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Todd: Here we go. My name's Todd. This is Cathy. Welcome back to another episode of Zen Parenting Radio. This is podcast number. What podcast number is it? 729. Why listen to Zen Parenting Radio. Because you'll feel outstanding and always remember our motto, which is the best predictor of a child's wellbeing is in fact, a parent's self understanding.

Todd: On today's show, we have a guest. I'm going to bring in some applause for our guest, Jennifer Wallace. She's an award winning journalist and social commentator covering parenting and lifestyle trends. She's a frequent contributor to the Wall Street Journal and the Washington post and appears on television to discuss her articles and other hot topics in the news.

Todd: After graduating from Harvard, Jennifer began her career in television at 60 Minutes, where she worked as a journalist for many years. She lives in New York City with her husband and their three children. Sweetie, hold up the book just so everybody can see it. She wrote a book called Never Enough. What's the subtitle?

Cathy: The subtitle is When Achievement Culture Becomes Toxic, and then the best part, and What We Can Do About It. There you go. This book is everywhere. Like, I feel like Jenny, when people hear this podcast, they're going to be like, my best friend asked me about your book two weeks ago. All these people that are in my women's group asked me about your book two weeks ago.

Cathy: And I'm saying two weeks ago because it was like, just getting all that momentum and you were on all sorts of podcasts. So I think a lot of people listening to this right now, Todd, already know this book. Yeah.

Todd: Well, I've, I've, it's somehow floated into my awareness and it's, you are much more entrenched in that sweetie.

Todd: But first you say you have three kids, Jennifer. Ages and gender.

Jennifer Wallace: Yes. So a boy who is almost 18, two weeks away. I have a daughter who is 16 and another son who is 13. 18, 16, 13.

Cathy: So we're kind of in the same world. I just said this before we started, but I have a daughter who's 20 who's in college.

Cathy: She's actually in Italy this semester. And then I have. A daughter who just started college, she's 18, she's at Iowa, University of Iowa, and then I have a daughter who's a sophomore, so we have three girls. So with your 18 year old, are you just about to send him to school? Does he plan to go to school is my first question.

Jennifer Wallace: Yes, he plans to go to school. Uncertain if there's going to be a gap year or not, but planning to, applying to, applying to colleges is where he is.

Cathy: Starting the process. Yeah. So it's, what an interesting time to write this book. I mean,

even though it's not just about this college trajectory, it really seems to be the seed.

Cathy: of where all of this began. So I'm just going to jump in, Jenny, and say this, like you say at the beginning of your book, you talk a little bit about Madeline Levine's book, *The Price of Privilege*. And Todd and I, a long time ago, had dinner with her, because she had come in and talked to some of the schools that I think you're going to come in and talk to.

Cathy: And one of the things that she, confided in us was that she comes to these schools a lot, but she doesn't see a lot of change. And while she's always willing to come, like, she wasn't, it wasn't a complaint from her. It was more like, I, I keep coming and sharing this message and everyone wants me to talk about these things.

Cathy: I don't, the, the community still struggles with the same issues. So, could you speak to that? Like, what is that and why does change not happen as fast as we'd like?

Jennifer Wallace: So, first, thank you so much for having me. Sure. I am also a fan of Madeline Levine and she and I also spoke for this book. I think when I was writing this proposal in 2019 to send it out to publishers, I thought, well, this is going to be a hard sell.

Jennifer Wallace: Parents, and then COVID happened. And I, well, I don't think I know parents are desperate for change and information and have help. And, I actually think we are seeing shifts and I think they are coming out of COVID. I think there's no. The stigma really around mental health or negative mental health issues has really been lifted, and parents are finally talking to each other about it, something that we used to just keep siloed in our own homes thinking we were alone.

Jennifer Wallace: Now we realize that there are other members of our community that are suffering with the same pressures and issues. So I actually am hopeful that we are in a moment for change.

Cathy: That's fantastic.

Todd: Me too. So, I have not read the book. Full transparency. Cathy did. We kind of divide and conquer.

Cathy: Can I just say, I read it in three different ways because we actually had somewhat of, a little bit of a family crisis on Friday and this weekend was my time to like finish this because I had already gotten the PDF, but then I got the real book.

Cathy: But I listened to the audio book and I'm now realizing it was you. I recognize your voice. So you were with me for a very long drive this weekend and you are a fantastic, I thought for sure it was someone like an audio book reader. You have a great voice.

Todd: How was your experience with that? Cathy did your, you said it was hard, wasn't it? When you did your sweetie.

Cathy: Yeah, it's very hard, but Jenny's a journalist for a living, so you're probably very used to

this, yeah?

Jennifer Wallace: Not at all. So I, so I will give you, I will give listeners a, a window into the process. So it's over three days. You go to a studio. The first day, my voice started really cracking.

Jennifer Wallace: And so they were feeding me cough drops. And did you know you could OD on cough drops? Because you literally can. If you Google up, I was, I got sick.

Cathy: Oh wow.

Jennifer Wallace: One of the side effects is hallucinating. Which definitely happened in a taxi on my way home. I was like, oh my god, I don't know what I'm doing. So, it was the cough drops.

Jennifer Wallace: I went to bed and for those three days, I didn't speak outside of the booth. And my kids were sleeping. So delightful and pampering me and like had such empathy because they saw me getting sick in the bathroom and they took care of me for those three days.

Cathy: That's, that's when it's wonderful to have grown kids, isn't it?

Cathy: When they totally get it. But the thing that I was fed was apple juice, apple juice, apple juice, apple juice, which didn't, I mean, I had to go to the bathroom 80, 000 times, but it was a little better than I didn't hallucinate, but I, but I just, well, even with all that said, you, you made it happen. Cause I really loved listening to your voice.

Cathy: So it really helped and having it in three different ways. It's interesting the different things that stood out to me, but anyway, go ahead.

Todd: So I just, because I haven't read the book, I just read the little bio, I'm going to summarize what I think your book is about and then you tell me what I'm, if I'm wrong.

Todd: I think what you were trying to convey in this book in a sentence is that Parents think that achievement and success, quote, unquote, achievement and success equals happiness and we're crazy drunk on achievement and higher grades and SATs and jobs and all that crap. And it does not equate to happiness.

Todd: Right, wrong, or somewhere in between?

Jennifer Wallace: I think that's right. I would, I would slightly, I might make it even sharper saying something like, parents have bet big that early childhood success equals happiness. Will lead to the well being and success that they want for their kids. Strap on, the college as a kind of life vest, many parents today, but that life vest in a sea of, uncertainty about the future, but that life vest is drowning too many of the kids we're trying to protect.

Jennifer Wallace: So I think you're right.

