

Parental Self Care Q and A with Dr. Markham

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:00:00](#) Hello, this is Dr. Laura Markham. In this audio, I'll be answering some of the most common questions that parents ask about parental self care. Remember, we're always applying our three big ideas. We start by regulating our own emotions and behavior. Then, we connect with our child. Finally, instead of trying to control our child, we coach them to be their best self, both by helping them with their emotions, and by creating an environment where the child can thrive. So let's see how to apply these three big ideas to daily life with children.

Question 1:

Dr. Laura Markham.: [00:00:40](#) A parent is saying, "I've been trying, I've been trying. I don't know what to do. I can't seem to not lose it at my children." And I say, Okay, I get it. Your children are already nine and seven. Don't wait. Don't wait. Please, especially since there's also friction in your marriage. Please don't wait, go into therapy. There's no shame in therapy. The shame would be in not reaching out for help when you need it. Your children are already nine and seven. Don't wait. Just do it. Therapy is a fabulous gift. Give it to yourself.

Question 2:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:01:17](#) Someone else is saying a similar thing, "I started to hit my son when he turned five. Things got out of hand. I was triggered and I hit him. I didn't even know I could feel that kind of rage. How can I better regulate that? It's not like I don't know what to do. It's just that there's a gap between my knowledge and my action." And I'm going to say the same thing. Have you been doing the self care you need to do? Have you been doing the other things in the course for preventive maintenance? So are you bonding with your child adequately in terms of the laughter? Maybe something's happening because your child turned five. Sometimes, that can happen. If something happened when we were five, some people don't even remember, it

can trigger us to act out when our child turns five. So if you feel out of control, and you've done everything you can, and we're already at week seven in the course, it's time to get help. Don't wait. Just do it.

Question 3:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:02:20](#)

Another parent says this kind of parenting is very rewarding, but exhausting. The daily meditation is wonderful. And her inner voice has shifted, so it's not critical all the time anymore. Yay, congratulations. This is hard work on your part that you've done. You should feel really good about this. And that's true for everyone listening who identifies with this. And for everybody who doesn't, for whom it's still hard, keep at it. Please don't give up. You're going to find your inner voice is going to stop being so critical. You're going to find the breathing is going to start to work to calm you down. And this parent says, "But I still get overwhelmed sometimes from the three kids and my husband working all the time." I get it. You know what? You've made a great start. Don't give up. Every day, figure out what you need to do to refill and recharge yourself. People are born with various resources, like maybe you're a really persistent and determined person for instance. Or maybe you're somebody who laughs easily. Those are skills, inner resources, but most of our inner resources we develop over time, and you can develop them. That's what this course is about, building your inner resources. So, you made a great start, just keep going and working on your self care. And that's going to build you more inner resources so that you can do this.

Question 4:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:03:37](#)

Moving on to another question. A parent asked about a chronic health issue and how to handle that with her kids. And she also asked the question about getting her daughter to fall asleep at night, her three year old and that she needs to get up and work after that. So I would say the

way to get your three year old to fall asleep before 10 p.m. is absolutely to get her laughing to reduce the amount of anxiety she's feeling at bedtime. I think if you do enough laughing earlier in the day, and enough outdoor activity earlier in the day, she will fall asleep at a reasonable hour. I mean, I don't know what time she gets up in the morning, and what her nap schedule is, but most three year olds do nap. And they do still go to bed at 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. at the very latest.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:04:29](#)

So I don't think you should be waiting two hours for her to fall asleep every night and I think that's a sign that she needs some help with some feelings that are keeping her awake. And so back to laughter, roughhousing and pleasure. Of course if you have a chronic health issue, it can be hard to do that. You say you have migraines, so I'm hoping that you're able to take something for the migraines that will allow you to at least diminish them so that you can go outside with your kids every day. And honestly, when you don't feel well, you don't have a sense of well being I know. And it's very hard to give children something you don't have yourself. And so I'm sorry. That is the hardest thing ever.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:05:14](#)

I would say move heaven and earth to get whatever help you need. Give yourself a safety net. Make sure you have a sitter that you can call on if you have a migraine coming on. Use screens if that's what you need to do. I am anti-screen most of the time but if you need to rely on screens, when you have a migraine, rely on screens for goodness sakes. Get more sleep, give your body more support so it doesn't have to have migraines. Leave no stone unturned to figure out a solution to that. And I would add, for anyone listening to this who has a chronic health issue, do not have another child until you clear that up. I mean it's crazy to think, "Oh well, it will be better after I have that next child." No, it's not going to get better. Get it better first, even if it means you only have one child, or no children. I would just say it is really, really hard to be the parent you want to be when you don't have a sense of well being. And so other than the things I've already said about leaving no stone unturned to feel better, it's really

just trying to get through the day that I would suggest, and there aren't really good answers to that, except getting all the support you need.

Question 5:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:06:32](#)

Here's someone asking about her own aggression, and when to get help, and that she was very aggressive with her kids. And she's less aggressive now but she still finds herself physically slapping or grabbing her kids' arm and hurting them. And she's asking when should I get medication? So I don't think the only answer is medication, but I think you should get help now. You know what? You're dealing with old demons. You're doing your best. I hear you. I am so proud of you that you're in the course and that you're working on this. And now's the time to get more support. You'll continue to work on this throughout the rest of the course, and things will get better. You will get more able to regulate. Why wait? Get yourself the support you need. There's no shame in that. The only shame would be in continuing to hurt your child. So I would say get help now. And if the meds are correcting an underlying issue like bipolar disorder or even depression or anxiety, sometimes the medication will jumpstart the healing and then you can use talk therapy to take yourself even further and then not keep on taking the meds that are for depression or anxiety.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:07:42](#)

I don't give advice about meds because I'm not a psychiatrist. I'm a psychologist. But I would say, go to someone not just a psychiatrist who prescribes meds. Go to someone who has experience in helping parents who are struggling with their demons and want to not hurt their children. That's what you need. Someone who can help you to just stop when you feel that need, and to just work through those feelings that come up. Don't wait. Just give yourself that support. You deserve it and your kids deserve it.

Question 6:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:08:17](#)

Here's somebody else who had a very traumatic childhood and wants to know how to not pass this on to her child. So, I am sorry for your trauma. Good for you for your commitment to not pass this on. And good for you for taking this course. And again, I'm going to say go to counseling. When you have trauma to deal with, go to counseling. One great kind of counseling for trauma is EMDR. Go to the website EMDRIA, which stands for International Association and it's specifically the kind of counseling that deals with trauma. Lots of people have training in how to talk to you about your childhood, but they're not trauma therapists. If you have trauma in your background, go to someone who's trained in EMDR and not just someone who says they do it.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:09:14](#)

When they hang out a shingle, it might mean they took a weekend workshop. I actually took my daughter for a trauma once, because I'm not trained in EMDR although I know a lot about it theoretically, I took my daughter to someone who does EMDR because of a trauma she had. It was a child specialist. I didn't find her through EMDRIA, just from her shingle in my hometown. And it turned out she actually didn't have good training. And she couldn't really help my child because she didn't do classic EMDR with her. And she had not really done that much training. So don't just take their word for it that they have the training. Definitely use the website of the official organization. Get someone in your location who does this. And get help with trauma from that.

Question 7:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:10:00](#)

A parent is asking about self acceptance and self esteem and fear that you're not good enough. And that is a source of anger. You're totally right. That is often a source of anger for people and it's also a source of shame. I would call it a lack of self love. And I think it's a universal tendency that we feel like we're not enough and that we

don't love ourselves. But it's a tendency, even in the most healthy people, even if it's a very small tendency. And it comes up even when you've done a lot of work on yourself, so that can come up for me once in a while. And you know what I do? I immediately start taking care of myself and giving myself the antidotes, the self love antidotes to any kind of feeling that I'm not good enough.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:10:48](#)

And so I think there are many things you can do in the moment, but also just in life in general, to cure those fears that you're not good enough, which will cure the anger. Now it's a major project, you'll have to work on it 24/7 in a way, make it a priority. You'll have to work on it for the rest of your life. One way is therapy. It's a time honored tradition. I think it's a great thing. I've been in therapy. It was wonderful when I was young, but I think meditation can be even more effective. If I had to pick one, I would pick meditation but I would also give myself other kinds of support. I would read inspirational books, I would use mantras. I would listen to audios that are inspirational. I would say one great way to do this is simply to get up a little bit earlier every day to have self love time and give yourself one thing to work on that day. But make it a priority. This is your personal growth project. And good for you for doing that healing. I think a lot of that healing will come from this course. And that's just the first step. And there are a lot of other resources that are given in the other resource section each week of the course that you can also use to help yourself in your self love project.

Question 8:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:11:59](#)

A parent is asking about her anxiety when her house gets messy, but also her anxiety when she goes to clean instead of playing with her children. So you are in a bind, my dear. When your house is messy, you're anxious. And it sounds like that comes from your childhood. Households will always be messy. But when you clean instead of play with your kids, you're anxious because you think you're a bad mother. So it sounds like you have two agreements with yourself or two belief systems, and they're in direct

conflict. So you need to renegotiate those agreements. So some of the rest of you might have had these specific agreements, but listen to how this works and you could do this for yourself.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:12:30](#)

We all have agreements, often unconscious that we don't even know we have, like I have an agreement that I have to be productive or I feel like I'm worthless. So, over the last few years I've been intensively working hard on that and it's not usually such an active belief system. It's almost like a shadow instead of a real thing, but it's like the groove from a record. It's still there and it's possible for it to kick in and I have to work on it when it comes up. Notice it and provide an antidote to it. So write all your agreements out. "It's not okay for my house to be messy. It means I'm a bad person." And then the other one, "I need to play with my kids constantly or I'm a bad mom." And then your new agreements. "Every day, I do a little basic housekeeping routine, I make the meals, I clean up the kitchen, I do a little something extra like a bathroom or some laundry. But my priority is connection and love in my family. It's okay for my house to be a little messy."

