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[00:00:05] **Todd:** Here we go. My name's Todd. And this is Kathy. Welcome back to another episode of Zen Parenting Radio. This is podcast number 736, I think, I don't know, something like that. 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 well being is a parent's self understanding.

[00:00:35] **Todd:** Zen Parenting. On today's show, we have a friend of ours. Her name is Patrice Lenowitz, and apparently we had dinner a long time ago. We sure did. At some post Oprah event, our friend, we have a mutual friend, Shefali, and Shefali asked us all to dinner, and we all broke bread together, so.

[00:00:53] **Cathy:** Yes. And then Patrice and I were just talking that we, I went to one of Shefali's events in New York a long time ago, and Patrice was there, so we saw each other there.

[00:01:00] **Cathy:** So we, we have similar, Um, desires for the world. We'll just say that and we do maybe have different jobs per se, but um, I just wanted to say real quick, a few of Patrice's, um, she is executive director of the Nurtured Parent. She's a domestic violence survivor. She is a victim's rights advocate and activist.

[00:01:19] **Cathy:** She is a writer. She is a playwright. She is a producer. She's a public speaker. She is all these things, um, which In itself, we could talk about, but today we're actually here for a more intimate story that Patrice has for us. And, um, I would like her to tell it rather than, than me to go, to get started. So Patrice, thanks for being here and thanks for being willing to share this story with us today, because, um, I know that there are parents that want to learn more and hear more about what you

[00:01:52] **Patrice:** know.

[00:01:53] **Patrice:** Thank you. Thank you, Kathy. Thank you, Todd. And always a pleasure to see you. I [00:02:00] have been following you for years. Um, I ran a domestic violence organization for 13 years, and we recommended your podcast to our members. You've been an incredible Um, support and help to parents. So first, I wanted to say thank you for that.

[00:02:19] **Patrice:** Um, yes. So, uh, as far as my career, um, in victims rights, this is something that, um, you know, it's, it's one of those things where Um, you have the experience of it, you're touched by it, um, trauma, childhood

trauma, survivor, and then, um, I was in a domestic violence relationship and raised my kids, um, with this man, um, until I, I had the ability to leave.

[00:02:48] **Patrice:** Um, and when I did, um, a whole other host of problems happened because the family court system does not protect children, um, which led me to start a non profit called the Nurtured Parents Support Group, and it was for victims and survivors going through the system. Um, I also started another organization called the Children's Justice Campaign, which Dr.

[00:03:10] **Patrice:** Shefali was on the board of, to actually advocate for children's rights.

## [00:03:16] Max Tragic Story - Start

[00:03:16] **Patrice:** And, um, But we're not here today to talk about any of that. Um, unfortunately, we're here to talk, um, about something very tragic that happened to me and my family. Um, my oldest son, Max, um, was celebrating his 25th birthday, um, and, uh, he died of fentanyl poisoning on his birthday.

[00:03:41] **Patrice:** And, um, like many of us parents, um, I Maybe I'd heard occasionally the word fentanyl. Um, my understanding of fentanyl was that it was a severe pain, [00:04:00] um, relief drug that cancer patients that are at end of life, um, would be administered. Um, it's 50 times more potent than heroin. And a hundred times more potent than morphine.

[00:04:15] **Patrice:** And that's kind of my understanding of it. And then I started hearing about it a little bit in the news, but more of, um, like seizures or arrests, but absolutely no understanding about what It meant for our children. And, um, so when, um, so this was July 20, um, July 20, 22, July 14th, my son's birthday. Um, we called our baby at midnight as, as was standard in our family, if we're not going to be together.

[00:04:51] **Patrice:** Um, when they start to grow up, they start to do their own things for their birthday, which is really hard for, for us moms, I can tell you that, and dads too, I'm sure, Todd. Um, but we, we got, he answered at midnight, and we got to sing to him the, um, Happy Birthday Monkey song, which is tradition in our family.

[00:05:10] **Patrice:** Um, we... You know, made him laugh. Uh, we got to talk about what his plans were for his birthday. Um, he was going to dinner at a restaurant he worked at in Margate, New Jersey called Shuckers. And he was going with all his friends that were coming. He lived in South Jersey. I live in

Northern New Jersey. Um, his friends were coming down to spend his birthday with him.

[00:05:33] **Patrice:** And then they were going to get a hotel in Atlantic City and stay overnight. And, um, he didn't know where they were going to stay yet, but he promised he would send me pictures because, you know, you gotta have the pictures. I have pictures. And, and all his friends are my babies too, right? So, um, it's just, it's just joy.

[00:05:52] **Patrice:** Um, and, uh, the following day is my birthday and Max was literally born an hour and a half before my [00:06:00] birthday. And, um, Um, James and I, um, Max's stepdad, were watching, um, a movie that Max had recommended, um, on the call, um, Everything Everywhere All at Once, and I, I mean obviously it's etched in my brain forever now, right?

[00:06:19] **Patrice:** Um, so we decided to watch that movie, it was my birthday, and, um, I got a, we got a call from our local police department. And heard the most horrible thing that any parent could ever hear. Um, they told me that my son was dead. And, um, it's like, what are you talking about? Like, we just, we talked, we spoke to him.

[00:06:45] **Patrice:** He's happy. He's with his friends. Um, best friends. Um, and, uh, it's a mistaken identity. Somebody must've stolen his wallet because I knew he was going to Atlantic City. And, um, so I really, I was, it was, they had the wrong, they had the wrong person. Um, and unfortunately, uh, the absolutely worst nightmare, um, was thrust upon us and it's not even a nightmare cause you get to wake up from a nightmare, right?

[00:07:20] **Patrice:** Yeah, the worst possible thing happened to us. And, um, Max, uh, Max's friends were actually going to meet him so they all drove down and Max was going to tell them where he was meeting them. So they were going to check into the hotel then go for dinner and stay overnight. But he stopped responding to their phone calls.

[00:07:45] **Patrice:** And, um, he was found, um, with, uh, Xanax.

[00:07:54] **Patrice:** And, um, Xanax, if you're familiar with it, it's an anti  
[00:08:00] anxiety medication. Um, I know, uh, it wasn't prescribed by our doctor and, um, it was, uh, the police identified it as counterfeit. And it was tested and it was pure fentanyl. Um, now, when it comes to our work, your Zen parenting work, and why we know Shefali, a lot of it on understanding trauma.

[00:08:28] **Patrice:** As domestic violence survivors, I know why my son took Xanax on his birthday. Because a lot of our abuse happened on our birthdays or holidays. Um, you know, why he didn't go to our doctor for a prescription. I can't, I can't tell you, but what I can tell you now, what I've learned in this baptism by fire, is that, um, China has created a synthetic opioid, um, this fentanyl, this one that we're dealing with now, this synthetic, um, opioid, has been created and with pill press machines.

