

## 223: Helping Our Children Manage Their Stress (with Anna Seewald)



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Jen Riday**

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## **223: Helping Our Children Manage Their Stress (with Anna Seewald)**

You're listening to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast, episode number 223. We're talking about helping children to manage their emotions, and especially their stress. 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, everyone so we are three months into this pandemic experience, depending on where you live, and how is it going for you? Well, you might have noticed over the past couple of weeks we've been talking about helping our children to handle their emotions related to the pandemic, but also in general.

And one of the themes I've noticed coming up is that we need to be able to regulate our emotions, emotions are contagious. And that old saying, the wives tale, which wives tales sometimes have some truth, I've noticed, that saying if mama aint happy, aint nobody happy. It's so true, and if you accept that as a truth, it will help you feel justified in making sure you feel good, and that's the point of this podcast, Vibrant Happy Women.

So I'm talking with Anna Seewald today, from the Authentic Parenting podcast. Anna is an awesome parenting expert, I highly recommend her. And we're talking about stress and anxiety and helping kids to discover where they feel their emotions in their bodies. A lot of times we'll try to solve problems by talking about the problem. "I noticed you were yelling, honey, why were you yelling, what made you yell?" And then we try to talk,

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and talk, and talk, but we forget to back up a step and look at how are they feeling in their bodies?

Do your children even know how they're feeling in their bodies? Do we as parents know how we're feeling in our bodies? That knowledge of how we're feeling is step one to regulating those stress hormones, those anxiety feelings, in short, there is a physiological foundation for all of our behavior and feelings. And it's really important that we learn to discover those sensations in our body. So you're going to learn how to do that in this episode with the amazing Anna Seewald, so let's go ahead and dive in.

Hey, everyone, I'm talking with Anna Seewald today and she's a parent educator, keynote speaker, author and host of the Authentic Parenting podcast, which I know many of you listen to. With a background in psychology and education, and having worked with children for 18 years, Anna helps conscious moms and dads to become calm and connected to themselves and their children through trauma informed education. Anna believes in helping children by helping parents.

She has a private practice that specializes in parent education, where she provides one-on-one parenting, court ordered and co-parenting classes. Welcome back to Vibrant Happy Women, Anna.

**Anna:** Thanks, Jen, thanks for having me; it's been a long time.

**Jen:** Yeah, I was just thinking, how long has it been?

**Anna:** I think I was your episode 47.

**Jen:** Whoa, no way, that long?

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**Anna:** That long.

**Jen:** You're right, that's like four years ago, how did that happen? Oh my goodness. Well, I'm glad you're back. So, today, Anna, we're going to be talking about helping kids to manage their emotions, a lot of kids are experiencing all the feelings, just like we parents are during Covid-19. So let's start by hearing how is it going for you guys, what has been your emotional journey as a family and as an individual, especially with your daughter during the pandemic?

**Anna:** For me during this pandemic it has been pretty hectic in the first two weeks. I think we have no structure, everything sort of fell out of place. The remote schooling, no one knew what it was, no work, no places to go. So I think the first two weeks for us was a little chaotic in terms of structure, routine, whatever we had, it just flew out the window. But I think after two weeks we sort of found a rhythm, I found my own, my daughter found her own, my husband found his own.

And so as a family we sort of merged and found our own functional structure and it hasn't been so stressful. My daughter is handling pretty well, thank goodness to technology she's 12 years old, she's been facetimeing her friends. The learning has been going very well, because they don't give so much. She's been cooking, baking, making smoothies and all sorts of culinary adventures. My husband has been working, he goes to his office, no one is there, so that's a plus because we don't cohabitate in the small space, and we're not on top of one another.

For me much hasn't changed, I hit sort of anxiety space a week ago, and it just dawned on me that wow, this has been going on for a while. And the future is kind of unclear and I had this anxiety, and it was the first time during this pandemic. And so I am trying to stay sane, I don't watch the

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news, I go outside, I practice movement, meditation, whatever I believe is helpful, I am trying to make the best of this time.

**Jen:** So you mentioned that anxiety came up, and I've heard a lot of people having different experiences with anxiety, different causes for the feeling, different times. I had anxiety right at the beginning as I contemplated suffering of a lot of people. That was where my cause was, it was so interesting. And I spent a day and worked through it and I haven't really had much since.

