

Healing Generational Trauma: Nervous System Regulation in Parenthood with Holly Logan | Episode 23

PROLOGUE

Hello, everyone, and welcome back to an episode of the Parenthood and Relationship Podcast. Today is a very special episode because it holds a very unique place in my heart. This is the first episode on this podcast that features a guest expert.

As I was editing this episode, I realized how far back this conversation actually took place. Holly and I recorded it when the idea of having a podcast was still just a dream. It's something I had put out there, but it was nowhere near being actualized. I am so grateful to Holly for having trust in me and my message and recording this even before it came to life with, of course, the risk of it never actually being put out there. And I'm truly honored that she joined me in this conversation.

In fact, I didn't even realize how far back this conversation had been recorded, to be honest.

As I started editing, I realized that we were talking about the approaching Christmas season. And I realized, oh my, it's been a while. It's almost been a year.

In today's episode, we dive deep into a topic that's incredibly vital to understanding matrescence and parenthood overall. Nervous system regulation. It's a subject that touches on not just our mental well being, but how we navigate the ups and downs of parenting and life. Nervous system regulation plays a crucial role in how we manage stress, process trauma, and ultimately how we show up for ourselves and our families.

But before we get into it, I do want to mention a gentle disclaimer. In our conversation, Holly and I touch on sensitive topics, including substance abuse, addiction, suicide, and loss.

So, If you are triggered by these topics, maybe this is an episode you might want to skip. And especially if you're listening with little ones nearby, it might be best to pop in your earbuds or save this episode for later, depending on how you're feeling about hearing these themes today.

Now, let me briefly introduce Holly, though she will explain her path and expertise herself. Holly Logan is a master's prepared nurse and family nurse practitioner who has turned her focus to mental and physical wellness, especially in the context of family life. She's a mom to three boys, and she's incredibly passionate about generational health and healing.

As you listen to this episode I want to encourage you to pay special attention to a couple of things.

First, Holly's explanation of nervous system regulation, especially in how it affects our ability to handle stress and stay present as parents. And second, I would love for you to listen to the way that trauma,

whether it's personal or generational or intergenerational, how it can deeply impact us as parents, even in ways we may not immediately recognize.

But most of all, I encourage you to listen to this episode with love and grace and kindness and compassion toward yourself.

Just like me, Holly comes from a very non-judgmental, non-critical place, and though a lot of the things that we discuss today are very sensitive and they could be taken the wrong way, they could be seen as a way of us having failed as parents, Of us not showing up in the best way possible.

This is not the place where we're discussing this from. This is not the message that we're supporting or putting forth. The goal of this episode is ultimately for us to figure out the underlying reasons for us not acting in the way that we know we can, and we obviously know we want to.

It's not about blame, but it's more about empowerment of gaining a deeper knowing of where we have more control and more power than we thought. So what do you say? Ready to jump into this episode? Let's do it.

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MARKELLA

Hi, Holly. I'm here with Holly Logan. It's wonderful to have you. I had the honor of being on your podcast a while back and it was great connecting with you and I'm so happy and honored that you are also here with me today to share your knowledge. so would you like to tell, our audience a little bit about yourself?

HOLLY

Yeah, sure. So, um, and thank you. We were just saying, um, before we were recording, I'm happy to connect again with Markella, cause it's just nice to see you, uh, from across the world. But, um, my name is Holly Logan. I am a master's prepared nurse by education. I'm a family nurse practitioner, board certified and registered nurse, but I am not currently practicing.

Those are, I like to say that those are my titles and that is my background, but I am fortunate and blessed to have that education. But I also feel like we can learn so much from the world. And I am currently a stay at home mom to three boys. I also manage my husband's business and I have started my own website, podcast and Instagram page with really the goal of sharing and the education and support and my own personal experiences with mental and physical wellness to improve generational health. And that seems kind of corny, even saying it out loud, but I truly believe That as women as families, we can take small steps every day to improve the quality of our health for the next generations to come.

It's not just about today. It's about the next day, the next year, the next 10 years, the next generation. And so I'm just excited to talk with you today and connect with you because I love talking about all things physical and mental wellness and as a family nurse practitioner, I was I worked in pediatrics previous to that I worked in women's health and pediatrics.

So really, my experience has only been with women and children. And that's where I truly loved practicing. But I also wanted to be home with my kids. So it was this interesting transition going from, um, what I love to do. I truly loved what I did for work and I love women and families. I love children. I love babies, but I also wanted to be home with my own. So this has been a fun way to bridge, I guess, my education and my love to educate as a nurse practitioner.

MARKELLA

This is wonderful. I mean, it's admirable how you can handle everything. I admire how you are able to keep all your values and be able to handle all of it and balance it.

HOLLY

Thank you. It's been a process. Let's just say that it's not a day to day easy thing. I don't, it's definitely not, but I really am excited to continue using my education but also my experiences and being home with my children.

MARKELLA

Right. And I'm sure that a lot of this has to do with today's topic. So today we are talking about nervous system regulation. I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself, but I do want you to kind of help us understand exactly what we mean, because I do feel like it's become a trendy kind of topic and everybody talks about their nervous system not being regulated.

So I want to make sure that we clear the air and make sure we're all talking about the same thing when we're talking about nervous system regulation. And then I'm wondering in what ways your knowledge and experience of this, applying it in your personal life, has helped you possibly, I'm imagining, be able to manage and balance all these things that you are doing so beautifully.

HOLLY

Well, thank you. And you know what's interesting is, I didn't really learn about this and I didn't understand it to the degree. So when I think nervous system and I started to see this information about nervous system regulation, I would say nervous system regulation. What does that mean? I mean, I know what the nervous system is.

So in our nervous system, we have what we call our parasympathetic and our sympathetic nervous system, and they serve us in different ways and we need both of them.

So when you think parasympathetic think our calm our relaxed and all the things that go with that. So it is natural and normal for the body to respond with certain neurotransmitters.

I'm not going to get into the science of that. Um, but our bodies will like our heart rate will go down. Our blood pressure can go down. Like think of when we're getting ready for bed and we're calm and we're sleeping. We don't want our heart rates crazy and our blood pressure high, or we're not going to get quality rest.