[00:09:12] **Patrice:** They also created these machines that you can. Um, imitate Adderall. You can imitate, you know, um, Percocet. You can imitate Xanax. Any over the counter legal prescription pills, these pill presses are now able to duplicate and make it look exactly Like, um, the prescription pills and they're adding fentanyl to it.

[00:09:41] **Todd:** So is there, so they, so there was a pill machine that create, first of all, I'm so sorry for your loss. And I'm, I imagine it does not get any easier when you tell that story. And I so appreciate your courage because it's helping other parents understand this better. My to say that. Um, [00:10:00] so, um, we think Max took something, uh, He got, it was a Xanax, a fake version of just fake Xanax.

[00:10:06] **Todd:** Xanax. Mm-Hmm. Did the, does the, does the fake pill maker try to make the effects feel like Xanax too? Like are they interested in trying to give whoever receives it? The same thing that Xanax does. To the human body and then they like,

[00:10:22] **Cathy:** yeah, like, is this just a financial thing, Patrice, like the putting fentanyl instead of Xanax, or are they really thinking that they're trying to come up with some, you know, basically the exact same effects as Xanax, but different, you know, makeup, makeup.

[00:10:36] **Cathy:** Yeah.

[00:10:37] **Patrice:** So those are great questions. And what we know for sure is, um, these are lethal doses. Of fentanyl. So what typically used to be the opioid crisis, and I'm talking pre fentanyl crisis, the opioid crisis, um, fentanyl could be used very obscurely in the background. And if you are a, um, someone who's addicted to to drugs, um, fentanyl may come into play.

[00:11:10] **Patrice:** in that journey, you know, that really hard journey of opioid addiction. But what we're seeing over the past 10 years is that the, first of all, I want you to imagine how little it takes for you to overdose on fentanyl. Um, the

Department of Justice has on their website, and I would recommend every parent go on, uh, Drug Enforcement Agency has images of the very tip of a pencil.

[00:11:41] **Patrice:** Very, very tip, and this is a pen, but the very, very tip is three, could be three milligrams of fentanyl and that will kill you. If you imagine a penny and you imagine the date stamped on the bottom, those numbers, that little bit, that little tiny [00:12:00] space, if there was fentanyl on it, that's enough to kill you.

[00:12:04] **Patrice:** So why we're dealing now with an epidemic that drug dealers are not. in introducing fentanyl to people. They're actually introducing something that's killing people. So that there's a whole other theory, and it's my theory, and maybe, maybe there are a lot of other people that are working in the drug enforcement agency that share.

[00:12:34] **Patrice:** this theory, but, um, I think it's an undeclared war on the United States. Okay.

[00:12:39] **Todd:** So you think that, let's say in this case, China, they are deliberately putting enough in there, not to make sure that Max and other people keep taking this, but perhaps to just kill the people that may or may not take it.

[00:12:58] **Patrice:** Absolutely. And the drug cartels in Mexico, you know, one of the things, you know, when we, when we talk about this crisis, You can get a little fuzzy and get political and fentanyl has come to the United States through the Mexican border, through the drug cartels, through air, through land, through sea and through the United States Postal Service.

[00:13:21] **Patrice:** So it is here, it is everywhere and our young people are targeted. And, um, if you're familiar with Dr. Laura Berman, um, so very famous sex therapist and, um, she's been on Oprah as well, and she, her 16 year old in the pandemic who was actually preparing to apply to colleges. So they're all home, you know, her husband, Sam, um, they're, they're, they're three children.

[00:13:54] **Patrice:** They're all home. Part, you know, when we were all. Home. Yeah. Home. [00:14:00] And, um, a drug dealer, um, reached out to him on Snapchat. So that's really important for parents to know because I wouldn't think that a drug dealer can reach my kids. on Snapchat, but that's exactly how they're reaching them. And the drug dealer, because um, one of Sammy, the,

there's the 16 year old precious boy Sammy's friends, must have, uh, been in contact with this person, this drug dealer.

[00:14:34] **Patrice:** And so now he can slide into any one of our kids that are in Sammy's Snapchat friend group. And he reached out to Sammy and offered him a whole list. You can buy one pill. Any, any kind of pill. You want Adderall? You want Percocet? You want to try this? You want to try that? Whatever. Um, so he bought, he bought something.

[00:14:55] **Patrice:** And while, uh, Laura, Dr. Laura was, was sleeping and her husband were sleeping and the kids were sleeping, Sammy went outside their house and met a perfect stranger on their lawn. And, you know, the tragedy is they lost their 16 year old, um, you know, and having to discover your baby, um, is, uh, horrific. And so what we know is, you know, this isn't like, um, a fentanyl overdose.

[00:15:28] **Patrice:** This is fentanyl poisoning,

[00:15:30] **Todd:** right? Can you explain the difference between that? Because some people are like, oh, this person OD'd on fentanyl. Max had no interest in fentanyl whatsoever. Max had interest in getting cheap Xanax. Correct. And in doing that, he died because there was fentanyl in it. Um, but there's some people that get addicted to fentanyl?

[00:15:49] **Todd:** Is that what happened?

[00:15:50] **Patrice:** Absolutely. I mean, I mean, yes. Um, so heroin users, um, you know, uh, uh, People that are suffering with [00:16:00] addiction can be led to fentanyl and, um, so that small amount that killed my son and killed Dr. Laura Berman's son, um, probably wouldn't have killed an, an active addict. What they're targeting now are young people and it's been found in marijuana.

[00:16:25] **Patrice:** So marijuana, not bought at a dispensary. Is being sprinkled with fentanyl. Um, any kind of recreational drug. And I'm going to give you an example. I mean, I mean, I'm so grateful to have this opportunity to talk to you and reach parents. Because I wish I had this knowledge. Maybe, maybe my son would still be here, but what, um, what I've learned on this journey for nine months, I was in bed, you know, like I, I daily thoughts of killing myself.

[00:17:03] **Patrice:** I lost my first born son. How do you go on? Like, so I'm sorry, I'm going to cry. How do you go on after the loss of a child? So any parent, only, only a parent that's lost a child knows. The cruel, the cruelty, um,



in, in that, but I have two other children and, you know, a loving partner and, and grandparents. I mean, Max has, his grandparents are still alive.

[00:17:29] **Patrice:** They buried their grandson. Um, and, um, now all the young people. So, um, I love having young people in my house. So Max's friends, my son, Zachary's friends, my daughter, Ellen is friends. This house, and like all our homes, right, the joy of having your kids, friends in your house, and just the laughter and the camaraderie and being that fly on the wall to just kind of pay attention [00:18:00] and make sure that they're safe and making good choices.

[00:18:02] **Patrice:** Love, love, love that. And, um, like, I had so many young people that needed my support. You know, they call me mama and I, I, I couldn't, I couldn't function. And for nine months, I wasn't able to sleep. Um, tried everything possible from, you know, meditation to, you know, my doctor prescribing things to every loving, kind person in my world was trying to help me because I couldn't fall asleep.

