

Kristin:

Welcome back big little bestie to After Bedtime with Big Little Feelings. Today's episode is near and dear to my anxiety-driven heart. We are talking about age gap. How many kids should we have? Basically, all the things that my fellow anxiety moms worry about all the time. We have the data for you. How many kids is the right amount of kids? What is the ideal age gap? We're doing it. Let's go. You're just kicking us off with a yawn there.

Deena:

I'm so tired—I was going to sing, but you beat me...

Kristin:

Really yawn directly into the microphone in your face.

Deena:

I think that's a great way to start. Yeah. Hey.

Kristin:

I think that's a great way to start. Hey, hi.

Deena:

Hi.

Kristin:

Hello.

Deena:

Hey, how are you?

Kristin:

Hey. Do we always roll into this just like... Do people have podcasts where beforehand they get into a zone and it's like calm and it's that like is that do you think that non-mom podcasts that's how it works?

Deena:

I would have to imagine. They meditate.

Kristin:

Oh, wow.

Deena:

Get the mindset right-

Kristin:

You ever think about like-

Deena:

... the energy.

Kristin:

... What this would be like if we didn't have kids?

Deena:

Oh my God, I haven't gone there in a really long time.

Kristin:

I love my kids. I would choose them over our career all day long.

Deena:

100% Even though our career is also our baby.

Kristin:

Yeah. But you ever think about that sometimes where I'm like, "Wow, what would this be like to have not just literally rolled in from cleaning up the water that spilled everywhere." That was my fault, by the way. But then in the cheers and the demands and then screaming like, "No, mommy, don't go." You know what I mean? And then you roll in and your brain, what kind of function is this? Executive functioning? What am I thinking of? It's like task switching where you're like, "Oh, shit. Okay. All right. Let's cool. Let's make a podcast. Yeah. Got it. No problem."

Deena:

That's exactly how we do it.

Kristin:

Okay.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

Yeah. But I mean, human beings, if we didn't have kids, I'm sure we would just find something else to fill that spot. But it's a special flavor once you have kids, I think.

Deena:

I think that's true, but maybe... I don't know. I don't know.

Kristin:

I feel like it just depends on who you are.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

I can now say though, confidently as a mom, now that I have this lived experience, if I did go back in that position of having no kids. Wow. Wow. Just wow. I would do things so differently.

Deena:

I guess you're right though now that I think of it where like, "I had a career. I was a working lady. I was still kind of a mess." You're right now that I think of it.

Kristin:

Right.

Deena:

Right.

Kristin:

Right. But you're right. Sometimes you have this fantasy world. It's kind of like sleep where you're like, you didn't know what you didn't know before, and now you're like, "Wow. I would've just come in with intention and I would've carved two hours and I would've meditated like what I have..."

Deena:

Do you know how many lunches I used to go into? Just annoyed like, "Oh man. Got to have lunch with this person." And now I'm like, "Wow." Imagine having lunch with someone-

Kristin:

You're having lunch.

Deena:

...at a restaurant, by yourself. It's just a... yeah.

Kristin:

Not drinking in a smoothie or eating leftover chicken before eating lunch?

Deena:

Yeah. Not the bread crust. Yeah. No, not that, but mac and cheese stuck at the bottom of the pan.

Kristin:

I do feel like every now and then, it is an asset, I will say, because while I didn't realize how good I had it, like we're talking about everything is kind of calmer and more stable and you come home from work and you're just like veg in front of it. You just veg out or you work out. You do whatever for you. I feel like now I am incredibly productive when I need to be productive. There is a strength to this season of life where today kids have a snow day. It was also a three-day weekend. We're rolling into that, and I'm just going to cram in this podcast.

Deena:

As your microphone is slowly [inaudible 00:04:40].

Kristin:

Bestie, my microphone went down. I might've been quiet the past two minutes, literally.

Deena:

I saw it all of a sudden. I was like, "That's weird. Maybe I should tell her, but she's on a roll right now." And I love where her heart like going, going. Yes. Yes. Also, I think there's research on what you just said by the way.

Kristin:

Go ahead, please. You know what I was about to say where I need to go look into this further.

Deena:

Now I just show up when I have to show up. You know what I mean? I get it done. Go ahead.