So our parasympathetic kicks in when we're lounging on the couch. We're calm. We're reading whatever it is.

Our sympathetic nervous system does serve us. It is our fight or flight. That's what we always call even in school. They call it our fight or flight system. And again, we need it because from an evolutionary standpoint, say that we were running away from a bear. We, we don't want to be calm, cool, and collected, we want to be able to run, our blood pressure goes up, our heart rate goes up, that is a normal body response, that's what we want to happen. The same happens with exercise, so, and again, we want that to happen because if I'm working my body really hard, my blood, my heart needs to be working harder to pump blood to the rest of my body.

So, that is normal. We want that to happen with our body. I think that needs to be made clear because a lot of people think I never want my sympathetic to be working. Well, it serves us and we want our body to be under certain stress and know how to handle it. Like exercise is really good for us.

When we talk about nervous system that's what it is. Um, but when we talk about nervous system regulation. It's how we adapt to stress, even on a day to day situation. So both systems, as I said, can serve us in different ways, but it's how we regulate them throughout the day that helps impact our mental health, our physical wellness.

And again, this is not what I learned about in school. We learn about the systems, and we learn about how stress impacts our body, right? Like, we don't want to be under chronic stress because that increases our blood pressure, which increases our risk for cardiovascular disease. That's what we learn in a primarily Western education.

But when I started learning about nervous system regulation, and when I started to delve into, like, family history of trauma, and how I handle situations, and, Being home and what do I do after I yell at my kids and why am I yelling at my kids? Well, I'm yelling at my kids because I'm just so overwhelmed and what that is is my nervous system is just so activated and so Elevated so it matters because nervous system regulation is about knowing and how to calm yourself in stressful situations, and it's not meant to be perfection.

Maybe there are people who regulate really, really well, but it's a strong inner power to be able to like, figure out what makes you tick in a way. And what helps you calm back down? So does that make sense from a very basic standpoint? That's what we mean by sympathetic, parasympathetic, and nervous system regulation is being able to bounce between those two systems, fluidly and as needed and coming back down from that sympathetic feeling of my heart is racing, I'm anxious and all the things that go with it and back to a calming state.

MARKELLA

It does make a lot of sense. Thank you for that. And I'm wondering, you mentioned trauma as part of the reasons why somebody would get activated. Do you want to delve a little bit deeper into that? And is that the only reason why someone gets activated? Why certain people, well, most of us, are dysregulated at many points in our day.

HOLLY

A lot of it today is not just trauma, it's environment. I mean, we're in an overstimulated constant environment. And so if I lived on a farm and I was disconnected from the world and the Internet, I would probably be able to calm myself in a different way because I'm more connected to nature.

I'm not scrolling. My resources are probably less, right?

So I always think back, like, what did our ancestors do? And our ancestors, probably 200 years ago, their nervous systems were probably not as up and down as they are with us now, because we're just inundated as women and as families with all of these stresses all the time, from social media to going to events to, you, you name it, right?

School events, illness, pandemic. I mean, I could just go on and on. But in terms of the trauma, I think that's a lot deeper than people understand. So, I was not abused, not physically, mentally, sexually abused. I was not neglected, but I have been in counseling and therapy in my life, and I was always trying to find the deeper causes and roots, like why I was dealing with anxiety at times.

Why was I dealing with depression at times? And I always, part of me was like, I shouldn't feel this way. I don't have the traumas that people in my family do, and that's where the pieces kind of started to come together. We have deeply rooted mental health addiction, um, child abandonment. In my family, it is very kind of deeply rooted.

And I think I talked to you about this. I can't remember on our podcast a bit, but I, even when it comes to leaving my children, my children are downstairs with my cousin right now. They are safe, but it's very hard for me even to pull away from my kids because I feel like I'm abandoning them. Well, where does that come from?

It's really interesting when you start to learn about epigenetics and how Even though I have not experienced trauma, my mother, my grandmother, my grandmother on the other side of my family, my father, they all have their own kind of deeper, true traumas, and I think I feel that somatically, which I mean physically, I have a lot of like belly pains, my mom and I, are linked weirdly with pain.

She can get the same spot of pain in her neck as I do at the same time, and I don't think that's a coincidence. It's been going on forever. And I think I, unfortunately, I will say, I don't blame her, but I hold, I think, more trauma from some gene that got activated in my body, because not everyone, from what I'm learning, is, you know, it's not like, oh, your parents have trauma, you get that gene, You're going to suffer from X, Y, or Z.

Some of us just have it activated and some of us don't. And I think mine is really activated and it's really impacted my nervous system. And going back to the yelling at my kids, because I hate doing that, and I

think a lot of moms can empathize with that. I hate yelling at them. And sometimes when it's happened, I'd say, why do I do this?

And it's because I get overwhelmed. I get overstimulated by the screaming, the yelling, the constant touching on my body. You know, we talk about getting touched out. And It's just overstimulating for me and my nervous system, and I, I've tried to kind of figure out the details of that. And I think just because of the traumas in my family, I don't deal with things as well as I want to.

I'm getting better at it, but trauma impacts a lot of women's nervous systems and families more than they think. But I also want them to know that they can change it. So, I Yes, I have yelled at my kids. I hate it when I do it. But after I've taken a breath, I look at them and I apologize and I tell them why I yelled.

And that I have big feelings too and that's probably not the way I should have, you know, should have handled it, but I love them and I'm going to try to do better.

And so that's where if you're hearing this and you're like, "well, yes, I have a history of abuse and I can't change that," I don't believe that because my mother came from, I won't go into, it's her private details, but she comes from significant trauma and I grew up in a very loving, happy, healthy household. But sometimes I go, hmm, this is the way she handles stress. Because of her trauma and that's exactly the way I handle my stress or don't handle my stress and some of it is learned.

Yes, you could say it's environment. It's how I learn from her, but I think also a lot of it is ingrained with me. Like when I get anxious my stomach hurts and I get stomach symptoms. She didn't teach me that, but she gets the same symptoms. So I just think I find this really interesting, the nervous system and the trauma side.