[00:18:39] **Patrice:** And it's that trauma response. Yeah. So that adrenaline was going 24 7 and I couldn't shut it off. So I'm, I'm delirious. I'm in agony. I'm grieving. Um, I'm, you know, um, Just a mere shell of the person that I was and, um, I, one day it just came to me because I'm reading now, you know, I'm getting more and more information about young people and what's happening, um, to them.

[00:19:19] **Patrice:** And so I started paying attention and I started. Um, logging in to, to get new stories on Fentanyl and local stories and national stories and just trying to figure out what's going on. I wasn't sleeping, so I was doing a lot of reading and research. And what I started to realize is I, I can't take my life right now.

[00:19:46] **Patrice:** The way, A, my family needs me, my kids need me, but I gotta do something about this. I have to do something about this. What's the one thing I could do? I can write legislation because I know in the [00:20:00] state of New Jersey where I'm from We're not getting fentanyl poisoning education in our schools. So how do I kickstart this?

[00:20:09] **Patrice:** And, you know, honestly, by the grace of God and the universe and all that's good. I was able to contact my local senator. And her chief of staff who were incredible. The bill that, um, that we wrote and it's, it's, it's, it's the beginning. So just remember this is the beginning. I had to get it through really quickly before the session closed last time.

[00:20:36] **Patrice:** June, um, was declaring my son's birthday, which is the same day that he left us, as Fentanyl Poisoning Awareness Day for the state of New Jersey. And I share this with you because any parent in any state that's grieving any sibling, any anybody, can also get this introduced in their state. We have to start with educating the public on what we're dealing with.

[00:21:05] **Patrice:** And the only way we're going to do that is through education. And so, by the grace of God, not only did we get bipartisan support, unanimous support, we got it through both houses in 25 days. It's like unprecedented and the governor signed our bill on Max's birthday, July 14th, 2023. And

[00:21:28] **Cathy:** Patrice, we, you and I talked about this last time we talked and you know, you just said this, but I'm going to repeat this because I know families who have lost children or, you know, Friends of the family who, you know, because everyone's affected as we discussed, like you were talking about neighbors who, you know, everyone is affected by this loss.

[00:21:46] **Cathy:** You were saying that if somebody wanted to take this up in whatever state they live in, that they could contact you and basically use what you created as a template. She

[00:21:56] **Patrice:** plays the trail. Yeah. So it's so [00:22:00] important, um, to, uh, find out what is being done in your state. Yeah. Um, oftentimes, it, there isn't going to be anything that has, has begun, um, unfortunately.

[00:22:13] **Patrice:** But, um, then piggyback off of other states that have some type of legislation that was introduced. So Max's bill, it's SJ, it's called NJ, if anyone wants to Google it, NJSJR, which is Senate, uh, State, uh, um, sorry. Um, oh my goodness. Um, okay. SJR, NJSJR128 is the bill number. And, um, that's in New Jersey. And that bill, um, declares my son's birthday as Fentanyl Poisoning Awareness Day and honors all the other lives that were lost in our state.

[00:22:55] **Patrice:** By this, um, epidemic. And, um, that's the beginning. The second legislation I'm working on right now is introducing, um, fentanyl poisoning education in our school systems from sixth grade through 12th grade. Now, this is not an assembly, right? This is going to be continual education throughout the school year, age appropriate on what fentanyl is.

[00:23:23] **Patrice:** Where it's coming from. How it can reach them. And now I want to share a story with you about this because this is so important. Had we



not gone through this? Um, it's getting me, um, my, um, my, my sister wife, I call her my neighbor, two doors down, my sister wife in the neighborhood. We all need our sister wife.

[00:23:49] **Patrice:** Um, her kids are my kids and vice versa. And, um, her two, uh, uh, two of her children are in college. So Max [00:24:00] passed and, um, you know, we're all grieving and, and, and, and. The young people are really, with mental health, you know, as, as an underlying factor here, which we know is of epidemic proportions right now, losing a young person when you're a young person is exceedingly hard.

[00:24:19] **Patrice:** So we're all in it, we're all going through it, and we're all just trying to figure out, figure our footing in this. Um, two of them, um, go back to school. Um, one is, uh, their daughter, Lauren, and she goes to Brown. Now, um, she was studying for finals at Brown, and one of her closest guy friends, um, said that he bummed an Adderall so he could cram and asked her if she wanted one.

[00:24:52] **Patrice:** And she has this trauma and this experience of losing max. So she flipped out and, you know, and she gave him the explanation and the education. She testified in the Senate on our bill, by the way, this extraordinary young woman, the courage. And she, the, the one thing that, um, her school is doing right, Brown, is they're offering fentanyl test strips.

[00:25:19] **Patrice:** on campus for free. I never heard of fentanyl test strips before, you know, going through this experience myself. And I know so many other parents have, aren't aware of this as well. So she convinced her friend to go, um, downstairs to where they were offering it, get a fentanyl test strip. They tested that Adderall and it was fentanyl.

[00:25:43] **Todd:** Wow. Do you know how that works? So, so there's, something you get, a test strip and, and the, whatever pill the take is a pill, right? That was a pill. Yes. So how do you test? Do you, how does the strip work? Yeah. How does the [00:26:00] strip work? Do you

[00:26:00] **Patrice:** know? I don't. Um, but, um, what I'm going to encourage parents to do is, um, contact their, you know, state.

[00:26:12] **Patrice:** Legislators, police department, drug enforcement agencies, they'll be able to get them, um, get trained on how to use them because it's not just the fentanyl test strips. It's Narcan. Um, and we'll talk about that next. Um, but. Which I was completely unaware of as well, um, and so when Lauren

tested this and it proved to be fentanyl, um, now there's this whole big thing that's happening because her friend bought it from a friend.

[00:26:44] **Patrice:** Right. And you trust your friends. Right. And so our young people right now need to know, unless... There's a bottle with your name on it. You cannot take it. Yeah. Because when I just went to a conference, um, uh, it was because the, there's federal legislation, um, called the Fend Off Fentanyl Act. And it's, it's for stricter penalties for drug dealers and things like that.

[00:27:14] **Patrice:** And at that event, Um, we were told that, um, the explanation of when we were young and, and I'm going to say carelessly experimenting, right? Um, our biggest concern, I'm 56. My biggest concern is something being mixed with baby powder, right? But today, they're the old expression of, you know, when you do drugs.

[00:27:47] **Patrice:** It's like playing Russian roulette, and you never know if you're gonna be affected by the bullet that makes you addicted. And at worst, you could die. [00:28:00] Now they're explaining it as, for the visual, for our parents and our young people, every chamber in that gun has a fentanyl bullet in it with a lethal dose to kill you.

[00:28:17] **Patrice:** So, things have changed. It is a completely different landscape, and this, we started to see this change 10 years ago, and there's, there's a spike in the, um, overdose, overdose opioid deaths in this country, but, um, It's, uh, it's unlike anything that our country has ever seen or experienced before, and the number of young people impacted is astounding.