Kristin:

I'm pretty sure there's actual research that working moms are one of the most productive categories of humans in the world.

Deena:

Oh, does it feel good though to be that productive? I don't know.

Kristin:

I guess it is. Once we get a little bit of a semblance of things back where it's not like little kids and babies and toddlers, your kids are in school, I bet that is where we're going to find, okay, now I know how to be really productive when I need to be, and then also let go when I don't have to.

Deena:

I know I have that. I'm like, hour and a half window. Watch me bang this out. Watch how much I can do on this to-do list.

Kristin:

100%.

Deena:

I wasn't like that before.

Kristin:

I mean, you were probably different, but I am going to be honest at my office job, the afternoon after lunch is tough. No one in that office, aside from the CEO who's running around and going and all these things, no one's doing much after 1:00 PM. You know what I mean? Like 1:00 to 5:00 everyone's just doing nothing. They're on their phone, they're scrolling, they're whatever. They're sending little emails checked out just to show they're still there. Let me just send a quick little email.

Deena:

Your body's here.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

They're hitting the tap. They're hitting the little tap of the mouse to make sure that your Skype back in the day. That's how old I am. Your Skype is still green.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

You know what I mean?

Deena:

You know all the hacks.

Kristin:

Of course, I know all the hacks.

Deena:

I can't say I was like that, but I'm also in therapy for being perfectionistic. So, if you could find maybe the happy medium, the balance in there in the middle, that could be good. Which by the way, motherhood has taught me to be a little more flexible because I used to be a very, very, very rigid person. I

Kristin:

I can't wait for you to have a third knocking on all of the fertility gods in here, and you will will. I can't wait for you to have a third because it's absolutely true. All those social media things and all of those Reels where it's like the third, you just give up, but not in a bad way. It's like the best. Nothing could happen that will derail me. Nothing. How many things have even this weekend kept popping up like, "Oh, he has croup. Oh, we have to be out until 8:30 at night." All these things that were derailed and did not even a phase, not even a speed bump.

Deena:

That was actually a question that I had for you.

Kristin:

Oh, I can't wait to get that.

Deena:

Yeah. We should do a whole thing on it because I have so many questions about going from two to three.

Kristin:

Oh, yeah.

Deena:

But today's episode is actually directly relevant to what I constantly loop on in my head as someone who's going to go down a fertility journey, right? It's like, "How many kids is the right number of kids? What is the right age gap?" I mean, let's just dive into it.

Kristin:

Let's do it. Okay. You're still in this, which is wild.

Deena:

Yup. I'm sure I am.

Kristin:

I cannot tell you how consuming this whole, not only age gap, I'm still kind of in the, I'm 1% in the, how many kids is enough kids, but 99% done. You know what I mean? It's so consuming to be like how many kids is the right number of kids? Because you can go so many different ways with it. And then the age gap thing too.

Deena:

Yeah. It's so true.

Kristin:

It's just that thing that right in the back of your head, no matter what you're doing, it's always there.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

Is that true for you?

Deena:

If you want another kid, I feel like it's just kind of looming in the back. You're like, so like, "What if I wait another six months? Is that too long? 'Cause then they're going to be X and X age, and then what about if I wait longer? What does that look like?" And just do all the math behind the scenes all the time. But even if you don't know if you want a kid too, I was there for where you're just like, first you have to start out where you're like, "Do I even want another kid?"

Kristin:

Exactly.

Deena:

Right? That's the first part. So, you agonize over that and then once you decide, you're like, "All right. Cool. I'm ready. Oh, shit." Okay. If I do it at this time, you're talking about then this, and then this, and then this. So, in today's episode, we actually went into the research. We wanted to make everybody feel really secure, bring a little bit of clarity to the whole, how many kids is the right number of kids? And then what is the right age gap? And we're talking about this in terms of child outcomes, child development outcomes, and parental happiness. That's what we really wanted to look into.

Kristin:

Exactly.

Deena:

And you know what? You're going to walk away. I've good news, feeling just really good at the end of this. You'll be reassured.

Kristin:

You're going to be reassured.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

Yeah. Instead of it just being like a [inaudible 00:09:53] circling, circling, circling, circling. I tend to do, I don't know about you Deena, but I tend to do that.