And I find it interesting you're now in a space where it's suddenly hitting you now. So, for everyone, no matter what their anxiety experience has been, or whether they've even had it, how do you cope with anxiety when it comes up like that?

**Anna:** I try to stay present as much as possible and tune into my body, and breathe through the anxiety and observe how my body shifts, how the emotion moves through my body, which I've been doing for the past several years. And tried to not avoid the feeling of anxiety, which is pretty unpleasant and uncomfortable, the first thing I want to do is just go do something else, distract myself, not to be engulfed by this anxiety.

Because when I'm in that place it's not pleasant, and my whole body, my arms especially, and my chest, and I try to breathe, breathe and remain calm and long breaths to activate my parasympathetic nervous system. And I put my hand on my heart and try to relax in the moment. And after a certain moment I notice also how it shifts in my body as the time goes by. And it shifts very quickly, in the beginning it's pretty gripping, it's very tight and scary, but then it loosens and dissolves.

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So I try to pay attention to that feeling throughout the day also, and see that it's fleeting, it's not I'm a slave of this emotion. And I try to remind myself that this is momentary, this will go away. It is just in this moment. And so that has been my practice.

**Jen:** So you're a trauma informed parent educator, tell us a little more about past traumas that you experienced as a child that if you didn't have these tools of being aware of your feelings, could still affect you more than it should or could, or that you'd want today.

**Anna:** Yes. And sometimes they do affect me big time, even today. A few weeks ago I had a panic attack almost, it just came out of nowhere, and I felt dissociated completely, I felt my blood pressure went down, and I fainted almost. And my body was shaking and I blacked out and it was a very, very unpleasant feeling. I had something emotional going on before that panic attack. But I didn't know that it was affecting me, and I was listening to this sad song of Billie Eilish's new song on repeat. And I guess it was...

**Jen:** [crosstalk] for sure.

**Anna:** And it was exacerbating my emotional condition, and God knows how these emotions come from, where they come from and how they affect us. But I felt like I lost control and I was in this state and I just went and I laid down, I asked my husband, "Please come hug me, I think I'm dying, I'm dying." And that anxiety state, that panic attack gives me even more fear and more anxiety of dying, of death, what is happening, that's the sensation.

And so my husband held me and he gave me food and I rested and did my breathing again. It wasn't helping much, but I enlisted a help of a social

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support of my husband. I asked him to hug me and hold me and reassure me that I'm not dying, I'm okay. And I was okay for the rest of the day.

**Jen:** How do our childhood traumas come play out in the modern-day moments like a pandemic, how can they affect us today?

**Anna:** It's such a great question; I wish I had a magic answer to that. I wish I knew how was this connected to my childhood. But of course, previous experiences shape us; they shape our fight, flight, freeze response. This was a freeze response for me. That's the stress response. And everybody has sort of their dominant response. And most frequently my dominant stress response is fight. I can argue, I can criticize, I can fight back. I have that fight energy most of the time. And that has been my predominant style of coping with stress and trauma and difficult situations.

However, very recently I started feeling this freeze response, and the reason being, and I'm trying to connect this, this is not connected to my childhood as much as medical experiences. So it doesn't have to be, the trauma doesn't have to be in your childhood only. So trauma is trauma, but however it affects your life today, that's the key.

So I went to a doctor and my iron was very low and I was very scared because the doctor told me it's very low, and they couldn't figure out the reason, and so that was even scarier. But that was before the pandemic started and now I can't go to a doctor, because I almost fainted in the store, and I didn't know that I had low iron. Once I learned that I have low iron and the doctor warned me with my low blood pressure, if I am alone, if I'm walking alone, if I'm in a place alone then it's not good.

And so that created panic and fear already, because of my previous history with medical procedures, C Section, number one, I had a panic attack

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during the C Section. I think that medical stuff related issues now put me into the freeze, because when I was on the operating table I couldn't move, I couldn't go anywhere.

**Jen:** Yes, that makes sense.

**Anna:** I was trapped, that's trauma, you're trapped, you can't get out, you are helpless, and so your body disassociates to preserve itself, and so I know my pattern. That happened a few times related to surgeries or medical procedures. But this anxiety was related to this iron situation. Knowing is not enough, your body still has to process, you have to be with your body to allow it to shift, that's the hardest part.