[00:28:48] **Patrice:** So, um,

[00:28:50] **Todd:** yes. Um, so, um. This is interesting to me and I, I find myself, you know, ignorant on all this because I had a, I had a friend whose son was addicted to fentanyl, like, and somehow he miraculously came through it and I think the chances of

[00:29:05] **Cathy:** doing that. Well, like she said, if he had been addicted to other things, his body had a greater capacity to take

[00:29:11] **Todd:** that fentanyl on.

[00:29:12] **Todd:** Right. So all I'm trying to do is separate the idea that there's some kids who intend to take fentanyl. It seems like. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe kids don't take fentanyl. Yeah.

[00:29:21] **Patrice:** I mean, it's a build up. It's a build up. You know, so somehow he got experimenting. Um, you know, you might start experimenting with more and more and the way that it works and I'm not, I'm not a doctor, but my understanding of it is once your brain is exposed to that opioid, it changes a lot.

[00:29:45] **Patrice:** Um, and how your body responds, and then you're constantly exploring with new and different things to get back to that initial high. And, you know, and I just want to take it a step, one step before.

[00:30:00] The only reason why, and we were all young ones too, the only reason why any of us go down that path is because we are struggling with some kind of pain.

[00:30:13] **Patrice:** We are struggling with some kind of mental health issue. Whether it's, you know, anxiety, depression, violence in the home, the death of a parent. We know from the, um, CDC, there's, uh, this, um, research that was conducted called the ACE Study, Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. And so, we know from that study that was conducted in 1998.

[00:30:38] **Patrice:** And continuous studies to support the original claims of that scientific study that children that are exposed to domestic violence, sexual abuse, a drug or alcohol addicted parent, incarceration, divorce, um, uh, neglect. Black Divinity Canyon. They are now, um, uh, they will have more illnesses in their life.

[00:31:05] **Patrice:** And, um, they are prone to have addiction, um, depression, and a shortened life expectancy of as much as 20 years. I think those numbers are going to change now with this epidemic, because that, you know, research was done, um, a while ago. But now knowing that, speaking of your friend, um, your friend's son, Todd, like, are young people are going to, possibly.

[00:31:33] **Patrice:** Explore with something so they don't feel pain and there isn't anything really out there to support our kids and their mental health needs. Um, you know, our, you know, what we learned from Dr. Shefali and the conscious parents, you know, we have to handle our own unconsciousness and our trauma and our stuff.

[00:31:56] **Patrice:** So we don't put our trauma onto our kids. [00:32:00] And, you know, pass that legacy on, um, but I do know that, and we can get to that, you know, a little bit later, but my next step is going to be supporting the mental health needs of our young people. I'm sorry.

[00:32:16] **Todd:** So before we get there, and I'm sorry, I just want to like understand this better.

[00:32:19] **Todd:** There is, there are people, young people, people out there that get addicted to fentanyl and can't escape it, kind of like heroin. And then there's... People like Max, who took one fake pill that had fentanyl in it and the, you know, like when I was a little kid, when kids were addicted to drugs, it took a long time for somebody to kill themselves from drugs.

[00:32:39] **Todd:** And the crisis that you're, that you were so deeply impacted by is that Max took a Xanax, what he thought was a Xanax, and there's like no forgiveness in it. There's like, it's like a one and done possibility. And that never happened. I don't know if that ever happened when we were little.

[00:32:58] **Cathy:** No, but I was telling Patrice that, that I have now heard so many stories like this.

[00:33:04] **Cathy:** There was a story of a girl in one of our suburbs just in the last month who she was trying cocaine for the first time. And there was fentanyl in it. There are other kids who have, you know, same thing. They ran out of their medicine, didn't ask for more, started getting, because one thing Patrice mentioned this, but I have a girlfriend whose son was, uh, you know, experimenting with a lot of drugs, and this whole Snapchat menu thing is a real thing, man.

[00:33:29] **Cathy:** Like, they, her son basically was ordering off of a menu of what he wanted, and when he finally said, you can't drop it off at my house anymore, the dealer, whoever it was, said, don't worry, I'm gonna drop it at a tree down the street, you know, you'll know it. So, uh, They get creative. And again, this sounds like a movie, like, you know, I sometimes hear stories.

[00:33:50] **Cathy:** Yeah, it's like a horror movie. And you're like, this can't but it's less about let's scare every parent. That's not that's never our goal is to put more fear in parents. [00:34:00] It's to empower and understand. And this is exactly what you're doing. Patrice is like, what you can how you can Be educated enough to talk to your kids about this.

[00:34:12] **Todd:** Yes. Well, it's so, it's so weird because I feel like we can say, you know, in a perfect world, Hey kids, if you're feeling your pain, feel the pain, get help, talk to a therapist, all that. And then there's this other thing where kids are kids and sometimes they're going to be experimental and there's this awareness campaign that I feel like you're trying to create.

[00:34:29] **Todd:** Especially with the strips and stuff. Do not take anything unless it's from a legal dispensary or from the doctor at

[00:34:38] **Patrice:** Walgreens. You're a doctor with your name on the bottle and your parents are involved, right? Because a lot of the opioid, um, crisis that we're facing were, you know, young athletes opioid by their Dr.

[00:34:57] **Patrice:** And, um, you know, have lifelong struggles with addiction now because of it. So even when it's prescribed by your doctor, you know, our parents, parents, we have to really be involved in it because as we know, the pharmaceutical companies really have dirty hands in all of this and, um, created, uh, a nation of addicts.

[00:35:22] **Patrice:** Yeah. So

[00:35:23] **Todd:** I want to ask one more question and I've already asked it once and maybe it was answered. Like, you're like, well, sometimes if you buy weed by, you know, some non dispensary, they sprinkle in fentanyl. Why do they, why does it get in there? Is it by accident? Is it by design? Is it to make it more addictive?

[00:35:40] **Todd:** Is it because they're trying to kill our kids or, or is it all of the above?

[00:35:44] **Patrice:** I mean, honestly, Todd, I think it's all of the above. I think, you know, um, local drug dealers, um, may think, hey, this is a great hook, you know, this is a great way to, to make more money. Not [00:36:00] understanding the, the lethal amount because this is, this synthetic opioid was manufactured at such a, high potency that, um, it's not having the intended, uh, I hope, you know, um, uh, effect, but, you know, the challenge we have is our local drug dealers, you know, we have all these new legislation and they're going, they want to punish, obviously, you know, the, the China, okay, China, the one that's manufacturing this.

[00:36:36] **Patrice:** Well, if you want to buy it, because it's legal in China, and if you want to buy the Pilibras, it's legal in China, but you don't want it to come back to you, use cryptocurrency. That's how, that's how it's getting through, so, you know, our drug enforcement agency has a hell of a job on their hands, and yes, they're doing everything that they can, I believe so, to, to stop it from, from harming us, but it's already here.