Deena:

I'm doing it right now.

Kristin:

Okay. Literally, I had to explain to my therapist the other day. I was like, "You know and then once you decide that you want another baby, it's like all you think about, right?" So, maybe I should just talk to you a little bit about that.

Deena:

I had the same conversation with my therapist.

Kristin:

Go on.

Deena:

Okay.

Kristin:

Okay.

Deena:

Okay. Let's start at age gaps.

Kristin:

Age gap.

Deena:

Okay? So, we can have them very close together. You can have bigger age gaps. Now, what does the actual research say about age gaps? Are you ready?

Kristin:

I am very ready for this.

Deena:

The best age gap is just kidding there's no data to support anything.

Kristin:

Uh-huh. Okay.

Deena:

Okay. No, let's break it down a little bit. So, the research, when you really dive into it, there's not a ton. And when we look at really, really close together age gaps, I'm talking about you're getting pregnant less than six months postpartum, having your other baby.

Kristin:

Like you did.

Deena:

I was six and a half months, and I'm going to hang on to that. But basically, the only kind of suggestion of research that there is for anything is that if you're getting pregnant less than six months postpartum, there's a bit of a chance that you could have some health complications like preterm birth, things like that. And again, it's like a small statistic, but then outside of that, there's really not much. The research looks at things like the health of the baby and then looks at birth gap in terms of later school performance and IQ. And that's really all that's kind of touched on in research right now. And if you look at both of those, there's really not much data out there, first of all. And anything that is out there is suggesting that any sort of difference, it doesn't have a huge impact.

Kristin:

So, when it comes to IQ and when it comes to school readiness, no impact, no difference if they have siblings that are close together versus siblings that are a bigger age gap. School performance.

Deena:

Yeah. Exactly. And even then, when you look at the research, and Emily Oster talks about this a ton, by the way, in her book Cribsheet. When you really look at it, you can't really pull apart certain factors that even affect this very small kind of difference that you see. Really, it could be that parents are just spending more time with the kid, helping them learn how to read and other kind of school skills. So, really when you're looking at age gap, there's no research that says one gap is better than another. It's really like what you feel.

Kristin:

That's crazy to me because I feel like we all paint these narratives in our head. A lot of them I feel like are completely made up where it's based on our own childhood or two people that we knew down the street. And so, you're like, "Oh, you definitely can't have them four years apart." Because that's when they'll end up hating each other and we just make it up. We just really do make it up. We make it up.

Deena:

I literally did that by the way. I was like, "Oh, my sister and I, four-and-a-half-year age gap far too big for us."

Kristin:

You guys love each other so much.

Deena:

And now we love each other. We're best friends. Okay. So, I always just had this vision. Mine was literally just this vision that I always had of me holding two small babies if I could. And then I literally got pregnant six and a half months postpartum, and I remember just texting you like, "Oh my God, I know I said I wanted this, but it's happening."

Kristin:

Yeah. You really wanted that.

Deena:

How am I going to do it?

Kristin:

You really wanted that though.

Deena:

You really did.

Kristin:

You really wanted that.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

And you did it. You made it happen. And by the way, that's a part of this conversation that I think that when you first start out, if you're not facing fertility struggles, then doesn't necessarily always come into the equation. You have these perfect plans. You wanted two babies right next to each other that worked out for you. Here you go. Even before we all... I mean, I think we all know to get my third, I went through miscarriage, had fertility, secondary infertility, did IVF, all of that. But even between my first and my second, I really wanted them close together too 'cause I came from a similar family where we were all five years apart, two older sisters, five years apart, 10 year age gap too much, right? I just thought we're all close. But I thought I really wanted my kids close together. Not like two babies close together, no offense, but closer together.

Deena:

That was a unique experience. I will say we can do a whole thing on two under two.

Kristin:

A unique vision.

Deena:

A unique experience. I will say, now that we're going all over the place, I will say that I hear a lot about how like two under two, long term they're best friends, blah, blah, blah, right? which is what we're getting to is it'll probably all work out no matter what.

Kristin:

Exactly.