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:13:30](#)

That's an agreement, right? I'm prioritizing what matters, or "Every day I roughhouse with my kids but I also need some downtime for me, while my kids have rest time and they need some unstructured time to play. That's what makes me a good mom." And just make an agreement, those new agreements, write them down. And really every day look at those agreements and decide which one you want to go to. And every time one of the old agreements kicks up its ugly head, pull out the new one and give yourself an antidote.

Question 9:

Parent: [00:14:02](#)

Thank you for all these resources. This has been life changing for us. So we have a two and a half year old and a nine month old and a two and a half year old. We've been able to use a lot of the techniques from this course so far to prevent tantrums and to get on her level and connect.

And that's been great. Where I'm having some issues is trying to figure out how to navigate. She has these moments where she goes from zero to 60 seemingly out of nowhere. And I know from what you said, it's never out of nowhere, but I can't figure it out. So like one morning, she just walked in the room and said, "Mom, take your ponytail out," and then started screaming and went into a full tantrum with no warning. So I think it's like a control thing, but I try to give her as much control of choices on clothing, food, and try to have her control as much of the day as we can. And it happens relatively frequently like three or four times a day. Just out of nowhere, she's inconsolably upset. So it seems like more than she just needs to cry. I don't know.

- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:15:08](#) Well, when you say more than she just needs to cry. I mean, why else would she be doing that? When she's inconsolably upset, I wouldn't try to console her. Will she let you hold her at that point or not?
- Parent: [00:15:21](#) Eventually. She pushes me away and I say I'm here when you need me, that whole thing and eventually, she'd like to be held like a baby, which I think is a whole other issue with having a new baby in the house.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:15:32](#) The nine month old. Yeah, yeah, of course.
- Parent: [00:15:34](#) Yes.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:15:35](#) So that's great that she will let you hold her eventually. How long does she cry for?
- Parent: [00:15:41](#) It varies, but five, 10 minutes maybe.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:15:45](#) Okay. And when she's crying, do you feel like you're able to welcome those tears or do you feel like you're in a hurry to have her stop crying?
- Parent: [00:15:54](#) I'm working on that. I get stressed out.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:15:58](#) Of course, you and the rest of the world. Okay, so that's normal. Of course, we all do because we weren't allowed to cry, most of us.

- Parent: [00:16:05](#) Yes.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:16:07](#) First of all, you're doing great to stay with her and you know, say I'm here with a hug when you're ready, and eventually she'll let you hold her. I wouldn't get up and move away. I mean, you have a nine month old, you have to go to sometimes, but if you can stay there with her and breathe. And I'm asking you to notice what goes on inside you. Just close your eyes and breathe and feel what's going to come up in your body and I guarantee you won't feel good. You're going to get like chills, you're going to feel like heat is rising off of you. You're going to maybe be hyperventilating, you might feel nauseous like you're going to throw up, that's what happens to us when we have a negative charge around something.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:16:54](#) I'm not saying you're causing this in your daughter at all. I think though that if she got a chance to really cry and let it all out, and you were actually able to be completely welcoming about the emotions, I'm betting it would be less often. It wouldn't be three or four times a day. You know, she's got a nine month old baby in the house, number one. Number two, she's probably a highly sensitive kid so kids like that do have to have meltdowns. When she's only two and a half, she might have one a day, but it won't be three or four times a day. And what I have seen, hundreds of times, is that if you can actually be okay with her tears, which means you sit there and you just breathe while she does this, and you don't try to numb it, don't try to sedate the feelings or distract yourself. Just breathe and just notice what's going on in your body.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:17:54](#) Then what will happen is you will have less and less reaction every time she cries, less and less negative charge running. And more and more, you'll have a reaction of compassion for her. And in fact, if when you're feeling this way, if it feels unbearable, the key to handling that is compassion for yourself, to just realize this is some two year old or three year old inside you, who is having a really hard time with her crying. And this is the work for every one of us in some form, every person listening. You may be at a different stage with your child, but every one of us

has to learn to reparent ourselves. And it's the negative charge around stuff that relates to our children. It all comes from our own challenges. And so if you can notice those ways of feeling in your body, just the sensations in your body, and hold yourself with compassion and even notice that two year old inside you who is throwing yourself on the floor, screaming at this moment inside you, you know --

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:18:57](#) and just hold that two year old inside you with compassion -- what ends up happening is you heal yourself in a way that is profound and that actually can change your life. And completely aside from that, but wonderfully, you change the way you show up with your kid. So I am not saying that this is the reason she's doing it, but I do think that she will cry, maybe even more deeply, and maybe for longer than five or 10 minutes, but less often. And in between, she'll be a lot less controlling because you started off by talking about her efforts to control and how you let her control. That's a sign of a full backpack. When kids insist on being controlling, that they get whiny and demanding, that's the full backpack. And they get much less controlling when we actually help them empty the backpack.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:19:47](#) I mean she's not getting stuck in anger, she does cry and then she ends up in your lap so you're already creating safety with her, which is fantastic. So the next step of it is to really welcome the emotions in a way that lets her really let it out. And I think basically, you'll see less crying and you'll see a lot less controlling.

Parent: [00:20:10](#) Okay, thank you.

Question 10:

Parent: [00:20:21](#) So just a little bit of backstory for my question. I think part of my triggers might be that I have postpartum depression right now. So sometimes I'll be changing my toddler in his room. And then my other two boys who are nine and five,

they'll be fighting in another room and the older one will punch the other one. And then I feel like all I can do is yell like, "No." So I feel like in that instance, I'm not really sure what to do.

- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:20:55](#) Well, first of all, I am really sorry that you're struggling with postpartum depression. It is really tough. That's the first thing I'll say.
- Parent: [00:21:04](#) Yes.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:21:05](#) And I want to make sure you have some support for that. Do you have anybody around you who you're seeing or you can reach out to at those moments when you feel overwhelmed?
- Parent: [00:21:15](#) Yeah, I do have a friend I can call.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:21:18](#) Okay. And is that helpful when you call your friend?
- Parent: [00:21:22](#) Sometimes, but not all the time though.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:21:23](#) Okay, great. That's a start. And not all the time. And how bad does it get? Like if your friend is not helpful, where would you turn next? Because you have three little children depending on you.
- Parent: [00:21:35](#) Yeah, well, I pray. So that's something that's helpful also.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:21:40](#) That's great, okay. And I guess I just want to make sure that you have somebody else to reach out to, some phone numbers, some support line, something, if you need that. Do you? If not, please, would you email my assistant?
- Parent: [00:21:57](#) I haven't thought of that so at the moment, I don't.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:22:04](#) And maybe you haven't needed it and maybe you won't, and that's great. I just want to make sure you have the tools and the support you need if you need it. So my assistant Beth, who is wonderful, is at administrator at ahaparenting.com.
- Parent: [00:22:18](#) Okay, yes.

- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:22:20](#) So just email her, and we'll send you at least a support phone number. But back to your question. So your question is, at that moment when your nine and five year old are fighting in the other room, and you're trying to change your toddler's diaper, what do you do? And I want to add that anyone would feel at that moment, upset, right?
- Parent: [00:22:39](#) Yeah.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:22:40](#) Anyone would feel upset if they're trying to deal with a toddler, because it's hard enough to change a wiggly toddler who doesn't want to be changed, right, and then your other two boys are fighting in the other room and you can't be in both places at once. What happens to all of us is we feel like we can't handle it, like we're not up to the task, right? That happens to all of us in that moment. So I think there's the outside things that you do, and then there's the inner thing that you do. And I think the inner thing you do is you increase your inner resources. First of all, you acknowledge it. "Oh my God, I feel so overwhelmed." Right? You just have to acknowledge, "Yeah, I'm feeling overwhelmed. Oh my God, I feel like I can't handle this." Then you increase your inner resources because that's what fear is and that's what upset is. We feel like we can't handle what's happening outside us. And so you can't change the outside world, but what you can do is increase the inner resource.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:23:35](#) And there are lots of ways to do that. And it's a lifetime of work to find ways to do it. You've already said that one way you do it is your own faith, your inner faith, and that's fantastic. I would say also at that moment, you want to reassure yourself, you want some kind of a mantra that works for you like, "I can handle this. They're not going to kill each other." That's the first thing. So you notice there's still screaming in the other room. You've done two things already. You have acknowledged how you feel, and you reassured yourself. And hopefully, you've still been relating to your toddler who you're trying to change, because if you start getting really anxious and you start to move very quickly with your toddler and sort of

manhandle them, your toddler will also start to fall apart because of your behavior at that moment. So you can't do that either. You have to stay calm.

- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:24:31](#) If your toddler isn't a mess at that moment, you can pick your toddler up under your arm, walk out of the room into where your boys are and say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. What's going on here?" First of all, if you're in the middle of a messy diaper or if you just think your toddler is going to pee all over the place while you're walking, then you can't do that. You have to finish changing them first. But if you can, go ahead and pick him up and just say to yourself, "It's not an emergency. I can handle this." And you walk into the other room, and that's when you intervene with your boys. And there's a lot of information both in the sibling week of the course, and also in my sibling book.
- Parent: [00:25:12](#) Yeah. Yeah, I have your sibling audiobook.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:25:15](#) Oh, great. Is that helpful?
- Parent: [00:25:17](#) It is. But at the same time, I do forget a lot of things. I think I have to keep playing the book (audio version).
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:25:24](#) Well, we all do. It takes practice. So I would just say keep working with how to intervene with them, but I think the real work you're talking about is inside yourself. And it's the "I can handle it," because you can.
- Parent: [00:25:38](#) Yeah, okay. Thank you.