[00:37:02] **Patrice:** And the numbers are astounding. I know that last year, they seized, and I'm going to tell you the exact number, the Drug Enforcement Agency seized 332 million. Um, uh, pounds of fentanyl, which is enough to kill every American. Um, because we have, okay, sorry, forgive me, 396 million lethal doses of fentanyl were seized and we have 332 million people in the United States.

[00:37:36] **Patrice:** Right. So that means they seized enough of fentanyl to kill every single American in the United States. Um, that, that's one aspect of it. Now the other, getting back to your, um, the young girl in your neighborhood who did cocaine, um, of my, I was telling you, my sister wife in the neighborhood, her other child, um, her son goes to [00:38:00] Rutgers University in New Jersey.

[00:38:01] **Patrice:** He's my middle son's best friend. And um, you know, we're very traumatized and grieving, you know, because Max is like a brother to him. Um, but he's back in school and it's at finals time for him as well. Um, he went to his, uh, apartment with his roommates. He's a senior and, um, his roommate had two friends over that he never met before.

[00:38:28] **Patrice:** And he said he noticed that they were messed up. So whether it was from drinking or partying, he didn't know, but they looked. You didn't think anything about it because that's college life. Unfortunately, that is the truth, parents. Um, it's scary and yes, we need to talk to our kids and yes, we need to be involved with their schools because, um, because there's a lot of, there's a, there's a much more lethal.

[00:38:57] **Patrice:** Bullet coming for our kids right now. And so, um, he, Alex took a shower, um, just that, those was his roommate's friends. And then he heard a, a boom, a really loud noise and it startled him enough to leave the bathroom to see what that was. And the two young man, 21 years old that he just met we're on the floor and his roommate was like.

[00:39:27] **Patrice:** You know, they're fine, they're fine, they're fine. They're wasted, you know, don't worry about it. Alex just lost Max. And immediately went to their overdosing. Immediately went to this is fentanyl. And even though they argued, and they argued because the roommate knew that his friends um, did cocaine. He didn't want to get his friends in trouble.

[00:39:52] **Patrice:** But Alex had the tragedy, the experience of that tragedy to know if I don't act fast [00:40:00] And we don't get Narcan in here, they're going to die. And so he was, he did call and he did let them know, he thought



they were overdosing and he did think that it was fentanyl and they did come with Narcan. And now, now to talk about Narcan, Narcan is something that, you know, EMTs, law enforcement have used for quite some time to reverse an overdose and it's been quite successful.

[00:40:29] **Patrice:** Um, a dose of Narcan reversing the effects of an overdose. This fentanyl epidemic could take 2 doses, 3 doses, 4 doses, 5 doses to revive someone. The police aren't coming with 5 doses. The EMT wasn't prepared for this, like everyone has been caught off guard by the lethal effects of this drug and also how something that has been tried and true.

[00:41:06] **Patrice:** To, um, help someone that's overdosing is not working and you have to continually administer it. Um, so fortunately, because of Alex, he saved those two young men. Um, but now it's our job as parents. to make sure that our high schools, our middle schools, and our colleges are all taking this seriously because it is everywhere.

[00:41:34] **Patrice:** They can get it on Snapchat or any, any social media platform. Um, they are getting it from their friends that they trust, not knowing And that's the scary part for me when you talk about legislation to punish drug dealers. You know, we have 18 year olds that are going to prison because they gave something to their best friend who died.

[00:41:56] **Patrice:** Neat. So, you know, we have to be very, [00:42:00] we have to look at that and be very careful about that. Um, it's meant for the actual drug dealers and the drug cartels and all of that. But, um, our young people, um. are being targeted from every

[00:42:15] **Todd:** angle. I'm trying, I'm trying to, like, look at this through the lens of a young person, because I remember my parents scaring me with all the stats of drunk driving, or whatever it was.

[00:42:26] **Todd:** And the amount of prevalence that, I don't know what you call it, like, off brand pills are, like, you get them off of Snapchat, like you said, like, I'm wondering if there's somebody listening, a younger person listening, like, this is everywhere. Like, the fake pills are everywhere, and only one out of 10, 000 die of a fentanyl overdose.

[00:42:47] **Todd:** Um, and I just, I'm trying to like think what type of pushback we adults might get from younger people, because if they're all kind of, not they're all, if there's so many of them taking these, off brand pills and most of

them aren't dying and they're going to keep doing it. I just, I'm just trying to see how we could frame this.

[00:43:04] **Cathy:** Yeah, like what's the counter argument, you know, Patrice, when, when, you know, some kids do get obviously off brand pills, you know, and they take them and they're okay. Like it is, it, there is a Russian roulette piece to it where is it there? Is it the makeup of their body? Is it that, you know, a genetic predisposition?

[00:43:22] **Cathy:** Does it depend on how much was in that fake pill? What do you hear people say about

[00:43:27] **Patrice:** this? So, um, you know, the challenge is, um, it often, and this comes to the fentanyl poisoning part, um, the overwhelming, overwhelming majority of young people that are experimenting do not know that they're taking fentanyl.

[00:43:46] **Patrice:** Right. Overwhelming majority. So that's why it is called fentanyl poisoning. Right. It's not a, uh, someone struggling with addiction and overdosing, which that is happening as well from fentanyl, but [00:44:00] we're talking the, the, the numbers, um, are right now the United States, 300 people are dying a day in the United States.

[00:44:11] **Patrice:** From fentanyl, 300 people a day. So you have to think about that. If we're talking to a young person, an airplane, right? Right. 300 passengers, you know, every day that 300 people, that plane's going to go down. 300 people are going to die every single day. You might want to think about flying. You might want to think about taking a bus or something after that.

[00:44:35] **Patrice:** But really those are the numbers. Those are the statistics our young people have to hear. You know, um, yeah, we were all young ones too and we understand what it feels like to get caught up in the camaraderie or wanting to fit in and things like that, but this is a whole completely different game. Um, it's, it's something that our country has never experienced before.

[00:45:03] **Patrice:** And so the likelihood of A, you being introduced to fentanyl and B, it being fatal is very, very high.

[00:45:13] **Todd:** What you're saying is it's possible that there's kids taking, you know, fake Xanaxes and have already been exposed to fentanyl and they don't even know it. They didn't even

[00:45:21] **Patrice:** know it. And now they're looking for more and more higher doses.

[00:45:25] **Cathy:** So that's what's interesting about this story is because there's a story like Max's story, um, and like Sammy's story and many other stories. Like I said, that I've heard in Chicago just in the last couple months, it's, it's too common. And then there's the story of a kid being fed fentanyl over time, becoming more of an addict.

[00:45:44] **Cathy:** And then to your point, there's kids who are offering those pills who are then getting caught on the side of being, and I'm putting this in air quotes, even though it is dealing. It's that kid wasn't. Attempting to be a dealer, but they gave the pill and they

[00:45:57] **Patrice:** murder now. It's

[00:45:58] **Cathy:** murder. And [00:46:00] so there's all these sides to it.