Deena:

But the part that we don't take into consideration is we're agonizing and agonizing and agonizing over the age gap, and we're like, "Okay. I solved it. I've got it. I'm ready." And even between my first and my second, it took us 12 months. 12 months. And every single month that went by was like, "Okay. Now they're going to be this and now they'll be this." This whole not to be this far apart, and like, "When is it going to happen?" And agonizing. And I really wish that we knew in advance that you really can't control this all the time. Some people can have a vision for two under two and then get it, but a lot of us, even if you don't necessarily have infertility, it doesn't necessarily always work out like that. There's a lot of variables that may change what you thought you wanted in the end.

Kristin:

Exactly.

Deena:

And by the way, on this note, my husband actually has a 12 and 16 year age gap with his brothers, right? And totally good.

Kristin:

Wait, they're good?

Deena:

They're good. They have a fully happy close family still.

Kristin:

Yeah. You really cannot control the outcome. My sweet spot was two and a half years. I needed them all to be two and a half years apart. And it's so interesting because I ended up getting that for the first one, the first gap, even though weirdly, I guess I started trying earlier than that now that I think of it, but it ended up being pretty much two and a half years. And the one between the second and the third is a four-year age gap. And that was, when I say devastating, I mean devastating, which is crazy to think about.

That's really not that big of an age gap. Okay. I'm just going to say that out loud. That is not a big age gap at all. But to me, for some reason, this was devastating. And of course, when you're struggling and you lose a baby and all that obviously compounds it, but it really was as simple as like, "Oh my God, four years I can't." Because I knew of two other people that had siblings four years apart, and I created this story in my mind of being like, "This is going to be, they're just going to hate each other or whatever it is." It was the best. If I could do it all over again, I'd have them all four years apart, which is crazy to think about.

I was a wreck over this four year age gap, and I'm like, "I should have done five." Things were so much easier. The kids were independent. I was not holding a newborn to my boob while the other one wiping her butt. Everyone could get their own snacks. It was a game changer. I was healed. I was healthy. They could watch iPad. It was incredible. So, it's crazy how it works out that way. And even I have a really close friend who I think her age gap now will be like nine years. She just wasn't ready. She didn't want to have another one for a very long time. She had decided just one kid for a long, long, long time. And then once she approached eight years, started to think, "Well, maybe I want them to have somebody else in their

life. I don't know. I think I might." I bet nine, eight-year age gap is beautiful to watch, beautiful to see a fully formed child, interact with your baby and be-

Deena:

Beautiful.

Kristin:

... so ready to be back in that. You know what I mean?

Deena:

Yeah. No, that's exactly it. And so really, this all comes down to you do you some things we can't control. We can do our best hope for the best, and then there are things that we can, and what really matters When you think about it, you do you bandwidth, right? Do you have the bandwidth? Do you feel ready to have another baby? Another pregnancy? Pregnancy is hard. It's beautiful, and it's hard and it's magical. And postpartum is the exact same way. So, really tap into where you're at and what you need and what feels right for you because literally no one else lives your life.

Kristin:

[inaudible 00:18:49] And that might be like two under two. Do it. I don't know. There is no answer. That's the answer.

Deena:

Exactly.

Kristin:

It's kind of exciting. It's kind of free.

Deena:

It's very freeing.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

Except for us who like to be told a certain way to do it.

Deena:

Who like to have a plan. I love a plan.

Kristin:

It feels great and terrible at the same time.

Deena:

Yes.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Yeah. I'm saying all this stuff, knowing that I'm still going to be the guy in the background and trying to make plans.

Kristin:

You know what this reminds me of? It reminds me of mom guilt because I've had to just make peace with the fact that no matter what I personally do, I will have mom guilt. No matter how I rearrange my schedule, no matter how much I'm either working or baking with them or doing something for me or whatever it is. I'm going to feel guilt over that, and I'm just going to have to lean into that or just acknowledge it and go, "Hi, guilt." 'Cause like seven years in, I can't get around it. That's how I feel about this agony over the age gap and all of this other stuff where it's like, it just might be something that no matter what. No matter how logical it is. We may obsess a little bit or think overthink it, and that just is what it is. We're moms, we're probably biologically hardwired to overthink these things, and that's okay.

Deena:

Likely so.

Kristin:

Okay.

Deena:

Yeah. Oh, and last thing that probably comes into play age. My husband's getting older, and that's something, yeah. He's like, "Yo, if you want this third baby, I want to get on it because I'm feeling tired in my bones."