But yes, to answer your question, I think we have, it's, it's in us and that's, you know, from trauma, personal or generational, and it's our environment.

MARKELLA

Yeah, I like the way that you mention the fact that we can change these things, because I still believe that talking about having trauma, whether it's happened directly to us, Or if it's generational, intergenerational, it's a little bit of a taboo because we think that it's something that we will then be affected by and it will come out in the wrong way and that we don't have control over.

So with you reframing this and saying, "okay, yes, maybe I'm carrying trauma but I can change it," that can help us. Be accepting and actually really be able to work on it because I think sometimes we Decisively or unconsciously decide to ignore it because we believe that this means it's a lost cause it's a lost game. So thank you for saying that and for bringing attention to this I'm wondering why do you think it matters for us to get into this work because it is difficult work to look at how our environment impacts us to look at our reactions. To really think about the yelling and to be able to admit that we do it and that we don't like it. To look at the trauma that we may be carrying and work on, regulating our nervous system.

HOLLY

I think for a couple of reasons. I think one, let's start physical. I think it impacts us physically more than maybe we want to admit.

So when I've started to learn about this too and dive more into it, When we think about, do you deal with, we'll say chronic stomach symptoms like I have in the past. My chronic stomach symptoms have drastically improved as I've started to learn my triggers and how to control them and how to control my nervous system a little bit of when I get into that like anxiety, fight or flight.

Also, I, I started to pay attention to when I was dysregulated, how irritable I was. Now that's kind of crossing into mental, I guess, but physically even, I had a really rough week in my body, just like almost some numbness in my body and tingling and achiness in my legs and just all these things.

And those are all related to being just overstimulated. And also we know so much more about chronic stress and what it does to our body physically. So our being in a constant fight or flight is not good for us because it can impact our hormones in our body, overall our body health and inflammation in our body.

So whenever you think inflammation, think chronic disease. So unfortunately, if you live in a chronic disease state, You are much more at risk for cardiovascular disease. cancer. I don't know the statistics exactly, but I'm sure you're familiar with the ACE questionnaire, which is the adverse childhood, something questionnaire.

I'm not sure if you're familiar with it, but, um, you're not. Oh, you need. So it's very interesting. It's a series of 10 questions. And people who score, I want to say over a six or a seven, have X amount of increased risk of all of these things and it's not just the mental health. Like people think, oh, if you have a lot of trauma, you have increased risk of addiction, mental health issues, suicide, depression, etc.

Of course you do. But it's also they have these increased risks of certain cancers and certain, chronic disease states. It's heart attacks. And it's, again, I don't say this is like, "oh, you have trauma, this is what's going to happen to you." It's just reality. And we are learning so much about that chronic state of fight or flight and that stress and how it impacts us physically.

And so I think it's really important, again, when I talked and mentioned about generational health, I don't want my kids to constantly feel like they are in this fight or flight if I yelled at them all of the time, let's say. It's going to spark some of that sympathetic, "why is my mother yelling at me, my heart rate going up," that chronic state of someone like they were experiencing trauma, and we know that's not good physically for the body.

So, from a physical standpoint, we know we don't want to be in that chronic sympathetic state. But you should look at that ACE questionnaire. It's really interesting and it's actually proven to be linked to X, Y, or Z statistically. It's quite amazing.

And so from a mental health standpoint, why do I want as a mother to be aware of this and work at it, just not even say I don't have children or say I do and I'm not a yeller. You know, not everyone who has nervous system regulation problems yells at their kids. Some are really good at calming themselves and

not yelling, but they show it in different ways. So I mentioned the physical symptoms, but like, fatigue and you may have like a mind cramp, but that happens to be a lot. Sometimes when I'm having this nervous system, like my mind doesn't feel like it's flowing, right. Some people have body aches. Some people deal with anxiety. Some people deal with like constipation or diarrhea and their guts are really related. Um, I mentioned the chronic pain. There are so many things that are actually linked to our mental health.

But why is this important? Why is this regulation important to us as mothers? I am very fortunate. I have a mother and a mother in law and a grandmother. People say, You know, motherhood takes a village. I have a village. I'm very lucky. I live within 10 miles of people that I need, but oftentimes when things happen with my three kids, I say, what would I do if I didn't have that village? We tell women "It takes a village to raise children," but what if you don't have that village?

And oftentimes when I'm like creating content or thinking about things, I'm thinking about the single mother who has no one. How are we supposed to help you; that woman who has no one else to watch their kids when they're dysregulated or. They're feeling overwhelmed. And you're saying to me, well, Holly, that's nice that you have your mother and your grandmother and your mother in law, but I have no one. So what do I do? And this is what I think about it. When you don't have the village, you need to learn how in these very heightened states, your kids are screaming, your house is a mess. You're way behind on laundry. You have two loads of dishes. You are supposed to get ready for Christmas and or holiday or whatever's going on right now for you when I'm recording this.

So, so thinking about the holidays, right? How are you going to take yourself from this heightened state where then you're not sleeping, you just feel like you're a stress ball all the time. Maybe you are yelling at your kids, you're irritable with them, or you're not communicating well with your spouse because you're irritable in general. So then you start getting into arguments. How are you supposed to control that? And I think one of the first things I wrote down for myself is, first thing is watching yourself for patterns. And really seeing what triggers you, and how you react and how you're feeling. The best example, again, like when I've yelled at my kids, I go, like, why did I do that, Holly?

And I did it because the TV's on, or say, the music's on, the kids are screaming, they were fighting, I'm cooking dinner, and there's all these other things going on. And instead of just taking a moment to shut the music off- I get overstimulated by sound is very overstimulating for me- and taking a breath in a moment because the dinner can wait. It's fine to shut it off and just like sitting with my kids and taking a breath and saying, " what's going on? Can someone explain to me the screaming?" Or maybe they just need a hug. And that's all they need. My second child was very, very attached. He had some medical issue stuff, but he would just scream if I never held him.