[00:46:02] **Cathy:** So there and there's more here. I know, um, Patrice, but like, as far as talking to our kids. About this, you know, you're, this is like, you know, your world in a, in many different ways, like you have this advocate side and this legislative side and this obviously being a parent and now this experience, like, because fear doesn't always work with our kids, you know, just being like, you should be scared of this or don't do this.

[00:46:25] **Cathy:** Like, you know, we're 80s kids. We got all that stuff and sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. Scared straight. Yeah, and you know, dare and all that. So. What do you say? Obviously the kids around, you know, ma knew Max and they know who he is and they know his story, but for kids, like, who don't, what do you say?

[00:46:42] **Cathy:** What's your what do what? What language do

[00:46:44] **Patrice:** you use? So, um, I can tell you that I learned, um, about, I learned a lot in hindsight now, uh, right, about what our kids are exposed to in high school. You know, our athletes, um, our young athletes, they get injured, they share things. Hmm. Interesting. Now that was something that, you know, has probably always been here.

[00:47:11] **Patrice:** You know, um, truth be told, it's probably always something that has been around, but the difference now is because of the fentanyl crisis, and it's a whole different ballgame that we've never, we've never dealt with

before. We've never seen numbers like this ever in our country, in the history of our country, never.

[00:47:36] **Patrice:** So, um, and is it, you know, specific to the United States? Yes, it is. Yes, it is interesting worldwide. Um, you're not, you don't see anywhere near the numbers that we're experiencing in the United States. Now in Mexico, the scary part is a lot of our young people go there for spring break, right? So in Mexico, you [00:48:00] can buy a pill, um, from a pharmacy without a prescription.

[00:48:05] **Patrice:** Of anything. Yeah, you just walk in. And now they're finding those pharmacies. So again, you're feeling comfortable. A, you're feeling comfortable taking something that your friend gave you and B, now you're at spring break and let's have some fun and let's go pick up, you know, something. And they go and they pick up Percocet, let's say.

[00:48:27] **Patrice:** And one pill and they pick up the Percocet. They're finding that it's in the pharmacy, um, uh, pills. So the drug cartel has already made its way there. Now, the scary part there is that they're pharmacy bottles. So just like we have here in the United States. So, you know, and I want to make the distinguish, uh, distinguish this for, for parents as well.

[00:48:51] **Patrice:** Our pharmacists in the United States are safe. If it's a prescription from your doctor, um, that goes to the pharmacist, there will not be fentanyl in it. But we, there was an article done on pharmacies in, in Mexico and bottled medications.

[00:49:15] **Patrice:** So that is another, you know, scary awakening for our young people and parents because so many of our kids travel for spring

[00:49:25] **Todd:** break. You know, what's interesting about this whole thing, Kathy and I watched Dope Sick. It was, it was on Hulu. It was just a really, uh, impactful, um, It was a, it was based on real life, real life, but they made it Hollywood ish.

[00:49:42] **Todd:** Um, I, I have this kind of like secret, I don't know if hatred's the word, but big pharma, like there's a lot of bad things about big pharma, right? And yet here we are, like, they're kind of like. the standard that we want to use if there is some type of pain that we're in, [00:50:00] we're just pleading with our children to use Big Pharma and not the Snapchat menu and not something your friends gave you.

[00:50:08] **Todd:** And it's just an interesting thing.

[00:50:10] **Cathy:** Well, it's a cycle, right? Like I think, you know, Patrice said a little bit ago that her goal, and I want you to share that before we're done today, is, you know, to take it 10 steps back and be like, where are we not talking to kids about their pain? When are we not communicating with our kids about whatever they need, we're there for them?

[00:50:30] **Cathy:** Do they know they have the supports? Do they have access to what they need where they don't have to get in that cycle of any kind of pain management? Now, Again, I think why you always bring up the athletes is because sometimes pain happens because of regular day to day things. You just roll an ankle, you break a foot, you whatever, and then you can get in that cycle.

[00:50:49] **Cathy:** And even there, to your point, regardless of your kid's age, it's it having a parent. You know, like my daughter had her tonsils out and they gave us a big bottle. Mm-Hmm. of, um, you know, medicine to control pain that had opioids in it. And, and Todd and I had to make these decisions about yeah, how long we do this, how much, yes.

[00:51:08] **Cathy:** And you, if you don't have that kind of management, if it's just a free for all mm-Hmm, , then that can a problem. So

[00:51:15] **Patrice:** thank you and for bringing that up. 'cause that's a really important point that I'd like to share, um, as a parent. You know, let's say firearms, you're going to take that seriously, make sure that it's locked up, keep it away from your kids, you know, that stuff.

[00:51:34] **Patrice:** But if you're prescribed something for going to the dentist and you put it in your medicine cabinet, all they have to do is Google what that is and they're going to take it and share it with their friends. That is the reality of parenting. You know, we always have to be on high alert. We always have to find out what can go wrong.

[00:51:58] **Patrice:** Not that we may not to [00:52:00] make ourselves crazy, right? Not to live in fear, but be aware of the dangers out there so we can do everything in our power to prevent it. And, um, so a lot of, uh, our young people, including in, in. Families that I know very well, um, when you have those medications in your house and they're not locked up in a safe.

[00:52:26] **Patrice:** Because opioids are so addictive, it's, you know, like leaving a loaded gun out.

[00:52:33] **Cathy:** Hey, you know, Matthew Perry said in his book, you know, Matthew Perry just passed and it, we don't know why yet, you know, it's really not our business in this, at this point. But in his book, he talked about that he would go to open houses, like when there was a house on the market, and go to the open house and go into people's bathrooms and look through their medicine cabinet and take things.

[00:52:55] **Cathy:** And this is. This is Chandler, right? Like, and I'm saying that to kind of normalize this, like, there are, our kids, we don't, it may not be our kid, but it could be a kid who's in our home.

[00:53:07] **Patrice:** It could be, you know, a kid that we love and adore and feed and take care of and take on vacation with our kids and, you know, all the things that you feel comfortable with.

[00:53:18] **Patrice:** But you know, it, it, those, that age, you know, the teen years, they're really, they're really Challenging for, for, for many, many reasons, which we know, but, um, knowing that that those are the years and we're talking so Chandler said that he started drinking when he was 14. Correct. And what he was trying to fill was a hole from being neglected.

[00:53:42] **Patrice:** Right. Divorced family, having to go between countries. Right? It wasn't like, you know, I was going to one parent and the other parent in the same town or what, what have you, he had to go on a plane by himself. So he was feeling incredibly neglected and [00:54:00] like all of us, I mean, Chandler is all of us. As a young person, when we don't have the tools to manage our feelings, when we don't have an understanding on how to regulate our emotions.

[00:54:16] **Patrice:** We may fall prey to alcohol or drugs and other self harming measures. And that was the beginning of his demise, right? That because, you know, alcohol led him to opioids. And, you know, Thank you for bringing that up because I think it's so important. I literally cried for three days, um, straight after he passed away, not because I knew him.

