

Girls Night #223: How to Become a Mom Without Completely Losing Yourself in the Process — with Alli Worthington

0:00:05 - Stephanie

Hey friends, welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie May Wilson and I'm so happy that you're here. Each week, I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women. We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends, and I cannot wait to get started. Friends, I'm so excited about today's episode. Today we're talking about how to become a mom without totally losing yourself in the process.

As a newer mom myself, I've experienced firsthand the pressures that come along with becoming a mom. First of all, motherhood is taxing, it is consuming, it requires everything you have to give, and often way more than that, and so being a mom while also trying to, you know, be yourself, it's a lot. It's also a lot because the expectations society puts on mothers are high. There's no shortage of opinions on what a good mom should do and be and act like and provide for her kids. The list of expectations is so long it's actually totally impossible to measure up to, which leaves a lot of us feeling like we're failing, and this is an area of life where we absolutely do not want to fail. We're pouring over the parenting books out there, trying our very best to do everything exactly right and feeling like we are going to mess up our kids' lives, or just mess up our kids in general, if we make even one tiny mistake. We're killing ourselves trying to be perfect and still somehow falling short. This is really what our kids need from us? I think the answer is no. It doesn't have to be this way. It shouldn't be this way. There is a better way, and that's why I cannot wait for this conversation.

Our guest for today's episode is my new friend, Alli Worthington. Alli is an entrepreneur, an author, a podcaster and is helping women reach their dreams in business and in life. She's also a mother of five boys, so she has been on this motherhood journey for a while now and has learned so much along the way. Alli recently wrote a book that I'm so excited about. It's called *Remaining you While Raising them the Secret Art of Confident Motherhood*. This book is not a parenting book, but rather a book focused on moms. In it, she's sharing why modern motherhood is broken and helping us remove the myths we've believed about what it means to be a good mom, and from the principles she wrote in this book, Alli is going to teach us how to intentionally care for ourselves spiritually, emotionally and physically as a new mom, how to conquer the mom guilt we might be feeling, how to stop comparing ourselves to other moms, how to embrace our unique mothering style, and more.

This episode is for the brand new mom, or for the woman who wants to be a mom but is scared of the pressure that comes along with it, or for the mom who's been a mom for a while now but is just positively drowning under the expectations that come with it. Friends, no matter where

you are in the process, I promise that you will come out of this conversation feeling so empowered and encouraged and, I hope, really free. I can't wait to share it with you. All right, friends, I am so excited for who you get to talk with.

Today. I'm sitting here with my friend, Alli Worthington, and to get to sit with her for the next hour is just a gift for my heart, and so I feel like this is for me. I'm glad you guys can be here also, but I feel like this is for me. So, Alli, thanks so much for coming back on Girls Night. I am thrilled to be here. We're going to have so much fun. This is so good. So we've had you on the show one time before and we'll go ahead and link to that episode in our show notes so everyone can go back and hear from you there. But for women who haven't gotten to meet you yet, can you tell us who you are, what you do and a fun fact about yourself?

0:03:51 - Alli

Yes, I am the mother of five boys. That's my claim to fame. I also have an amazing stepdaughter. I'm an entrepreneur. I'm an author. I here's a fun fact about me I'm a roller coaster enthusiast. I'm a theme park enthusiast. I love theme parks, amusement parks, disney, universal, dollywood, the whole works give me a soft pretzel and a roller coaster and something fun to do, and I'm in my happy place for anyone who can see us. Right now, I have a collection of Disney Mouse ears behind me. This wasn't something that I loved when I was little. As I've gotten older, I've kind of come into my own and it's actually something that my children and I have developed a love of together. One of the things that I decided as a mom is one of the ways that I was going to kind of connect with my teenagers, as my teenagers have gotten older is I want to love something that they love so we can develop it together, and I just you know, in my 40s, developed a love of roller coasters. Who knew?

0:05:00 - Stephanie

That is so fun. That is so fun. I have so many questions. That started at. I have five boys and a stepdaughter. Yeah, I have so many questions, and so it's funny, right before we started recording, we were talking. This could not, this conversation could not come at a better time, because right now I have twin, two and a half year olds, and they're amazing. And then sometimes it feels like we're not going to make it, like I would say, like half the time I'm like we are nailing this. They are amazing, we're having so much fun, our relationship is growing because they can like talk and interact and I'm loving it. And then, yeah, half the time we're like getting our butts kicked and so I feel like I need some mom, like love right now, and so I'm so, just, I'm just so grateful for your book and for your heart and the fact that I get to talk to someone who's gone before me and survived, so welcome.

0:06:00 - Alli

That's why I that's why I can do this now that my youngest is 14, my oldest is 24, my stepdaughter is 27. I couldn't have this message and I couldn't speak to women if this was 20 years ago, because I was in the middle of the throes of it. Like you, you really need to get some time. And I think of all of the women who went before me and spoke into my life and told me it's going to be okay, you're going to get through this. They were the women who had children who

were either grown or almost grown, and you know, they had some time on them and they understood it and they were able to put an arm around me and give me wisdom.