Kristin:

I feel that. I felt that at 30, and I still feel that, but no, you're so right. I have a lot of friends that either needed to do it closer together or tried closer together just because of the age factor, which is always part of the conversation. Totally.

Deena:

But let's roll on to the second big question. What is the right, perfect, best number of children to have?

Kristin:

Okay.

Deena:

Okay.

Kristin:

Do you want to hit the research?

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

Or do you want to hear my monologue first?

Deena:

Let me hit you with the research.

Kristin:

Okay. I want to hear it.

Deena:

Hold on again. Everyone hold on to your pants.

Kristin:

I'm ready. My pants are, hold on. Okay good. Yeah.

Deena:

There is no research.

Kristin:

Oh, man.

Deena:

Indicating what the perfect number is.

Kristin:

Is that true? Is that true, Deena?

Deena:

That's true.

Kristin:

I swear to God. And I think the besties out there they're on social media, so they get it too. I swear to God, everything on social media is, it has an opinion. There are Reels and TikToks and all of this of how many kids and five kids and four kids is the optimal happiness. Three kids, the Today Show says that three kids is the most miserable number for the parents. And I'm like, "Is it?" And then it gets in your head where you're like, "And then it's like, "Only children are weird," or "Oh, only children thrive." And I'm like, "What is true?"

Deena:

It's all over the place. I got an unsolicited one the other day, by the way, when I said, I was like, "Oh, we're going to try for a third." And then the guy was like, "Oh, three is a really weird number." A real person should definitely have four. We had four because, and I'm like, "Oh, no."

Kristin:

No.

Deena:

No.

Kristin:

Oh, no.

Deena:

Such again, when it all comes down to it, it's a personal choice because there is a debate out there to be fair about this idea of quantity versus quality, right? The more kids you have, are you going to be able to give them quality, attention and time? And then the research that exists, which is very limited, by the way, bless Emily Oster. She dives into this again. But basically, all the research that exists is all done mostly on performance in school.

Kristin:

Okay.

Deena:

Okay. And so, when you really start to look at that, again, the number of kids is not really impacting performance. Now there's a little bit of data to suggest that the birth order of children has an impact, right? Like a second child.

Kristin:

I feel that as a third child who nearly flunked out of school, go ahead. Go ahead.

Deena:

Yeah. But when you look at just sheer number of kids, there's no real data to support that there's a certain best number.

Kristin:

This is really mind-blowing to me. It truly is. I swear to God. I swear to God that I read the Today Show thing of three kids means less parental happiness. And then it was like, but if you get to four kids, then, so it's like either two kids or four kids. But you're saying, nada.

Deena:

Listen, there's also some research out there to suggest parents are not as happy in the early years. It is hard. And then it pays off in the long run.

Kristin:

And that's no matter how many kids you have though, right?

Deena:

That's not impacted necessarily by the number of kids. Yeah. But there's also a ton of just clicky, like baby headlines out there. And I think we all have to just pause and acknowledge when it comes to actual research. This is the age we're living in. People who are not researchers, they're not data scientists. Take a study, they pull out their favorite sentence and make a powerful headline that makes you anxious and makes you want to click-

Kristin:

[inaudible 00:24:01] parents.

Deena:

Exactly.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Yeah. And then you go read the actual study, and it's like, "Well, also, they couldn't pull apart this factor and it wasn't well controlled." And yeah, when you really dig in.

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Yeah. Makes sense. Good news, you're free to, do you?

Kristin:

Wow. Yeah. That's crazy. Honestly.

Deena:

Including by the way, you want one kid?

Kristin:

Yeah.

Deena:

Fantastic.

Kristin:

Let's talk about one kid.

Deena:

[inaudible 00:24:27] your one child please. Please let's talk about that.

Kristin:

Guilt free.

Deena:

Please, let's talk about that. I feel like that's one of these things that's taboo in a way. I feel like 'cause my sister has one kid, and I feel like, "God, the commentary is near constant of when are you going to give them a sibling?" or "Oh, huh." And I cannot express how healthy their marriage is. And we went on vacation together, and her kid is eight, and mine's obviously seven, five, and one, and younger at that point.