[00:54:41] **Patrice:** And yes, you know, he's a beloved celebrity and, you know, our whole family, um, adores friends, but it was because my brother died of alcoholism and very similar. To Chandler, um, started at 14 and, um, you know, as a young man, trying to figure, figure yourself out and how you fit in as you're growing into manhood and not having support, that's, uh, you know, that's, that's a whole, a manhole.



[00:55:17] **Patrice:** The cover's off and, you know, our kids are, are falling in that. And which is why the work that you do is so important. Because we're talking about, you're, you're talking about these issues constantly about, you know, young people and their mental health struggles. They're real. It's, it's not, you know, something that's new.

[00:55:37] **Patrice:** It's not something that, you know, just came on the scene. It's been around for forever. We're learning about how to be mindful and conscious and take care of ourselves and lead by example for our kids. We're not all there, but, um, certainly, you know, a story like that, you brought me right back Chandler, [00:56:00] Matthew Perry, because You know, that was my home, you know, and my brother and my experience and yes, he died from alcoholism and So, how do we now?

[00:56:13] **Patrice:** Okay, we've got we've got all these issues that have been around for a long time. We've got you know Addiction and all these things that we want to prevent but we've never had the social media impact. We've never been in this situation where our young people are being educated by perfect strangers with negative stuff.

[00:56:44] **Patrice:** None, I can't say that there's, um, you know, it's not all negative because it isn't. We know that it isn't. But for so long, our young people were, were given a screen as a way for parents. Okay, good. She's busy or he's busy. You know, I can cook dinner in peace or I can do my laundry or I can take my work call and not even.

[00:57:07] **Patrice:** We weren't even considering because we never experienced this before. Yeah. What do they mean? What are they doing? And now that we have all this time behind us and the research and showing us how harmful it's been. Now we have a whole other set of problems that we have to focus our energy on and understand that it's not going away.

[00:57:31] **Patrice:** Um, you know, and the fentanyl crisis has made it even that much more. dangerous. So what are we going to do about it? And that's where, you know, focusing on our young people's mental health needs is going to save lives. Teaching our young people how to self regulate. What do you do when you're feeling awful?

[00:57:56] **Patrice:** Having those tools. And that's something that I was able [00:58:00] to share with adults in my domestic violence organization. You know, helping the parents. Um, be able to regulate their own emotions because

they're trauma victims, you know, going through the judicial system and all that stuff, and that fear and that anxiety is gonna lead you to make bad choices.

[00:58:25] **Patrice:** So how do we reach them? And now I'm talking our young people. So as, as far as the adults, I'm able to now share. All the, that I've learned along the journey and, and hopefully they put it in their toolbox so they can self manage, they can pick up the phone call, they'll know a doctor to call. Like we, we share information, but our young people, that's, that's where they're getting all their information from their friends, right?

[00:58:50] **Patrice:** And they're getting all their information from social media, which we know has been incredibly harmful. And so now I think my energy. It's going to be rushing to, to, to go to the beginning before our children start exploring and help them with their mental health needs and give them the tools that they can carry with them for life.

[00:59:17] **Patrice:** So, because, you know, we're going to have ups and downs in our lives and, and tragedies and, you know, um. To learn that stuff happens. Yeah. We have to learn.

[00:59:27] **Cathy:** That's correct. How to deal with pain because we will not have a life without pain. And this is exactly, I sometimes when I think about, and, uh, we're kind of close enough shop here, but I, when I think about when it comes to fentanyl or when it comes to pain or when it comes to choices our kids are making, I think I, I think about.

[00:59:46] **Cathy:** Um, the challenges around porn and the reason I think about it is because so many parents are trying to keep porn from their children, understandably, totally get it. But we're in an era now where our kids can access porn so [01:00:00] easily that it's not enough to try to put the parent controls on and try to say you can't go to that person's house or you can't be alone in your room.

[01:00:08] **Cathy:** You have to talk to them about porn. You have to talk to them about what they will see because they, their access is too great. It's the same with pain. You will have pain. You will fail. It's the same with, you know, drugs and, and fentanyl and opioids and all these things, you will be tempted with this.

[01:00:29] **Cathy:** This will be around. Like, I remember even talking to my kids when they were going into middle school and they were still like, Ooh, cigarettes gross, or Ooh, vaping gross. And I'm like, Oh, you will see it. At

middle school, and they eat like not to make them afraid, but open that conversation

[01:00:44] **Patrice:** and make them feel safe, right?

[01:00:45] **Patrice:** We want to create the safe space where, you know, over the dinner table, which is something that became a staple in our home. You know, family meals are a real thing. It's a real thing in our home because. You know, I grew up in a very toxic home in my childhood and saw the impact on me and my siblings and then did my work and recognize how important that was.

[01:01:10] **Patrice:** So, being able to safely and openly talk about these things and also as a parent. When they ask us a question to actually say, you know what? I don't know the answer to that. Yeah. I guess I'm going to do some research and I'm gonna get back to you on that. Let's just put a pin in that because Yeah. And being able to, to, to learn some stuff right now and being able to,

[01:01:36] **Cathy:** yeah.

[01:01:36] **Cathy:** Regulating our feelings and fears around this. Like you said, it starts with us. We have to regulate because if our kids come to us with something. Our fear, or why are you asking that, or where'd you hear about that, or that kind of initial snap judgment and reactivity closes them down. And so, Todd, go ahead.

[01:01:55] **Todd:** So, I, I'm trying to like picture somebody listening to this, and I'm sure that, um, we [01:02:00] will have done our job, um, at a minimum level. Because I even wrote down halfway through you said, you said, what we want our kids to do is if they're going to take a pill, take it with in a bottle that they, that their name is on it, they're prescribed, like, but I feel like that's just the top, like, if that's the only takeaway, great, that's fine.

[01:02:19] **Todd:** But really what I think you're getting down to is the nature on how we experience discomfort. And if like, if, if parents are going to be like, hear this podcast and be like, Hey, I just heard this lady and she lost her son and I don't want you taking anything other than if you're like, that's, that's just the bare minimum.

[01:02:39] **Todd:** That's bare minimum. What we really want to do is engage in a conversation with our kids about how they experienced discomfort, how they experienced pain, not to numb out from it, not to escape from it. And I feel like

our job will have, um, Will be more impactful. This podcast will be more impactful. If parents take away from this is not just, Hey kids, if you're going to take a pill, make sure it's yours and you got that prescribed by a doctor and you got it at a U S pharmacy, but it's really about how do you feel when you're uncomfortable?

[01:03:09] **Todd:** How do you feel when you're in pain? How can I help you process it? Cause none of it's anger, fear, sadness, none of it's. And we need to feel it so that we can process through it. And what we do, what drugs does is just escape. It's just escape. And we want to empower our parents, how to guide our children, not to escape from the discomfort.