**Jen:** So as a child your traumas were, just because I've mentioned them, in case someone hasn't listened, if I remember correctly, it was an earthquake, [crosstalk]. But the point being, those traumas don't seem to relate to the current pandemic in your mind or in your brain, so that's not a trigger?

**Anna:** Maybe they do in some ways, the feeling of – like the other day when I had that anxiety with this pandemic, the reason being is I went to our town for the first time in two months. I was home the whole time and I went to my town and I saw the deserted stores and the life and the town, it just gave me this, I guess, that sensation of the earthquake that everything is not normal, it's out of place, this is not ordinary. And when I came home that was the first time that I realized, oh my God, what's happening in the world?

I was living in my own little bubble, but now I feel trapped in time and space, and I don't know what's going to happen. So that's sort of related to the earthquake experience, the earthquake was unpredictable, and I



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couldn't get out, I was trapped, that's the sensation of trauma. With the earthquake I have my other hang-ups and traumas. I mean I lost my mom when I was 13, but that trauma, that loss shows up in my relationships.

I have a hard time saying goodbye to people or getting too close with people, then I have to cut ties with that person, because that person may disappear and I may feel loss. So I sever the relationship, that's my pattern, I am aware of it as an adult and I'm trying to avoid that. So that's related to that relational trauma.

**Jen:** You're brilliant at that. So let's say now we're in a pandemic, we all may or may not have some past traumas that influence our anxiety around this particular circumstance. But how can we as parents try, being the key word, try to help our kids not experience this too traumatically, this pandemic?

**Anna:** I think the key is to take care of our own stress level, our own anxiety, be aware of it, that no matter what, this is a stressful situation. I have to remind that myself too, because it seems like I have a nice life, I'm going outside, everything seems alright. But when I pause and think about everything deeply, it's not alright. And that's a very anxiety provoking, very stressful thought. And it can just engulf you and you can lose your orientation right away. Our children's wellbeing depends on our own wellbeing, first we have to attend to our own stress, lower our own stress.

And anxiety shows up two ways in people, people either overwork, over-function, tend to get busy and do things, like my friend, during this pandemic she is cooking, baking, which she has never done. She is undertaking projects in the kitchen like crazy, which seems alright, very productive. But she's burdening her own nervous system, she's not slowing

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down enough to feel what's happening, she keeps plowing through the anxiety.

Whereas some people try to under-function, and that's how they're coping, I see both patterns in our society, in my neighborhood, talking to different friends. And if you observe your children, same is true for children; some children are scared to go outside even for bike rides or just walks. It depends what kind of child you have, some children are very sensitive, highly sensitive children. So these types of children are going to have a lot of outbursts, a lot of fears, anxiety. They're probably seeking closeness, they are clingy, they're irritable.

All those behavior signs and changes that you see in your children, these are not the normal behavior issues, the challenges. And your child may mask very well, like my child, with over-functioning. My daughter is organizing the yoga class every day 5:00pm with her peers. She is baking and cooking, and that's her way of coping with this stressful situation. But in the evening she's trying to seek closeness and family time. During the day we're sort of on our own, all of us, trying to manage our own stress.

But there comes a point in a day that we're trying to recoup, regroup as a family, and that's alright. I tell my clients that this is not a time to do everyday family dinners, everyday family game nights, movie nights. This is a time, it's alright, you don't have to be this perfect present parent and play and do the regular things that you used to do.

This is a time to attend to your own needs and feelings and me time, and self-care, because everybody is on top of everybody else. And so if your wellbeing is at stake, your children are going to feel that energetically, your mood is contagious, emotions are contagious. So I think that's high priority

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right now, whatever you have to do to keep sane and grounded, that has to be the priority.

**Jen:** So you mentioned over-functioning and under-functioning, and I've heard of a lot of people just Netflix binging, is that a form of under-functioning, what would you call that, self-serving?

**Anna:** I guess, escapism, yeah. And it's addictive; once you start you can't stop. So yeah, it's under-functioning because it's easy, you just you turn off your mind when you're watching something, but that's okay too, you can't judge yourself.