Question 11:

- Dr. Laura Markham: This specific question is, "What are the different kinds of therapies? Can you give us a rundown?" That's a lot, and I'm going to keep this very short. I'm not going to give you a full rundown, but let me say that there's therapy that is based on talking and then there's therapy that's based on the body. And talking therapy really falls into more, "Let's talk about your childhood" versus "let's talk about your current reactions to things and the way your mind is working." So the first one about your childhood, honestly,

even though I was trained that way, I don't think it's necessary. I think anything you have as a problem from your childhood, it's going to come up now. You're going to have plenty of opportunities to address it in your current life. That's because triggers by definition get triggered later in life. So I'm not actually encouraging you to go find a therapist and sit and talk to that therapist for two years about your childhood.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:26:41](#)

If you're moved in that direction, great. Go do it. It's not a bad thing. It's just it takes longer probably, but it's not a bad thing. And everybody should have some experience with thinking through their childhood and you can do that with journaling. You can do it by talking to a therapist. And you can do it by talking to your siblings and friends. But the other kind of talking approach, cognitive behavioral therapy, is looking more at how your mind works and how you react to things. The most effective cognitive behavioral approaches now include mindfulness. So I would ask a therapist what kind of approach they use. They might tell you, they're eclectic, they use lots of approaches. I would ask them if they do mindfulness, really important I think. I would ask if they use a cognitive behavioral approach, and if so, is it more cognitive? Is it more behavioral? I wouldn't use a behavioral approach most of the time, unless you're doing something like overcoming a phobia like learning to fly. It's good for that. Otherwise, I wouldn't use behaviorism.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:27:48](#)

But cognitive approaches are generally pretty good, especially if they're more mindful in nature. You know, when we talk about therapy that works, this is all verbal and many smart people like you, listening to this, can talk rings around a therapist, and that's not useful. So what we really want is to get to the body, where everything is stored. So I would encourage you to consider body therapy. And Somatic Experiencing is a fairly recent developed body therapy. And I don't just mean getting a massage, I mean somebody who's actually trained to help you notice how things feel in your body and work them through. And you do talk about it as it happens generally. So you're working through your triggers that are stored in

your body. And another related kind of therapy is EMDR, and it comes from eye movement sensitization technique, which was developed when people noticed that the eyes move in REM sleep because we're processing emotions in our dreams, as we're creating memories.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:29:05](#)

So there was experimentation on ways to process emotions when we're awake by moving our eyes, to resolve the trauma, the past emotions. And I really like EMDR. I'm not trained to do EMDR, but I have seen great results from it. I've observed EMDR sessions with people who I thought were not very good, and it wasn't effective. And I've observed EMDR sessions with people who are fantastic, including one with me, and it was life changing. So I would just say, if you want an EMDR therapist, the way to find one is through EMDRIA, it stands for international association. Make sure the person is certified. Lots of people take these weekend workshops, they're not certified. You want somebody who knows what they're doing. And if it's for you, ask if they've dealt with this before, the thing that you have, and trust your instincts. You should not be seeing somebody 100 times. EMDR is effective in a few sessions. That's really plenty, unless you had a very traumatic childhood. So probably, you'll know very quickly if it's working for you.

Question 12:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:30:23](#)

And somebody has a follow up question to this, which is, "Is it safe and effective to use EMDR with children under age eight?" There has been research on this. The answer is yes. It's much more effective than doing nothing, and it's somewhat more effective than using cognitive behavioral therapy, but cognitive behavioral therapy is also effective with kids. I am a big fan of EMDR for kids actually. I've never seen anything that shows that there's any harm in it, but I would always make sure that you have an experienced person who has worked with kids, who can form a trusting relationship with your child. And obviously, who's certified, somebody who comes from the EMDRIA website.

Question 13:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:31:05](#)

Okay, what are the best meditation resources? There's a list of meditation resources under the bonus materials in week one. I consider it so important that I put that right up front, in week one. And I think meditation was more effective for me than therapy. I think it changes your life. I don't think there's anything that's as effective. But, you know, if your instinct is to do therapy, do therapy. Do it all, why not? Do whatever you can do, where your instinct tells you you're going to grow from, and that's great. There are also some apps that are good, the Calm app is good. The Smiling Mind app is good. There's something called Headspace that somebody suggested on the forum. So there are many apps out there for meditation. Basically, meditation, I would say when you're first starting out is really, really hard. And it really helps if you have somebody to walk you through it like a guided meditation. And once you do that successfully for a while, you can choose something like Tara Brach, B-R-A-C-H, Tara is T-A-R-A.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:32:11](#)

She has a website with hundreds of free meditations you can listen to, stream or download. And the great thing about her is that she does it with you and these are all recorded from live events. I've been to her live event. She's great. And you just listen and she'll say, "Now bring your attention back to your body. Listen to the sounds in the room. Now breath, just notice your breathing." And then she'll sit in silence for like three minutes and then she'll say, "Notice that your attention is wandering, bring it back to your breathing.", so you get the experience of someone helping you keep on track, but it's not a completely guided meditation. So I'd start with guided meditation, I'd move on to somebody like Tara Brach. And then eventually, you can sit down, shut your eyes, bring yourself completely present and just bam, you're there. You're all lined up inside, you're present. And if you've done any meditation retreats, maybe before you had

children, you'll know how to do this, but maybe you've taught yourself otherwise.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:33:16](#)

But if you find this hard to do, don't worry about it, you'll get there. These other kinds of meditation will ease you into it. And the positive benefits of meditation, as you know, are that you become less reactive and you rewire your brain. Your health gets better. You get happier. And I would say you bring much more consciousness to all of your unconscious stuff. I think that's what the process of meditation does. As your mind wanders and you bring yourself back with love, you're learning self love so that's another thing that meditation does for you. I can't speak highly enough about it. So I'm delighted that you're asking about it.

Question 14:

Dr. Laura Markham:

Somebody else asked about their own anxiety, feeling constantly worried when their child's away. And I would say great, you know your own anxiety, your child is fine, but you're anxious.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:34:10](#)

And if you read the last chapter of my book, Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids, there's an example. And when you're fearful about your child, I use the example of biking to school. Imagine your child biking safely through the streets, stopping at the roads to wait for the cars to go by. And just imagine your child being safe. And as your own anxiety comes up, breathe through it. This is just what you do when you meditate, you breathe through the discomfort, and you find that the discomfort melts away and your anxiety will melt away too.

Question 15:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:34:43](#)

I have another question from a parent who says, "I'm trying to develop a gratitude practice. And it's great, but I find I'm always tacking on the things I'm not grateful for. So for instance, I have children whose health is healing very well. They're loving. They're mostly very happy. And

then suddenly it comes to my mind, but now I had to get my three-year-old dressed again, like when she was little, and my five year old had an aggressive meltdown.” So you're wondering why this happens. I would say it's perfectionism or shame, those are two things you posited that might be the reason, or maybe you're just letting yourself know about the things that aren't working for you. And you know what, this is an opportunity for you to acknowledge that stuff. So let me give you a little quick tool to use. On the website, if you go and you put EFT, it stands for Emotional Freedom Technique.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:35:40](#)

If you put that into the search box (at AhaParenting.com), you'll find a page on how to use EFT, which is simply tapping your energy meridians. You use it to calm yourself, but you can also use it for this kind of situation. So when you're sitting and doing your gratitude practice, and all the sudden that pops into your mind, take a deep breath and do a little tapping, because tapping is great to shift you from one place to another. So you can say, "**Even though** my five year old had an aggressive meltdown today, I deeply love, accept and forgive myself." Now, you may wonder what that has to do with it. But essentially, everything comes down to your own self love and forgiveness. It's like, "Well, my five year old had a meltdown, therefore, I'm not a good enough mom. Therefore, I failed. Therefore, I'm a bad person. Therefore, I'm not lovable. Therefore, I don't deserve to survive." That's the way the dominoes fall when this happens to you.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:36:43](#)

So you do the tapping, and the tapping is just on the karate chop part of your hand. You take your other hand with the fingers and you tap it. Just do this right now while you're listening. Tap your karate chop point of either hand and just say, "**Even though** my child had this problem today..." or "Even though my child has this problem..." "...I deeply love, accept and forgive myself. Even though my child has this problem or showed this problem today, I deeply love, accept and forgive my child. Even though there was this problem in my life today, I am so grateful I have this child." So as you do that, you might notice you're

starting to yawn, you might notice a shift, I feel more centered just doing that just now. You just notice that you're clearing something out.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:37:41](#) And so every time you do a gratitude practice and you get one of these negative things popping up, reverse it. Say “**Even though**” the negative thing, and then state your positive. And as you do the tapping, you'll find this will shift. And I bet in a month, you won't be having this issue anymore.

Question 16:

Parent: [00:37:59](#) So my question is when it comes to regulating our own emotions, what if we can't cry? I've heard you talk about what to do if your kid can't cry. But if we ourselves can't cry, how do we necessarily help our children move on and empty that backpack?

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:38:20](#) That is such a great question. I'm so glad you asked it. So as you think about something like watching a sad movie, do you ever have times when you tear up watching a sad movie, for instance?

Parent: [00:38:38](#) Oh, yes, that was my go to move to cry.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:38:42](#) There you go. So that's because it's safe, because it's not about you, right? It's not about you or your situation or your family. And so it's not about your own emotional backpack. But the truth is, it is. Because that's what is touching us, touching on something inside of you. So I would say start with the last movie you cried at, think about that feeling and notice what it feels like in your body. Just right now, think about that. Whatever that movie was that made you cry, think about it and just feel what's in your body. Do you feel your eyes starting to well up even a little bit? It's okay if you don't.