And I'm at that point in my life where I'm like, hey, it's okay, let's go ride a roller coaster. I'm going to give you an ice cream cone. I'm going to tell you you're going to survive and and you're going to get through this, because the truth is, those years with young kids, they are amazing sometimes and sometimes they're just really, really, really, really, really, really hard. And what women do to other women that makes me really angry is they say enjoy them while they're little, as if there is some ticking time bomb and it's going to get really hard one day. Hello, you're at the hardest period. It is never going to be harder than it is for you right now, Stephanie, it is. It is only onward and upward from here.

It is never going to be this hard. It is so hard right now. It's just roses from you here on out. Trust me, I hate it when I hear women go enjoy them while they're little. I did enjoy them while they're little, I guess, but I enjoy them way more now. No, it's great now. It was really hard to enjoy them because every five seconds they're losing their mind about something.

0:07:50 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah, yeah, oh yeah. We just recently got to the phase where we're like mad if we get the wrong cup, like the wrong color cup.

Oh, okay, and it happened while I was out of town, so I got to go away for just a really great girls weekend. We've been trading off this summer doing weekends. My husband just got back from a golf weekend and I came back and I tried to hand Annie the pink cup and she was like no, and like threw it back at me. And Carl laughed and was like mama doesn't know, annie gets the purple cup. I'm like okay, I've been gone two days, yeah, but I love hearing that, especially now that we're going into summer. You know, as we're talking right now, people say the thing about like well, you only have 18 summers with your kids.

I hate that no-transcript. I just like I'm just trying to get us out the door in the morning. I'm not thinking about summer.

0:08:45 - Alli

It's kind of shaming to women and it's like you're going to lose your kids, as if there is this bomb that's going to go off and you're going to lose your kids. Like, yeah, kids go off to college, but they're home in the summer. And for me, I have children who are grown. I still have a great relationship. We still text every day, we still call all the time, we still do family vacations. It's not like I've lost them Now. This advice still goes around.

I fell for this when I was a young mom. I saw someone and they told me to get a marble jar. Have you ever heard of the marble jar? So you fill up the marble jar and you put in this certain number of marbles and this is the number of weeks in your child's life before they go away to college or they graduate high school, and every week you take out a marble to remind you to spend your time intentionally, to steward your time well, to make sure you're loving them and

teaching them, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I fell for it and I had this marble jar in my kitchen and a friend of mine with grown children came over. She was also a psychologist and she came over and she said oh, I see you have this marble jar in your kitchen. It's full of so many marbles. And she said what's it for?

And I really wanted to impress her fellow mom and I told her the spiel about the marble jar and she took a moment and she said well, that sounds like a recipe to feel terrible as a mom, like a failure. And I just blurted out I hate it, I hate this marble jar so much. And she said Alli, it sounds like that would be great for some women's personalities, but for most women that's a recipe for guilt and misery as a mom. And I said I hate it so much. And that's when I realized like 90% of the advice in parenting books and advice you see on the internet just makes women feel bad about themselves.

Before I started writing this book about motherhood, I sent out an email to women on my list. Over 1,000 women answered and I asked what was the last book on motherhood you read? And most women answered that it was a book on parenting and get this. A lot of women wrote back and said either I wish I had never read it or I stopped reading it halfway through, or I felt worse after I started reading it than before because it made me feel so bad about myself and I was like this is the state we're in as mothers. We're trying to get help, but everything out there is just making us feel terrible.

0:11:13 - Stephanie

Is it? I wish I had never read it. Is it like it gave them this whole laundry list of things that they were supposed to do? It's like I didn't even know that was an option of something I was supposed to do, and then, after they read it, they couldn't like not know it anymore.

0:11:26 - Alli

Yeah, especially in the faith space. So then there's like all the added on guilt of like everything you do in the future of your child is 100% on your shoulders and it's just making women feel like failures. So that was kind of my message, like you've got to write this book right now.

0:11:47 - Stephanie

Yeah, okay, well, so we need to talk about the book. Tell us, so it's I love. When this came like into my email, I was like Stephanie, you check this out. I'm like a hundred million percent. It's called remaining you while raising them the secret art of confident motherhood, and I just like, honestly, I'm pretty tired right now. So the chances of me crying during this episode, especially when I say things like that, are just like hi, we're just catching, we're catching me on the tender day. Talk about why. Just tell us about the book. Tell us about the book and where this came out, like what this is looked like for you and I don't know. Just tell us anything we need to know about the book.

0:12:26 - Alli

Yeah, it's funny because this is my fifth book and this is a book that was really born of my own frustration. You know, I sent out that survey to figure out where women you know, because as

an author, you don't want to write about parenting and you don't want to write about marriage, because if you write about parenting or motherhood it's like your child's going to go to prison and if you write about marriage you're going to get divorced. Right, like you don't want to tempt fate, you don't want to do that, right. So those were the two things you don't want to touch, right, like you just don't want to do it. But for me, the nonsense that was out there and the way women are suffering at the like parenting industrial complex of nonsense out there for women, and to send out that survey to a thousand women and to realize the stuff that's out there is just making women feel terrible. That's how I knew I had to do it and none of my children are in prison and hopefully won't be, so you know, got it most erased and I know a thing or two. And what I did was I partnered up with a researcher to go through all of the research that's been done on parenting, to go what actually works, what doesn't work. Because we have a lot of people who are really cute on Instagram and TikTok saying what they think works. But, like, I want to know studies that have been done over 50 years and 20 years of what actually works and what doesn't work.