And I mean, she looked at me at one point and was like, "Three is a lot." Because she has one child and that one child has needs and expresses it, and maybe he's going to melt down, but he is also eight. So, he is not really, and he puts himself to bed and mom and dad are holding hands. Yeah. And it's not to say you should definitely have one kid, but it's also bandwidth is so important. And what are you sacrificing? Are you willing to sacrifice these earlier years for a lot longer in order to get, if your goal is to have more children or not? Right? There's so many different ways to go about it. He's such a wonderful, well-adjusted social kid that I feel like, I don't know about you, but I feel like the myth of only children, that they are "weird" or... right? Did you grow up with that?

Kristin:

Socially awkward. Socially inept, weird.

Deena:

Right?

Kristin:

Yeah. And like-

Deena:

I don't think That's true anymore.

Kristin:

You said the word sacrifice, but part of that myth is that you're sacrificing your kid's wellbeing and they're going to be so lonely, and there's really no research out there to truly, truly support that.

Deena:

I applaud people who do one kid, and by the way, sometimes that's not always a choice. So also, being really careful with your words to people.

Kristin:

Totally.

Deena:

Again, I see people come up to her all the time and I'm like, "Oh, no, we need to comment on this. And then other times it is a choice, and it's such a valid choice. It's such a valid choice. I want to say the same thing by the way, and people are not going to like this maybe. I'm going to say the same thing about seven kids because there is a teen mom. You don't watch Teen Mom. I love Teen Mom. Her name is Catelynn, and she's pregnant with twins, and they'll be her sixth and her seventh baby. And the amount of comments that I see on her page about having a sixth and a seventh baby, it's flabbergasting, right?

And I don't know that everybody's like that. I see that, and I'm like, "Oh, congrats. She probably wanted that. Cool. Keep scrolling." Right? But it's like if someone chooses to have one kid, they're like, "Oh God." And then all the commentary. If you choose to have seven kids, you probably get a lot of looks in the grocery store. A lot of commentary. And I just feel like this is a great example because in her case, I don't know her personally, but she has the finances. She's very successful. It seems like she chose this. It wasn't an accident. Even if it was, who cares? She has the bandwidth. She wants to have a big family. Great. One kid, you want to have one kid?

Kristin:

Great.

Deena:

Exactly. And I'm sitting here, by the way, I'm like, I think in my personal heart, I can't handle seven kids very well without me sweating and getting overwhelmed every day.

Kristin:

I think I could do it.

Deena:

I think you might be able to, but my point is, that's just a personal thing. If someone wants that, you want seven, fantastic. You want one? Fantastic.

Kristin:

Fantastic.

Deena:

Right? And it just means this is such a personal choice.

Kristin:

Yeah. Which I feel like it's just hard to also, what we're saying is so hard to do, which is you have to look inwards and maybe with your partner or maybe not. Maybe it's just you and decide what is best for your family and then roll with that. Because I do think some of this agonizing, I wonder if that was really the case in the 80s. Like, "Did my parents really?" No. They were like, "I want three and I want them five years apart." And then I will do that. Right? My mom had real Deena energy. Did she? Or

Deena:

Did she just get home from a party late one night and then she was pregnant? I don't know.

Kristin:

Every December. Every December. Every single holiday way.

Deena:

Did you know that September birthdays are the most popular birthdays?

Kristin:

I do know that. I think most people are like, "Oh, holidays and romance." And all of that. And with my parents, I think it was a gift. It was a literal exchange, was like my mom really wanted the baby having five years. It was like a thing, and I respect that now as somebody who chose to have a Virgo baby.

Deena:

Everyone else is just married, jolly drunk.

Kristin:

That's their reasoning.

Deena:

And stuck at home in the snow.

Kristin:

Exactly. Exactly. So no, I think that the hardest part of our generation and why we agonize over a lot, I speak for myself, agonize, is because we do see all of these outside opinions and these headlines and all of this, and then you starting to get wonder like, "Oh my God, do they need more siblings? Do they need less?" And it's like, there's actually no right answer.

Deena:

Yeah. And I would say beware of the stories that we start to tell ourselves and create just by seeing a handful of examples.

Kristin:

That's the biggest one. Yeah. That's the biggest one.