Parent: [00:39:21](#) No.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:39:23](#) Okay. Listen, you're on the phone and in front of 1,000 people so it's okay that you don't. That's not exactly the

safest situation, right? But here's what I'm going to suggest you do. Later when you hang up the phone, go by yourself, sit down, and just call to mind that movie, whatever it was where you did cry, and breathe. And just notice the feelings and just sit with them. And just allow whatever comes up to come up. And as you notice what it feels like in your body, not the storyline, you don't have to go into the storyline in your head about the time your mother yelled at you or your brother beat you up. Just stay with what it feels like in your body. And just notice it might feel a little tight in your chest. Maybe your throat. Or maybe there's some places you feel numb.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:40:27](#)

I'm thinking that you're probably feeling numb in different places in your body. So as you notice that numbness, just sit, breathe and just feel and just say to yourself, to that part of your body that feels numb, "I'm here. I'm listening." Just the way you would to a child who you wanted to open up to you. Just sit with it. And I think if you do this on a regular basis in a very nurturing way to yourself, you'll start to notice that your body has all kinds of secrets, and it's trying to keep you from feeling pain and that's why it's numbing out, and that's why you aren't crying. And I think you're going to find that you begin to unlock that. I would also suggest meditation is a great way to do it. And I would also suggest getting pictures of yourself as a child and talking to those pictures, and listening and loving. And you know, the more we open our heart to anything that's in there, the more we feel everything that's in there. So the more you open your heart to love, the more you feel the old pain.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:41:39](#)

But the more you open your heart to those tears, the more love you're going to feel too. And if you feel like you're doing this and you want more support, go to a therapist, get some help with something from a therapist to actually work through some of this, because your life is not going to last forever and you deserve to have the richest life you can. Is that's helpful?

Parent: [00:42:04](#)

Yes. Thank you.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:42:06](#) You're so welcome. Good luck to you.

Question 17:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:42:10](#) A parent says, "I'm a perfectionist and I struggle with feeling like I'm not good enough, and I'm not doing enough. I was an independent child. My parents were hands off and didn't affirm me. So give me some practical tips to work on reparenting myself in my daily routine. It didn't work to say I'm more than enough to myself." So first of all, I wonder why it didn't work? When it doesn't work, it's usually because we're feeling numb inside. So you say that to yourself and you don't feel anything. That numbness is a sign that you are defended against your own love. So it's okay if at first you don't feel much. Just keep showing up and doing this. And don't let yourself go on autopilot. Be very conscious as you say to yourself in the mirror, looking in your eyes, "You are more than enough. I love you so much." And if you can really be conscious, you'll begin to notice, maybe discomfort, that's great. Just go right through it. It's sort of like special time. In the beginning, it may feel like it's hard to make the breakthrough.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:43:15](#) But once you do it, when you really show up and you get used to it, and you actually are present, it doesn't fail. It sounds to me like you need some tenderness. So somewhere inside you, you probably have a deep longing for what you didn't get. Some of us who were forced to be independent too early, are defended against that longing. We don't even hear it. And the way to make that breakthrough sometimes is to give that tenderness to others, to our child or even to a pet. As far as practical tips to parent yourself, set your phone or your watch for every hour, just as I tell you to do in the course, and ask yourself what you need and talk to yourself tenderly, and comfort yourself when you're upset or sad. As far as being a perfectionist goes, I would just start tackling that belief system and dismantling it. It's based on fear. It does not make you happy.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:44:05](#)

Linda Graham wrote a great book called *Bouncing Back*. It's about dismantling beliefs. It's about how the brain works. It's very meditation oriented and very brain science oriented. Another great book for this is *Parenting from the Inside Out* by Dan Siegel. It's more introspective. It's lovely. And then finally, meditation. It is the number one most important resource I can ever recommend. It is the most important habit in healing your ability to love yourself and others.

Question 18:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:44:33](#)

A parent says, "I have PMDD. And so for two weeks a month, it's really hard to regulate myself and I'm not a nice mom. So in the other two weeks, I give all I can to my son because he needs a lot and it's difficult, and our connection isn't that great. But my mother says that must confuse him. So I should not be so enthusiastic on the two weeks when things are good." You know what, I do not agree with your mother. She's well intentioned, but I think she's just wrong. Your child is being wounded during those two weeks when you are not able to be nice to him. So at least he has half the time when you are nice. That's what gets him through the bad times. That could save his life. A kid whose mother was not nice to him all the time, would probably need to self medicate or self harm or hurt other people. So being nice to him the other two weeks of the month is critical for him to get through the hard times.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:45:34](#)

But I also want to say, I know that this is a really hard struggle. PMDD is a hard struggle, but I would leave no stone unturned in treatment. I've seen many women get better or at least be treated. I don't know if you can cure it, but get it manageable so you can self regulate. Some have gone on SSRIs like Prozac. Some have been treated with hormones. Some have used natural foods. There's all kinds of things, meditation, exercise, but whatever it is that's going to work for you, do not give up until you find it. You deserve more, and your son deserves more.

Question 19:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:46:15](#)

Here's a question, "I had a very troubled childhood and I'm still struggling on account of the trauma." I am so sorry, but you're not alone. Many parents who are enrolled in this course, had hard childhoods. And that's why they're here, to heal that cycle and not pass it on to their kids and that's what motivates us. Like it's hard enough to do the work for our own good, but we love our children. We want to show up for them and not pass this on, and we want to be the parents they deserve. And that's the best motivation in the world. So you're here, you're asking this question. I know you're on the right track. You're committed to your own growth. So just develop habits that are part of your daily life that keeps you on track so you can begin to self regulate. All the things that I talk about in the course and that I just mentioned, for daily support, to keep yourself in balance and return yourself to center, make sure you're using my daily inspirations every day. Make sure you're meditating.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:47:08](#)

And you know when you had trauma, therapy, especially EMDR, which I've already mentioned earlier in the call for trauma. But therapy, someone you can go talk to, will make a tremendous difference to you. You deserve that. It really does make a difference.

Question 20:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:47:23](#)

A parent asks, "I hear a lot of advice for families with two working parents, but what about the stay at home mom? So we are already connected to our kids, but we don't have space for ourselves." I would say make a routine, make a schedule. Find time for yourself. Enforce rest time every day, after lunch, if your kids are told to nap, but they can still have rest time where they play quietly or read or listen to books on tape or whatever so that you get some time every day, and then use the time well. Do not fritter it away on Facebook. Use that time to rejuvenate yourself and it's very hard to make yourself sit down and meditate,

but find a way to do what nurtures you. So for instance, listen to a guided meditation. You can experiment to find one that really nurtures you and makes you feel replenished after you listen to it. And it doesn't have to be a long one.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:48:17](#)

You know, 15 minutes can do it or 15 minutes of a workout tape that you can do some yoga or stretching, will really help as well. I would also say find ways to do self care everyday. Self care is not going to the spa. Self care is the way you talk to yourself in your head, and what you do every day. So make sure, if you're home with your kids, that you turn on music and dance with your children every single day. You can't have a bad time when you're dancing. You will find that you feel better afterwards. Find time to laugh and roughhouse with them every day when you have energy because you'll find it actually is a pickup for you as well, in the same way that it helps your kids by lowering the stress hormones in their body, it does the same thing to you. I would say let go of your perfectionism. Who cares what the house looks like? We think that we have to keep the house in perfect order, no way.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:49:17](#)

Your number one job is to keep your kids safe. After that, you're going to keep them healthy, get them fed and get them enough sleep and keep them from getting sick, if you can. And then the next job you have is to take care of you, because that's the only way you can show up emotionally for your kids. So "take care of you" is in your top three. And I think the only way you can do that is if you work out a routine every day that includes time for you and time to rejuvenate with your kids. So I think there are absolutely ways to do it. I actually think it's a lucky thing to be able to be home with your children, even when that can be wearing, because it allows you to connect throughout the day and there's not quite so much pressure at the end of the day.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:50:04](#)

And usually, parents who work outside the home, the research on this is that they get their kids to bed later because they have to, because they're struggling to get

home and get people fed and washed, then into bed. And they get less time to themselves. And so if you are home with your kids, usually you can get them to bed earlier, and there are ways to figure that out even if your partner is home later, that you can feed the kids earlier and then have some time with the working partner before you put your kids to bed. And that does mean you get a little more time usually for your partner in the evening and for yourself. And so I think it can be a wonderful setup when your kids are little, but you do have to find ways to replenish yourself. And sometimes that's setting up a trade with another person who's home, another mom or dad who's home during the day. And you can set up a trade so that every Tuesday, you take the kids. Let's say they have two and you have two.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:51:00](#)

You take all four kids, and then on Thursdays, they take all four kids. And don't spend that day catching up on your housework. Spend the day doing something for you, whether that's taking a painting class, or going to a bookstore and browsing, or a coffee shop to write, or see your girlfriend, whatever's going to make you feel rejuvenated when you're with your kids.

Question 21:

Parent: [00:51:29](#)

So my question is, I really don't know how to acknowledge my feelings, or even know that they're there. It's whenever I have any feelings, I just get really angry and start shouting. So I'm not sure that I have any feelings to be regulated.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:51:55](#)

You know from listening to the audios in this course, you know that anger is always because we feel something else underneath the anger. We feel something like fear, or sadness, or disappointment, or we feel pushed around and powerless. And when we feel any of those things, they feel awful to us and we start shouting or yelling. So I would just urge you to start keeping a record of every single time you yell. Write down every time you yell. And then next to it, write down what was happening that made you yell. And

then next to that, write what you think might have been going on. For instance, "I yelled at my child when she scratched me, when we were leaving the house. Maybe I was feeling pain." When we feel pain, we also lash out. That would be reasonable, right? "Maybe I was feeling scared. I was feeling scared that I can never get my daughter to talk to me and she always hurts me instead. The more you can look at what else you might be feeling, even if you look at it later in the day when your daughter's asleep, the more you'll notice at that moment what's happening and the more you'll be able to control yourself. Does that make sense?"