**Jen:** It has its place, yes, it has its place. So you mentioned we need to slow down enough to feel what's happening, why is that important, do you think?

**Anna:** Because if you don't then it's happening still in your body. Even if I'm not noticing the anxiety in my body, it's still happening in my body. And it's going to sort of get stuck somewhere, it gets stuck in my body, in my nervous system and show up again in another time when I feel a similar thing, or when I go through something emotional. But if I take care of it now, that emotion will come and wash through me and not have so much power over me in the future.

**Anna:** So, very natural, a biological natural process, but because we are scared of the discomfort, our chest is tight and how our body's feeling and how the fear absorbs us. We sort of avoid that sensation, but that's the beginning. Once you sort of cross that line and be with the feeling, then it's alright, it dissolves, you are no longer powerless. But it's hard to do; you have to start training yourself to handle the discomfort, because the fear of feeling the discomfort is a lot bigger than the feeling of the emotion itself.

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**Jen:** I love how you were describing you feel it in your chest and your arms and you can place your hand on your heart and you can slowly feel that grip loosen. I kind of like to encourage people to say, “What are you feeling?” You have to name it. Sometimes when you ask what someone’s feeling they’ll go to a thought. “Well, I’m just really mad at my,” whatever, “And I’m bored.” And then you go back, “What are you feeling?” Slowly they’ll name it, “I’m afraid.” And then where do you feel it in your body, that’s really hard for people.

It’s like we haven’t learned as a society to know, wow, this is how I feel a feeling. So I was really impressed when you described that for yourself.

**Anna:** Everybody feels it differently, how anxiety feels for me is completely different than it may look like for you. I don’t want to mislead people and say you have to name it right away. It’s okay if you can’t name what you feel, but it’s okay to describe how your body feels in your arm, in your chest, in your throat, the temperature how it changes throughout your body in different body parts. If you feel coldness or sweating, tingling sensation, I think that’s the key, to pay attention to the sensations as opposed to saying, “What am I feeling?” It’s not the logical thing; it’s a body level process.

And once you sense what’s happening in your body then you don’t even have to name what you’re feeling, it’s okay not to know is this anxiety or frustration, is this fear or disappointment? At the end of the day it does not matter, it matters what the sensations are and how you are loosening the sensation and observing and noting how the sensation are just changing in your body. Because they do change, they are very fleeting moment to moment, even the strongest emotion changes in three seconds, if you stay and observe.

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And that's the key and you can use – with children you can say, instead of saying, "What are you feeling? Are you feeling frustrated?" I think that's useless, you can say, "How does it feel in your chest? How do you feel in your belly, is your belly tight or soft?" Questions like that to locate the different sensations and pay attention to them. And you can say, "Is it big or small?"

What kind of weather is it?" For young children they can say, "It feels like it's very strong wind, mommy, in my body, or a lightning." If you pay attention to that level then you are already in control and you're no longer engulfed by this feeling.

And you can ask children to see and witness how the process changes, how their emotions sort of washes through them, eventually dissolves. And I've seen a lot of emotion toolkits for children; you've probably seen them too online. Today I'm feeling sad, today I'm feeling mad, something like that. And the child has to pick up either a smiley face or a word to describe how they're feeling.

Here is the thing; I have a problem with that, because I don't want our children to be taught that I'm feeling angry today. Today does not have to be part of that because I'm feeling angry right now in this moment. In three minutes I'm not going to feel that intense anger in my body anymore. I want to give the correct information to our children that emotions are part of life, they're normal, they come and go, they're part of life and they're beautiful. And we are in control of them, we can witness and let them flow through our body and it's alright.

And they're impermanent; I think that's the main thing I want to communicate to children. Instead of saying, "I'm angry today," and sort of that gets ingrained in your brain, and that child is going to behave angry the

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whole day, even though that anger was just a really fleeting moment during the day.

**Jen:** I love that, it's really important. Well, so earlier you mentioned fight, flight or freeze. And I think a lot of us forget that fight is often a symptom or behavior associated with anxiety.