Deena:

Keep on that, because it's not always true. We kind of make up stories just as humans. All of us do it.

Kristin:

I did. I did.

Deena:

I've done it. I've done it.

Kristin:

Should we get into questions now?

Deena:

Yes.

Kristin:

Let's do questions.

Deena:

We should.

Kristin:

Okay. Okay. Besties coming in hot with the questions. Jen wants to know, "You're very open about being in therapy." We're literally all in therapy. When I say that you, me, our husbands in couple's therapy. "It's something I want to pursue and get overwhelmed at all the therapist options. What type of therapist do you see?"

Deena:

I love this question. I'm so glad that Jen asked. So, as a therapist myself, I have a little bit of advice. My best advice is you're going to have to interview different therapists to see who feels like a good fit. Now, a lot of times I feel like we get overwhelmed because we're like, I don't know. But part of this is not only sharing what your goals are or what you're struggling with to see if that person really is an expert in that exact area because different therapists focus on different things and use different kind of approaches.

So, when you start the conversation by being just really honest about, "Hey, I'm struggling with anxiety or depression," or "I think about hurting myself." Whatever it is. They can then have the opportunity to be like, "Oh yeah, this is what I help with," or "I don't." You should meet one of my colleagues who does

help with that. That's step one. Then after you gather maybe three different referrals, interview them, and you're in charge. This is your process, and you need to vibe and connect with the person and feel comfortable, really. So, have a little conversation, a five-minute phone call, 10-minute phone call, see how you feel, and if it doesn't feel like a fit, keep getting referrals.

Kristin:

Also, I have to say, I think once you try it, sometimes that's the only way that you know, and you just don't have to ignore your intuition. Give it one or two times, and then sometimes I feel like it's easy to then just give up on therapy like, "Well, this is a waste of time." It's probably just not the right fit. Right?

Deena:

Exactly.

Kristin:

It's like, "Okay. That's cool." Move on to the next option, and then the next option. Sometimes you don't know until you're actually in it and you're having the conversation.

Deena:

Yeah. Now, on the flip side, as a client, definitely had that. There was one woman I went three times and I was like, "Whoa, I don't feel comfortable even sitting here, let alone talking and sharing."

Kristin:

But it also could be more subtle than that, where you're just like, "I don't really getting much from this."

Deena:

Yeah. Exactly. True, true, true.

Kristin:

No problem. Listen to that.

Deena:

Okay. This one is from Dana. What's the best family vacation you've ever been on?

Kristin:

Oh my God. You're not going to like this.

Deena:

What is it?

Kristin:

It's Disneyland.

Deena:

Oh.

Kristin:

It's Disneyland.

Deena:

I'm overwhelmed.

Kristin:

Who knew?

Deena:

Wow.

Kristin:

Did you ever think I was going to be a Disney bitch?

Deena:

I really did not. I like it for you though.

Kristin:

We're sitting here in all black, both of us. We're both wearing all black. We are not Disney people. The joy. The joy. And you know what I'm going to say for anybody who's on the fence, because by the way, before I went for the first time, I called Megan of Feeding Littles because if you follow her too, you know that they go to Disney every year. I would always watch it. I'd be like, "I want to do this. This looks fun, but I'm so nervous. It's going to be terrible. They're going to be melting down the whole time." So, if you're in that situation too, and you're thinking about it. This is what I'm going to tell you. No matter where you go, your child is going to melt down. They're going to have potty accidents. It's going to be chaotic. It's going to be pretty overwhelming.

What I learned, which was mind-blowing to me, is I always thought I'd be the person that'd be like, "Oh, I'm just going to take my kids to France." And if you take your kids to France, please keep taking them to France. But I always thought like, "They'll just do whatever I want." And that is where they end up melting down and having an even harder time and yada yada. And it's like, "This is not the vacation I thought it was going to be." When you go to Disneyland, all the stuff is for them, and they're encapsulated with joy and activities and things that you're doing, and it ironically is easier and more fun because it's for them. It's so much fun.

Deena:

That sounds great. I'm not there yet.

Kristin:

I'm going to take your kids.

Deena:

But you brought me one step closer. I'm open-minded about it at least after hearing this.

Kristin:

It's the best.