Todd: Sometimes Cathy and I present and, one of the questions I ask parents is, what do you

want for your kids? And they'll always say happiness. And even that for me is like, I don't want happiness for my kids. I want them to be whole, like I don't want to undermine sadness, fear, anger, all these other emotions because happiness is really not the way we're wired.

Todd: We can have moments of happiness, but, It's just an interesting thing. Like we just think that success equals happiness and happiness may not even be the target. It's like to be a whole human being anyway. She talks about that in the book.

Cathy: Oh, does she? All right. Yeah,

Jennifer Wallace: I say, I used to be one of those parents who solved for my kids happiness, but I want more for them.

Jennifer Wallace: I've come to realize in my research that happiness, like you said, is a byproduct of living a meaningful, fulfilling life with deep connections. So anyway, happiness is a nice byproduct, but that's not the point of life. There you go. Love it.

Cathy: Yeah, it's like a general, it's like a general word that's supposed to mean just all good or something.

Cathy: And I, and that's, you, you dive deep into this in the book in many different layers, but even Figuring out the definition of success. And this is kind of for ourselves, this is kind of what Todd and I always talk about with self awareness is sometimes we haven't done that deep investigation in ourselves as parents about what does success mean.

Cathy: And I, I will say that something, and again, a lot of this comes from life experience and hardship. And, my parents were sick for a long time. There's a lot of things that, we all of us have experienced in life where you kind of see things differently, but success. Is my kid emotionally, I'll use Susan David's language, agile?

Cathy: Can they like move through their emotions? Can they regulate? Can, do they have connections? Just like you said, versus all of these like external measures, that when you're, when you're talking to parents in these, you called them in the book, super zip cultures. Where did you get that language?

Jennifer Wallace: That is a sociologist, who, who coined that Robert, Robert Putnam in the, I don't know, 15, 20 years ago. And super zip are at the time when he first, coined the term, there were roughly about 650 super zip codes around the country, meaning that concentrated communities where generally parents went to four year colleges where they have similar definitions of success.

Jennifer Wallace: And similar sort of demands of their children to replicate that success. So SuperZips were just highly educated parents, very concentrated in communities. But what I have found with this achievement pressure is that it's not just in SuperZip codes. I mean, that's maybe one area where it's really magnified, but this has trickled down to everyone.

Jennifer Wallace: I mean, a lot of the parents that I spoke to, it wasn't that they wanted their kids

into a highly selective college. They wanted to be able to afford college for their kids. And so, getting into the state school and getting some aid or scholarship money was the, that was the pressure they were feeling.

Todd: Yeah, it almost makes more sense, like if somebody's from a rich zip code and their kid's going to be able to go to school regardless, I feel like it would be, it makes more sense that the middle class or the lower class, lower income, socioeconomic, thanks sweetie. Cathy's always there to kind of clean up my messes that I make.

Cathy: I just don't, I'm like, you gotta be so careful with words because it's not lower class.

Todd: She's kept me out of so much trouble, it's not even funny, but it makes more sense to put those kids under, it doesn't make sense to put these kids under the pressure at all. But it makes more sense for the ones that are really struggling.

Todd: Like all this, if you get a 30 you get an extra 6, 000. But if you get a 29, you get nothing. It's just like ridiculous. I just, it, and don't even get me started on standardized tests. But anyways, there's no question there. It's just a comment.

Jennifer Wallace: I agree with you. I would say that, in lower socioeconomic Groups, they are contending with things like poverty and violence.

Jennifer Wallace: And so, achievement, while, it's necessary for their future, it's not an immediate, necessarily an immediate need. Necessarily an immediate need.

Cathy: Yeah, it's like the hierarchy of needs. They're waking up dealing, which I do appreciate now having gone through, the college process and making those decisions about, essays becoming more important, which I know can be like everything has its challenges, right?

Cathy: So even SAT scores, Todd, I've been listening lately that some people are like taking away the SAT scores can hurt. People applying to college too, because if your grades were not good because of the school you went to, it wasn't college preps. So it's like this constant like, moving and shaking where we almost like need to apply in a way that works for our community instead of this generalized way.

Cathy: But, but anyway, I, I'm, Going off of that, and I also think that,

Cathy: Going back to parents, I think one of the things that I struggle with is when parents will tell me, and this is about school, but about everything, because in your book you're not just talking about school, you're talking about, how this looks and extracurriculars and friendships and everything, and is, parents will share with me their history and say, I went through the struggle, I had this problem, my, my family did this for me, and that's why I'm successful.

Cathy: And I, or, or I achieved, or I was on the basketball team, and that's why I'm successful, and I always call them survivor stories because they're taking their story and just like placing it on everybody else. So, what did you find, like, and I think you did, you talked to, I know you talked to families and parents, like, what was the feedback you got from parents about why

they're doing what they're doing?

Jennifer Wallace: Yeah, that was, that's very interesting. I, what you're talking about is something I, [00:13:20] it's related to something I call in the book, the encore effect, meaning that, every child really wants to be able to replicate their own childhoods for their kids one day. And that's been the American dream, right?

Jennifer Wallace: To at least do as well as your parents, if not better. And parents are now seeing a first. generation, millennials who are not doing as well. So they are feeling that pressure and they are wondering what can they do to safeguard, their children's economic futures. So it, what I am hearing is the anxiety and the fear about the future.

Jennifer Wallace: AI is on the scene. We don't know what 50 percent of the jobs we're preparing our kids for. will be, what role will higher education play in their lives? So all of this uncertainty for parenting, for parents today, they're absorbing it and it's coming out in their parenting, the fears. It is.

Cathy: And I, it's, it's interesting because you're so high, I wish we had like eight hours with you because there's so many like other factors at play, like Todd, I work with women and girls and Todd works with men and boys. He has a men's group that he runs. And so we're always kind of coming not at each other.

Cathy: We meet in the middle, but like he, his group is very worried about boys, being left behind, which is a real thing when you look at the data and you look at that these, like you said, the jobs are falling away. It's, it's real. Suicide rates are high, even for grown men.

Cathy: But as someone who works with women and girls, I'm also seeing things being taken away from them and them not getting, we look at data and we say, hey, but there's. This many more girls in college, but it doesn't really result in more CEOs or more politicians being, it's not meaning anything.

Cathy: So all these other, factors come into play too, where parents are seeing, I think parents are, I'm hearing from our group, from the people we talk with that people are very worried about their sons.

Jennifer Wallace: Did you, have you been hearing that? I have been hearing that. I've been hearing about sons though and daughters.

Jennifer Wallace: Good. I wrote an article about sons for the Wall Street Journal, a couple of months ago, talking about how, if we are going to be raising sons who can contend with the uncertainties in the future that, helping them get language and talk through their emotions and, give them models.

Jennifer Wallace: It's important for the men in their lives to be doing that work, because if it's the women, if it's the mother who's talking about emotions, we, we further sort of entrench the idea that that's something women do. So I think it's really important for the men to be modeling that.