- Parent: [00:53:20](#) What about when I start shouting? Usually I only notice when I see my children's scared faces and every time I want to hug them or just be close to them. They actually just shiver.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:53:39](#) Because they're scared of you. Yeah.
- Parent: [00:53:43](#) I don't know how to solve it.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:53:44](#) Sorry.
- Parent: [00:53:46](#) I don't know how to stop myself in the moment.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [00:53:48](#) Yes. I hear how much you love your children. And I hear how heartbreaking it is when you want to hug them and they shiver scared of you. I hear that. So first of all, I think it is important that you find some support. You need to get some counseling. You need someone to help you with this because your children are already feeling the results and you need more support than you're getting. So that's the first thing. I want to urge you to get more support. You don't deserve to be heartbroken and they don't deserve to be scared. The other thing is when you find yourself yelling and you see the fear on their faces, and that's your signal, most of the time what happens is we feel ashamed. We feel like, "Oh my goodness, I can't believe I'm doing this to my kids." And then we yell more, because we feel so terrible. So the minute you notice that you're yelling, or you see their faces, stop and turn away. This is stop, drop and breathe. Stop, turn away, bite your tongue. Just bite

your tongue, whatever you have to do not to open your mouth. And don't talk to your children until you've calmed down a little bit. Do you think you could try that?

Parent: [00:54:58](#)

I will try, yes.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:55:00](#)

I think it's really hard. But I have seen thousands of parents do it. And you can do this too but I do urge you to get more support because it is really hard, and I hear how upsetting it is for you and for them. And I think you need some extra support so that you can support yourself to move faster. I think you can do this even without support, but you've been taking the course for eight weeks now, and you're still having a hard time with it. I understand. You're not alone. I'm spending a lot of time on this is because there are other parents listening who are feeling the same thing. So I urge you if you're feeling stuck with this, anyone listening, get yourself some extra support, even a little bit.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:55:45](#)

And I want to tell you that I have some people I've trained who will work with you on Skype. You can find a time. I know the time difference is difficult, but they can talk to you in Dubai, on Skype from wherever they are in England or in the United States and they can help you to work this out. In fact, there's somebody who I'm working with who's in Beirut, who's a trainee of mine. She's closer to your time zone. But I'm sure that we can find somebody who can work with you to do a few sessions with you to help you over this hurdle. So reach out to my assistant, do you know how to reach my assistant, administrator@ahaparenting.com?

Parent: [00:56:25](#)

Yes, yes.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:56:26](#)

Okay. Reach out to her, and we will find somebody to help you with this. Okay?

Parent: [00:56:31](#)

Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:56:37](#)

All right. Thank you. You know, a lot of parents have taken this course so that they can stop yelling at their kids. And I think it takes a lot of courage to come out on a phone call

like this and say, "I'm really having a hard time with this." And so I want to commend you for your courage. And I want to say for anyone else who's listening who's having this challenge, reach out to administrator@ahaparenting.com, and we'll figure out a way to get you a couple of sessions with somebody who can help you over that hurdle and figure out your next steps.

Question 22:

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:57:05](#)

A parent who's struggling with anxiety says, "There are days and weeks when I simply can't connect. Just getting the kids to bed and kept safe is all I can do." So, first of all, you have a new baby. So this is the hardest time and I'm glad you're getting medical help. You also need other kinds of help. I assume your five and nine year old are at school, but you need someone to help you in the afternoons or evenings because that's the baby's fussiest time, it's the time when your five and nine year olds really need you and it will diminish your anxiety to have that help. I know most people would say, "But I can't get help. It's expensive. If you had a medical issue since the birth of your child, you would not feel bad about getting help. This is a medical issue. This is postpartum anxiety. You need to give yourself this support.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:57:56](#)

I would also say that during the day when your older kids are gone, do some things that will treat your anxiety. Get outside, exercise, put the baby in a jogging stroller or put the baby on your body and walk briskly. Listen to guided meditations as you feed your baby, do some deep breathing. All of these things, according to the research are very effective at actually reducing anxiety. I know it's hard to get mobilized to do them. And you probably feel like you have to accomplish things because you're feeling anxious. Don't do it. You can postpone anything else. This is the most important thing -- to be the mom you want to

be. You have to take care of you, which means you have to settle this storm of anxiety that's overwhelming you.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:58:39](#)

And then finally, since you often feel too anxious and too depleted to connect with your kids, use rituals that will help you to connect and help them to feel connected. You said all you can do is feed them and keep them safe. Okay, that's your starting point. Sit with your older kids and have your baby with you while they're eating, when they wake up, do morning snuggles. Do snuggles at night and bedtime stories. Make sure that every time you are apart from them and you are reunited, there are hugs. If you can institutionalize that kind of connection, it will go a long way to helping your children feel connected, even though you're feeling too anxious to be fully present, and connect in the way that you most want to.

Dr. Laura Markham: [00:59:21](#)

So I just want to say, you can postpone anything but love. This is the time to do that. And you're going to need to have a heart to heart with your partner. You both chose to bring a new baby into your family so you both need to participate now in making this work. That means your partner needs to take on roughhousing and special time because your kids need those things. You're struggling, you have a new baby in the house. Your kids can make it through anything but they need at least one adult to show up for them and love them through it. That's what the research shows. And so right now, your partner has a really important role to play. You can do this in the future as you continue to get stabilized. But for right now, this is your partner's job. So this person has to be completely enrolled and showing up for your kids no matter what. Hang in there. You can do this. This is not a permanent condition. This is the hardest time, two months after your baby was born. You can do this. Everyone listening to this is sending you hugs and love. Just imagine all that love surrounding you with white light. Carry that with you.

Question 23:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:00:29](#)

Our next question is from a parent who says, “While working on my inner voice, I discovered I have a fundamental belief system that in life, good things equal bad things. There's a balance overall in what a person experiences. I imagine you will not find this to be a helpful belief system. What can I think instead?” You know, it's funny about beliefs. We simply assume they're true. But I can tell you for a fact that the one you're describing is not true. When something good happens to us, we do not have to pay for it by having something bad happen to us. It's true that we're all on a learning journey and not one of us is perfect and in every life, some rain must fall and our bodies will suffer and die. And the amount of suffering is not because of the good things we've had. We have more suffering when we have more resistance. So for instance, if we insist on other people being a certain way in order to be happy, then we're not likely to be happy ourselves because we can't control other people.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:01:26](#)

But if we take responsibility for being our best self, and we choose to be grateful and happy, we create a lot more happiness in our lives. and we do not have to pay for the happiness we create. So this particular belief of yours, like all beliefs, is a conclusion that was formed from experience, almost certainly in childhood, and it's a way of understanding the world, but it's usually a defense that we use to try to make us feel better. And as life goes on, often while this defense works for us when we were little, it doesn't continue to work well for us. So if you're ready to let that one go when you notice it operating, just give yourself an antidote. And the best one is probably gratitude. Come up with a mantra that works for you, that reassures you that it's okay to experience this good thing. It's a gift from the universe. It's not something you need to pay for. I personally use the line from Jeanette Winterson for this to reassure myself. She says, "It's only humans who withhold from each other and themselves, who are obsessed with measurement. The world just pours it out, giving us slabs of sunshine the size of towns." We don't have to repay that sunshine. If we really let that sunshine and goodness sink in, we want to pass it on to others.

Question 24:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:02:47](#)

Our next question is from a parent who says, “Is it possible to completely release deep insecurities, fear, shame, jealousy and self doubt caused by years of witnessing trauma and experiencing parental rage? My kids were insulted, screamed at in long bouts of rage while toys were thrown and destroyed. I consoled them after, but I'm afraid that even now underneath our new peaceful life, they're carrying old wounds still. I'm afraid the damage has been done and it's too late to completely heal them at all. They're nine and seven.” So by the way you're describing this, it sounds like it was a different parent who was subjecting your kids to the insults and screams, and you consoled them afterwards. But yes, it is a big deal to experience that kind of trauma, really scary. And if they went through years of it, and they were pretty young when it happened, which they were clearly since one is only seven now, yes that can do damage.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:03:47](#)

So the kind of parenting that I promote gives you tools to use to help kids with those old tears and fears. So when you do special time, and they feel deeply cared about and seen, they will start to play out the old traumas that they are carrying. When you do roughhousing, some of that fear is giggled out and it allows them to surface the tears more easily and the deeper fears more easily. And then they need to cry. Tears are a really important part of healing. So when you're afraid that your kids have not completely healed, I guess I would ask you, are they showing signs of anger management problems, insecurity, fears? And if the answer is yes, then I highly recommend therapy. If they're thriving, if they laugh easily, if they cry easily, if they don't seem to have anxiety issues, I would say they're probably fine. But it really just depends on whether they've had the opportunity to work out what happened.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:04:58](#)

And it even depends on who they are, how highly sensitive they are, how they experienced it at the time. If you were there to console them afterwards, I'm sure that went a

long way. And if you're allowing them to work things out now, that goes a long way too. And if you see any sign of a problem, don't hesitate. Do some family therapy with them, I probably wouldn't send the child to therapy, I would probably go as a family unit, the three of you, because there's also obviously some healing for you to do in relation to them, and your guilt about what happened. And I think the family therapy could help heal that as well and give you an opportunity to talk about your regret that your children ever had to go through this.

Question 25:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:05:45](#)

Our next question is from a parent who says, “How do you love your hardest child? And the deeper question is how do you love yourself while making glaring mistakes while parenting? I truly want my children to be emotionally healthy, especially since I felt uncomfortable with my own emotions growing up. And then I end up yelling and showing disapproval and lack of empathy, especially when I'm juggling so much in the thick of things. I feel like I see the damage and I have a really hard time sticking with any idea or a tool even after a few days.”