Did that and then partnered with some counselors, so it's not just my opinion, but it's actually mental health professionals. So we can go here's what's, here's my stories, here's what therapists know to be true. And then let's let's figure out from the research what matters and what doesn't matter. Like, let's just let's give women freedom, because we have enough opinion from our moms, from our aunts, from our grandmothers, from influencers all over who are telling us that we need to grow our own organic wheat in the backyard and then make sandwiches for our children every day and savor every moment, and who knows what other nonsense is going around. Like, let's just have a recipe for freedom and be wise women, where we can back up with research to go you know what? Here's a story or here's a, here's a research of 5,000 children over 30 years, and actually that doesn't matter. Like, how about we just have a recipe for freedom as moms. That's what we need. So if that's what I can give women, let's go for it. That's why I did it.

0:15:09 - Stephanie

Well, where's some of the things that you like? I have a couple of like. I want to hear it like a couple of different lists, if I can like. What were a couple. What were some of the worst pieces of advice, other than maybe the marble jar, which again might work for some people? But, yeah, what were some of, like, the most commonly believed or passed around pieces of advice that you're like? This is trash.

0:15:33 - Alli

Okay, here's something crazy.

You know how children who are surrounded by books do better in school. Have you heard that one? Well, we all, we all hear that and go okay, well, let's surround our children with books. Well, it could be that children who grow up in a home surrounded by books it's because parents who have homes surrounded with a ton of books just have really high IQs and they've passed on those genes to their children. Like, when you get into the research, it's pretty wild. So there's this thing called the Minnesota Twin Study and they have studied twins for decades and

decades and decades. And I'm not saying, don't read to your kids, I'm just saying like, when you look at the study of genetics, it's pretty wild. And they separated kids, these two children, at four weeks old. So it's not like they were influencing each other.

At four weeks old, these two boys both named James, or no, no, two boys, yeah, both named James and they grew up completely separately. They both named their sons the same things, just a different spelling. They both married women with the same name. They both had a dog they named Toy. They both did the same thing as a career. They both had the very same car. They both grew up in Ohio randomly because they were adopted in Ohio. They both vacationed in the same three block area in Florida. They both served as volunteer law enforcement. They both had a career in mathematics. If you and I go through all this in the book, like, and if you go through like the Minnesota Twins study, it is amazing how similar people grow up. Now. They both were adopted into families where they were loved and cared for. These are optimal surroundings. If they were adopted and one of them had been in an abusive environment, then obviously that they wouldn't have turned out just alike.

The point is, the thing that was the big takeaway from the study is our genetics play more of a role than we realize. We are knitted together in our mother's womb. Our DNA is our DNA and if we are kept safe and loved every day and given nutrition and a place to thrive, we are going to be who we are, no matter what happens. Whether we are potty trained at 18 months or three and a half, whether we go to preschool or restart school at age six, whether we do this or that and the motherhood industrial complex has convinced women that every single thing we do is the be all, end all in our child's life. So we feel like from the time we wake up in the morning until the time we go to sleep, if we do anything wrong, we have completely screwed up our child's life.

But when you study the research of everything, we realize, oh, it all kind of comes out in the wash. I give you a look. For instance, with children who learn to read, you can teach your child to read at age three, or you can teach them to read in second grade and by the time they're in fourth grade it doesn't really matter. So we can push our kids to do things early or we can naturally let them develop and it's all fine. And when we realize what the research says, we can sit back and go oh, what if I don't have to work so hard? What if I can take the pressure off myself and just love my kid and enjoy my kid? That changes modern motherhood completely.

Because, as I say in the book, the culture of modern motherhood is breaking women. But it doesn't have to be that way. We don't have to buy into I've got to do everything perfectly. If I do anything wrong, my child's going to suffer for it. I mean the way we are living, constantly stressed out, constantly frazzled, beating ourselves up all the time. What's happening is we aren't emotionally healthy, but we want to raise emotionally healthy children, and it is impossible for us, as mothers, to raise emotionally healthy children if we're breaking ourselves. What if we actually did less, focused on our own emotional health more and just created an environment of our homes of more emotional health? I think we all would thrive. I think the natural overflow would be happiness for our whole family.

0:20:48 - Stephanie

I know that this isn't a motherhood podcast, and so a lot of the women in our community don't have kids and I think that if I were listening to this a few years ago, I would be like, yeah, of course you can't screw up your kid by reading one, two, few books to them, or, of course, whatever you guys, this is so real, this is so real. The latest we're about to start potty training, and so that question of is it too early, is it too late? I haven't even read about it yet because I am afraid that the second I read about it I'm going to go oh my gosh, it's too late. Or, if we do it this way, we will infuse our children with this shame, or we will make them feel I don't know. It's like every single tiny decision is just there's so much pressure on it and I don't even have I'm not even reading all the parenting books, because I know that I'm going to walk away feeling terrible, like I'm not even reading all the blogs, I'm sheltered from a lot of it and I don't have.