Cathy: Totally.

Todd: You are preaching to the guillotine. It's so frustrating. Have you seen The Mask You Live In? It's an old documentary, but it's So we, we hosted a screening. We targeted, marketed towards the dads and all that. We hosted in Elmhurst. In Elmhurst where we live. Movie theater. Fun. Spend 10 bucks. Go watch a really good documentary and then have a, a discussion afterwards.

Todd: We had a few hundred people in the audience, and 90 percent of them were women, and I get so frustrated and I don't, I just have to keep moving along trying to talk about this stuff and call men in instead of call them out, even though I'm calling them out right now because it didn't show up to the stupid move, but there's a million examples of that.

Todd: And I think you're right. I think that us men have to step up our game to model the behavior that we want. Because, to your point, I'm sure you're probably familiar with Richard Reeves and his work and how, how the man has to evolve in a way like, and you can talk about pink jobs and all these things that, oh, it's not cool to be a nurse or a teacher or whatever.

Todd: Those are going to be the jobs that are available. And if we don't raise our men to know that it's okay to be a teacher or a nurse, then they're going to be sitting in the basement, smoking weed, playing games. That's it's, that might be a little overly stretch, but that's where they go.

Jennifer Wallace: So I talk about this in the book. I don't talk about it as explicitly as we're talking about it now. But I talk about how as parents we are. Told that the ultimate goal of parenting is to raise self reliant, independent adults. But actually what I found in my research and my reporting was that there was a more profound lesson we needed to give to our boys and to our girls, which is the skills of interdependence. That means being able to rely on others, and have others rely on us in healthy ways.

Jennifer Wallace: And too often, we really hold on to this stoic individualism as like, this is the goal, when it really isn't. And my, I will give credit to my husband, who really models this healthy interdependence. When we, when he's going through something at work, or something personal, he shows our kids who he reaches out to.

Jennifer Wallace: Has conversations in the living room about it. They, they breeze in and they breeze out and they see it. And we've been explicit with our kids, our boys, and our daughter, that if there are issues in our house, here are three families, one is my sister. The other two are close family friends. Here are the trusted adults in your life.

Jennifer Wallace: Who, as parents, we trust and you can say everything to. There are no secrets in our homes. You can say anything you want to these adults. And it, wow, it, wow, does it give my kids this really firm safety net and this idea that, we don't have to go through this life alone.

Todd: It's such an, it's such a good reminder. So on Friday, I was driving home and I just had a lot of stuff happen. There was some things that happened in my life that gave me a really crappy

day to deal with. And Cathy was, I don't know. Dealing with some of those crappy things. You were dealing with some of those things. And, I stopped at my friend's house, whom I love, and I've known him for like 10 or 15 years, and I just said, dude, let me just vent for a little bit.

Todd: Now, I'm proud of the fact, because in the old days, I would have been like, nope, I could figure this out, it's all going to be in my head, blah, blah, blah. And I just, I got sad and mad, and I emoted a little bit with him holding that space. But what I didn't do is tell my daughter, my one daughter who lives underneath this roof, like, yeah.

Todd: I was having a really bad day and I went to my buddy Frank and he just listened to me. Like, and that's a wonderful reminder for me. Thank you for reminding me that I, it's not just to do it, but to model it and make sure, because I do a lot of that, but I don't necessarily bring my kids into that. So I'm glad your husband does that and it's something I have since forgotten. So thank you.

Cathy: Yeah. Jenny, I love the, I love that part of the book because I, not only do you say, here's people you can talk to, but that's okay with me. Like I want you to expand. I did the same thing when my girls turned 13. I had a party for them and invited all the women. So it was actually just women.

Cathy: It wasn't just the families. It was women who are important in our lives, family, friends, neighbors, and said, these people are your people and you use them however you want. And obviously my friends were like, yeah, we're, we're here. And my girls have like, there's things that they go to other people and that's fine with me.

Cathy: Cause. That's community building, that's, that's good. And so will you tell the story in the book about the flower that someone left at someone's door?

Jennifer Wallace: Oh my gosh, I I went up to Wilton, Connecticut, which is about an hour ish from New York City. And I, I interviewed a few women in the community and one woman I interviewed talked about how when she first moved to Wilton, she didn't know anybody and her next door neighbor asked her for a cup of flour. And so she gave it to her and she's like, I felt all warm and like cozy inside that I was building community and these were my neighbors. And then the next day she drove up and there was a two pound bag of flour leaning against her door. And she thought to herself, how the hell, like people can't even have a cup of flour hanging over their heads.

Jennifer Wallace: Yeah. You got to repay that favor immediately and so generously. And I've done stuff like that. I don't have this in the book, but I remember one of my neighbors, we were away during a big storm and my neighbor took photos of a tree that fell. And she said, I checked and made sure it didn't touch the house.

Jennifer Wallace: There was no damage. And I thought, how delightful is that? So when we came home, I brought her a bottle of wine as a thank you. And she said, I don't want the wine. She said, that's what neighbors do. And I. Was a little embarrassed, but I have learned. I have learned to accept the help. And to not repay it immediately. Totally. To allow it to build.



Cathy: Jenny, I had the exact same experience, that's why I was, I was laughing in the car. I remember exactly where I was in Iowa when I, when I heard that story, because my friend Noreen, who used to live down the street, she one time helped me with something. She was like happy to do it, something about taking my girls to school or something.

Cathy: And the next day I showed up at her door with a Chipotle gift certificate. And she goes, What the hell are you doing? Like, she's, she's one of my favorite people for that reason. She goes, you don't do that. Like, she kind of like called me out, like to my face. She's like, this is just what we do. And I just really loved her and honored her for that because I, I, I'm still not good at this. Like, I'm not saying, oh, and then I learned my lesson. Like I, I mean, Todd, am I not the worst at feeling like I owe people things all the time?

Todd: And it's such a complicated thing. Cause I agree with every, I love both of those stories and I'm totally on board. And there's, everything's nuanced. Everything's gray. There's no one way to be a parent. There's no way, one way to be a kid. And you, when we, there's a, there's over here, it's gratitude, which is a wonderful thing to express. And then there's this transactional nature of all relationships. And, oh, are we supposed to be grateful? Are we supposed to like, be transactional.

Todd: And for me, like, transactional just seems icky. Like that's not how we're wired. We're supposed to want to give and by giving we get back without getting anything back. So I think it's tricky.

Jennifer Wallace: I'm not perfect either at it. I'll admit I, I have to think, but I stop myself. And I say, okay, this is somebody that I can, and I'll tell you, I'll give you one other example in our, in our, I live in New York City.

Jennifer Wallace: We live in an apartment building and we have a line of families in our, in our line where we, where everybody takes the same elevator bank. It's a big building that we have five families that have kids my age, and we have leaned on each other over the years, including things like it's the first snowfall and snow pants don't fit.