And I found sometimes if I just sat with him, shut everything off. And just sat on the floor. That's all he needed. Even if it took two, five minutes. It helped us both because it would help him to calm down. And it helped me because I couldn't, I couldn't hold him anymore all the time. I mean, I have a bad back and like, I, I love to hold my babies.

I will hold them as much as I can, but sometimes I need a break and I can only do things one handed for so long. So I have just found that If I had no one, and that's what I imagine when these things happen, if I had no one, sometimes you have to notice the patterns. What, what makes you tick? And for me, it's sounds; how I'm feeling at that moment. So in those moments, I'm feeling high stress because I'm trying to get something done and they're not letting me. That's how I feel. Now, that is how I feel, but is that reality? Well, they're young. I have a two, four, and six year old. They're not doing this so I can't cook dinner.

They're doing it just because they're learning. They're learning each other, and they're playing, and they're dealing with conflict, and they don't know how. So they're not doing it to me. I'm just, that's how I feel at that moment. How does that manifest for me? So again, sometimes that manifests as yelling.

Sometimes it's just irritability. Like they come over and they say, mommy, can I have a hug? And I'm like, no, I'm cooking dinner. I don't know why the dinner thing, but it's very triggering to me. I'm just trying to get something done and you're all on me and it's very hard.

But it's normal. And so I recognize those things and I feel my heart rate going up and I get. Just, I, I feel, I, you have to first recognize those symptoms though. You have to notice your own patterns first.

MARKELLA

Yeah, I just want to note here that you are talking about kind of like a pattern interrupt. And in order to interrupt the pattern, we have to actually notice it. So it's not something that you can do just because I have the intention of next time not yelling. And taking a breath and not yelling if I don't know what it is exactly that has triggered me in that moment, wishful thinking, of course, we all have the best intentions for our children.

But then why does it not happen? And there's always this very clear why, if we allow ourselves to find it. But I wonder if sometimes we are scared of looking within to find out what it is that's triggering us? And I like the examples that you're giving because you are taking away the negativity from it.

You are showing us how it could be just the physical triggering. So sounds could be very triggering and that could be what's happening or I'm taking something personally and that's okay. We all do it. And that's fine to take a beat and kind of think, okay, "well, you know, of course, in that moment, while I'm trying to do a task, it can be extremely frustrating," and instead of berating ourselves. So I'm really, I feel really strongly about mother guilt. And I think a lot of times we take things inward and we think, "Well, I should be able to handle it. I chose to have kids. I should be able to handle the situation. You know, I should know that things are not going to flow as easily as they did without having kids.

I mean, that's what's expected. But that kind of thinking doesn't allow us to move forward.. So just because you tell yourself you should be able to be more flexible while cooking dinner to handle the noise and not be triggered. Well, if you are triggered, you are and that's okay. You can figure out what it is exactly that's triggering you.

So you can deal with it instead of shame yourself that you get triggered. So I really like the the way you're describing how to truly get to the root of the issue without blame and without shame.

HOLLY

And I think we, um, going off of that, sometimes. Um, when we talk about nervous system regulation as well, you have to think about what's appropriate in that moment.

So going back to the bear thing, is it appropriate for me to be very heightened and anxious when a bear is running after me? Absolutely. So sometimes you have to give yourself grace that the kids are screaming, one's bloodied, I've got dinner going, I've got laundry, I've got all of these things.

Is it normal for me to be overstimulated? I think so. Everyone handles it differently. To be honest, I almost rescheduled today because I've had a rough week. But I thought, you know what a better way, I guess, to describe nervous system regulation than to talk about what's happening in my own life and how I've had to control it because it also, you know, how do we react to it?

And I have had a hard week because holidays are busy for me and it's end of the year planning. I do my husband's books. I have four sets of books actually to do. So I do his books. It's the holidays. My dog all of a sudden in the past five days has decided to develop possibly severe tremors and I thought he had cancer.

I had to bring him on Tuesday to the vet after a major storm in my state where like 70 percent of people were out of power. It was something. No, 70 percent of people in my county were out of power. We lost power for a little while, but then we got it back. And then, um, on Wednesday, yesterday was the first birthday of my cousin who committed suicide.

And, um, it, so. That's a lot, right? But what I told myself yesterday and today and these past few days is like, you're going through a lot and it is appropriate for you to feel tired, anxious, upset, right? But as mothers, like you said, we don't accept it. We hide from those feelings or I shouldn't have those feelings because I wanted these kids and I wanted to be stay at home mom.

And so sometimes I do grapple with that as well. Like, I wanted this. I wanted to be home with my kids. I have three kids. This is the life I chose, and I should just be able to handle everything fluidly. But that's not the case. It is appropriate for me to feel overwhelmed, upset, anxious. All the things that go with grief and anxiety in that situation.

Anyone with appropriate responses to emotions is going to have those same feelings. So, you're correct. I agree that as women, we've just said, we can't feel these things. We're, we're strong and we have to be able to handle everything.

I actually love this, um, respectful parenting model that is kind of everywhere in social media. I do really enjoy it, but at the same time, I think sometimes women think that's the standard and that they can never yell and they can never be overwhelmed. They just need to be calm, cool and collected.

And I was just saying to my husband, I saw this woman at my son's skating lessons. And this little girl is probably four or five, absolutely having a meltdown, screaming her head off that she did not want to skate. And the mother was, bless her, but was holding her and just saying, "I hear you. I know you don't want to skate." very monotone. "I know you don't want to skate, but we are going to skate today. I love you. I hear you." And it was so monotone. And I said to myself, she is reading from a script in her head that she has heard from social media about respectful parenting and respectful emotions, rather than just reading her child and saying, this child is so dysregulated right now. They don't want to go out on the ice. And it's okay for them not to go out on the ice today. Like it. And I wanted to tell that mother, like, you're doing a great job, but you don't have to be the picturesque, Instagrammable, respectful parent.