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:06:19](#)

So you had a hard childhood. And here's the thing about hard childhoods. They wound us. A hard childhood does cause damage. And we pass it on to our children, all of us, unless we do the hard work on ourselves. So, I know the person asking this question, and everyone else listening to this, I know you took this course because you're committed to your own well being and your children's well being. I know you don't want to pass on the damage from your own childhood. So the great news is you're noticing it, you're noticing that sometimes, in the thick of things, when you're juggling so much, you yell, there's no empathy. You have judgment and disapproval. Yes, that's something that will cause damage and you say you can see the damage. So the good news is, you see it. And now it's your responsibility to do something about that.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:07:30](#)

Step one was taking this course. And the course is designed to help you heal. And I'm betting you did some healing or you wouldn't be able to see the damage that's happening. But step two is going to be going beyond the course. I strongly recommend parent coaching or therapy, probably therapy, but you could start with parent coaching and see if it works for you. It would reduce the stress you're under with your children, and I've seen many parents for whom coaching was sufficient. And if it feels like it's not enough, then you can do some deeper work on yourself with a therapist. But please, don't wait. Start getting some parent coaching today. If you go on the Aha! Parenting website and put the word coaching into the search box, you'll find a page of coaches I've trained, parenting coaches. They're all great. Pick the one that resonates most for you, and start working with them. Make a three month commitment. And I am sure at the end of three months, things will be very different, and you'll feel a lot better.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:08:42](#)

This is especially important for you because you say that it's hard for you to stick with a tool or an idea. That's totally understandable. These are big new habits --changes -- and all change comes from forming a new habit. So until your new life is a new habit, you won't be able to act differently in these situations. But that's where a parenting coach can really help. And the answer to your question, "How do you love your hardest child?" Honestly, it's to love yourself, which is also, "How do you love yourself while making mistakes while parenting?" You love yourself while making the mistakes, **because** you commit to doing better. You commit to taking action, so that you **can** do better. And as long as you're on a path where you know you're taking action -- coaching -- to make things better, then you can love yourself, you can celebrate yourself. You don't have to be perfect, but you're doing better every day. And even on those days where you fall backwards, the next day you pick yourself up, you try again, you put one foot in front of the other, and even when it's two steps forward, one step back, you still get to a better place.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:10:03](#) It all really does start with loving yourself, and that heals your ability to love your children. The more you love yourself unconditionally, the more you love your children unconditionally. And this is the work of a lifetime. And I believe it's why we're here, to love more. It makes the world a different place, and it transforms us. Parenting is love in action.

Question 26:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:10:29](#) Our next question is from a parent who says, "Since I was pregnant with baby number two, I yell loudly, throw things, slam doors. My throat hurts daily from yelling. My daughter asks me to stop. My son just hugs me and goes quiet. My daughter has been exposed to this since age two and a half, and my son, his whole life. They're both a bit aggressive and they do what they like. She gets yelled at and manhandled by dad too. We do have lots of love too, but will this permanently affect them at all? What can I do to reverse the damage? I apologize but I keep relapsing. And my daughter points that out."

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:11:07](#) I'm afraid the answer to your question is yes, this will affect both children. It will affect them in many ways. It could give them anger management problems like you are suffering with. It could also give them self esteem issues. It could mean that your daughter will pick a man who manhandles her, yells at her, beats her up, berates her. In fact, both your children are learning that people who love each other in families hurt each other, which is not the way you want to raise your children. I know you don't want to raise your kids this way. The answer is, even though there's love, there is going to be damage here. It will permanently affect your children unless you do something about it.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:11:53](#) So I'd like to suggest that you go back and listen to the answer I just gave about what's happening with her kids. And then I would like you to start coaching, parent coaching or therapy, either online or with somebody in your community. It is not okay to do what you're doing

with your kids. And you are going to see that damage as they get older, because their brains are taking shape every day, and because they're in an environment that scares them. It means that they're both growing brains that are fearful and alert to danger. They think everything's an emergency. And they don't feel secure. Your children can't possibly feel secure in the world when they're scared all the time.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:12:44](#)

So commit right now to doing something different. It does not have to be this way. I know you were treated this way when you were young, but it does not have to be this way. You are a strong enough woman to do something different. You have the courage inside you to change this cycle so that your children can have a different life. Please don't wait. Start today, reach out, either online or to a parenting coach in your community or therapist. If you have any problem finding somebody, please send an email to Beth, my assistant, and we will help you find someone. Your children deserve it. And really, so do you. You deserve a better life than this. You can do this. It's a hard thing but you can do this. We're here to help.

Question 27:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:13:45](#)

Our next question is from a parent who says, "I'm an expat. English is a second language in the country where I live and I want online therapy for myself with an English speaker. I've searched online therapy but I don't know who's qualified. The internet's full of experts. What questions should I be asking to check qualifications? Is there a governing body I can inquire to find an online therapist?" I'm delighted you're getting therapy for yourself. Healing yourself is a really important gift for your children, as well as something that you owe to yourself. So you're asking the right questions. You want to find somebody who has an approach you feel good about, as well as who has credentials, meaning they have some training, and who you click with personally. And of course, if you're looking for somebody online, that gets complicated too.

- Dr. Laura Markham: [01:14:41](#) So let's start with the approach. I really like body based approaches because well, the body keeps the score, as Bessel Van der Kolk, a therapist who worked with trauma says, but it's pretty hard to do a body based approach and online therapy. And if you're mostly wanting to talk about your childhood, then you're looking for somebody who is more conventionally trained in talk therapy, and that's fine. You don't have to do a body based approach. It's just sort of a shortcut.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [01:15:15](#) I'm also a fan of EMDR, which stands for eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, because there's research showing that it's good to work through old traumas. There's a book by Francine Shapiro, who's the founder of EMDR, that you could read. I think it's a great book, and it will tell you whether this resonates for you as an approach. And there are now EMDR therapists online but I want to warn you that you should go through EMDRIA, which stands for international association, because that has a listing of all of the people who've actually been trained and certified rather than just people who took a weekend workshop in EMDR and hung out their own shingle. So you want to go through EMDRIA to find an EMDR therapist, and you'll be able to find somebody who does work online.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [01:16:09](#) I would also look for a therapist who has experience in mindfulness. So I had years of therapy myself. And I've done years of mindfulness work, meditation mostly. But there's lots of different kinds of mindfulness work. And I would say that my mindfulness work was probably more important than my therapy, in shaping who I've become. So I really like working with a practitioner, a therapist, who is mindfulness based. There are many of them who do work on Skype, and by phone, and one source is Tara Brach's website, Tara, T-A-R-A, Brach, B-R-A-C-H dot com has wonderful meditations on her website. She is a therapist as well as a meditation teacher. If you look at, tarabrach.com/find-mindfulness-based-therapist/. And you could probably just put those words without all the dashes into Google and you'll find it but on the tarabrach.com website, find a mindfulness based

therapist. And there's a listing including people who do some work on Skype and the phone.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:17:30](#)

And then finally, there are good therapy databases like Psychology Today, and there's some other ones, Psych Central, Good Therapy. And you can go through there and look for therapists you like and see whether they work with people online because at this point, many therapists do work via Skype and phone. I would say the most important thing is to ascertain whether you feel connected to the person. What's the fit? Do you feel empathized with? Obviously, you need to feel your therapist empathizes with you. And sometimes that's harder to transmit or to feel long distance.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:18:08](#)

So pick three, four, or five of them, and ask them if they'd be willing to do a 10 or 15 minute phone call with you, not to talk about your challenges that you're going to want to talk about in therapy, but so that you can understand more about how they see the process working. What does it cost? Have they dealt with issues like you have before? What's their usual approach? What would be most helpful as an approach and why? Maybe they do cognitive behavioral therapy. Ask them to explain that to you and ask them to explain why that's helpful for childhood issues or depression or whatever it is that you're working on. Ask them how long they think therapy will last. Is this something that will take three sessions? 10 sessions? A year? Three years? Would they expect to meet with you weekly? Monthly? Anytime you want? What happens if you want to text them in between sessions? Do they answer you? What about emails?

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:19:13](#)

So ask those kinds of questions, make a list of them, and ask them of each person, and notice how they answer and how you feel comfortable, and of course, ask them what their training is. They should absolutely have some training, academically speaking in therapy or counseling or psychology, so that they know what they're doing. And a coaching certification to me is always a plus because coaches are different. They don't have as deep an understanding of psychology, but they're very good at

helping you set goals and helping you achieve them. And they're often very well trained in listening and validating. It's just that they can't necessarily go as deep psychologically, and don't have as much training in that.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:20:00](#)

And my final piece of advice, since you took this course, is to look at the article on the Aha! Parenting website called "Finding a Therapist who Understands my Child Raising Practices". Often, therapists don't understand this approach. I've known a therapist who recommended all kinds of things to their clients who were parents about dealing with their kids. So when a mom or a dad was having a problem with their kid, and in talking to their own therapist mentioned it, they would come up with things like "Just shut the door to the room and let your kid cry all night" as an example. I mean, that's one of the things I've heard that therapists have said. Therapists don't necessarily have training in how to bring up children, or the latest research in child development, or positive discipline. So they're not the best sources on that often. So also ask them the questions that you'll find in my article about their view toward child raising and how they'd approach it. Now, they don't have to be experts in child raising. Just make sure they won't be pressuring you to follow practices that are not in line with your own values. You'll find questions to ask them in my article "Finding a Therapist who Understands my Child Raising Practices" on the Aha! Parenting website.

Question 28:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:21:25](#)

Our next question is from a mom who says, "I struggle to self regulate most days. I shout and I'm physically rough with my five year old and my three year old, and my one year old has special needs. I'm home full time. My mom was emotionally abusive, my dad neglectful and manipulative. I've been in therapy for years addressing this. I try several times a day to be a better parent and I fail several times a day so my children must find me volatile. I end the day fearing I've damaged them. I have friends. I try to find time for myself daily. My husband

helps but my rage and sadness are never far away. Essentially, I hate myself. What can I do?"