Jennifer Wallace: Who has a size 10 snow pant? Who has the printers broken? It's 1030 at night and my son's three page papers do. Anybody app, who can print out a paper? There is such a community. We have little, we call them 30 second therapy sessions when we get in the elevator and it's been such a long morning. And we're just like, oh my god.

Jennifer Wallace: And they're like, I feel you, I feel you, I get it, I get it. I mean, just, and also the nature of a New York City apartment is you can hear everything. There's like, somebody's fighting in the front door area. It could be heard throughout all the apartments. So

Cathy: that's like the definition. I mean, maybe in this more, contemporary culture of a village, I mean, it's not the way that it was, described way back when, but that's a village like where you, there's other people looking out for your kids and looking out for you.

Cathy: Again, this is, this is all of us. Sorry.

Todd: And it's so funny. Like it's independence is such a wonderful attribute, but I love when you bring up. Interdependence. And Covey brought that up 30 years ago in his book. 7 Ab is a highly effective people. And as a man we're taught like, no, you're in this alone and you got to do it all alone.

Todd: And there's that long Harvard study Waldinger's doing it now. And what I understand about that is the quality of our lives is dependent on the quality of our relationships. And there's nothing independent about that. It's about the exchange between, not the exchange, the connection between two people. So I think it's wonderful.

Jennifer Wallace: That Harvard adult study. So, about, I don't know, 10 years ago, I interviewed the former head of it, George Volant, who was head for quite a while. And, it was for an article. And I said to him, okay, to not like. What do I do at home? Like, what are the, what, what, what should I be focusing on? Where should I be putting my parental energies if I want to raise happy, successful, blah, blah, blah kids?

Jennifer Wallace: And he said, maternal warmth and a work ethic. And I think maternal warmth, because he was doing the study in the fifties and the sixties, back when that was the parent that showed the warmth, but he said it makes sense because the maternal warmth gave kids a kind of blueprint for what relationships should look and feel like that they could replicate in the future.

Jennifer Wallace: And a work habit, a work ethic, number one, helps of course with their own work one day, but also That, that as a, as a person, you understand that even relationships need work and willing to put in the work. So that's what I've been focusing on ever since I had my interview with him. Maternal warmth, expressing it, being explicit and work ethic.

Cathy: I love that. I actually thought you were going to say it because I mixed up these stories. The one guy who questioned where you were sending your kids to school. Tell that story.

Jennifer Wallace: Oh my God. So luckily this was not on zoom. It was on a phone call and you'll know why. So his name is Tim Castor and he is one of the world's leading researchers on how our values impact our wellbeing.

Jennifer Wallace: And so, he was talking about how materialistic values, not just liking logos, but, any sort of self enhancing [00:26:40] goal, career success, material success, wealth, that if you overly prioritize that, it leads to or highly connected to mental health struggles and depression, anxiety, and substance abuse disorder, but internal values like community and, and being a good neighbor, those lead to, positive wellbeing.

Jennifer Wallace: So I was talking to him and I said, my kids are going to the school that, really focuses on these extrinsic values. And so what could I do? And he's, I said, short of moving out of New York city and pulling them out of school, what can I do? And he said, well, I don't buy the premise of your question.

Jennifer Wallace: If you knew there was lead in the pipes, if you knew there was asbestos in the air, you'd pull your kids out of that school. And so I went into like a mental spiral, what, how could I leave New York? How could I leave my job? How could I have my kids leave their school

that they love so much? And then he filled in the awkward pause with, but if you are going to stay, you need to be very intentional about the values that you focus on at home.

Jennifer Wallace: Because values operate like a seesaw. The more your kids are exposed to those materialistic values, the less room and they have in their lives for the healthier, intrinsic ones.

Todd: I'm, I'm on board with all that. What's interesting is as our kids get older, our influence, when they're born, I have a hundred percent influence.

Todd: Like they never leave your sight and then they get into high school or whatever and your influence just slowly, slowly starts. It's the way it's supposed to work, like they're more affected by their environment at school and you spend less and less time with them during the day. It's evolutionary. They need to work with their peers.

Todd: It's just, for me as a parent, it is scary because I agree with you. Like, modeling is the best way to, raise good humans. And, but our modeling is less... In their awareness as they get older and older.

Cathy: I question that though, Todd. I don't think that's the case. I think when you start things when they're young, which, I mean, I loved your extrinsic, intrinsic.

Cathy: You spent a lot of time on that, which I think is the most important, one of them. I mean, you have so many important messages, but one of the most important messages that I, is absolutely true. Like really basic alignment when kids understand what feels like them. Like, even little, I remember when we first started the podcast, we would talk about our girls.

Cathy: We would, we would never talk about their personal issues. We'd talk about like, things outside, like our experiences, but like they could wear whatever they wanted, like where, one of our daughters wore her coat backwards, one of them wore things that were mismatched and sure, especially in this community, there'd be like, what are you doing?

Cathy: They liked it. And, and there was a point when they stopped doing that because of peers or, and there's other things they took up ballet, but then they quit and then they took up this. And then they, you talk about that too, about quitting things and, but I think we can, they will be, you just said it, it's a seesaw.

Cathy: They will be affected by their peers, but if you are consistent at home, you keep doing this. So they're going to have experiences where they totally go external, but is that kind of what you found, Jenny?

Jennifer Wallace: I totally agree. And what the expert said to me was just like the conversations we have about substance abuse, we need to have explicit conversations about values.

Jennifer Wallace: And those are some of the best conversations that we've had in our house. Like what is, what would buying another pair of sneakers that you absolutely don't need do for you? What are you hoping? What are you hoping comes of that? Because what I found so

interesting in the research is that actually people that are very focused on materialistic values do so because they don't have strong relationships and what they are hoping is by having the nice shoes, the nice house, the good watch.

Jennifer Wallace: That they will then be attractive to people, that they will earn the love and respect they so desperately want. So when you see materialism through that lens through, it's somebody who's lacking in strong relationships.

Jennifer Wallace: I think it makes you feel so, so much more empathy. And I think for our kids, even as they go into their twenties and adulthood, I think as, as parents, I think to be having those explicit conversations about values.

Jennifer Wallace: And I'll give you one example. I, I am being, blessedly the, the book is really resonating and schools and organizations all over the country are calling to book me and it's my son's senior year. And so I have set up parameters where my travel is really limited because I'm not going to miss out on the senior year.

Jennifer Wallace: I will do Zooms. I will meet your community on a Zoom, but I am not, so my value, even though the book and the book's message is so important to me, my last year with my son at home, and I remind myself, I say to my publicist every time she brings me a request, Zoom only, Zoom only. I am, I am living my values for him.