I had the same type of situation with my son, where he was screaming a different son, and I said, I just calmly said to him, "I'm very upset that this is what, you know, we had discussed that you were going to get on the ice. And now you're saying you don't want to," he was kicking and thrashing at me, and I said, "This is unacceptable, you know, you can be angry, but you cannot hurt me." And he ended up giving me a black eye that day, it was very dysregulated, like, he was very dysregulated, and I removed him from that situation, and took him in the car, and I was bawling my eyes out, and I said, I love you, but you hurt me, and I'm very upset, I'm very angry. And I said, "You're gonna go to bed when we get home. I love you, but this is not okay and you hurt me." And I wanted that mother to almost see that and see like, it's okay to, that was not my perfect mothering moment. I think sometimes we are drawn a little bit to like, we can't feel emotional. We can't be dysregulated. We have to be calm, cool, collected for our kids.

We need to try to do the best we can. Don't get me wrong, but sometimes it is not going to be that picturesque monotone. I, that's all I could think of. If I hope I described that the best I could, but you may, you may know what I'm talking about with someone who's just. She wasn't being true to what she needed to do because she thought that she had to be a certain

MARKELLA

She wasn't feeling her feelings.

I think is is what you're saying with the mother wasn't known. Yes, exactly. The mother wasn't feeling her feelings because she thought it wasn't okay that she couldn't gentle and respectfully parent if she were to feel her feelings like her frustration for having driven her daughter all the way there and getting that attitude wasn't allowed to be expressed. And so that came out as being monotone and reading a script.

But what you're describing, I believe, honestly, is balance. Because if our kids never see us angry, if our kids never see us, how we handle this anger. So I don't think that was your not the way that you said it-"this was not my best mothering moment-"

I actually think it was It was done very well, in my humble opinion, because you were able to first protect your son by removing him from the situation, and then you showed him how you feel and that you felt equally angry at the moment, but how you were able to handle it without yelling, without kicking and screaming, and by setting boundaries, because that is a boundary.

And I do believe that as, as we try to move forward, from models that were hurtful in the past. So for example, very authoritarian type of parenting, we've gone to the other extreme and that's how it works. We've gone to the other extreme where we're completely on the other end of the pendulum, where we just allow kids to do and feel and do all the things without boundary setting.

And we're not doing them any favors. So what you did was kind of like, this is how I feel. I'm exemplifying how it would be better to handle it. I'm allowing you to feel your emotions, but I'm telling you, this is where I draw the boundary because You know, I don't, I don't want you hitting me or anybody else, right?

HOLLY

And I think, you know, drawing back to that single mother. So just because, you know, when we talk about nervous system regulation, again, I'm thinking about that. How would that single mother who was home with her kids who just got smacked in the black eye, like how would she handle that?

Right. And it's not about in those moments being able to calmly. Like, it's not like I, if I, this had happened, I could calmly look at my son without crying and saying, Oh, I know you were upset. I'm so sorry you were upset. And then feed him a cookie and call it a day. I think about in those situations.

what is amping a mother or anyone up versus being able to control it the best they can. And so you're going to have these hard times in motherhood. You are going to have these hard experiences, but I want to give you some things that I have found help other people in terms of nervous system regulation that bring you to an appropriate state.

So not a heightened state where all of a sudden I'm inappropriately acting with my child, physically or whatever it is, but to an appropriate level, I mean, he didn't want to hold my hand and he didn't want me to carry him. And so he smacked me. So I picked him up and carried him. That was an appropriate situation, but I didn't hurt him.

I just picked him up. You know, there is. So how do you find that balance? And again, I think of these, if I was all by myself all the time, how would I handle it? And some things I want people, you mentioned, you know, recognizing and feeling those emotions. The next thing is noticing your patterns that help you and don't help you.

One big thing is caffeine. So caffeine is a stimulant and it does all the things to our nervous system. Well, we want cortisol to rise in the morning because that's what wakes us up and gives us energy, but if you spike that too early in the morning, so cortisol goes up and then you fill it with caffeine before you've put any food or protein in your body, you drink this caffeine, you're, I guarantee you a lot of women feel that 2 p. m. crash. This thing called adrenal fatigue, which some people in some worlds do not believe. I did not believe in this when I was originally a nurse we don't learn about this in, traditional Western medicine training when I learned, started to learn about this nervous system regulation and how that 2 p. m. crash is related to our adrenal glands and how we feed our, inappropriately with caffeine, caffeine, caffeine, caffeine, our bodies and caffeine makes us lose water and electrolytes. It's, it's a diuretic. It's a natural diuretic. If you were in a heightened state. So say this week with everything going on with, um, my emotions and my dog say, I woke up in the morning and drank a big cup of coffee with eight creams and eight sugars, which a lot of women do. I know they do. And I am just telling my body fight or flight time to go fight that bear. So this week I switched to decaf because I don't need the caffeine. I'm waking up already kind of panicky because like, I don't know how my dog's going to be.

I'm emotional. I'm busy, et cetera. So So I cut caffeine caffeine out from my day. Sugar is a big thing, especially in these holidays for a lot of us, but I am kind of sensitive to sugar. So I have to be aware of how much sugar I'm consuming and some bad patterns of like, Oh, it's 10 o'clock and I want a snack, reaching back for that coffee and a cupcake versus like having something with protein, like some hard boiled eggs or something like that.

Something that's going to manage my blood sugar a little bit. And I'm kind of getting to the physical changes, but you have to understand that they are related. So you have to see what you react to, and if your first reaction is, I had a horrible night with my newborn, and your first reaction is to grab caffeine, that's not serving you. It's not serving your body, it's not serving your mind. Please eat a breakfast first.

And so the day after my son hit me, if I had woken up and had a large cup of coffee and with lots of cream and sugar, ate nothing, and he woke up, and say he woke up in a bad mood, which sometimes he does, That is just going to set me off, uh, right, versus if I make myself a nice egg sandwich and sit there with a nice cup of water or tea or something decaf and in silence and just like breathe and eat, I'm probably going to be better off. It's not perfect. I'm not saying he's not going to come down the stairs screaming and I'm not going to have a harder time, but the caffeine's not serving you.

And so again, noticing those patterns with your body. So sugar, diet, alcohol. I am very against this mommy wine culture thing. If you look at statistics since the pandemic as well, it's staggering the rates of alcoholism, and amongst other things, substance use in women during the pandemic. Um, and I just don't find it funny. I know like it's on social media. They make reels about these things. I'm not saying I don't ever find them slightly with a little chuckle, but I also know that if you're needing a substance like alcohol or another substance to cope, that to me is a problem.

I mean, I love sugar. I love chocolate. And it is a coping for me. I realize that so I have to be mindful of it and I feel like the same way goes for if I don't find it funny. If you're like, well, I just can't wait till you go to sleep so I can have a glass of wine.

There's so much coming out now, too. We know about alcohol and the, the, you know, the effects on our mental and physical health. But is that your instant reaction of like 8 a. m. they're already wired and you're, you're like, oh, I can't wait to have that glass of wine tonight. That is a problem. I don't find that funny. No offense, whoever's listening. Just don't find that funny. You have to notice those patterns and how they serve you and how they don't. And alcohol in that moment might be covering up your emotions, like you just said, how we kind of want to, we don't want to deal with these emotions, right? And that's what the alcohol is doing, but it's not helping you to sleep better and to cope better. Especially again, if you have no one in your village.

MARKELLA

sorry to interrupt you, but it's kind of like we are being led there because we are given this impression that we're not supposed to show these emotions like you said before with the gentle parenting. So it's kind of like, okay, so if I am that mother that believes like I shouldn't be angry or frustrated, or at least I shouldn't express it to my son. Then how do I cope with this later on? I have to swallow it in that moment, correct? But then how long can you swallow it for? And then of course comes in some kind of coping mechanism because your body needs to somehow, express this emotion that's pent up inside it.

And so then comes that glass of wine or then comes that, that cup of coffee. So I, I drink a lot of coffee and I do realize that partly it's because my body needs it. I'm truly addicted to coffee. I've cut it down. Um, Completely three times to do homeopathy and every single time I have, withdrawal symptoms the first day

I have severe migraines and I, I puke too much information, but no, it's yeah, I have severe withdrawal symptoms, but part of it is also like, this is my go to kind of, uh, soothing mechanism.

And although coffee is not. It's kind of like people who do cigarettes who believe that it calms them down, but it's actually been proven that the substance that's inside the nicotine and the rest of the stuff that's, that's inside the cigarette is actually a stimulant. So it is a coping mechanism in our minds.

HOLLY

So the pattern in the pattern where you're comfortable with familiarity, you know, you are comfortable. Exactly. Exactly. I'm having a hard time. It's just like me. I have a bucket of chocolate chips. I'm uncomfortable or I'm having a hard time. Just grab a scoop of chocolate chips. I have the same habits. I, I, I recognize that.

And you're recognizing, you know, yours is caffeine. And so it's not a hundred percent that you always, you have to pull it back all right away. You know, I would say for you, even like hydration and minerals and other things that your body is being depleted of, you're probably need to replenish those. And for me, sugar is like, it's an emotional connection.

It's a physical connection. There's a lot of things to it, but you can recognize it and you can slowly make those changes. And, you know, to kind of, you know, go off of that too was the next thing I had on my list was a content monitoring and the other pattern is I'm just if I'm overwhelmed I'm going to sit and scroll like you guys I'm going to put the TV on and I'm just going to sit and like be mindless scrolling.

I'm guilty of it. I am 100 percent guilty of it. And this week I've had to catch myself and say, if you're going to hold your phone, you're going to create and not consume, and I'm not saying everyone who uses social media needs to be a content creator. But I have needed that outlet to just like write and express emotions.

And I think we need to be mindful of that too. Of like, do you wake up in the first thing in the morning as you grab your cup of coffee and you scroll on social media? That is a problem. The blue light, the coffee that all stimulates our nervous system. It all spikes our cortisol. And that is what makes us feel the impacts of stress.

So if you're feeling crashed by 2 p. m. then that's not a surprise after everything that you've just kind of done to your body. And again, I'm not shaming. I've had to recognize these things for myself. And so that's like the, you know, the coffee and the sugar. I need to pull back on these things when I'm having a rough week.

And I am catching myself just scrolling. I'm like, Holly, why are you scrolling? It's because you don't want to sit with your emotions. And the emotion is grief. You know, yesterday was grief and Yeah, the day before was all like scared. I was scared. I was going to lose my dog, like, and so you just sit and scroll.

And that's just the world we live in, right? So how can you then use your free time? If I was a mother who was just like really overwhelmed and overstimulated, And I finally say my kids are gone down for bed and what can I do to serve myself? Is it like taking a warm shower? Is it listening to music? For some people, it's very calming. Is it journaling? Not again. Not everyone who writes has to share it on social media. So

is it helpful for you to share on social media or is just like writing down your thoughts at the end of the day?

They helpful. I always thought it was kind of silly. Like when I first started to get back, like journaling, like what am I, a 12 year old, you know, 13 year old girl. Um, it's, yeah. Helpful sometimes to just brain dump and also gratitude. You know, you hear about practicing gratitude.

How can that help me? It's flipping the script sometime when I've had a rough day or first thing in the morning. Just saying like. You know what? It's a hard week, but I am thankful I have electricity because, you know, half my community does not. And just taking those brief moments, like I've had a really hard day with my son, but I'm happy to be here with him and think almost like things could be worse.

Um, there are these moments where just taking moments of gratitude before bed or first thing in the morning where it can help, especially if you don't have the privilege of a village. I, I really think you need to fit these little things into your life and notice the patterns that again serve you and don't and how can you improve that balance that you don't, you're not crazy stressed at the end of the day or first thing in the morning. And that seems such minuscule. You're like, Holly, it doesn't bother me to scroll on Facebook first thing in the morning. You don't know, unless you give it a try. And I think you really have to Give it a practice of saying I'm going to give it even seven days of I am not going to touch my phone and scroll on my phone until 10am and after because I'm gonna have breakfast and then I'm gonna have a cup of coffee and then if everything is good, I will give myself some time to scroll and just see if that helps you.

I'm not saying it's the perfect answer. I don't have the perfect answer for every single person. But I think we do need to be mindful of how these things impact us, and it goes back to caffeine, alcohol, scrolling, our protein intake, our hydration, are you drinking enough water, the basics that can impact us and help us a lot.

MARKELLA

Yeah. So it sounds a lot like connecting back to our bodies a little bit more in the sense of your body is not just a vehicle that takes you places, but mind body, they work together. And so respecting your body, um, as something sacred as your home is going to have a big impact. And as you were speaking, I was thinking you said something along the lines of these are small things.

So the gratitude journal as a therapist is something that I don't think I've ever not assigned it to, uh, to a client. It's, I think the one exercise that I assign to everybody. Most people won't stick with it. I have a hard time. I assign journaling just one to three things you're grateful for, either when you wake up or before you sleep, and I honestly, I understand those who have a hard time with it.

But then there comes that question, which I, I do want to kind of put it as a seed for our listeners. If they're finding these things difficult for them, like you said, they are small things. So it's very important to wonder, why do these small things feel like they will cost us time? And we have such a hard time implementing them.

When, if we add up how much time we'll spend making, Four cups of coffee when you're making it from your own machine, right? Um when we look at Very realistically and objectively how much time we did spend scrolling. And so why is scrolling okay acceptable is it because i'm present in the room with my

children and I'm still overseeing them while I'm scrolling while for example doing a Five minute meditation isn't because I would have to be away.

Why is five minutes of gratitude journaling such a big difficulty when I will take 15, 30, 45 minutes scrolling before I sleep and that will take away from my sleep and I don't even notice. And so that's where it comes into a deeper conversation with ourselves about what's holding us back basically from implementing these things that are truly good for us and will truly regulate us.

And that's where a lot of times I find that shame and guilt hide under the surface.

HOLLY

You're so, I mean, think about people who stream four or five episodes of Netflix and, you know, I can't wait to my kids go to bed and I'm going to watch three episodes of this show that I love. But then I wonder why in the morning, and I'm not, again, I'm not placing blame or guilt, I've done the same things.

It's like, I tell myself, well, Holly, you could, you just spent an hour at night scrolling, when you could have been reading, or you could have been sleeping, or you could have been, I don't know, writing, or whatever it is. So we have to just recognize and I do that. I say, why am I scrolling? Well, it's because I'm avoiding emotion. I'm avoiding that grief. And I had to just put my phone down at times and say, you know, you can't just work or scroll all the time. Sometimes you just have to be present and grieve.

And so, going to that underlying guilt and shame as a mother, if I just yelled at my kids because they were doing something that I didn't approve of, and then they're all happy and I put a show on and then I'm just sitting, scrolling on the couch, I'm sitting and scrolling not just because I need a moment to myself, but because then I don't have to sit with those emotions of, "Wow, I just yelled at my kids and I kind of feel guilty and about it. And why was I feeling that way? And how could I buy controlled it? Could I have shut the, shut the music off or sat on the floor with them and stopped what I was doing?" I'm just, I'm a task oriented person. Like I, when my kids are playing the laundry's being done, I'll do 15 things at a time.

And so I know that's a me problem or not a problem, but it's, it's what I do a multitasking. I putter all the time. And so sometimes when I finally sit with my kids, it's like, I don't even know how to interact with them. And it's because I'm just overstimulated. And so I need to go back to those roots of like, what do kids do when they're overstimulated?

I have one that loves to color and paint. I have one that we're learning to read, but does like when I read books and it's like, why don't we do those things for ourselves? Why don't we play? Why don't we roll around? My kids, like, jump off the couch onto another couch and roll. Like, why don't we do that as parents?

Because it'd be, we feel like it's silly. But, like, why don't we just go back to those roots a little bit of, coloring? By the way, I'm not a creative person. I'm not artistic. But sometimes I'll even force myself to, like, Holly, just put everything down and color with your kids, just taking a moment to, like, enjoy those little things and you never know what's going to stick, and for some people it may be painting or it may be

journaling or it may be writing or reading. There's such small things and you don't know until you give it a try, I guess is what I want to say.

Yeah.

And I did write down, I think, practicing in terms of how to practice ways to regulate your nervous system and to come down from those high events is breathing. Breathing is so important. And I learned from the, a couple of apps, like when I'm having moments, I will do four second breaths in through my nose and nine second breaths out.

And that has always helped me when I'm dealing with panic as well. It really can make a difference. Practicing that breath before you react breathing. So, and sometimes I try to practice like Holly, before you react to this with your kids, just take a couple of breaths like that less than one minute may help you to kind of reset where you're feeling and then have your reaction.

I also wrote down forgiveness and we've kind of talked about this in guilt, but sometimes I just have to forgive myself for the way I react, and forgive myself that I'm not perfect as a mother. Because of the underlying generational traumas, I fear not being perfect because I never want to like slip into what happened with other people in my life.

And I have to forgive myself that like, I'm not going to get there because I recognize my patterns and I recognize the yelling and I recognize how I can improve myself. And that is the first part I think to healing as a generation. It's recognition. I tell that to, family members all the time, is that if you're feeling like you're overwhelmed because you're trying to change your kid's diet and you're like, "Oh, I used to give them crunchy Cheeto snacks all the time,"

and you feel guilt about that. You have to give yourself forgiveness that you didn't know, or you. Just, we're following patterns and then you just need to move on to what's next? What can you do today, tomorrow, the next 10, 15, 20 years that will improve your physical health and mental health of your kids?

And that's what I try to focus on. When it comes to nervous system regulation and everything in health, I am not thinking about just my kids today. I'm thinking about how I can help us all today, tomorrow, how they choose to parent someday, grandparent someday. It really is a marathon and not a sprint when it comes to regulation and generational health.

And I truly believe that.

MARKELLA

You're right. I mean, even in going back to the avoidance strategies, it sounds like of scrolling or the caffeine or the alcohol or any of the things that you mentioned, there is a time and a place for those just like you said, with a sympathetic system being aroused. If I have a bear in front of me, it really does need that.

And sometimes all these coping strategies, We hear all the time how they're bad for us, and yes, if we're using them every day for every single thing that bothers us in order to cover up our emotions and never

deal with them, yes, they can be very detrimental, but there is a time and a place for them, and that is also where we can apply the forgiveness that you're talking about, to forgive ourselves for possibly having rested in those avoidance strategies a little bit longer than was good for us, And for the people around us, and that's okay.

And that will happen. And it's happened to all of us. And the questions that you and I are raising in this conversation, I think, are questions that we've been raising for ourselves as well. It's not questions that we're asking others and pointing the finger. These are things that I wonder myself. So I love reading books.

And when you said that, I was kind of like, it kind of triggered the question. Yeah, I love reading books. And I have so many that are in the line of how many books I want to read and they're waiting to be read, but a lot of times it just feels like, yeah, but today I just want to watch some Netflix and it's okay to kind of sit with that.

But then if it starts to happen for a while, I will ask, okay, but you say you want to read the books, but you keep on reverting to scrolling or Netflix or things like what's happening. So it's important for us to just take moments of checking in. And, and being forgiving with ourselves and having that question, but not coming from blame.

Like, why are you pointing the finger to ourselves? Why are you not doing what you said you were gonna do? But from a place of compassion, there must be something wrong if you are going against your own wishes, your own values, what's up? The way we would embrace a friend and ask, so what's happening? Why are you in this place?

HOLLY

And I think we just need to check in with ourselves and you said it's it really is checking in with I just posted something this morning because I just felt it in my heart this summer I was waking up and I was waking up before my kids and I was exercising and journaling and reading and doing all these things feeling so good about it.

I have not been doing that as of recent and I had to check in with myself and say, am I being lazy? Or why am I doing that? And I'm not doing it because this is the overwhelming season for me. It just is. And I am choosing sleep over doing all those other things. I am still trying to exercise and journal and do all these things during other times of the day.

I wish I was back to where I was, but I'm checking in and saying, okay, I'm not being lazy. I'm just overwhelmed. And I will get back to those patterns at some point. It's not going to happen today, but I will get back there. And it's okay. I read a quote yesterday or the day before that said, when your nervous system knows it's safe, you will feel exhausted.

And I can't feel that more because if you've ever like come off of a, from back from a funeral or had a really hard time in your life and then you come home and you're exhausted, it's because you've been just through something that's really like hard and difficult. And. Your mind was going crazy and your sympathetic nervous system is just up here because you're anxious and upset and just all these things.

And when you finally come back down from that, you're exhausted. And to be honest, I'm just exhausted and I have to read myself and know myself. And after this conversation, if I go downstairs and I, choose to scroll, drink a cup of coffee that's just going to give me caffeine in the afternoon. And I just know now what things trigger me and what things don't. And I can't figure that out for every person.

You just have to learn to recognize it and change those patterns.

MARKELLA

And sometimes it just takes a little bit of practice, which is a little bit of extra work, but. **I think for our listeners, if they're having a hard time recognizing these patterns and how they may be affecting them, maybe, a good thing to leave them with is putting everything that you said together to kind of think about those examples that you gave us with the physical cues and some of the emotional cues and the cognitive cues that might set everybody off note them down and take a few days where you, notice what's happening, you don't have to notice it with a way to associate it just yet to something, to, for example, your triggers, but just to notice what is a week like in my life, and then note down moments in time that maybe I snapped or I yelled or I phased out or I scrolled longer than I would have wanted to and then maybe if I've written it down I can notice the patterns a little bit better because sometimes things because it's a routine and because certain things just happen all the time we are not able to make associations for ourselves it's easier to Put it down on paper and notice it as an observer, as an outsider at the end of a week of observation, for instance. [JOURNALING ACTIVITY]**

HOLLY

Yeah. And just to end, please understand this is not like an overnight process for me. This is a understanding myself since I've been in and out of counseling for, I don't know, 10 years. So give yourself grace that it's not an overnight process, but don't let that also hold you back from not starting somewhere.

And Maybe it is writing down your patterns and starting somewhere. It is worth trying. It is worth exploring where you can start and stop.

And I'm still working on my nervous system. I'm still learning about it and maybe we will have a follow-up conversation about it someday because I'm still learning too. But, I hope some of those strategies and some of that information just helps someone to identify where they can make a change today.

MARKELLA

Yeah. I love that as a closing message that it's important to just start somewhere. Be forgiving, be compassionate with yourself and just start where you're at right now. Thank you so much for coming to my podcast, for being my first guest.

HOLLY

Congratulations, too. So excited for you!

MARKELLA

And I hope we do have another chat very soon.

HOLLY

Oh, yes. Anything, anything, anytime. Thank you so much.

MARKELLA

Thank you as well.

EPILOGUE

Wow, that was a powerful conversation we had there with Holly.

There's so much to unpack here, from understanding how our nervous system works, to recognizing how trauma, both personal and generational, influences the way we parent and handle stress. I hope that as you listened, you were able to reflect on your own patterns and maybe even start thinking about how you can begin regulating your nervous system in small ways each day.

One activity that Holly and I both touched on that could be a great place to start is journaling. Of course, even before beginning my podcast, I knew that journaling would be the go-to exercise I would be assigning, right? So in maintaining our journaling ritual, this week, I encourage you to take a few minutes each day to simply observe yourself. Write down any moments where you felt triggered or overwhelmed. Were there physical or emotional cues? This small step of noticing can begin to shed light on the patterns that might be driving your stress.

Don't worry about changing things right away. Just noticing is a very powerful first step.

And of course, if you want to learn more about Holly, which I encourage you to do, be sure to check out her podcast, ***Lead with Empathy*** and follow her on Instagram **@HollyLogan_health**.

Don't worry, I will be writing and linking all of this down in the show notes in the description everywhere. She's a wonderful resource for those wanting to explore mental and physical wellness, especially as it relates to parenthood and family life.

As always, thank you for tuning in. If today's episode resonated with you, I'd love to hear your thoughts. Feel free to connect with me on Instagram **@Markella.Kaplani** or drop me an email at **info@MarkellaKaplani.Com**. Let's continue this conversation.

Until next time, remember taking small steps toward healing and self-compassion is always worth it.

Bye bye.