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:22:06](#)

Oh, my dear. You're carrying a very heavy burden. And here's the thing, even though you've been in therapy for some years, clearly, something's not healing. I'm going to advise you, if you're in therapy right now, to switch therapists. I think you need better tools than you're getting. Sometimes people just don't change when they're working with one therapist, but when they work with another therapist or do a different kind of therapy, they do change. If you've listened to other parts of the live call or addendums, you might have heard me mention EMDR. And when you've got a traumatic background as you do, EMDR can be really helpful. It bypasses the words.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:22:52](#)

Sometimes people who are good with words are able to basically circumvent the healing process by just talking but not really feeling. And the feeling is where the healing comes from. So if you are in therapy now, and you're hating yourself, I would say, switch therapists, absolutely. And switch kinds of therapists. I also want to add, healing is not just emotional, or healing our thoughts and belief systems, although that's really important. There's also a spiritual component to healing, which I think is the power of love. You have to love yourself.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:23:36](#)

This online course is actually designed for parents to learn to love themselves. That's what the daily inspirations are for. And as you've noticed, the daily inspirations, if you do them, really do make a difference in how you feel about yourself. So I don't know if you're doing those daily inspirations. But I know sometimes when you're in a negative cycle, it's hard to get yourself to do things that are positive. I would say, start small, do whatever you can to move yourself to a more positive place. And that absolutely includes the daily meditations that I've given you to work with. They're only four minutes long. That's not enough for you, you need more, but I know you have three young children as well.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:24:20](#)

So I'm going to say this can be turned around. I've talked to many parents who are carrying the kind of baggage that you're carrying, that very heavy load, who've been able to turn it around. But it's not an easy lift. It takes a lot of work. And you also have three young humans in your care. So I'm going to suggest that you find ways every hour to get yourself back on track. You said you try several times a day to be a better parent and you fail. Join the club. We all fall short of our aspirations in every way to be the best we can be.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:25:09](#)

What you want is a ratio of doing better. That's all, a ratio of doing better. And one of the ways to support yourself to get that ratio is that every single hour, you have a buzzer go off, your watch, your clock, your phone, and you use that moment to dose yourself with love. Just flood yourself with love, so that you are getting what you need and you're more equipped to make it through the next hour. Just take it hour by hour. And remember, the key here is your love for yourself. You won't become a better mom by beating yourself up. You become a better mom by loving yourself more so you have that well of emotional generosity that can overflow onto your children. So I'm sending you big love here. Feel that love enveloping you. You can do this one hour at a time. You can do this. Just keep moving in the right direction.

Question 29:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:26:18](#)

A parent has a question about self care. She works from home. Her partner works long hours, and she cares for the children in the household. She says she's exhausted and losing patience at the end of the day. She gets maybe 30 minutes twice a week to work out. And that's the only alone time she has, except occasionally when her girls nap together. They're nine months and two and a half. And she says it's so hard to regulate when you're exhausted. There's all this new research that shows if you're getting less than eight hours of sleep, your body is compromised, you're more likely to have all kinds of health issues and your ability to self regulate is also compromised. Now the

problem when you have kids waking you up at night is that often, you think you're getting eight hours of sleep all together, but you aren't because when you have disrupted sleep, you have to have extra sleep to be equivalent to eight hours. So if you have a nine month old who's waking you up as most nine month olds tend to do, you could have a problem where you're even more exhausted.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:27:19](#)

So, the first thing I would recommend to you is get enough sleep. And that might mean that you go to sleep when your kids do. I understand your partner works long hours, but either your partner does the dishes when they get home, or you leave the dishes in the sink and they happen the next day, and your kids are up on stools helping you, your nine month old is on your back and your two year old is helping you with the dishes, whatever needs to happen, but you should not stay up after your kids go to bed.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:27:51](#)

You say you work from home, which I assume means you have a job that you're able to do after your kids are in bed. Again, if there's any way you can not do that job or cut back on those hours to just do them when your partner's home, on the weekends, would help. You're working a double shift. Your partner works long hours, but you work long hours too at a very exhausting job with the kids. So I would simply make it a priority to go to bed when the kids go to bed. And do that at least three times a week. If you can do that, I think you'll see a dramatic difference in your ability to self regulate, even at the end of a long and exhausting day. I know that's a hard choice to make, especially if you have a job that you have to do to earn money after your children go to sleep. But if we know we're exhausted, and therefore we're yelling at our kids, and we don't choose to get the sleep we need to get, what are we really saying?

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:28:50](#)

We know that when we're not regulated, it affects kids profoundly. When we yell at kids, when that's a regular part of their experience, it changes the way their brain is developing, and it will affect them negatively for the rest of their lives. It affects their self esteem, it affects their ability to self regulate. We really don't want that for our

children. We work so hard for our children. In fact, if you're doing a job after hours after they go to sleep to earn money, presumably you're doing that partly to give them a better life. But the better life they need is not about money, the better life they need is about your emotional regulation.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:29:31](#)

Of course, there are other things you can do to take care of yourself. But sleep is so foundational that I would always start with that. And exercise is also foundational. And I see that you are working out twice a week and that's fantastic that you're doing that. That is so great. It really helps with tendencies to anxiety, tendencies to depression, and it helps you actually self regulate because it lowers the stress hormones circulating in your body.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:29:59](#)

The final thing that I would say, that is really helpful to reduce stress is meditation. That's what the research shows. You don't have to meditate for an hour to have a positive effect. Of course, if you do, that's great, but you don't have an hour, that's okay, you've got five minutes, 10 maximum. So I would find a couple of guided meditations, maybe a five minute one, maybe a 10 minute one. I suggest guided meditations because they're much easier when you're first starting out, but if you want to just sit and notice your breathing, really trying to just stay present with your breathing for five minutes... If you do that, every single day, for five minutes, that repeated experience actually rewires your brain. That's why this course has the daily inspirations that are four minutes long. But this is even more of a meditation, even if it's guided. So I highly recommend making time for that -- five minutes as you fall asleep at night, five minutes while your girls are playing, and you're sitting there with them watching them, you can have headphones on listening. Or you can just play a guided meditation in the background while your kids are playing. Often they really like listening to them.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:31:20](#)

So those are my top tips. I would also add that in the self care week of this course, I included some self care ideas from parents as part of the bonuses. They're taken directly

from my new Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids workbook. And there are things that you can do again, with your children. You don't have to have someone take your kids while you do the self care things. So I encourage you to make sure that every single day you do some of those things as well. And just to close that, I would like to add, parenting is exhausting. It just is. It takes a lot of emotional labor, as well as physical labor, and you're going to be exhausted at the end of the day. So it's really important also to use your tools like stop, drop and breathe because you will just find that there will be times you're exhausted and you'll lose patience. And while it's easier if we've done self care, it also really helps to just use the stop, drop and breathe and the other tools to regulate yourself. And as you do that, every time you do that, again, you're changing your brain wiring to make it easier in the future, even at stressful moments.

Question 30:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:32:37](#)

Our next question is from a parent who says, "My son and I are both sick for the umpteenth time this winter. I find my fuse getting shorter and shorter. I don't have the energy to play and connect with him. I'm too tired to do self care like yoga. The house ends up descending into chaos with tears, upsets and tantrums." Well, this sounds awful. And I am so sorry. And I think that you're in the breakdown lane and it's very hard to do preventive maintenance when you're sick. So you do whatever gets you through the day. And you take one step in the right direction, as much as you can. I wish I had a magic wand I could give you. There's no real magic wand except to say, if you're feeling sick, and he's feeling well enough that he needs energy and connection, is there another adult that he could be with? If you don't have a partner, then I think you might have to hire someone to take him out to the park or whatever, because you really need to get better. And I know kids bring home all kinds of germs, but being sick for the umpteenth time sounds like there's something wrong. There's something that's making both of your

immune systems rundown so you're getting sick all the time.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:33:52](#)

So I would leave no stone unturned to strengthen your immune system so that both of you can stand up a little better to the germs that you're inevitably going to encounter. And if you're not getting enough sleep during the night, because you're having to stay awake through the night with him to nurse him when he's sick, then you need to sleep during the day. And if you have to turn on the TV for him during the day, than do that. I am totally not a fan of TV, but I would do whatever was necessary on a short term basis, to recover your strength. And if he watches TV nonstop for three days, it's better than you and him having upsets and tantrums for three days.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:34:39](#)

I don't know where you live, but I'm hoping that spring is around the corner for you and that you'll feel a lot better. And you can start to get your regular practices of good food and yoga and other self care together so that you're able to be the mom you want to be. But in the meantime, all bets are off. You just have to try to take care of you so that you can get enough sleep and recover your sense of well being.

Question 31:

Parent: [01:35:03](#)

Our next question is from a parent who says, "I've been practicing peaceful parenting for four years. Thanks to this, I now have a wonderful relationship with my seven year old. However, four years ago when he was three, while I was using the naughty step, which of course I regret, I inadvertently smacked his cheek while trying to stop him from punching me. I apologized, cuddled him immediately, and explained that I really didn't intend to do it. We never spoke about it again. But after all this time, it haunts me every day. Should I apologize to him again for my actions, or am I opening up old wounds he may have forgotten?"