So I have a daughter who does have some anxiety. But I never recognized it as anxiety until she turned seven years old when a therapist told me when people have anxiety everything feels stretched tight, like a rubber band. They're coping with so many different things that can cause anxiety that that rubber band can just snap at any moment. And it looks like they're just a really angry person in that moment.

Tell us more about how you can fine tune your discernment of what's anxiety versus what isn't, fight, flight or freeze. Because that was really a big awareness for me and I didn't feel uneducated in that area, I just never understood anxiety manifests in so many ways.

**Anna:** Yes. So the fight, flight or freeze is the stress response, everybody experiences stress differently. And so when you see those kinds of behaviors in children, I call it stress energy. And so when you're experiencing stress you are dis-regulated, meaning your nervous system is no longer regulated. Imagine there is this green zone when we are regulated, we are aligned, we are feeling good, we are attentive, alert, we're engaged. That's the green zone.

And most of us go through our day-to-day life we either get regulated or dis-regulated depending on how we interact with people, what kind of situations we encounter. And stress is very different for everybody. For an anxious child or a child with developmental disabilities, autism and stuff like

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that, they have sensory issues also. They perceive the world much deeper. I have a nephew who has autism, and he's very auditorily very sensitive. And his behavior immediately shifts when there are a lot of loud noises in the environment.

So being aware of your child's patterns, stress basically makes the child get dis-regulated and the stress could be – the brain constantly scans the environment or the situations or the interactions for danger. And when your child's brain detects danger, either real danger or perceived danger, the child becomes dis-regulated and the stress response gets activated.

You may not know what triggered that stress response in your child, there are obvious reasons, let's say parents are fighting, you yelled at your child. The demands are too high, there is too much pressure academically, or a child is not eating well, not sleeping well, using a lot of screen time. A combination of all of those, a history of trauma, chaotic environment, unpredictable lifestyle, with this pandemic, uncertainty, unpredictability, not seeing their friends, not having the regular routine, not being able to go outside.

Everything is a source of stress for our children, and so they are going to respond with their stress response which is pretty normal. But what do parents do usually? We try to punish those behaviors; we try to get rid of. We can see those stress behaviors as bad behaviors. But what happens in the brain of that child or in that nervous system is the child does not feel safe.

Because when your nervous system detects fear, either real, imaginary, perceived or some kind of fear, either in a relationship or in the environment, then you can't control consciously. The child has no willpower. They are not choosing to behave like that. Their nervous system

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makes them to behave like that to protect themselves. If your child has a tendency to have this fight response, they are going to yell back, fight back, kick, throw, those kinds of behaviors, fight behaviors.

Younger children may hit you; kick you, bite you, older children may just verbally assault you and call you names and things like that. So that is the fight energy. The flight energy may look different in children, it could be they're running away, they're hiding from you, fleeing sort of, giving you cold shoulder, teenager not speaking with you or stuff like that. Adults and children are pretty similar.

And the freeze is disassociation, disengagement, aloofness; it seemingly looks like a child is alright. But they are not alright, they are lethargic, they're not engaging with the world, they're not learning, they're not studying, they're not paying attention, they're sort of there but they're not. You can tell by looking at your child, by looking at their eyes, if it's a fight energy you see the pupils are dilated, their movements are a little jerky. And it's like prepared for a fight, anything you say to that child is, wow, wow, they're going to attack you back.

But if a child is not responding, they're like quietly in one corner sitting and not engaged and doing something on their own, murmuring a song. That may not be a good sign also, it's a disengaged nervous system, they're not present.

And the flee, you can see the child is just running away and not listening to you, whatever you say they're just ignoring you, that kind of behavior. Through the tone of voice even you can tell, high pitched voice, if children use high pitched voice, jerky movements, rapid eyes, they're not looking at you straight in your eyes when they are speaking. They are fidgety, they can't sit still. This is all stress energy and so instead of getting angry at



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them saying, “Sit still, eat your dinner,” maybe just, what’s happening for this child, what’s happening in their body?

Body focused activities would be good, movement, yoga, dance, asking questions about how they feel in their body, helping them calm down, maybe breathe, meditation for children, every child is different again. But not punishing them or talking through those behaviors because it’s on a body level, those emotions and stress. You want to calm them down; you want to engage them, so that they can use their cognitive skills.