Todd: The fact that you're saying that because Cathy, it's when, so it's so interesting because Cathy chose a path of first and foremost, my family comes number one at the expense of her career. As, right, as a speaker, as an author, everything. And I didn't ever have to make that decision. I could do whatever the hell I wanted.

Todd: Three days after my first kid was born, I went back to work and everything was fine. And so I, I'm guessing what you just shared about you setting, because how seductive is that? You, you've been working your entire life.

Cathy: New York Times bestseller.

Todd: You've been working your entire life. And the fact that you have the intuition, the gut, the, the courage to set a boundary around that.

Todd: I would love to say I would do the same thing. I would probably be like, no, it's how can I, how can I be both and, and I just want to honor you for doing that. And Cathy, I know that resonates with you, right, sweetie?

Cathy: Well, yeah. I mean, well, of course. I mean, that's why I. That's why I love her because I just love everything she's writing about because it makes it mainstream like when things like this go mainstream, it makes life easier for everybody because they and because you know what we always say is it's not like people don't know this, they just it's always like they know it.

Cathy: It's like, but they forget it. Or it's, like you said, it's seductive. And, even, going back to that question about, well, I won't go that way. I'll say this. The, the language that I use, David

Brooks wrote a book a couple years ago, I think it was about character. And he talks about having our loves in order.

Cathy: And that's what I always, it was such a good, I, I felt like I was already living it. But when it's like, when you're putting them in order, your love, and that's what's so funny, Jenny, is I think most people would say their family is their greatest love, their connections, their pets, like it doesn't have to be this nuclear, traditional family, the things they love, that is really what they love, but they don't, and you, you do it, some chapters about this, they don't live the value you talk about in the book.

Cathy: Will you talk about that more that we don't live it?

Jennifer Wallace: Yeah. I mean, when you look at your calendar, I think everybody would say that they value friends and family, but then you look at your calendar and you're like, how many family dinners have I missed for a work drink or staying late? So it is, it's very, I have to say it's very hard because like you said, these are two loves.

Jennifer Wallace: I love this book. I spent four years. I am so thrilled it's resonating and I want to be a part of the conversation, but I also need to be home. So how can I, so I feel blessed that, Zoom is now really something we can do. And it's, we can connect with people on zoom. I feel very grateful for that, but it is really hard.

Jennifer Wallace: It's, it's not like I'm saying money versus my child. I am saying my two loves, my ideas, my values, getting those out into the world and helping families think through these things and being there a steady presence for my son in a very stressful year for him. Yes.

Todd: Are you doing the whole traditional book tour circus?

Jennifer Wallace: So I did, so I have, travel on travel off until a week on a week off basically until Thanksgiving. But I, I only have one week where I'm gone an entire week. And friends of mine have said, Oh, you should just do all your West Coast things at one time. But I have three teenagers. I can't be gone for nine days, even though I have a very involved do.

Jennifer Wallace: I, I need to be there checking in and, And I feel lucky that I, let me be clear, I have the privilege of being able to say I don't need the in person fee, which is considerably higher than my Zoom fee. So I recognize that this is a privilege that I get. And, and I feel lucky to have it. It does, I, just this morning I sent an email out to my publicist, reminder, no more in person. We are, once a month I will do an in person event, the rest will be on Zoom.

Cathy: And you just said to us that you are coming, cause we are 15 minutes outside of Chicago, you are coming to the Chicago area soon, correct?

Jennifer Wallace: I am, Thursday.

Todd: Thursday. So it'll actually be last Thursday because this is going to be up on the 25th of September.

Cathy: But you know what? I'm going to promote this ahead of time so people know that. But so unless Todd you had something else you wanted to say, I wanted to switch gears a little bit.

Todd: I want to switch gears too. Okay, good. Do you want me to go or do you want to go? Which gears are we going to switch? You go.

Todd: You read the book, you do it.

Cathy: So one of the, so this kind of digs into our kids again. I, there is a sentence I wrote it down three times because it's so true and we have these conversations with our girls all the time because we have to be really clear about intention versus impact and you say what we say and what our kids hear are different and that ability to have conversations with our kids about here's what I said, but how are you taking that?

Cathy: Or I'm noticing that your demeanor just changed. What did you think I meant? And we do this in partnership too. This isn't just with our kids. This is with all human beings, but talk a little bit about that. I mean, there's many different ways you can go, but sometimes we say things, but our kids hear it differently.

Jennifer Wallace: Absolutely. I mean, I have yet to meet a parent who does not love their child unconditionally yet to meet them, but it doesn't mean that our kids feel that that love is unconditional. I actually did. I did a couple of surveys for this book and I interviewed 500 young adults with the help of a researcher at Baylor.

Jennifer Wallace: And I'd love to read you a couple of things. Because I asked them about this, I asked them about how much they thought, their parents loved and valued them, right? So every parent loves and values unconditionally, but among the parents, the young adults I spoke with, and they're 18 to 30 year olds, but most of them were 18 to 25, more than 70 percent of the students I surveyed reported that they thought their parents valued and appreciated them more.

Jennifer Wallace: When they were successful at school, more than 50 percent went so far as to say their parents loved them more when they were successful, with 25 percent of the young people saying they believed this a lot, the highest measure the survey allowed. So our kids are saying they believe that we love them more when they are successful.

Jennifer Wallace: That's what they are feeling.

Todd: So I'm going to, so I'm totally on board with everything you said, but I'm just going to take the double, the, the other approach. The kid brings home a bunch of A's on a report card. Of course, I'm going to be like, yay, sweet high fives. And then they bring in a bunch of C's and D's and F's.

Todd: I'm going to be like, what's your problem? I don't know what I would say, but he would never say anything. No, I wouldn't say that, but. I'm totally on board and in agreement with what you just said, and it's like a human condition thing. Like, of course, we're going to give more praise when they're doing well versus when they're struggling.

Todd: And as I'm saying this out loud, I'm like, actually, I would probably honor the struggle as much as I might, because you don't learn anything from succeed. I don't think you learn very little, if anything, from succeeding. You learn all your lessons from when you fail. So anyways, anything you want to say about that?

Jennifer Wallace: I'm not disagreeing with you and we are so binary in this country that like you're either this or you're that. No, to show our kids that we love them is to show them we are invested in their success and their future. So I am certainly not saying parents shouldn't have a standard and that I'm not saying that parents shouldn't, have a focus.

Jennifer Wallace: I guess what I would say is to be careful about how we communicate that so that we are separating the deed from the doer. So they bring home a C report card. And in, instead of saying something that a very tired parent might say in the moment, Oh my God, you were so lazy this semester.

Jennifer Wallace: You didn't instead get curious, not furious and, and sort of dig in and figure out what that's about. So I am absolutely not saying this is not an anti achievement. This is a book that says achievement shouldn't have to hurt. And it shouldn't have to come at the cost of your sense of self and value. That, that's what I'm saying.