Deena:

You can take them.

Kristin:

It's the best.

Deena:

I'm going to go to the spa. You take them.

Kristin:

I'm there. That's me. I'm going to do it. We must matching shirts like, "I'm a Disney bitch." Deena, your best family vacation go.

Deena:

I would say our Mexico redo vacay that we ended up taking, and if you remember the nightmare vacay one, if you followed us on Instagram where we all got rotavirus on the flight on the way to Mexico like it started. And then just spend a good four days in a Cabo hospital and flew home. That was my worst. And then we had a redo. I knew that if I didn't want to just never go again because I felt like-

Kristin:

Which is what I would do.

Deena:

... the anxiety was building, right? We had to just go tackle this, we had to correct it, have a good experience, show myself. That was bad luck. We can get back in the saddle. And we did, and it ended up being so, so fun.

Kristin:

Good for you.

Deena:

Even more fun than I thought.

Kristin:

Oh my God. So, just doing nothing but relaxing. A big bite pool.

Deena:

Yeah. No, really. They had snacks, smoothies, just swam all day nap because they were so tired from the sun. It was beautiful.

Kristin:

I love that.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

Yay.

Deena:

Yeah.

Kristin:

The last one is from Hope. "What is your take on manners and making your toddler say please and thank you to get something?"

Deena:

Please, and thank you, really, really critical skills to have. And when we start to force our kids, if you will, to say, "Please." Say, "Thank you." Say, "Please," if you want this. Right? We not only are entering into a power struggle most of the time because our kid is like, "No." So, we're frustrated. They're not learning how to do this. But then the other thing is, if that's our main approach, when we're not around forcing it, they're probably not saying, please and thank you. They're saying, please, and thank you with you just to make you be quiet and get what they want, frankly. So, this approach of the forced, please thank you thing. It feels so logical. You're like, yeah, you got to learn how to do it if you want something. But long-term there's a better way to go about this, I think, which is us as their parents modeling, saying, please, and thank you casually day in and day out. And I guarantee you without that forced pressure, they start to just pick it up. It becomes like a normal part of interacting.

Kristin:

Mm-hmm. And they may even start to do it, or you could even bring them in at times, right? Where it's like, "Okay. Let's say please." And then when there's a refusal, we can do it for them. Right? There's so many reasons by the way that we don't factor into why a kid might not say, "Please or thank you." I was painfully shy. I was a painfully shy kid. I was nervous. I was anxious. If this is a new person, we have to give our kids a little bit of the benefit of the doubt, right? And they can gain confidence and know how to do it by watching you, and the spotlight isn't necessarily just thrown right on them. Let them get comfortable.

Deena:

'Cause that's overwhelming sometimes. Yeah.

Kristin:

Yeah. Model it over and over and over and over.

Deena:

You're unloading the dishwasher, and they help put something away. Thank you. Thank you so much for helping.

Kristin:

Yeah. Yeah.

Deena:

Totally.

Kristin:

Cool. All right, bestie. This has been the best.

Deena:

All right, bestie. We'll see you next week.

Kristin:

Bye. If you are struggling with toddler or preschooler tantrums, pushback, discipline, picky eating, just all the confusing things. This podcast, we can only scratch the surface if you need help, our course Winning the Toddler Stage is here to help. It is aptly nicknamed the Toddler Manual because it truly has every single thing you could possibly struggle with under the sun, between the ages of one and six, within one course. We're not going to do a bunch of workshops. You have to buy the sleep guide and the picky eating guide and the, this guide and the that guide. No. Everything you could possibly need for ages one through six is all in this one course. We were never meant to do this parenting thing alone. You deserve to have help. We are here for you. You can find that course at biglittlefeelings.com. And be sure to follow us on Instagram and Facebook. At Big Little Feelings, we give free tips every single day. They might change your life with one free tip.

Deena:

Thank you so much for being here with us. This has been an Audacy Production. Executive produced by Lauren LoGrasso, produced by Daniela Silva, edited by Bob Tabbador. And theme music composed by Liz Fall and studio lighting design by Shane Sackett and designed by Jackie Sherman. Special thanks to Audacy Executive Vice President and head of Podcast, Jenna Weiss-Berman. And thank you for being here with us. We can't wait until next week.