[01:03:33] **Patrice:** That's beautiful. And you said it perfectly, Todd. That is absolutely right. And it's, it's important for us as parents to understand what trauma is. So, a lot of our young people could be experiencing bullying in school. They are. That's trauma. And trauma, we know, is a thief. Trauma is a thief [01:04:00] of wonder, a thief of joy, a thief of curiosity, a thief of hope.

[01:04:07] **Patrice:** Yeah. So, and that could be any kind of trauma that a young person like we were talking about with the CDC discusses, um, uh, on adverse childhood experiences, but we're all going through something. So if we can understand. Um, what trauma is, what pain is, what sadness is, and then how do we find healthy ways to work through them.

[01:04:38] **Patrice:** And instead of our young people trying to escape, right?

[01:04:44] **Cathy:** Yeah. Like I, one of the suggestions I have for this podcast for parents who are like, well, what do I do next? Tell your kid, like, if you're driving in the car, say, I want to listen to part of this with you or the whole thing, or will you listen to it on your own?

[01:04:56] **Cathy:** And then we can talk about it. And be curious because what I'm going to ask my girls to do is tell me what we were missing here. In your experience, how much of this is true? How much of this have you seen? Or are we missing a vital component? Like, instead of with your kids being like, I'm the parent and I'm going to tell you to not do this.

[01:05:14] **Cathy:** Say to them, Is this real? Yeah. In your life? Yes, exactly. Because we know it's real. Like, we're not questioning, is it real in the world? Obviously this is happening. We're, we're sharing real stories, but demonstrating to our kids, the way I'm going to care about you is be curious about your world. And, and this end conversation we're having right now is.

[01:05:32] **Cathy:** Are you in pain? Like, are we? And I know these parents are like, well, I'm not gonna ask that.

[01:05:37] **Patrice:** Why not? Yeah. And you know what's so wonderful about that? I can tell you, um, before my son passed away, the year before I was diagnosed with stage 3 colon cancer. And I remember getting diagnosed and being so Angry.

[01:05:56] **Patrice:** Like, so angry at God. So angry [01:06:00] just like, you know, with everything I've been through and, you know, a lot of us out there have experienced a lot of trauma in our lives. So making it through all of that and now you give me stage 3 colon cancer. Like, are you effing kidding me? So I was really angry. I didn't want to do chemo.

[01:06:19] **Patrice:** I didn't even take Tylenol when I was pregnant with my kids. Like, I'm so, like, trying to leave, lead by example with a healthy, healthy choices for my life. And now I have to take chemo or I'm gonna die. That's what they're telling me. So I'm just, I was so overwhelmed and so angry. And Max, um, was living in South Jersey at the time.

[01:06:39] **Patrice:** And, um, I... I explored every avenue I could to, to not do chemo and you know, the consensus came back, I've got to do chemo. And, um, so I, Max came home when I got my chemo. Um, and by the way, Max came home every three weeks when I got chemo to take care of me and take care of a stepdad. Cause he would cook for him because he knew how hard it was for him fearing losing me.

[01:07:12] **Patrice:** And that's Max. And I remember I, on one time when he came home in the beginning, and I'm just, I'm so angry. And he said, um, Mom, why are you being so negative? You know, that negative energy is attracted to negative energy. You're making yourself sicker. And right now you got to fight for your life. And like, when he started down that conversation, I remember I felt like a bucket of water was just throwing in my face because I was venting like, I was just so mad and just like, why me?

[01:07:47] **Patrice:** Right. And then he started sharing with me how, right now, how it was really important that I raise myself to that higher frequency because every cell in my body was [01:08:00] counting on me. To make it through this and having the introduction of that poison into your body is really going to do damage. So you have to be at your best and you have optimal game and yada yada yada.

[01:08:12] **Patrice:** My coach, you know, I just, I stood there. We were actually walking into the mall. He had to pick up something and I just stopped walking. And I just said, Max, how did you get so wise? And he stops and he turns around and he goes, Mom, you taught me this stuff. I felt slapped in the face at that moment, like, he caught me and reminded me to self correct.

[01:08:43] **Patrice:** Yeah. He caught me and held me through it and got me and our family through that. And so, you know, that's Max. And for so many of us, you know, our precious children, um, cut off from fentanyl poisoning. Um, You know, we're losing these amazing young people that could have done extraordinary things with their lives had we all been at the table, understanding what's happening right now, and talking about it right now, and educating each other about it now, and then, you know, holding our schools accountable.

[01:09:23] **Patrice:** Why doesn't, don't, why do my schools in New Jersey not have fentanyl test strips? Why isn't it mandatory? At every single school. You know that they're doing it. So it's like, you know, you have to start where you are, right? Some, some it's going to be in the beginning, some it's going to be in the middle. We, we have to meet them where they are.

[01:09:42] **Patrice:** So Narcan education and fentanyl test strips, you know, in the schools. And obviously educating our law enforcement are losing their lives and routine traffic stops. Because of fentanyl in the car. Yeah. and, you know, [01:10:00] preschools in Manhattan, um, just last month there was a preschool and actually in the Bronx and the owners were selling drugs and taking care of little ones.

[01:10:15] **Patrice:** And the little ones just touched little residue on a surface. And overdosed. One died. Mm-Hmm. . It's. Everywhere. Yeah.

[01:10:27] **Todd:** Um, Patrice, thank you for your courage. Thank you for sharing. Um, And using, uh, your experience with Max to empower us as parents to try to help us reduce the possibility and just make the world a better place.

[01:10:40] **Todd:** I can't say thank you enough. Oh,

[01:10:42] **Cathy:** yeah. It's just, you know, like we were saying, it's not like always under the best of circumstances to connect in this way, but our mission has always been this, right? You know, all of us here, all three of us, and now you have a story of that really is going to save lives and the legislation.



[01:10:58] **Cathy:** And like you said, I remember when we talked and you were like, One day, you know, when you were getting through your grief, you're like, wait, I know how to get legislation passed. And we're just so grateful for you using that energy and just so nice to reconnect again.

[01:11:13] **Patrice:** And you might, but I also want to say, sometimes we're going to come up against, um, a brick wall, whether it's with administration, whether it's with, you know, um, our elected officials.

[01:11:29] **Patrice:** Don't give. Yeah. There's always going to be a way around it. Yeah. There's, whether it's, you know, climbing under a fence, through a window, through a back door, this is so important that we have to make sure that we break through to educating our teachers, educating it, educating our kids, and educating our parents on what's out there and how to keep our kids safe.

[01:11:54] **Todd:** Um, I will include all of the links, um, that Patrice wants us to include in the show notes. So [01:12:00] if there's anybody out there that wants to, um, take up some advocacy or even reach out to Patrice, I'm sure you'd be open to that. Absolutely. And, uh, I'm sure we'll be in touch one way or another.

[01:12:10] **Patrice:** We will. We will.

[01:12:11] **Patrice:** I look forward to it. It was so wonderful to see you both and thank you for all the incredible work you do. You're a blessing to this world. Thank you. As are you, Patrice.

[01:12:19] **Cathy:** Thank you.

[01:12:20]