My mother-in-law is not telling me all the things I'm doing wrong. Now there's my mom. They're great, and still we're trying to figure out if, when preschool, what preschool we have one thing that we're doing for the summer, is it right? Are we totally messing them up Because they're so sad when we leave them every day? Like I don't know it? Just, this is so real. It is so real. How do we? So I think, if I'm taking this a step further, like we feel the pressure to do all of these things and we feel like if we get one of them wrong, we're going to mess up everything. Yeah, and you're saying, if we just do less of these things like maybe you read one less book, maybe you have them in one less activity, maybe two and a half doesn't need to be when they start their gymnastics and swimming and ballet and art careers you know, like maybe you just don't do it yet.

0:22:57 - Alli

Or or? Here's the thing do it if you want to and you have the time and you enjoy it. Don't do things because we feel like we should.

0:23:09 - Stephanie

But like, if it really genuinely feels like, like that feeling like I'm prioritizing like my my wellbeing over my kids' wellbeing. If I'm like if I go take a shower instead of reading another book to them or something.

0:23:30 - Alli

Here's the thing Moms need to learn to prioritize their wellbeing over their kids' some, because when we get into a pattern of always prioritizing kids' wellbeing over ours, we end up kind of shriveling on the vine, and a mom that lets herself shrivel on the vine will end up being emotionally unhealthy, and children that grow up with emotionally unhealthy mom will not have a happy childhood. That's the thing. Like the premise of this book is your children will not be more emotionally healthy than you are. The one thing that we want to do as moms is raise emotionally healthy children. Right, I got you on that one. I know I got you on that one, but being a great mom is less about what we do and more about who we are. We got to do less to be great moms.

Moms are doing everything, but we're shriveling on the vine and we can do everything, but if we don't take care of ourselves, we're not going to be happy. Our kids are going to feel it, even if we're doing everything right, and there's going to be the undercurrent of mom's not happy. Kids don't understand why mom's not happy and they internalize it. It is a happier childhood for kids to have a mom doing less and being happier. Gymnastics are not as important as a happier mom. So I'm like the lone woman on the horizon going hey, stop doing so much. Put your feet up and drink a lemonade and let your kids watch Bluey and just be happy, because your kids are going to be way happier for it.

0:25:24 - Stephanie

Also Bluey's awesome.

0:25:26 - Alli

For real. I mean, I let my kids grow up watching TV and had a valedictorian. There's no correlation, it's not going to rot their brains. I'm the woman out here saying it's OK, we don't have to do so much and we don't control the world. You don't even know to say to that one no, just take a breath.

0:25:53 - Stephanie

Just take a breath. Just take a breath. It really is so funny because I know better. I do. I know better than to. Then it's one of the things that I always talk about with women is like, what advice would you give your friend? If your best friend was asking you this question, what would you tell her? So good, and it's because we know things that we don't know. We know things for other people that we don't know for ourselves, and that is so true of this, like I would say this exact same thing to anybody else.

I had friends before I had kids of my own. I had friends who struggled with breastfeeding, because so many people do. It is really hard, it is, and I remember, I remember several friends of mine telling me how they felt like they weren't able. They felt like they were falling short as a mom because they didn't physically have enough milk to give to their kids. And I immediately like shot back with how they absolutely have enough to give to their kids and they're not a better mom if their kid has more breast milk and less formula and that they just need to be fed and loved and they're not falling short. And this is something they absolutely cannot control and all these things.

But when I didn't have enough milk for my kids, I really feel like it. I felt like I was going to mess them up, like I felt like they were, you know, getting the short end of the deal because I couldn't provide for them in the way that I wanted to. And it took me a while to get over that, even though, again, like I'm insulated from, I don't have people yelling in my ears about how breast is best, like I just don't have that in my life. But I still had those messages like inside of me and it took me so long to finally be like formula is a gift my kids need to eat, like we're doing the best we can and and it turned out fine. I saw a meme on I. It said something like it was like two slides and it was like only exclusively breastfed kids and then kids who've had some formula oh, like

heaven forbid. And then it was like it's led to the same thing and it was like eating old french fries off the mini van.

0:28:02 - Alli

It was like we all end up in the same place, and that is, that is just true.

And I will tell you, from research there is no long-term difference. I mean from thousands of kids, from from decades of research. There's no difference. And when I did survey again over a thousand moms and I asked about mom guilt like, what is the single biggest cause of mom guilt? It's not mother-in-laws, it's not husbands, it's not even themselves. The biggest single cause was social media. Because I think that people scroll through and they see images of women and kids. You know, you go through and there's this other family and even the dog is smiling where, like, like they're all in matching outfits and you look and like your dog is throwing up on the carpet and your kid is freaking out because there's a drop of water on the outside of the sippy cup. You know what I mean. Or the sippy cup is pink.

