them two months to feel stable again.

Maybe for us, we've been re-growing some dopamine receptors and that means we're able to experience normalized levels of pleasure again. Okay, enough science, what do I mean? What do you mean, Jen? I'll tell you. Maybe, just maybe this stabilization period, this great awakening will increase our ability to experience joy from smaller things like gardening, going out and seeing that your watermelon vine grew four inches. Maybe, just maybe those things become exciting when we're not just over-stimulating our brains with too much fun and adventure.

Now, that said, many of us are feeling pretty bored, I've heard you talking about it, you're like, "What are we going to do all summer? We can't swim; we can't do all the normal things? How are we going to have fun?"

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I'm going to challenge you to think out of the box, create those fun and adventurous activities, get out your How to Have Fun with Kids books, what to do with the preschooler books, whatever books you have. Search the internet and think of those creative ways to give you and your family those small, but necessary, dopamine hits that keep life interesting, that help us feel good and balanced.

One last thought, mama, you've got this, you have everything you need to feel happy right now, you have everything you need to help your kids feel happy right now. I want you to feel that confidence in yourself, that confidence in your ability to connect and have fun with your kids, even if it means we're doing it in simpler ways, that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Well, I send you all my love. You're amazing. And I will see you again next week, until then, go make it a vibrant, happy and adventurous connective week. Take care.

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