Cathy: Absolutely. And Todd, you just used the word praise. [00:40:00] And Jenny does a thing about praise, all the research that's been done on that. But the, I kind of think about it with my girls that am I giving the same amount of attention? You use the word investment. When, maybe they come home with a, they won an award or they got an A, but then sometimes they come home and their heart's broken or they're really scared and I am just as much there.

Cathy: It, not with praise, I'm putting that in air quotes. I'm not praising them for it. What I'm saying is I can handle it. Like I can, I can sit and listen. And again, listen, listen, listen. I don't really have advice all the time, but I don't run away from it. My sister and I were just having a conversation the other day about how sometimes, and this may be a Gen X thing, but about the only bring me your good news and I don't want to hear your bad news.

Cathy: That kind of, parenting where we just want to hear the good stuff. And I obviously as I'm a therapist, and so not only have I worked with teen girls, but my, my daughter's friends often come and tell me things. And I will say. Have you talked to your parents or your brother or your sister about this?

Cathy: And they're like, no way. They're like, that will cause more problem because they will struggle. And then I will have to take care of them. So, to your, to your point, again, did you find that as well? Like the teens didn't really want to talk or teens or even young kids didn't want to talk to their parents.

Jennifer Wallace: Oh, I think there was a lot in my interviews where kids talked about the struggles of their parents regulating their own emotions. Yes. And, not only did we not, learn these skills when we were growing up, and, and emotional intelligence was not taught in school and all that, but also we, our bandwidth.

Jennifer Wallace: At the end of the day, we are working eight, ten hours a day. We are exhausted. It is very hard to show up and be, in the words of one researcher, a first responder to our kids struggles, when we have been just beaten down all day at work, feeling like... Our value is contingent. Our worth is dependent on meeting the sales mark, metric, et cetera, et cetera.

Jennifer Wallace: I do want to say one thing that, that popped into my head. So I, one psychologist I spoke with talked about praise and a lot of the kids I interviewed actually talked about how praise felt like pressure and that not only did they have to replicate that, but then there was a higher expectation that they would always be improving, always doing more.

Jennifer Wallace: And a researcher that I, a psychologist I interviewed said, the self becomes stronger less by being praised. Then by being known. And so what I've taken to doing in my home and this sort of talks about the, the, the praise versus how much attention do you give to things is getting a PhD in my kids is intimately knowing them.

Jennifer Wallace: Because they're getting a PhD in us, by the way. They know everything. They know when our eyebrow goes up. They know by the way we walk into the room. They know everything. So I've really turned to trying to get a PhD in them. What are their weaknesses? What are their strengths? How can I, bolster those strengths to overcome weaknesses?

Jennifer Wallace: So that to me was a big takeaway of the book is, is getting a PhD in our kids.

Cathy: I love it. And knowing them, not taking the blanket approach to parenting, which is, this is how I parent, but these are, we have three girls all born from us, all in the same house, same community, same schools. I mean, they've literally done a very similar path.

Cathy: They could not be more different. And as far as what they need, as far as what support means to them, the, the way they look at the world. And so that, and to your point, I mean, one thing I want to say to everybody listening, this is a very compassionate book. Like I know sometimes when we read books about toxic culture, we feel like, Oh, I'm doing it wrong.

Cathy: I did not feel that way at all about Jenny's book. This is very like, she gets it, why this is a struggle. And so you, you feel it's more resonant. And I will even say empowering than it is like, here's more for you to do. Because that's what a lot of times parenting books just tell parents, there's more that you need to do.

Cathy: The, the, the need that you need to do is really just take care of yourself and focus on your self awareness. I mean, other layers, but it really is a giving back. And that how that trickles down. I

Todd: appreciate that. It sounds like the book is compassionate. I'm not an author. I hate writing. I could barely write a three paragraph blog, but if I were to write a book, it would be like parents get your crap together.

Todd: And everybody would hate me and nobody would read it. But honestly, that's what this is. If you want to have human beings that, that make an impact in the world, get your crap together and it's hard. I love the fact that you talked about bandwidth. Like I'm lucky enough to have a



good job and I could set my own schedule.

Todd: I don't know what it's like to have a job that I can't stand.

Cathy: That's why people, when you're, they can't get their crap together because. Other areas of their life. It's not their doing.

Todd: I know. It's a very privileged perspective that I have and get your crap together.

Jennifer Wallace: I wanted to say one thing that, that, when you were talking about how you have three very different children, there was a sociologist, Gregory Elliot Brown, who says parenting is not about the parent.

Jennifer Wallace: Exactly. Which I thought was so profound and such a great reminder. I have three very different kids too, and they need different things from me at different times.

Cathy: Yes, and Jenny, it's something that we realized kind of early. The kids were young when we were like, hwe're actually, and this is actually a title of Julie Lithcott Haynes book, but we're actually raising adults.

Cathy: Like they are not kids very long. I cannot believe my children are the age there. And I know that's the most cliched thing that everybody says. They grow up so fast. It didn't feel fast when it was happening, but we are here already. And so I am now. More at a peer level with my girls, especially my 20 and 18 year old where they are adults and I am now showing up in such a different way where I am grateful that it and again, nobody does this perfectly.

Cathy: It's not like I, dotted every I and crossed every T, but I, I knew this as they were getting older. So my, my goal was relationship, relationship, relationship, and not power dynamics, hierarchy. It was like, how do I keep, and it wasn't always easy because our culture, everything you're talking about in this book, it's somewhat of what you want Even though things are changing, counter culture.

Cathy: Like, my girls would come to me and say, Mom, all these things we talk about at home and these things you say, this is not what I'm experiencing at school. Like, the amount of conversations of actually doing this works. This makes this person popular. Her having clothes means people are coming to her party.

Cathy: There were things where they were like, I love what you say mom, but this is not, and so this is very nuanced. Like that's true. They were right.

Todd: Well, and I just want to say where we started the Madeline Levine thing, how she said nothing's changing. I think it's because we'll, somebody will read Jennifer's book and they'll spend, a day, a half a day, a few days on it.

Todd: But the culture that we swim in, the environment we swim in is like, whenever somebody listens to a message that we're Contrary to what they're seeing on a day to day basis. So it's really hard to make change.

Jennifer Wallace: Here's how you do it. Here's how you do it from what, from my reporting on the Brown traveling all over the country and meeting families who did hold onto their values, who did things counter culturally, who had power with dynamics with their kids, not power over, and it was having one or two people.

Jennifer Wallace: In their life, friends outside of the home that they could fight in, that they could turn to when they're saying, why, tell me again, why we're not doing travel soccer for my seven year old. Tell me again, why I'm not letting him load up on APs, that, that you have people in your life who share your values that you can talk to about these things.

Jennifer Wallace: That's how you stay the course.