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:35:40](#)

So, you say you have a wonderful relationship with your son. And it sounds like he is not suffering from this. He's not showing you that he has a problem. It was one

incident and it does sound like he forgave you. And he got right away that it was an accident. So I think it's time to let yourself off the hook here. I would begin by writing a letter to your son. This is an assignment that's in my Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids workbook. If you have the workbook, it's on page 24. I think this is a great thing for all parents to do. Basically, it is not a letter for your child, it's a letter for yourself. And what you're doing in this letter is acknowledging what your child deserved, and what you wish had been the case and you promise to do better. So your child will never see this letter. But on some deep level of the soul, your child will feel it. And writing the letter will change you and help you to come to terms with the past and to be different in the future. You will probably find yourself crying as you write this letter. That's good. That's healing the judgment you've had against yourself for all these years for having inadvertently hurt your child.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:37:10](#)

But it's time to let go of that judgment. Judgment never serves us. Letting go of this judgment is what's going to free you to be the mother you want to be to your son going forward. I would also, as you are writing this letter, think back to that incident, allow yourself to experience it again. Just feel what it feels like in your body as you revisit that moment. Love yourself through it. Be totally loving and compassionate to yourself as you feel this. I think what you'll notice is that you were in fact desperate, maybe enraged as your son was trying to punch you. And you didn't mean to hit him in the cheek. But you did have a lot of big feelings going on at the time. Somehow, that has stayed with you and is haunting you. And often when that happens, it's a defense against feeling the awful feelings of that moment, including our rage at our child.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:38:13](#)

So I think reliving it, allowing yourself to feel in your body, whatever comes up with no conclusion, no conclusion like, "I was a bad mom, I should have done this better. I should have known better how to do this." None of that, that's not useful. Just notice what's going on in your body as you relive it, have total compassion for your son and for yourself in that difficult time and allow yourself to feel that, all those feelings and come to terms with them. Just

as you allow yourself to feel them, they're going to begin to dissipate, to evaporate, to melt away. That's going to heal that incident from so long ago. And then give yourself a mantra, some ammunition, something you can use to protect yourself when your mind starts to torture you about that incident. And what you say is, "My son is fine. I didn't mean to hurt him, and I've made it up to him. And we are stronger than ever." And maybe that's your mantra going forward, "My relationship with my son is stronger than ever. My relationship with my son is healed and is stronger than ever."

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:39:36](#)

As you say that mantra, if anything comes up that contradicts it, that's just your mind surfacing stuff. And if there is anything that it's surfacing that seems to need your attention, then you heal that too, just by loving yourself through experiencing it again. But mostly, your mind is just going to test you to see if you actually now love yourself enough to forgive yourself, if you trust yourself enough to be the mom you want to be. And I get from your question that you are that mom, and that you do love yourself and you do trust yourself. There is no reason to torment yourself going forward.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:40:20](#)

If you continue to have a struggle with this, I would suggest that you use my workbook to work through the feelings that you're struggling with. And I strongly suggest a meditation practice, because when you have recurring thoughts that really bother you, it is just a matter of managing your mind. It doesn't have to be that way. And you definitely don't want to believe everything your mind tries to tell you. You're in charge. You're in charge of your mind. You can trust yourself. So a meditation practice will really help you to remember that when your mind starts to bark at you about the past. And that's a great theme to end up with here. Mindfulness. Mindfulness is not getting hijacked by the mind's anxiety, or the past emotions that you've locked up. And my wish for you, listening to this, is that you use this course you've done as inspiration to keep doing this work on yourself. Yes, it will help you be the parent you want to be every day with your child. It will help you raise a wonderful human being and it will help

you clear out the baggage you've been carrying, everything that's been keeping you from that sense of well being that is your birthright that is waiting for you.

Question 32:

- Dr. Laura Markham: [01:41:51](#) A parent asks, “How do you get back to a good place when you're constantly on the brink and everything, big or small just tips you over the edge and it's hard, sometimes seemingly impossible to recover?” So, I just want to say, when I hear this question, my heart just goes out to you. I hear how hard it is. And you're not alone. Many parents feel this way. So I would say, it doesn't change all at once. But there are many, many things you can do. The good news is, you notice that it's on **you**. You're not telling me “My kids are impossible.” You're saying that it's that you are having a hard time getting to an even keeled place.
- Dr. Laura Markham: [01:42:36](#) And taking responsibility in that way is the first step. It is what allows you to recover in that moment. It's also what allows you to do the preventive maintenance that keeps you in a more centered place on a daily basis. We've talked a lot about preventive maintenance in this course. What would preventive maintenance look like for you to help you stay on an even keel, in a good mood, where you can be emotionally generous with your child, and where those little things don't tip you over the edge, and where you even have more patience for some of those bigger things, so you can recover more quickly? In other words, what would give you more centeredness and more resilience?
- Dr. Laura Markham: [01:43:26](#) The first thing is sleep. Sleep is non negotiable. If you have young children and they're waking you up a lot, then you need to find other ways that you can sleep, during the day when they sleep if they're young, or while they're at childcare. Go to bed early in the evening, leave the dishes in the sink. Whatever you need to do to get your sleep is really important because without it, there's no way you can be the parent you want to be. I realize that's hard if you're a single parent. Sometimes you can't do this, get the sleep you need, and in that case, I strongly urge you to

hire help some of the time. If you have your child 24/7, and you're a single parent, hire help part of the time, so you do have a little help, and you can sleep a little more, even if it's a nap on Saturday afternoon.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:44:18](#)

Now, after sleep, exercise is the big thing. All the research shows that exercise reduces anxiety levels, changes your body chemistry to make you happier, and more able to be emotionally generous to yourself and to your child. So those are the first two things. And then, there's the emotional work. If you're carrying around a full backpack, then everything pushes you over the edge. So there's no way for you to be the parent you want to be with a full backpack. How do you empty your backpack? Well, you already know. Laughter is very important. Crying is very important. You're an adult, not a child. So you can also do healing by talking. When you talk about issues that upset you -- and you don't have to go back into your childhood -- you can just tap into those same emotions that are coming up and getting triggered today, right? You don't need the old event. Whatever is your feeling right now, talk about that with someone you trust, who won't try to fix you, who won't give you a solution, who will just be compassionate. Often, that could be another parent. So you could post on our Facebook forum, asking for another parent who you could team up with and you can trade off listening to each other.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:45:42](#)

The person who first popularized this idea is Patty Wipfler of Hand in Hand Parenting. She calls them parenting partnerships, I think. But intuitively, we all know we need a witness as we talk about our feelings, to help us heal, to help us feel safe really going into those dark places. However, research shows that you can also do some of this for yourself. Research shows that when you journal, the observer part of your brain joins in and is your witness. And you bring your own compassion so that you're doing the integration as you're expressing those emotions, integrating the emotions into your understanding. And journaling can be, I'd say, for some people, just as effective in personal growth as a listening partnership with another parent.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:46:40](#)

I need to add that for some people, you really need a professionally trained clinician. There's nothing magical about what psychologists and social workers and other clinicians do. They listen, they bring their compassion and they're caring. The ones who are most successful, the research shows, are the ones who really care about the person they're seeing. And that person feels it and that allows them to trust and to express and to move through those old dark places and leave them behind. It's very healing. So I'm going to suggest that to empty a backpack as an adult, begin with the laughter and the tears, begin with some tools that will help you get to the laughter and tears. My Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids workbook is a great tool. Begin by finding someone you can talk to who you trust. But it may well be that you just need to see a counselor, and that's what's going to help you. So no shame, no blame. Nurture yourself, give yourself what you need to heal. The only thing to feel bad about is if you didn't do that, if you didn't give yourself the support you needed to be the best parent you can be. Also to take care of you, and to do the healing you want to do -- because no parent, no person should live on the brink of everything setting them off.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:48:12](#)

I want to add, there's one more book that I would highly recommend. It's called *Resilience*. It's by Linda Graham. She's written two books. This is her second one. They're both great, and they're very good for helping to build resilience, so when things do happen, you can recover more quickly. And she uses work that's very similar to the work that I use in my workbook. But it's not about parenting at all. It's really about how you can build your own inner resources to better take care of you and to bounce back when life gets tough.

Question 33:

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:48:49](#)

The next question is from a mother of 12 year old twins who says that she's a former ad executive who is used to a creative collaborative environment, and is feeling resentful that her life revolves largely around making her girls' lives

magical, their needs, their activities, and that she struggles with feeling anxious and confused, unless she's going to her part time job that day. So there are days when she doesn't go to the job and she gets paralyzed and doesn't really know how to structure her day because she feels overwhelmed.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:49:23](#)

So I am not going to tell you some way that you could better structure your day. I'm going to tell you that I don't think you should be home full time. You say you do have a part time job. Some days you go to work. I think maybe you need to go to work every day, at least part of the day. Maybe you can find a job to work from nine to three. But clearly, you're feeling overwhelmed at home, you're feeling resentful. You're wishing that you could have a collaborative environment. Instead, your focus in life is on your twin girls' activities and needs and the need to make their life magical. I don't think you need to make a child's life magical. I think they need love. They need understanding. Yes, of course they need nurturing, but they will sense your resentment, it will come out at them. And it isn't doing them any favors for you to be home, honestly.

Dr. Laura Markham: [01:50:24](#)

At this point, at 12, there are after school programs that they could be in if they're not ready to come home by themselves, which I would say they're probably not at 12. You can hire someone, a high school student, for instance, who could take them in the afternoon to activities and you don't have to find a super demanding job that will keep you busy 24/7. You can find a job that ends at three o'clock. But I would urge you to not continue your life as it is. It sounds to me like it's not working for you and your psyche is telling you that. You need more structure, for one thing, so that you're not overwhelmed. You need more creativity and you need more collaboration with other adults. I urge you to listen to your own needs here. I think otherwise, you're finding the meaning in your life by being home for your girls, and that puts a burden on them. That's not helpful to them. They're 12. It's okay for you to have a job.

Dr. Laura Markham.: [01:51:27](#)

And that's all our questions for today. Thank you for listening. And I hope this was helpful. If you still have a burning question that wasn't answered on this audio, please submit it for possible inclusion on my podcast. Just go to ahaparenting.com/podcast and leave your question as a voice memo. This is Dr. Laura Markham, wishing you less trauma and more love. Goodbye for now.