And the thing we have to remember, especially with social media now, I'm an entrepreneur. I am. I am here for women having businesses online. I teach women how to have successful businesses online. That's what I do all day long, every day. I love it.

But women have successful businesses by presenting imagery on social media, like that's what they do. There's great money in that. So when we are scrolling through social media and we see influencers posting beautiful pictures or beautiful videos with their families. A lot of times that is a business, so we have to go. Oh, it's not that other women have it all figured out and I don't. We have to remind ourselves this is an influencer and this is a business. It's not real life, right, but because we see hundreds or thousands of images like that a day, our brain like it's impossible for our brain to keep that front and center all the time and mom guilt it just is beating women up all the time. Because we live in real life and our real life doesn't look like everyone's carefully curated images that they're doing as part of their business model.

0:30:11 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah. It's kind of like grabbing a catalog and being like we should, I mean, but that affects us too. You know, looking at catalog, you're like, well, I should look like this in a bathing suit and I don't.

0:30:23 - Alli

So I mean it, really love it if my life looked like a Ralph Lauren catalog, 100%, oh same.

0:30:30 - Stephanie

I love Ralph Lauren. Please, it really. Yeah, it's social media is something that I have such a love hate relationship with. Like I've made a real life, really true friends on social media and it's a way that, like, I get information. It's a way that I'm inspired, it's a way that I like it's something that makes me laugh a lot and all those are good things. But there have been long seasons of my

life, like even recently, where I've had to shut it down because it's just so like one of the things that I realized I was doing seven or eight years ago.

This is kind of when I first started. Actually, you know, being on social media is I felt like I was falling short in every single area of my life. And I remember talking to my husband about it and he's like what do you think this is supposed to look like? And I'm like, well, this person's an amazing chef and this person has this beautiful house and this person has these abs and this blah, blah, blah, and I had like combined all these people into one and I felt like I was supposed to be her and he was like she is a fitness professional, she is a trained interior designer that is a Michelin star chef. Like this person's an actual professional photographer, Like these people are not one person.

This is everybody has, like one thing they're good at and they're probably like okay or terrible at everything else. Just like you. Like you have something that you're really good at. You're not supposed to be good at all the things You're combining these people these are not one person, but it's really hard to like. I don't know, Our brains don't know that, especially when it's just like a quick scroll.

0:32:06 - Alli

Well, and it's because we're just taking in visuals, so it's visuals of perfection and it's of the Michelin star chef, perfection in food, perfection in abs, perfection in this, perfection in that and it's really hard to see visual images of perfection all the time when we live in the real world. Yeah, I'm really careful about my social media feeds. My social media feeds are mostly amusement parks and animals, because I had to mute or unfollow everything that triggered insecurity or guilt and so anything that has the business model of perfection. It's not good for my brain. I just can't handle it.

0:32:57 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah, I mean same, yeah, same. I was going to ask you what you do like, because there are probably people in your real life that trigger that, or like in your professional life. So do you like save, keep following, but mute people.

0:33:16 - Alli

Yeah, I follow them. Well, what I do? I follow a lot of people on Twitter and I know Instagram is building a Twitter competitor and the reason I like Twitter is because it's a social media that's built around words and thoughts as opposed to a visual. So whenever Instagram builds that that I know they're working on that's words instead of visuals. I'm all over that. I'm going to be on that all day long because I want to be in a social media platform where we can share thoughts and words. Like, get me that over visuals all day long. I'm about that. I will be all about visuals. If it's like sea otters and roller coasters or ice cream cones at Disney World, yes, please, I will take those visuals, but I don't want visuals of abs or those things. That doesn't make me happy. That makes me sad. Yeah, I haven't had abs in 25 years. I don't need to see other people's. Yeah, God bless them. More power to you, but I don't need it in my feed.

0:34:23 - Stephanie

Well, there's just only so much time and energy that we each have in a day, and you just can't be good at everything. No, no, and you just can't do it all at the same time. And so if abs are the priority, then that's okay. Abs can be the priority, but if abs are the priority, that means that something else isn't.

0:34:43 - Alli

Exactly, and for me, the majority of my work life is as a business coach. So I'm going to be on Twitter, I'm going to be on LinkedIn, I'm going to be talking about business and talking about those things. I'm not going to spend time on anything that makes me feel bad. Yeah, and that's the thing. It's kind of a gut check of what triggers momgill, one of the things that I put in the book. That was really interesting in terms of research with social media, because the whole end of the book is habits that help us thrive with social media.

Research has found the more time we spend on it generally, the more likely we are to be depressed at the end of the time. But if we are active in our use of it, we won't be depressed. So if we're actively commenting on our friend's stuff or we're like sending a message to people and we're talking to people, if we're active in it, we're okay. But if we're passively scrolling, that's when we're more depressed at the end of it. So fascinating, that is really interesting. I hadn't heard that. Yeah, the more we're just passively scrolling and we're not engaged with other people, the worse we feel.

0:35:51 - Stephanie

Talk to me about more of those habits. We're taking off some of these expectations or some of these half-dos in motherhood, I guess. How do we figure out for us what we want to take off and what we want to keep and what we want to replace it with? What does that process look like?

0:36:14 - Alli

Okay, let's move this one. Okay. So it's funny when I went into that final section of the book Habits to Help Us Thrive. One of the first things I say is don't worry, I've realized. This is going to stress you out at first when you hear this, because it's going to sound like extra work. This is not extra work, because everyone has done already.

The most important one is something that women tend to not do, especially mothers. I call it the magic question habit, and it's every day asking ourselves what do I need right now? At first it was what do I need? That question is so foreign and overwhelming. Women are like I don't even know what I need. Do I need a nap? Do I need a shower? Do I need to have sex? Do I need a snack? I don't even know. So it's like what do I need right now, in this moment? It's just kind of getting back in touch with ourselves and being like how do I honor myself? What do I need in this moment? And then it comes down to I need some food, I need to sit down, I need a babysitter for the afternoon, I need to make sure that I get these kids down for a nap so I can get five minutes alone. I need to make sure that tomorrow afternoon I have a friend come over to sit on the couch with me while we let our kids run around the backyard like crazy.

Well, it can be something small, it can be something big, but it's learning to just pay attention to whatever it is we need. Because, like we talked about earlier moms and it starts as soon as we're pregnant. We put our needs on the shelf. And when we're pregnant, we'll still listen to our bodies and ourselves a little bit because we're housing that baby. But as soon as if we're breastfeeding, we stop breastfeeding, we stop listening to our body, we don't pay attention to ourselves at all and it's all for the child. And it just gets worse as the child gets older, to the point where we're withering on the vine and we wonder why we feel so bad all the time and we wonder why our health is declining and we wonder why we're grumpy all the time. So the magic question habit is how do I honor myself, how do I take care of myself? Just like my child is a wonderful, worthy, amazing person, so am I too. So for you, Stephanie, what do you need right now, today?

0:38:48 - Stephanie

I seriously think I need a good cry today. Yeah, it's like you know how you can just feel it in you and you're like I'm not sad, nothing, like there's not a. I don't think I have a re, like I don't have a bubbling up urgent reason. But yeah, I think today I might need just like a good cry. You just need that release.

0:39:09 - Alli

But that's honoring to you as a person to go. I just need that release.

0:39:14 - Stephanie

One of the things that I've noticed and it's like so exactly to your point how long it took me to notice this is that the times when I'm the most frustrated or the most short with my kids are times when my basic needs aren't met. Yeah, and like a pretty major basic need, but one that's kind of hard to fill, I guess in the season to sleep. So it's like that's kind of a bigger, a taller order, but a lot of times it's like I need to pee, like I need to go to the bathroom Without little fingers under the door. Totally. Mama, mama, mama, are you in there? Yeah, but I'm still in here.

But really it's like I'm trying to talk to them and try and do a million things and like I have to pee, so like I'm getting kind of cranky about it. And when I stop for a second and ask myself that question, like what do I need? I just need a bathroom break, like I just need like 30 seconds of the bathroom. Or I haven't eaten yet today, I'm really hungry, and so like I just need a snack, and so I've started to get better at noticing that being like why am I so short right now? Is it this situation Maybe. But like also, one of my very, very, very basic needs might not be met. And if I can just meet that, like, we're all gonna be better. So I'll be like hey, buddy buddies, I need two seconds, I'm gonna. I promise I'll come back, I'm gonna go to the bathroom, I'll see you in a second. Like mama needs a cheese stick, you know.

0:40:47 - Alli

And here's what's so great about that as the kids get older not so much right now, but as they get older. One, it teaches them that the world doesn't revolve around them. But two, it teaches them that other people are also worthy of being cared for. And for moms, we need to model how women should care for themselves for our daughters, but it's also really important how women

should care for themselves and be cared for for our sons. We have such a responsibility as women to model the kind of respect that women deserve for both our daughters and our sons. So why would we not care for ourselves with so much love and grace and respect? Because we have to model for the next generation how our daughters are gonna care for themselves and how our sons are gonna care for their wives. Like we can't just put our needs on the shelf, we can't not care for ourselves and mistreat ourselves and go. I don't wanna be a selfish mom, I wanna be a good mom. So I'm just not gonna care for myself. And the thing is, the kind of mom who would say I wanna be a good mom, I don't wanna risk being a bad mom is never at risk of being a bad mom. Bad moms don't ask that question. They just don't. You know what I mean. I mean, it's so silly.

One of the therapists that worked on the book with me. She was like a bad mom is never gonna read this book. A bad mom would have to be court ordered to read this book. She was like good moms are not at risk of being selfish. A good mom isn't just gonna accidentally fall into being selfish. She's like a narcissist, is never gonna look at somebody and be like could that be a narcissist? No, they don't do that because they're narcissists. She's like good moms worry so much about being selfish and about being good moms that they're so far off in the other direction that we just have to convince them to do anything for themselves. Does that make sense? Yeah, yeah, but yeah, it comes down to we have to model for our daughters and model for our sons the right way to treat themselves and to treat women. It's huge, right, it's huge, yeah, and we deserve more than eating cold nuggets off the floor and begging for a potty break, and we deserve to put our feet up and drink lemonade occasionally.

0:43:36 - Stephanie

And we deserve to sit on the couch with our girlfriends, yeah, yeah, not.

0:43:41 - Alli

I mean I'm not saying that moms don't do anything, but I'm saying there's balance and I'm saying the more we enjoy life and the more we invest in ourselves and our emotional health, the natural overflow of that is happy, confident, well-adjusted children and a household.

0:44:02 - Stephanie

What do we do? Because this is so like. Again, I feel like I need to say like I know this stuff. I know this stuff. The second I found out I was having girls, I immediately began to think about all the things that I wanted to show them about, like what it looks like to be a woman and how to honor yourself and care for yourself, and like I'm so conscious of the fact that they're seeing what this looks like by watching me less or like more so than through what I tell them, especially right now, like I know this stuff, but it is so in the water, it's like it is. So this is so hard to do because it is so like it is so counter-cultural to take care of yourself as a mom.

So, even if you like really know it, it still feels like driving on the wrong side of the road.

0:44:59 - Alli

I think it's really important for women to get together and support each other on it. I think my hope is that women read this book in book clubs and really hold each other's feet to the fire with it. So, like every week they get together, whether online or together, and go did you take care of yourself, like, did you pee alone? Did you unfollow somebody who triggers mom guilt? You know, I mean, it's just those simple things because, you're right, it is everywhere and the way we thrive is in community. Okay, I know I'm such a research nerd.

One of the things I found in researching for this book is, of all, of the relationships that we have.

Of course, our marriages and children give us such meaning in our lives and such deep joy, but it is our friendships with our girlfriends that make us the happiest, because our friendships aren't tied.

They don't have those normal ties like of work and a family. We are friends with other people because we like them, so our friendships bring us like just the happiest of relationships and women who have a bigger social connections, on average like two or three people. Their children actually are better developed at age two or three than other children. So it's not just the books around the house. It's women with great friendships, with better developed children. So I think it's really, really important to build networks of strong women, of these relationships, for your own happiness, of other women who have educated themselves with the science of what matters in motherhood and what really matters in parenting. That we educate ourselves so we can be smart and not buy into the craziness of this culture. Motherhood, a messaging, modern motherhood messaging, may be breaking us, but it doesn't have to if we're in community with other women and we just have to kind of spread the word and stick together on it.

0:47:13 - Stephanie

Yeah, yeah, I love that. What do we do if we, I guess, talk us through the moment when we say, for example, that your mom or your mother-in-law is one of those voices that kind of triggers some mom shame, which again, might or not. I'm very, very fortunate if you decide to put your feet up, turn on Bluey and drink some lemonade and someone is there that like gives you a side eye or says something to you like that's shaming. Walk us through kind of how we can process and respond yeah, I have some scripts in the book for some different things that you can say.

0:47:57 - Alli

I love scripts. I also have scripts in the audio book for mental load. You know, all those things that women carry to ways, things that you can say to your partner to get him to help with things, and some scripts that you can use for people if they want to tell you how to do things. It can be as simple as thank you so much for telling me. I think that we're going to do it this way in our house, but I appreciate you sharing that with me. So again, it's as simple as you know.

You're starting with a thank you, then in the middle you're telling them how it's going to be and then you're ending it with appreciation Thank you so much for telling me I'm going to do it this way. But I appreciate you letting me know. So you're friendly, you're nice. You're letting people know your boundary like this is how you're going to do it. But then you're ending it nice, you're

not qualifying it, you're not leaving it open for discussion, you're just ending it up that way. So I have found that as long as I am nice about something and I have a nice tone of voice, I can give just about any boundary out, and if I just keep being nice about it, eventually people will stop repeating what they're saying to me. Thank you so much for letting me know this is how I'm going to do it, but I appreciate you letting me know.

0:49:20 - Stephanie

I even like that phrase. I feel like it just like strengthens my backbone, it just like helps me sit up taller. Boundary work has been really, really important in my life for the last like I don't know probably six years. It's been just something that I've been learning a ton about and practicing and having a script and practicing it ahead of time is so helpful and so like hearing that and having that script saying it out loud a bunch of times like it does get easier and then in the moment, that moment will be so much easier because you have that in your back pocket. And one of the things that I've practiced also is, like I'll take that into consideration, oh, that's a good one, thanks for bringing that up.

I'll think about that. I thought about it, not doing it, but thanks for throwing that out there.

0:50:14 - Alli

I have a great script when people want me to do something I don't want to do. You want to hear it? Oh yeah, this is my favorite. Okay, here we go. Thank you so much for offering. Unfortunately, I have reached my capacity and I can't take on anything else, but I appreciate you thinking of me. So that way, like I have told you, I have reached my capacity. I can't take on anything else Like that's what I've done. So it starts with a thank you, ends with a thank you. But I'm very honest with this is my capacity. I can't take on anything else. What's not about you, it's all about me, and so far, nobody has died because I've said no.