Cathy: Yeah, like you have to have, the culture may not speak back to it, may not mirror, but your community, going back to the village, the people on your elevator in your apartment, like, are we doing this together? And, and when we have times where we do choose to travel soccer for the external reasons, and then pull back that people aren't judging us, but they're like, yep.

Cathy: It, because that's the thing too is I, I have a lot, I've done a lot of women's groups and we just have to like have each other's back in every form. Not in a we don't tell the truth way, but like we're gonna have missteps here where something becomes really shiny. And we're like, Ooh, and then we realize, this wasn't what I thought.

Cathy: And that ability to have some humility, that's the word I'm looking for. Humility.

Jennifer Wallace: And to have people who love us unconditionally can see us through our bumps, through our missteps. And those are relationships we just, have, have stopped prioritizing. We've, we've given, it's not that we, it's not that the parents I met in these communities didn't have friends, it's that so many of them didn't, they didn't have the bandwidth and they didn't have the time and energy to invest in their relationships so that those people could be sources of support when they needed them.

Jennifer Wallace: So I think if there's anything that I want people to take away with today hearing this, it is the number one intervention for any child in distress, and this is according to decades worth of resilience research, is to make sure the primary caregivers that their resilience, their mental health is intact, because a child's resilience rests on the resilience of the adults in their lives, and adult in their lives.

Jennifer Wallace: Rest on the depth and support of their relationships. It's not the bubble baths or downloading this meditation app or going for a walk. Those are great stress reducers, but they do not give you the resilience. To be there, to be countercultural when you need to, and to be that source of support when your kid is crumbling.

Jennifer Wallace: You need people you can rely on, who love you deeply for who you are at your core.

Cathy: That's it! I mean, that, that, and, and the, that word resilience, Demonstrating to, we

talked about this before, showing our kids, like, I go to therapy. Yeah, I have therapy today. Yeah, you know what I learned from my therapist, or, I had to go be with my friends this weekend.

Cathy: We're going away in a few weeks. And again, you actually say, I think it's in your, you say, the research is that we actually are happiest when we're with our friends.

Jennifer Wallace: Is that from you? That is, I did put that in the book. It was from, I read it in All Joy No Fun, Jennifer Senior's book. How, yes, that, that's according to a study that found that we report being the happiest with our friends, even more so than with our spouses.

Jennifer Wallace: And it's because our homes, we are, Our marriages are, are one, are one house villages and that's exhausting. So that's why we really need to have people outside of the home, that we can rely on and depend on for the betterment of the people within our home. So, and it does not require, three nights a week going out with friends.

Jennifer Wallace: Research finds it is one hour of deliberate time. Either in person or even on zoom works. What you need is deliberate time to be vulnerable and to allow others to be vulnerable with you. It's that interdependence that we talked about earlier.

Todd: I love it. How are you doing on time? Do you have 10 more minutes or you got some more to do? Okay.

Todd: Do you talk about sleep in the book? Yeah. Rest. Can you talk about that? Cause I think it's, the older I get, the more I used to laugh at people who had sleep etiquette and all that. And now I'm kind of on board and our poor kids are probably not getting enough of it. What, what do you write in your book about it?

Jennifer Wallace: So I write about sleep in a chapter that I call Confronting Grind Culture, where, as parents, I say, often it is our job to put up guardrails, not to support every endeavor, not to support every, the kid take every AP, but really to teach our kids how to live a balanced life that they don't need drugs and alcohol on the weekends to escape to.

Jennifer Wallace: So, how do we do that? We prioritize. Yes, you can do the extracurricular and take those classes. In our home, we prioritize eight to nine hours of sleep, and we are going to guard that time. Every day should have some sort of family time component, some kind of friend time component, and a downtime component.

Jennifer Wallace: I mean, the way I see myself now is really... Teaching my kids, giving them the skills of how to live a balanced life. And that sometimes means saying, no, you can't take that extra AP course. No, you can't do, two sports at the same time. No, you can't like, this is not realistic because the kids I met whose parents.

Jennifer Wallace: Did support every endeavor. Did support, Oh, it's not me. It's my kid. They're so ambitious and they thought it was their job to support it. Actually. Those were the kids that were, taking the drugs and alcohol to escape on the weekends. Black drinking to black out, not just one or two drinks to socialize, to black out from their lives.

Jennifer Wallace: These are not sustainable lives. Teach our kids how to build a sustainable life. That's the goal of my parenting.

Todd: Yeah, we always quote Julie Lythcott-Haims with the whole AP thing because she's, she was the Dean of Freshman Students at Stanford and she's like, yeah, all you parents that are getting your kids into [00:53:20] four APs, like, doesn't make a difference.

Todd: It doesn't help. Like it's from a college application standpoint, give them one. to it the most, but, and I thought that was such a wonderful, somebody knows she would know.

Cathy: Well, she was actually speaking at our high school, which we, we had her, we do conferences and we had her at a conference. So she was able to speak to our community, but then she spoke to our high school.

Cathy: That was, different thing. It had nothing to do with us. And she said that, and I swear people's faces were like, Ooh, because, we are, our community is very focused on academic achievement as well. And so they, that that's the way that's the prize. Your kid takes all the AP classes. But, Jenny, the, because our daughters are older and we have watched, not only are they going to school, but they have friends who have gone to college, there have been many kids I know who have left college because they didn't learn how to take care of themselves.

Cathy: They literally didn't learn how to sleep. They didn't learn how to do homework in a way that was, Independent, or I'll even use interdependent, where you talk to the professor and you, you don't have to do it all by yourself, but they had kind of, kind of gotten through the grind culture, like you said, so a lot of kids get, we push them to this place, yet they can't do it.

Jennifer Wallace: We skipped developmental milestones. Yes. We are, we are, we are jumping to the goal. And that is, that's the pressure on us. I actually interviewed for a New York Times article, Stuart Schmel, who's the, admissions director at MIT. And I, it was an article that was titled, I co wrote it with a colleague, college admissions officers tell their own kids about the college process.

Jennifer Wallace: Oh my gosh. And what he talked about was yeah, I want my daughter to take AP courses only in the classes that appeal to her. That speak to her strengths, that speak to her interests. Because I don't need to see that, you took it in every class. I want to know what's actually interesting to you.

Jennifer Wallace: What interests you? What are your strengths? Do you know yourself enough to know your strengths? So that's helping our kids get a Ph. D. in themselves, too.

Cathy: Yeah, and that's the things that start really early in our community. And then these, a lot of communities now, like you said, it's not just the SuperZip, it's everywhere.

Cathy: Is there was a lot of pressure in our community as far as getting your kid into a gifted program, ours is called Reach. And our girls did well in certain areas, but they didn't necessarily, their test scores were right there, but we didn't push that. We were like, just stay where you are

because you're also doing 10 other things.