If a child is experiencing stress, they are not going to learn, pay attention, listen, respond, be logical, be reasonable, no, you can’t do that. So the first order of things has to be to bring your child from that red zone into the green zone so that when you speak and give them orders and make agreements with them, they will understand and cooperate. But if you are trying to do those parenting teaching moments while they are dis-regulated, it’s going to just exacerbate the situation.

**Jen:** I can’t tell you the number of times, I mean parents mean well, and I’ve probably done it earlier on in my parenting as well. But when you’re trying to talk through those behaviors like you mentioned, but they’re dis-regulated, why are you doing this? And sometimes I’ll watch parents and I’ll think, you’re not going to get anywhere. So we just talk through how they’re feeling instead then?

**Anna:** Not even talk through feelings, you see you have to know your child. Most children – we’re all human beings, our connection need is the highest need. When you are in that moment, be it that the child or an adult, you’re feeling unsafe, the key here to remember is when your child is acting like that they’re not feeling safe. And you don’t want to be a source of threat for your child by yelling screaming, “No, you’ve got to do it this way,” put more

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pressure and demands, that's not going to register, that's not going to work, it's going to further exacerbate your stressed child.

So it's best not to say anything in that moment. Your teaching can happen later, the correction of the behavior; everything can happen later, the discipline. But in the moment, first of all, in order to help your child to get regulated, you yourself have to be regulated. If you are reactive and rageful, it's not going to help.

So for that parent, who is feeling rageful or reactive, go away to your bedroom, to the bathroom, outside, take a break, maybe drink water, calm yourself down, whatever your techniques are. And then come to help your child get into the green zone, because it depends on your state. So let's say the parent is calm and regulated, great, your presence is already going to help your child, not your critical attitude, not the critical look in your eyes.

Children at this stage, when they experience distress, they're going to detect every little ingenuine reaction, you may be calm but your tone of voice may be a little aggressive and snarky, that's not going to go very well. So you have to genuinely be kind and compassionate because your child is sort of suffering, they're stuck in this unsafe place.

You being kind and compassionate, you have the power to move them into the green zone by hugging them, giving them a touch or a gentle warm look, saying a couple of words, not much. Words don't register in that moment, the brain, you know, word processing center is not working, so it's best not to say many things. You can hold your child's hand, depending on the age of the child, depending what preferences does your child have. Some children don't want to be snuggled, don't want to be hugged, then you smother them with affection in that moment.

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You want to give them space also to be with their feelings, but you want to be present, next to them perhaps, sort of to offer your support, your emotional support in however way you can, and that's what matters.

**Jen:** I love that, it takes the pressure off, because we don't have to figure out why they're behaving a certain way. What triggered this? Or what past traumas might be coming up? It's just help regulate the body. And you mentioned breathing, hydration; getting your own rest to get yourself regulated, maybe moving your body, being present. It kind of reminds me when you say, sitting in the room with them but being in a state of regulation yourself. Tell us more about those mirror neurons help with this process even when it's not even at the conscious level.

**Anna:** Yes. Yes, big time, we're wired for this, good positive emotions are contagious and so are the negative emotions. If you're anxious and frantic, everything in the household, everybody's sort of going to have a bad day. It's like mommy's not feeling good, everybody's not going to feel good. So being regulated has to be our priority because that's our super power, that's a weapon that we can use to regulate our children, and this process is called co-regulation.

We're co-regulating with our children, and the more we practice that the more they will not be scared of their feelings and the stress and everything, it will be very normal. And eventually they will learn to self-regulate like older children.

Like my daughter does not need this kind of attuned co-regulatory, the way I used to do when she was five years old. Now she actually needs her space, we talk about this ahead of time when she feels upset, "How do you want me to help you?" I ask her. She says, "Mom, just stay out of my way, let me go to my room." So we have this agreement ahead of time, how our

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child needs to be helped in those moments, and everybody has their dis-regulatory moments during the day.

And it's not always parenting related, the child may have seen something on social media, a child is missing their friends, they have poor sleep, physiological stress. A good question would be just to look at your child's day and life in general and ask yourself questions, where their stress is coming from, what could be stressing your child.