0:50:59 - Stephanie

I love that. I just period, I have reached my capacity. I cannot take on anything else. Period, like my natural, like gut reaction is to be like because and here's what, here's what that looks like. And man, well, okay, well, do you think that I'm weak because I, this is my capacity and I can't take on anything else? Okay, let me explain to you even more how crazy this is. So you don't think that there's any weakness in me and you understand that this really is my capacity, I like just to take it back for notches and say listen, this is my capacity, I've reached it.

0:51:36 - Alli

And the thing is we're all human. You know, we all have capacity and life is crazy for everybody. We live in 2023. The world is bananas. So I feel like everybody's going through stuff and when you say average capacity, most people go I get it because everybody's going through something. Yeah, Yep, I love it.

0:51:58 - Stephanie

I love it. One of the things that I want to make sure to ask you about before we go is you know, when we are a new mom, we're doing something that we are new at, yeah, and so making

decisions for our family is hard, because it's like we we can read research, but we don't have that in our own. There's no way to see how your kids are going to turn out, you know, 20 years from now, to know that it really doesn't matter if they watch an extra half an hour TV or something you know and and we're doing something that we're naturally, like, untrained at. Like there's no mom school, there's no degree, there's no prerequisite, there's no, there's. There are lots of, lots of manuals, but they're all, like you know, it's a bit of a mis, as we've been talking about. How do we like build up confidence in ourselves, to to trust our own voice, to trust our own wisdom, like, how do we make decisions confidently when we're not confident about the decisions we're making?

0:53:02 - Alli

Yeah, the secret really is to constantly invest in our emotional health, and I consider emotional health a combination of our spiritual health, our mental health and our relational health as our our health, of our relational, of our relationships. If we're investing in those things, then natural overflow is getting it right and it's being confident. If our relationships are healthy, if we are working on our mental health, if we're working on our spiritual health, we're going to be just fine. If we're feeling good, if we're relaxed, if we are enjoying our kids, our kids are going to be fine.

I mean, if you've ever gone to a family reunion and you've seen your cousins and your cousins' kids and you've been like, oh my goodness, they're all carbon copies of each other. They all act the same, they look alike, you know what I mean. That's going to be you and your kids one day. Your kids are going to grow up and they're going to be little carbon copies of you, whether they watch that 30 minutes of extra TV or not. It's just the way it is. What matters is how you love them. What matters is how you enjoy them. What matters is snuggling on the couch and laughing at a TV show and the way they walk in the room, when your eyes light up, when you see them and they feel secure and confident in the world. That's what matters in parenting. It's just learning to enjoy them and knowing that every little thing that happens doesn't really matter. That is the secret art of motherhood.

0:54:46 - Stephanie

I love that. The thing that I'm thinking right now is I'm like that's the stuff I'm good at the cuddling on the couch, the eyes lighting up, the being together, the laughing about silly things. That is my sweet spot. You got it. It's the growing wheat in your backyard and deciding between subsets of the Montessori method for preschool. That is not.

0:55:08 - Alli

It literally does not matter. What matters in preschool is what you can afford, what you prefer. That's a whole other thing. What you can afford and what you prefer and what's open, that's it, what makes it easier for you as a mom and what's not going to stress you out, because in the end, it's not going to matter in the end. Yeah, I promise I love that, ali, do you?

0:55:38 - Stephanie

have anything else, just any last anything we didn't touch on. Where you're like? I need new moms to know this.

0:55:46 - Alli

Yes, there is an entire industry out there that is dedicated to making women feel bad about themselves as moms. That keeps that industry going. I am out here waving my arm, saying you are doing better than you think you are, that you can trust yourself. Let's get some healthy habits in there that are easy to do. I want to be the voice of reason for you and help you enjoy this and learn to trust yourself and know that you are a great mom and you're doing a lot better than you think you are. You can do this. Thank you for giving me just a little bit of time to be able to share it, Stephanie. I appreciate it.

0:56:29 - Stephanie

Thank you so much for coming on the show. Thank you for this message. This is just exactly what my heart needed today. Thanks Ali, thanks Rand, you guys, isn't Ali amazing? I just love her and I love her story. Don't forget that if you ever want to find any of the links for anything we talk about in our Girls Night episodes, you can always find those over in our show notes. Just head over to girlsnightpodcast.com and you'll find links for everything, including links for Ali, so you can pick up her book, listen to her podcast and follow along with all the great stuff she's doing.

Okay, that's it for today's episode, but we have so much good stuff ahead this season and, with that in mind, now is the perfect time to make sure you're subscribed. Subscribing to the show is the very best way to make sure you never miss an episode. It won't send you an email or anything. It just makes sure your phone downloads the latest episode when a new one's released. And I did want to take a quick second to ask you a favor. If you enjoyed this episode or if you've been a Girls Night fan for a while now, would you take just two quick seconds to leave us a rating and a review on iTunes. Those reviews help out our podcast so much and it really would mean the world to me. So if you take two quick seconds to do that, I'd be so grateful. Friends, thank you so much for joining me for Girls Night. I'll see you next week.