Cathy: And as they got older, it meant they couldn't do certain classes or he couldn't do certain things. And they were, do you think they were frustrated at us about that?

Todd: Maybe one of them.

Cathy: One of them, I think, brought it up like, Oh, if I would have been pushed here. But the truth is, first of all, that one's in school and it's fine.

Cathy: And the second thing is, is what you said. They were able to do AP and honors in areas that they were really good at and not stress about the, the AP class where it was an area that they didn't, they, they were. And here's the thing. Not being in a gifted program means you're at grade level, which is where you're supposed to be, right?

Cathy: Like, that's what was always, I didn't go to a college prep high school, so my high school experience was very different. I grew up in a small town, so the mentality of push my kid into something that they didn't really, they don't need it. They, we just want them in that for the status, so it starts at a younger age, don't you think?

Jennifer Wallace: Oh, Achievement Creep is all the way down into the kindergarten ages. Yes! Yeah, and a lot of it is this gifted tracking that I found, that they start earlier and earlier.

Todd: Can I tell, so let me just own my own story about, what is it, something creep? Achievement creep. Achievement creep. Achievement creep.

Todd: Alright, so I'm a first time dad, my kid's like three or four years old, and I'm literally doing the flashcards with her. And Cathy's like, what are you doing? I'm like, well, she's got to learn how to read sometime. And I, I'm like, no, this way when they get into kindergarten, they'll be ahead, blah, blah, blah.

Todd: Cathy, with her intuition, she's like, that's ridiculous. Stop doing that. And we probably had a discussion, but I stopped doing it. And then we sent our kids to a play based preschool, where there's no... Academic. It's just...

Cathy: There is, but it's built into the play.

Todd: Let's teach these kids how to love school. Yeah.

Todd: Instead of teaching them a bunch of flashcard crap. And then our kids got to kindergarten and they were a little behind. And they're like, Oh, they got to take remedial reading or whatever it is. We're like, okay, okay, no problem. And then, and then they caught like up and then exceeded everything. So that's my own baggage as a dad, because I thought, Hey, we got to stay ahead.

Todd: But the problem is. If you, Cathy, if you didn't pull the plug on me then, I would have kept trying to stay ahead of the, the other third grader, what the third graders are doing right then. So

it was really helpful lesson for me.

Cathy: And Jenny, didn't you tell, again, I keep like pointing these things in the book, but people have to go read this cause it's so good.

Cathy: Like there were, there were stories of like parents who were checking on every other kid's grade point and like, because they wanted to know where their kids like fell. Is that true?

Jennifer Wallace: Yes, particularly around the college admissions process. Where are other kids a legacy? Where are their big donors?

Jennifer Wallace: What are, what are their activities to be strategic around college admissions?

Todd: Oh my god. I have a hard time, not, not being boastful of myself for net, we have, we call it power school schoolology, all those kind of things. And whatever, like whatever their grades are, their grades are. And I don't really, now, It's not like all my kids are straight A's, like plenty of B's and C's, and I don't know if there's been any D's, but I know that it's, inappropriate for me to say, just never check power school, cause that's not a one size fit all piece, but for me, school is for them.

Todd: It's not for me and they can go ahead and do it. But I also know that it's a little bit limiting of a perspective.

Cathy: And teachers tell parents to look at it. So again, culture and teachers are being pressured to tell parents. It's not, I don't, I'm a teacher, so I don't blame teachers. It's just, we're all kind of in this soup together.

Cathy: Right.

Jennifer Wallace: The best advice I got on that topic was, as parents, instead of focusing on the shiny outcome of a grade, focus on how work gets done. At home. And really help your child scaffold them with the skills they're going to need throughout grade school. So instead of saying, I want a CNA in math, which frankly our kids could get by cheating.

Jennifer Wallace: Instead you say here, when you walk in the door, you get a short break, then you sit at your desk and here's what it, here's what it's like to have a clean desk and your phone should be charging in the kitchen. You could get up and check it. But work gets done early, before socializing with friends online or whatever it is.

Jennifer Wallace: So really having hygiene around work habits. Yeah. Hygiene. The work will come. I mean, the grades will come.

Todd: Yeah. I praise the effort, not the outcome. Basically. Anything that we... Yeah, what did we

Todd: miss?

Jennifer Wallace: So the only thing that I would love to, to stress is that in the book, while I do

unpack some of the, what got us here, really the book is about solutions.

Jennifer Wallace: And I went in search of the healthy strivers because I wanted to know what, if anything, they had in common. What was home life like? What was school like? What were their relationships like with their peers? And I unpack it all in the book, but it really boils down to this idea of mattering. These kids who did well had a deep sense that they mattered for who they were deep at their core, away from their achievements and successes.

Jennifer Wallace: They mattered to their families, to their friends, to their wider communities, and importantly, they were depended on to add meaningful value back to their families. to their friends and to their communities. The kids who were struggling the most felt like their mattering was contingent on their performance, that they only mattered when they did well.

Jennifer Wallace: And the other group that seemed to be suffering, which surprised me, were kids who heard from their parents that they mattered, but They were never relied on or depended on to add value back to anyone other than themselves and their own resumes. And so these kids lacked social proof that they mattered.

Jennifer Wallace: So mattering acts like a protective shield. It doesn't mean that these kids I met who were striving in healthy ways didn't have setbacks and failures. They had negative emotions, but mattering acted like a buoy. It lifted them up. It helped them to become more resilient.

Cathy: Such a great word. That was, I'm so glad you brought that up because it's one of my favorites.

Cathy: Like, just a great, great way to end this. And, I love that I, you talk a lot about values, belonging, and mattering is such a great place for parents to focus because everything comes out of that.

Todd: So. And I'm sure you break it down of what that means. I haven't read the book, as I've said many times in this interview, but I instantly went to one of Dan Siegel's books.

Todd: I forget which one it is, but you want to make sure your kid feels safe. Seen, soothed, and supported, and I'm guessing that backs in nicely to what mattering is.

Jennifer Wallace: Very much important, significant, and valued for who they are at their core. Yes. No doubt.

Cathy: Well, Jenny, thank you for writing this book, for having such a wonderful conversation with us.

Cathy: Thank you for just being willing to go all over the place, because there's so much in this, and I can't, I know your book is already crushing it right now, but I can't say more to people about go get this and read this. I think you will feel connected and that there is more that we can do for ourselves, for our kids, for each other.

Cathy: So very community building. So thank you and good luck on your tour and with your family and everything that you're doing.

Jennifer Wallace: Thank you both so much. It's such a great conversation. Thank you. Thank you, Jenny.

Todd: Thank you, Jenny. You take care. We'll be in touch one way or another. Never Enough is the name of the book.

Todd: Go get it. Go read it. And start practicing it. For goodness

Cathy: sakes.

Todd: