

TRANSCRIPT for Episode 013 Jessica Lahey: The Gift of Failure

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Brie Tucker, JoAnn Crohn, Jessica Lahey

JoAnn Crohn 00:00

Welcome to the No Guilt Mom Podcast. I am your host JoAnn Crohn and I am joined here by my amazing co-host, Brie Tucker.

Brie Tucker 00:09

Hello. Hello, everybody. How are you?

JoAnn Crohn 00:12

We hope that you are doing well and staying healthy.

Brie Tucker 00:17

Yes.

JoAnn Crohn 00:18

All this COVID nonsense going on and maybe your kids are going back to school, like our kids went back to school, and you're dealing with all of this stuff that comes along with that.

Brie Tucker 00:28

Oh, you mean like when a cold makes you freak out that they might have COVID?

JoAnn Crohn

Yeah, yeah.

Brie Tucker 00:28

That was me this weekend.

JoAnn Crohn 00:35

Yeah. So we today are talking with author Jessica Lahey. And this was such an exciting interview for us to do. I mean, when Brie texted me that we were doing this interview with Jessica, I screamed in my car. It was...

Brie Tucker 00:51

Oh, and it scared your son! He was like, "Oh my gosh Mom!"

JoAnn Crohn 00:53

It scared my son. Like Brie texted and she was like, "Jessica agreed to do the interview!" and I was like, "Ahh!"

Brie Tucker 00:55

Because, her book, she's a phenomenal person. It was just one of the most fun interviews we have done.

JoAnn Crohn 01:04

We want to induct her into our No Guilt Mom, Girl Squad.

Brie Tucker

Yes!

JoAnn Crohn

She's amazing. If you haven't heard of Jessica, She is the author of The New York Times bestseller the "Gift of Failure", and the forthcoming "The Addiction Inoculation", which is due April 2021. And what Jessica does is she writes and researches about the confluence of education and parenting so how we could take those strategies and skills from education and how we can apply them best as parents. That's what I loved in the "Gift of Failure". She lives just outside of Boston. She lives near Burlington, Vermont. And she also has a podcast about writing for all of you future authors out there. You would want to check it out. It's the *#AmWriting* podcast. And without further ado, we are brought to you today by our upcoming the *SIB Journal*. Now, SIB, it is an acronym. It stands for Siblings Interacting Boldly, and it helps to solve one big problem in your home. So like Brie, does your kids fight?

Brie Tucker 02:09

Pretty sure they eat and breathe, so yeah, they fight.

JoAnn Crohn 02:12

Yeah, I think it's normal for siblings to fight like my kids fight as well. But are they fighting fair? Do they know how to solve the problem they're fighting about? Or does it turn into like things flying across the room and people screaming at each other? There's a lot of yelling, we don't have a lot of throwing and things flying through the air at this moment, but we have in the past. But what we have a big problem with, is not being respectful.

Brie Tucker

Mm hmm.

JoAnn Crohn

And I think kids need to be consciously taught those skills. It's not something that they know from the get go. But so many parents, like myself included, I had no idea how to even start. And that is what the *SIB Journal* does. It is a fun journal for kids, that teaches them all about their emotions, how to name their emotions, and then, how to communicate those emotions to other people and solve problems. And we focus on the siblings.

Brie Tucker

Which is one of the most important relationships that they have. And it's one of the best people to practice it with. Right?

JoAnn Crohn

Definitely, it's a safe environment at home and everything that they learn what their siblings they can take and use with other people. The *SIB Journal* comes out the last week of October. Until then, make sure you go and grab our free Sibling Adventure log, which are missions that your kids can do together and have fun with each other. And really improve that sibling relationship by doing something enjoyable. And you can grab the Sibling Adventure log through our link on the show notes. You want mom life to be easier. That's our goal too. Our mission is to raise more self-sufficient and independent kids and we're going to have fun doing it. We're going to help you delegate and step back. Each episode we'll tackle strategies for positive discipline, making our kids more responsible and making our lives better in the process. Welcome to the *No Guilt Mom* podcast.

JoAnn Crohn

Hi!

Brie Tucker

Hi, how are you?

Jessica Lahey 04:25

Very well. I'm covered with paint as I'm painting after two and a half years of swearing that I would paint my back deck. We only moved in two and a half years ago and I said I was going to do it then and I haven't done it yet.

Brie Tucker 04:39

Oh, please. I have tons of those lists in my house. I've been there two years and like there's little patches, I got scuffed, we moved in with the furniture and I'm like, oh, I'll fix that. Yeah, the gallon of paint is still sitting in the garage.

Jessica Lahey 04:49

So we've had our first frost here in Vermont. So my timeline on being able to get stuff done is closing very quickly. So, you can't paint when it's below 55 and it just doesn't get much above 55 from here on out, so I'm rushing to figure out everything else.

JoAnn Crohn 05:07

Yeah, well here in Arizona, we're like, entering the time we get to do stuff outside. Yeah, like, woohoo!

05:12

Brie Tucker

I got lucky today because it's 100 degrees.

Jessica Lahey

I'm so jealous that you guys get two podcasts together. Because I used to podcast. I used to live down the street from my co-host on the *#amwriting* podcast, and I moved to Vermont. And so now we have to Skype it. And you know, every once in a while, I drive the two hours to go be with them when we record because it's just not the same.

JoAnn Crohn 05:35

There is a certain energy, there's a certain energy when you're in the room together. Definitely.

Brie Tucker 05:39

Yeah, we used to live just like a few blocks away mile away from each other. And then I moved to just one suburb over. So I'm like 20 minutes away. So this is a way and we agree. Like we tried doing one or one in separate room other things. And yeah

JoAnn Crohn 05:57

It wasn't good.

Brie Tucker 05:58

Yeah, oh God, Yes it was!

JoAnn Crohn

No. It wasn't good.

Brie Tucker

Yeah, It was hard.

JoAnn Crohn 06:00

Yeah. Well, I have tons of questions to ask you. And I want to ask you in a chronological way. So, I like have to put back the things I really want to talk about until a little bit later. So, tell me like, where you grew up in Boston.

06:13

Jessica Lahey

I actually grew up outside of Boston, and that was sort of like the Metro West area. I grew up in a town, Sherborn, which is sort of like Wellesley Natick, Framingham area, and it used to be like all farms. And now it's weird, McMansion houses. It's very strange. Yeah. Farmland, that's now not farmland anymore.

JoAnn Crohn 06:34

And I was listening to another podcast that you had an interview on. And you described yourself as kind of a writer who fell into being a teacher.

Jessica Lahey 06:41

Yeah, I mean, I've always been a writer. Yes. But I was in law school to work in juvenile court in North Carolina. That was the goal. I had a mentor, I had sort of a, we had a job plan, like she was going to move up to this other thing. And I was going to take her job in juvenile court, it was all sort of set. And then I was asked to teach over a summer. And I just fell so in love with it, that it was completely obvious that I was supposed to be doing that. And that was when I was pregnant with my first kid who's about to be 22. So, I sort of became a mom and a teacher at the same time, which has worked out really nicely for me.

JoAnn Crohn 07:16

And when you are a teacher and a mom, how did being a parent affect what you did in the classroom?

Jessica Lahey 07:21

It's the weirdest thing. And I got, so I do a ton of professional development for teachers. Like, I'll go to the school, and I'll talk to the students during the day. And then I'll talk to the teachers in the afternoon, and I'll talk to the parents in the evening. And inevitably, I always say to the teachers, "Look, I know many of us in this room are parents, and there's this weird wall in our brains between our teacher life and our parent life. And a lot of the stuff that we do naturally as teachers would make for really great parenting, if it would just occur to us that these are things you actually bring home with you. Like, it would never occur to me to say to one of my students, 'Oh, forget it, you know, I'll just give you all the answers. That'll be easier for all of us.' Or you know watching them struggling, you know, part of watching them struggle and sort of helping them lead them toward the answer to figuring out the answer themselves." Like, that's what I do with my students. And you would think like, Oh, she must be really good, she must do that all of the time with her kids. And then "Gift of Failure" I also talked a lot about some of the stuff I did as an advisor, not just as a teacher, but as like a kid's advisor, you know, doing goals and working towards short term, achievable goals and having long term goals and helping build their executive function by helping them see how the short term achievable. None of these things occurred to me as a parent, I'm like, I don't know what my problem is. So, and I hear that from a lot of other teachers, they say, like, wow, you're right. All these things that I'm doing at school that work really great for learning. I don't know what my problem is. And it's because I think because we're just too emotionally involved, and it's too hard to watch our kids get frustrated. And it seems like an indictment and there where we don't want them to be mad at us. And you know, all that other stuff. Oh, yeah.

Brie Tucker 09:05

Yeah. And it's also the whole, like, I know how to do this. Why am I struggling? Like I run into that all the time with that mom guilt, my backgrounds, early childhood. So I run into that all the time of just that, I know what I'm supposed to be doing. Why are the words coming out of my mouth the right way? Or what did I do wrong? That you're not naturally picking it all up? Why? Because I didn't have the time teach you.

Jessica Lahey 09:24

And as I'm researching that stuff and learning it, then there's this added layer of my kids are getting old enough where they're like, "Can you stop with the 'Gift of Failure' stuff?" There is that added layer. So it's important for me to have other authors that I admire and look to and other experts. So I have a group of parenting educators that are friends and colleagues and trusted, you know, I can go to them and I can say, "I know I'm supposed to review it, I'm the expert. But I need some help!"

JoAnn Crohn 09:56

I go through that all the time. Like I literally, I wrote a book on homework and helping kids do homework at home. Because I used to be a teacher just like you. And that emotional connection is strong. But then you see your kid crying on the floor having a tantrum over homework, you're like, "What happened?!" What's different?"

Jessica Lahey

It's just different. The emotional engagement, the emotional involvement, the whole, you know, we take our validation from their successes, blah, blah, blah, all that stuff just gets in the way. Yeah, yeah.

Brie Tucker

It gets very, very hard as a parent, and like talking with parents, I feel like that is really what gets in the way of helping our kids be more self-reliant is that emotional pole that our kids have on us.

Jessica Lahey

And so for me, often, when I'm talking to parents, I have to walk this really, you know, very narrow line, very thin line where I say, you know, I have to give them the information, I have to poke a little bit so they'll start thinking about the things they do,

but and give them the research. But also, I can't, you know, I don't want to make anyone defensive, I don't want to get anyone upset, because you don't hear very well, you know, the tools I know as a teacher is in the minute, if you want to interrupt learning, just introduce stress. So I have to keep sort of the anxiety and stress level at a certain place. And so I have to be funny, and I have to make jokes. It's a whole tightrope thing. And, you know, a lot of that comes from the fact that I know what works and doesn't work for learning. And so if you watch me on stage, teachers call me on like I saw you do that visual learning thing on the stage where there are certain places on the stage where I talk about certain concepts. And so if I'm going to come back to a certain concept, I move to that place on the stage, so that people are getting certain cues for certain pieces of knowledge. And then to bring it all together, I move back to the center and bring those disparate ideas together. And that's something that's a teaching tool. And it works well for learning because it engages various parts of the brain. So that teachers side of me, I need to fulfill both of those things when it comes to my life and my kids. And so, you know, I think the kids are just grateful that I have some other outlet for the teaching stuff. Otherwise, they would get the full blast, and they would, they would never speak to me ever again.

JoAnn Crohn 12:02

Isn't it funny though, how your kids just start calling you on like all the psychology and all this stuff?

Jessica Lahey

Yeah, you do.

JoAnn Crohn

Because my kids do it as well.

Jessica Lahey 12:10

Oh, oh, yeah. I see what you're doing there, I see. I see what you are doing there.

Brie Tucker

My daughter's favorite thing is, "Stop it with the breathing. The breathing doesn't calm me down." There is like, six different techniques, because she's very emotional like her mom, she's very much like me. So yeah.

JoAnn Crohn 12:26

So, like knowing that, like parents, we have like the this emotional connection to our kids. And when we see our kids be so frustrated, it's hard to just step back and use those tools. So like, how can we get our kids to sit more with that frustration that they feel when they are doing something hard?

Jessica Lahey 12:42

Yeah. So there's two different ways to come at this. First, let me explain that kids of highly... Let's put up two different kinds of parents. There are 'directive' parents in the research, they're also called 'controlling parents', but I use the word 'directive', it goes down nicer, I think. And then 'autonomy supportive' parents, and 'autonomy supportive' parents, you know, support kids ability to make their own choices. You know, I make the joke all the time that when you have a toddler, you don't say, do you want to wear a hat? You say, "would you like to wear the red hat or the blue hat?" in order to get by it? Okay. So it turns out that, according to Wendy Grolnick, like who has done a bunch of research on this, that kids of 'directive' parents, of parents who are constantly just giving him each step by step, you know, first, do this, then do that? No, no, no, don't ask questions, just do this. Those kids are less likely, when their parents are not around, to be able to complete tasks that are challenging for them, because they don't exercise that muscle of knowing what it's like to feel frustrated and deal with it and push through it and finish the task. Whereas kids who have 'autonomy supportive' parents are a lot more likely to have had that opportunity to wrestle with frustration, and therefore, a lot more likely to finish tasks on their own. Then I explain that the difference between these two kids, a kid who can be frustrated and a kid who can't, this is huge. These two kids come to my classroom, one is going to be a lot more able to learn and one is going to be a lot more resistant to learning. So the kids who and that's mainly because one of the most powerful teaching tools I have is this thing called 'desirable difficulties'. And 'desirable difficulties' sort of require you to be able to be frustrated with something and work through it and think about it in a new way. Take some breaths, do a little breathing, you know, think about rereading the instructions. It's the kids who fall apart and are like, "I'm never going to be able to do it ever, ever!" and just give up and go boneless and never finish the task. Those kids of 'directive' parents simply don't learn as well as the kids who are able to be frustrated, push through their frustration and finish tasks because those desirable difficulties are such valuable teaching experiences and learning experiences that if there one kid can benefit from the another kid can't, you know, I've got a very two different learning situations in my classroom. So kids who can be frustrated, have that feeling, and deal with it, take a breath, push through it and keep trying, those kids are going to be much better at learning than kids who can't. But just remembering that helps

remind me that “No, no, no. This is valuable. This thing right here that’s making me want to vomit and making my kid wanted to freak out. This is a valuable experience in and of itself right now.” Because just, you know, my books called “Gift of Failure”. But I don’t want kids to fail, I just want them to have a positive adaptive response to the failure when it inevitably happens, because it will.

JoAnn Crohn 15:39

No, because failures are really what make you as a person. And I know like, as a child, myself, I don’t think I experienced failure fully, until I was an adult, like working at my first job. And that’s when I finally had to grapple with it. And I think about that a lot with kids. Where, if the first time they fail is when they move out of the house, like, that’s not good for them. They don’t have any support; they don’t have any cushion.

Brie Tucker 16:04

So, we have our No Guilt Mom mindset, we have like six different mindsets that we talk about. And on our first podcast episode, we were talking about how, you know, your kids will learn from their mistakes and JoAnn referenced your book, and she was just talking about how she wants her kids to have that, would you say like, crushing failure

JoAnn Crohn

when they’re young and elementary school.

Because it actually teaches them to move forward? And yeah, I definitely see it a lot too with my kids like they have had their points. And I think a big one where we see that big struggle to is even just look at our educational format, moving from like an elementary standpoint, to like a junior high standpoint, so many changes. And you have to sit there and you want to like you said, like, you want to be like “Oh, just give me the homework, I’ll do it all for you.” But they have to learn how to do those, they have to still have to struggle while you’re still there.

Jessica Lahey 16:46

And for anyone who’s listening, this sounds all like yeah, kids fail, it’s great for them. Now, on the other hand, you know, what I’m talking about here is like this productive failure. Failure that is helping you feel a sense of self efficacy, of failure that’s helping you feel like you’re getting something out of it. I told the story the other day of there’s this kid I spoke to at a speaking engagement of mine at a school and he had had this art project that was due. And he stayed up all night to do it. And it turns out there was a flaw with the assignment, the materials they were given just didn’t work great for this assignment. So, the kid stayed up all night to sort of figure out a better way to approach the assignment. And the next day, he didn’t have a completed version of the assignment that the art teacher wanted. And the art teacher didn’t give him full credit for his project. And the kid was like, “Look, I did this whole thing where I figured out a better way to do it.” And she’s like, “Yeah, but you didn’t follow the instructions.” But the nice thing about this kid is that he was self-aware enough to know that this adult is a bit of a dork and doesn’t get it. And he was so proud of himself. When he told me he was like, finally, there’s adults that I can share this thing with. And she’ll totally understand that what he experienced was a really productive, valuable experience for him. And that’s the kind of failure I’m talking about. And, you know, I spent the last five years of my teaching career were spent teaching in an inpatient drug and alcohol rehab for kids. And the kids that I taught, had often had a lot of unproductive failure. Like totally nonproductive, just beat them down, you know, stuff that there was no value coming out of that experience, because they left it feeling even less efficacious, less like they had any control over the situation. And these are the kids that I really worry about, because they’re not getting any of the support from adults around them in order to help them have hope and see that they can be more competent and capable and all that stuff. So, there is a difference between like, you know, just failing over and over and over again, because the world is against you. And you just can’t, you know, and there’s systemic stuff going on that’s setting you up. But what we’re talking about here is productive failure.

JoAnn Crohn 18:53

To like, differentiate between the two for the audience, what are some examples of unproductive failure?

Jessica Lahey 18:59

Unproductive failure are times when you don’t have any control over changing your situation. And that’s what leads it. So for example, if a kid, and I’ve taught many of these kids who are in a home, where there’s abuse a home where if the kid acts and tries to change their environment, it will not lead to any actual change. And what that puts the kid on the road towards is a thing called learned helplessness. They don’t have what we call self-efficacy. And that just becomes this self-perpetuating helplessness upon helplessness. And then you get to a point with some of these kids where they feel like, “Well, why would I bother? I can’t change my life. Why would I bother trying in school? I just fail. Why would I bother you know, trying to change my environment? So of course, drugs and alcohol are the best possible option for me because I just want to escape from

that. Why would I want to be engaged in my life if everything is going wrong, and I can't affect any change?" But what we're trying to do, and that's why I talk a lot about the difference between competence and power. Confidence. competence is one of the things that I talk about a lot because it's confidence based on actual experience trying something screwing it up getting it changing how you approach it, and getting it right in the end and learning from that experience as opposed to confidence which is just like this "Oh, it'll be great because everybody says I'm so smart kind!" of thing. You know that sense of competence is what can help rescue kids who feel like everything is just hopeless. It turns out that there's some great metadata on learned helplessness, data research on the research out of University of Pennsylvania with Martin Seligman looking at learned helplessness. And Marty Seligman found out that, you know, it looks like going helpless is sort of our default mode when experiencing long term, hopelessness, long term pain, long term suffering, we just sort of roll up in a ball and say, well forget it, I won't even try. But the way to interrupt that is by giving control back. If you give control both in the animal models in human models, and these research studies, you can help kids gain some sense of power and control and self-efficacy back in their life. If you insert them back in the picture and say, "Look, I will support you, if you act, it may possibly change things. Let me show you how to do that." There's a big difference, I think the perspective that some people have when I go and speak somewhere is "Oh, you just want kids to screw up." And you know, that's not the lesson at all. I got to help write the curriculum for a show for Amazon Prime called the *Stinky & Dirty Show*. And Stinky and Dirty is that process. It's these two machines, a digger and a dump truck based on the *I Stink! / I'm Dirty!* series of books, and they have a task that they have to do. And they screw it up. And they say, "Oh, okay, well, this part seemed to work. But this part didn't really work. So, let's get rid of that. But let's take this with us. Because I think this part might be useful next time." And then eventually using those tools, they succeed in the end. So, you know, that's the big picture. Yeah, I love that show so much. The last thing I wanted to do is be a part of more screen time for kids. But the person who asked me a part of that show was Alice Wilder, who created Blue's Clues. And you don't say no to Alice Wilder.

JoAnn Crohn 22:09

You can't say no to that. No, no. I love the kind of failure that's good for kids is the ones where Yes, they may feel at first on a task, but then it's under their total control to go and kind of remedy the situation and repair the situation. And they have a say in that.

Jessica Lahey 22:27

Well, and it's that they have someone who will support them and say, you know what? Yeah, that didn't work. And often the kid's response will be like, "Oh, I can't learn this. Or I can't do this math." If you give them the sort of Carol Dweck growth mindset words like 'yet'. Well, of course, you can't do that yet. You just learned how to do this 10 minutes ago, but let's keep trying at this. And you know, our job when we talk about homework, for example, our job when a kid is frustrated and wants to just throw the algebra homework out the window is not to reteach all of algebra one, it's to help the kids sit there and say, why don't you explain what you think the instructions are? Or you're stuck on number four? Well, what did you do to get number two right? What happened over here? And what lessons from number two, can you take to number four? It's that sort of supporting and redirecting that we do as adults as trusted adults around kids that will help them feel supported and like they have some ability to screw up and that's okay.

JoAnn Crohn 23:24

Yeah, asking those questions. Encouraging them and kind of sitting beside them.

Jessica Lahey 23:29

Yeah. And instead of saying, "Here, let me do that for you." You can say things like, "How can I be of help to you? Or why don't you explain it to me, or I don't remember how to do this. How about you teach me how to do it as you were a teacher", you know, this half the time the kids raised their hand, and they're like, I'm stuck. I don't know what I'm doing. And you go over there, and they start to explain it to you. And they say, "Oh, never mind, I get it now." And you didn't even do anything except stand there and listen.

Brie Tucker 23:50

Exactly! I going to say just so you're standing there in the proximity, you know, whatever it was. Like you had that knowledge, they feel like you have that knowledge radiating off, right? Nope. You had it. It was there. Right? You just need it. You needed somebody to stand near you to push it out, I guess.

JoAnn Crohn 24:05

Yeah.

Jessica Lahey 24:06

Right. And my experience is teaching older kids, I've never taught the little sevenly. I've taught in grade six to 12 all the grades between six and 12. And with those kids half the time, you're just the sounding board, you're standing there and saying, Okay, well rephrase the instructions for me. What do you think they say? And then half the time they figure it out on their own.

JoAnn Crohn 24:24

Yeah, they do. I was a fifth-grade teacher. And it was like, right at that borderline of like little kid to the middle school kid. And so, yeah, just being there, though, with the kids is great. And even with the littles, like, as you're describing this math homework, I have flashbacks to last night with my son and math homework. And I feel like I'm very emotionally connected to my son. Like more so I feel like his moods affect me more than my daughter. And so sometimes I feel like as a parent, I may not be the best person to help him along in his struggles. I feel like my husband is the best person for that because he is one who steps back and can ask those questions, yet, while my mind gets flooded with all of the emotions and seeing my baby cry and stuff that I have to talk myself down from, I feel like a lot of parents struggle with that. Yeah. So, what's like, the first thing that parents can do if they see their kids struggle?

Jessica Lahey 25:21

Yeah. So, there are two main takeaways. I try to make sure that I give to parents when you know, I'm doing a speaking engagement. There's two things. Number one, you have to think more long term, you have to think about like, Okay, do I, you know, fix this for my kid right now? Or do I want my kid to be able to fix it for themselves next time, six months from now, a year from now, whatever. And then the second thing, because those daily emergencies, we have like, Oh, my gosh, this homework assignment has to get delivered to the school immediately because they left at home. Actually, the bigger more important lesson might be not delivering it and forcing that conversation to happen between the kid and the teacher and stuff like that. So there's the thinking long term instead of short term. And then the other one is to focus more on the process and less on the product. And this is especially useful, this is useful for me as a parent, but it's especially useful also for kids that have a lot of anxiety and that sort of perfectionism thing going on, because they tend to really spiral over product, product product product, why isn't the sub an A minus it should have been an A minus five instead of B plus. But if our focus is more on the process of either, what are you going to do next time? What did you do here that you're going to leave behind? What did you do here? They're going to take with you, you know, did you have a conversation with your teacher, blah, blah, blah, all of that sort of stuff will also help them believe us when we say what we really care about is the learning because for the most part, that's not what kids believe we care about. If they play, we care about the letters. Because we put those letters up on the refrigerator, and we freak out, get all excited. And then, you know, when we beam with pride, and in the end, what we're doing is exchanging love for performance. And that's an extraordinarily damaging things to do to kids, because the alternative to that is, you know, they bring home a low grade, and you're just you're just silent. And that silence gets translated in the kid's head for the most part, as you know, withdrawal of love and exchange for some unwanted performance. So, yeah, process process process.

JoAnn Crohn 27:23

How important for us as parents is it to model that we value the process in our own work versus the product because I feel like I am a high achiever. I want to like bam, bam, bam, bam, and then the next day, I'm like, bam, bam, bam, bam, like so how can we model that better to our kids?

Jessica Lahey 27:40

I'm assuming no offense, but I'm going to assume that maybe you don't do everything perfectly every single time.

JoAnn Crohn 27:48

Of course not!

Jessica Lahey 27:50

But one of the best things we can do is to talk to our kids a lot about what we're dealing with and what we're going through. And if we make a misstep at work, if we make a misstep in a relationship, you know, it's a really great thing to talk about that in front of your kids, because part of the process of not only will it help them value, you know, when we're getting all excited about a piece of writing getting accepted somewhere that you know, you've been rejected four or five times, they will be even more excited for you, because they've seen you go through that process and learn from all the rejections you got in the first place. But when we're talking to our kids, we seem to not want to share these mistakes we make, and I don't know if it's because, you know, we want them to think we're perfect or whatever, but they know we're not. So why not just model that sort of our growth process and our learning from our mistakes. And honestly, the very first way, the easiest way to do that is if you've been doing too much for your kid and you've been doing the helicopter thing or you've been snow plowing all of the

problems out of their way is to say, you know what, I am really sorry, I thought I was doing the best I could do as a parent, but I learned some stuff. And I learned how important it's going to be for you to try and make mistakes and be able to figure things out for your own and on your own. And I think I've been underestimating you and so I learned some stuff and I'm going to try to do better from that stuff I learned. And that process right there is modeling for them what we want to see in them and you know, in the book I talk a lot about setting goals as well because they said that whole thing about how work great with my advisees. If you're setting in our house when we set goals, we try to make one of our goals a little bit scary all of us set goals from time to time. And like in the new season or whatever and definitely over summers we try to set some goals for ourselves just you know to have usually three and two of them you know our regular goals, but one of them has to be a little scary. And it's easier for kids to believe us when we say no you got to put yourself out there sometimes and they look at you and they're like wait, I don't see you ever putting yourself out there. Everything seems so easy for you. Because if you only tell them about your successes, then it is going to look like you know every single thing you try is golden and you do perfectly every time. You got to share some of the mistakes and ask them what they would do, like engage them in the problem solving around it.

Brie Tucker 30:08

I'm loving this, this is something that happens with me and my kids all the time. I'm really big on like, well, mom really messed up on that one. Anybody got any ideas? How I'm going to do this better?

Jessica Lahey 30:16

Well, it's usually that was my students actually have pushed me on this a bunch of times I was asked right after "Gift of Failure" came out. I was asked to write for Richard Branson's website about my biggest failure, like a failure I learned from. And I told my students when I was going to write about and they said, That's not your biggest failure. You told us what your biggest failure is. And it's this other thing. And I was going to write about the fact that when I got close to failing my first law school exam, my first instinct was to quit law school. And they're like, no, that's a BS story. Your real story is the one you told us about your book. And the story that I ended up writing for this website, it scared the bejesus out of me to publish this post because it was just really scary. Because when I first wrote the "Gift of Failure", I had never written a book before. And been a journalist, you know, I write and 1200-word pieces. So, my first draft of the "Gift of Failure" was so bad that my editor called it unpublishable.

JoAnn Crohn 31:13

Wow. Yeah, that happened to another writer, it was in "Pain of Quiet". Yes. You know, yeah, it was an amazing book.

Jessica Lahey 31:22

Yeah. And he actually wanted to bring in a ghostwriter to help me with organization. And so, I begged and begged my editor to share all of the, you know, give me all the feedback, tell me all the stuff. And then I begged for two probationary chapters. I said, Please, please, please just let me have two chapters to try to get this right. And then, at that point, my book had been delayed anyway said had a head injury, it was a whole story. So, we had some time to do some more in depth editing. And she let me have two chapters, which turned into four, which turned into me writing the book by myself, but based on an entire notebook full of criticism she gave, and it was so hard to hear all the things I did wrong. But that became the blueprint for the second draft to "Gift of Failure", which became the blueprint for the book I just finished, which is going to be published in April. And I just said, I am not going to make these same mistakes twice, I'm going to learn from this experience and become a better book writer because of this. And so, I had this huge checklist of like, okay, don't do these 250 things. And I sent in the first draft of my new book, and it was so clean, she couldn't believe it. She said, Oh, my gosh, like this book, there's not a ton that needs to be done here. And that, you know, that's an example of productive failure. That's an example of like, really, really screwing things up, and then being able to be humble and listen, and learn from it. It's that sort of Zen mind, beginner's mind kind of thing. Like, okay, I'm a beginner, teach me. And yeah, so that's what I try to help my students and my kids understand.

JoAnn Crohn 33:01

There are so many things I love about that story, and that you shared that story. Because, you know, I've read "Gift of Failure", probably twice now. And I just think it's the most wonderfully put together, well researched work. And it lays things out in such a logical argument. It's just like, it looks perfect. It looks amazing. It looks like...

Jessica Lahey 33:20

I'll tell my editor. A lot of that is due to my editor, being such a great editor.

JoAnn Crohn 33:25

Well, that, yeah, and the fact that you were willing to just pick yourself up and try it again and go with it with everything you had. And because it wouldn't exist without you.

Jessica Lahey 33:35

Well, and the thing is, the book would exist because the ghost writer would have probably helped me and it would have been fine. But there would have been this regret that I didn't learn all I could have from it, and it wasn't totally mine. And that's, that's I think, the big lesson which is unpublishable, or whatever the humiliation is, there's going to be stuff to be learned there. So how do you do that?

JoAnn Crohn 33:58

Let's talk about your next book, [The Addiction Inoculation](#). So, what is that book about?

Jessica Lahey 34:03

So, this book, you know, after you write a book that does well, there's this real freak out about what you're going to do next? What am I going to find with? Well, in speaking of Susan Cain, I'm so indebted to her because I went to her one night, and I said, you know, been friends for a while, and I said, I'm really feeling some pressure to get the next thing started. And she said, Why? And I said, because that's what I'm supposed to do, right? And she's like, Look, you know, I'm still promoting and talking about "Quiet". And that's been the focus of my work for longer than it's been since you put out "Gift of Failure". And is that still fulfilling to you? And I said, Oh, yeah, I'm still traveling a lot and still doing all that stuff and blah, blah, blah. So she was wonderful in the sense that she gave me permission to wait until I now know my process is a lot of reading and a lot of gardening and a lot of walks in the woods to let sort of the ideas percolate. So, I actually presented a bunch of ideas to my agent in the five years since "Gift of Failure" came out, and they were all just a fine, whatever. And then in this one glorious moment, like all these ideas came together, and I'm like, Oh, that's the book. So, my story is that I'm an alcoholic, but it'll be seven years when the new book comes out. I have six and a half years of sobriety now. And so, I have two kids who have a genetic predisposition to substance abuse during their lifetime. I also spent these five years teaching in an inpatient drug and alcohol unit, and I'm constantly thinking of those kids, like, where could that intervention have happened? What could we have possibly controlled, changed? Whatever. So, I was sort of in search of that elusive question of what can we as parents and educators also control? And what can't we control? Like? What is looking at all the research out there on everything that could even be tangentially related to substance abuse prevention? What can we do and what can't we do to prevent it? And really, I look at it as a set of scales, the more risk you have, the more protection you're going to have to pile on in order to outweigh that risk. So it's very much a memoir, there's a lot, it's, it was scary to write, there's a lot of memoir in there, I was really fortunate to get some beautiful framing stories from people who are now adults, but had become abusers of drugs and alcohol during their teenage years. And they shared their stories very honestly and openly with me. And so this book is for parents, it's for educators, it's for coaches, there's a whole chapter in there for schools on the best substance abuse programs, and what to look for, and what's available out there. There's stuff in there about sports, there's stuff in there about, you know, anything that sort of feeds into that question of what counts as prevention. And really, honestly, what it comes down to is how do we promote social emotional learning? And how do we protect kids' mental health? And how do we intervene early for some of the things that are the biggest risk factors for substance abuse, like early academic failure, early aggression, you know, things like that, that build and build and build on themselves if we're coming at them, you know, when we're first starting to see evidence of aggression, or evidence that the kid is not doing well at school, and we're intervening at those times. Given that it can be really hard to get interventions for kids, I had to get a little creative in the book and I had some school counselors who were really helpful. Some of the new substance abuse prevention programs are really heavy now on the stuff that is really in the best SEL program, social emotional learning programs. So yeah, it's the book I wanted, which is essentially like, Okay, I've got these two boys, how do I do everything within my power to raise them to not have to go through what I went through as an alcoholic? So that was the book I wanted to look, I couldn't really find so.

JoAnn Crohn

And when is that coming out?

Jessica Lahey

It was supposed to come out in this past summer. And then we decided that this fall, but then we decided the election is not the loveliest time to release a book, and then COVID hits. And we're like, Oh, thank goodness, we didn't do that. So, August 6th.

JoAnn Crohn 38:12

Well, it has been so wonderful to chat with you, Jessica. And thank you so much for taking the time because it has been amazing.

Jessica Lahey 38:18

It was so lovely to chat with both of you. I'm so grateful for what you guys are doing and the conversations that you're having. They're really important.

JoAnn Crohn 38:25

Well, thank you. And hopefully we'll talk to you soon. Talking with Jessica was, I just don't have words for it. It was pretty amazing. It was like one of the reasons I started this podcast was to talk with all of these interesting people and authors whose work I find fascinating and just dig into their minds. And I feel like that was like my dream happening.

Brie Tucker 38:47

And Jessica was right at the top. It was phenomenal. I just really really loved the conversation. I found that there were so many times. Again, the audience can't see us. But I'm sitting there shaking my head. Yes. So that I'm not interrupting. You're going Yes, yes. Uh huh!

JoAnn Crohn 39:00

We learned that in podcast audio that if we say Yeah, uh huh. Because that's like a skill. And like after listening, you're like showing that you're paying attention to the other person. But when you're trying to edit audio, Oh, my gosh, it's not good. It's not good.

Brie Tucker 39:12

Yeah. Yeah. So there is just so much and one of my biggest things that I loved, love loved. Well, there's two pieces that I really loved from that interview. But I loved how she talked about how we, as parents, we need to think about the long term versus the short term. I think so many times, right. We think about the challenges that we're facing today. How do I get my child to stop having this tantrum? How would I get my child to do their homework instead of thinking about the long-term gains of, okay? If I let my child work through this tantrum, and I teach them skills for self-regulation?

JoAnn Crohn

Mm hmm.

Brie Tucker

How much better is that going to be in the long term? And if they're struggling with their homework, me stopping everything I'm doing and coming and helping them answer their math problem, isn't really teaching them in the long term how to do it.

JoAnn Crohn 39:59

It doesn't. And for that, like for our conversation with Jessica was so many great reminders for me because even though I was a teacher, and I know these things, but it doesn't mean I practice them or I remember to practice them all the time. Because with our kids, we are emotionally attached to our children. And sometimes like those emotions flood us, and we just forget everything.

Brie Tucker 40:19

I think it's 100% true. Like if you work in a field where you do social skills or child development, education. Yeah, we sometimes we just want to rip our hair out. We're like, why am I so good at this at work? And then what I come home with my own kids, and you hit it right there, and Jessica talked about it too, because we're emotionally connected to these ones we are and most connected are a little Munchkins.

JoAnn Crohn 40:40

It's funny, because I was sitting by my son, my husband was there, too. He was doing his math homework. And I remembered our conversation with Jessica about asking them questions about what they know, and what they need to figure out instead of pointing that information out to him. And so I concentrated my questions on those. I'm like, Okay, well, what do you know? And he's like this, this this and like, so what's the question this? And he's like, Oh, no, I know how to figure this out now. And he was able to take it from there.

Brie Tucker

That's when you do the cheer!

Brie Tucker 41:08

I just want to be like, "yes!" But you got to keep it on the DL. Yeah. As soon as you cheer too much, then they're like, "Mom, you're weird."

JoAnn Crohn 41:15

Yeah. You cannot outwardly celebrate your parenting successes in front of your children. Or else, they will...

Brie Tucker 41:22

They will. They'll be like, Nope, I'm going to regress right in front of your eyes.

JoAnn Crohn 41:30

Right. Exactly, exactly.

But it was just amazing to see his reaction to those questions versus some other questions like I've asked in the past, I'd be like, Okay, well, this says that, and I basically would read the problem for him, and he would get really angry. And now I see, of course, he would get really angry, because that stuff is in front of him. He could figure it out himself, right?

Brie Tucker

That's not helping me. Right. It's not helping anyone. That's a lot of how I would do it. My daughter was having trouble with math. And now I can kind of see why that was maybe a little more difficult.

JoAnn Crohn

Yeah. So, I loved it. I loved it. I loved it. I loved it. And if you have not yet, if you've not yet, read the "Gift of Failure", go get it. Go get it. Like it's amazing.

Brie Tucker

It's definitely one that needs to be in your library for sure.

JoAnn Crohn

Yes. Also, little reminders here. I'm like if you haven't done this, if you haven't done this, if you haven't done this.

Brie Tucker 42:16

Well, this was a quick one.

JoAnn Crohn 42:18

This one's an easy do. This one's an easy do. Hit subscribe. Yes, on that podcast button. We publish new episodes every Tuesday and Thursday. And when you hit subscribe, they will be delivered to you right there. So, you do not miss a *No Guilt Mom* episode and if you have a few minutes, we also love it if you could rate and review us. We love the reviews in particular.

Brie Tucker 42:36

Yes, yes. There are warm fuzzy virtual hugs right now.

JoAnn Crohn 42:54

Yes. So, we always, if we remember, pick a review to read.

Brie Tucker

And we found, and we remember keep refreshing my phone, so I don't lose it. I'm like, here it is, here it is, here it is.

JoAnn Crohn

Yes, this one is from Heather Murphy. And she says, "I appreciate that JoAnn has ideas I can relate to. As a mom of only one child, it is hard to remember that my life shouldn't revolve around them 24/7. It's encouraging to your other women with ideas similar to my own when it comes to children and I look forward to being assured not doing it all is actually good for my child.

Brie Tucker 43:15

Yes Heather, you get a hug!

JoAnn Crohn 43:16

Yes, yes. And this episode, I hope that it shows you that not doing it all is the best thing for your child. So, until next time, remember the best mom is a happy mom, take care of you. I'll talk to you later. Thanks for stopping by!