And whether you are contributing as a parent to your child's stress with your demands and pressure, expectations, too high expectations, maybe your child – well, not now, but maybe before they were in too many activities. They don't have enough downtime and rest and restore time; they're always on the go. Stress can come from many, many angles, knowing where it comes from, I think that's already half the problem, you solved it.

If you diminish stress in your child's life, if you make sure that they are sleeping on a regular basis, they have a normal stable sleep schedule, they'll be better behaved the next day. If they're eating more or less healthy then that's going to affect them, the sugar is going to affect them, too much screen time. These are all stressors, and the buildup eventually is going to affect your child's behavior.

**Jen:** That's beautiful. And going back to that idea of co-regulation, that's a big one, many women in particular struggle to feel like, isn't it selfish to make sure I feel good? Hey, it's not, it's contagious; it's a great thing to take care of yourself.

**Anna:** Yes, it's absolutely a prerequisite, if you're doing parenting, taking care of, or mothering, or partnering with someone. I think it's a prerequisite

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to take care of your needs, your emotions, your mental health, your wellbeing is key to a healthy relationship.

**Jen:** Well, this has been amazing, Anna, I'm going to go talk to my kids about what's going on in their bodies. I'm glad you reminded me to do this, thank you so much for sharing. If people want to listen to your podcast, which I highly recommend, where should they go?

**Anna:** They can listen to the podcast wherever they get their podcasts, and the podcast is also available on Spotify, Pandora. Authentic Parenting, that's the name of the podcast.

**Jen:** It's a great one. Well, Anna, I appreciate you being on the show, thank you so much.

**Anna:** Thanks for having me, it was a blast.

So many great tips there, and I want to challenge you to think about emotional regulation for yourself and for your kids. 'Misbehavior' isn't really misbehavior at all, as much as it's emotional dis-regulation. Think about your partner if you have one, your kids, your parents, I know when I visit my parents, my mom gets a little tense. She tends to behave in a different kind of way. And if I apply this filter of emotional dis-regulation that would tell me as her daughter, she needs some space. Maybe I ought to take all six of these kids and leave the house for a little bit, go figure.

But the same thing happens at home, we're dealing with this new big situation, a pandemic, and there might be a little more emotional dis-regulation than usual. How do you see it in yourself? How do you see it in your partner, your kids?

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And how can you all reregulate? Maybe it's meditating together, maybe it's more hugs, mindful hugs where you imagine you're sending positive energy and you're keeping yourself calm and hoping it will rub off on them, maybe it's eye gazing, maybe it's just time together, talking. All of these beautiful connection strategies that can help us all stay regulated.

I have told myself, if there's anything my family's going to master through this pandemic, I hope that it's emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, because that's the foundation of everything. If you can manage your emotions you can eat healthier, you don't emotionally eat. If you can manage your emotions you're more committed to your exercise routine or your morning routine. It all starts with being aware of what you're feeling, the thoughts that are causing you feelings, and how those feelings generate actions and result, it's that simple.

And then as parents to look at our kids and recognize they don't want to misbehave, to apply a new system of 'judging' these behaviors and realizing, or believing the thought, hey, they actually want to be good. When they're having trouble with it, it means I need to help them regulate their emotions.

That prefrontal cortex that we adults use, it doesn't come online for kids until at least age 25. So we're asking them to apply logic to these reptilian emotions stemming from their amygdala, an ancient part of the brain, and they don't have the bandwidth to do that. So that's our job as parents who do have that prefrontal cortex fully online, to help them talk about how they're feeling, to help them understand what their emotions even are, to give them a label to describe those feelings.

So I love that Anna brought up this topic, if you want to go deeper with us, we talk a lot about emotions in the Vibrant Happy Women Club, how you

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can regulate your emotions and help your kids do the same. How you can stay calm when your kids aren't, how you can be patient when your partner does that one thing that drives you crazy. Well, you can change your thought, change your feelings and learn how to feel it to heal it.

So, join us if you want to get that skill. It's an amazing one to have in your tool belt. You can join us any time at [jenriday.com/join](http://jenriday.com/join).

Alright, my friends, this has been fun, I love Anna, go listen to her podcast, Authentic Parenting, she is amazing. And I will see you again next week. Until then, make it a vibrant and happy week. Take care.

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](http://jenriday.com/join).