

Katie: Hey, we're Katie and Caitlin coming to you from our library living room. We are here not just as children's librarians, but as people who are parenting our own children.

Caitlin: Each week will bring a new conversation about parenting with helpful resources from our library and beyond. This is your family, your library, and we're your librarians.

Katie: Today we're talking about social anxiety. And we just want to preface this by saying that we are not mental health or medical professionals, and the knowledge that we present today is based on our own research and our own personal experiences. So just to lead off with that. So social anxiety is more than just being shy. A lot of us can be shy. We have children that can be shy as well. But social anxiety is kind of like the next step up from that. It's a debilitating fear of embarrassing yourself in front of others. And it's not a phobia of being in social situations, but it's being terrified of how people are going to perceive you.

Caitlin: I read something interesting about this as I was doing some research for this specific podcast. I learned that social anxiety disorder is one of the most common issues that kids and teens are diagnosed with, and not just kids and teens. 9 to percent of the overall population in the United States has been diagnosed with social anxiety disorder. I thought that was really interesting. I didn't realize how common it was.

Katie: That is that's very interesting. I was also surprised, too, that it's actually something that's not diagnosed until the ages of like between eight and 14 or 15.

Caitlin: Right. They take a minute to sort of assess the situation and see if it's a thing that the kid is going to grow out of, or if this is like an actual thing that is going to affect them in an adverse way as they go forward into school in social relationships.

Katie: Yeah, I have personally experienced a lot of social anxiety growing up. I was definitely one of those kids that kind of hid behind my mom's legs constantly and even, you know, going into school-age, like kindergarten and beyond. I experienced it a lot. And I would say as an adult, I do. I still do, but in different ways it manifests like I think the challenge of doing something or putting myself out there usually outweighs how I feel like someone is or people are going to perceive me. But for instance, like even today on My way coming here this morning to record this podcast, you know, going through my head, it's like, am I going to sound like I know what I'm talking about? Am I going to be able to express everything that I want to express? Am I going to let Caitlin down today?

Caitlin: Oh, never. Never.

Katie: I know, but it's like that. That is the realness. But on the other side, it's like, I'm so excited to be doing this with you. And it is. It's a professional challenge for me and a personal challenge that I'm like, really happy to be doing. So for me at this point in my life, that outweighs all those feelings. Like I know I can get past that, but at one point it was really much harder for me to do that.

Caitlin: Yeah, for sure. I think I don't have I think I have like general anxiety about all of the things all of the time. And I definitely consider myself to be pretty introverted. I thought that the the conversation around introverts and extroverts I find really helpful when I'm thinking about things like social anxiety or how I feel when I'm socializing or putting myself out there publicly. I find them really helpful and it's it's something that wasn't really on my radar until probably like 2010 or 2009 whenever that book "Quiet" came out. And I feel like that's when people started talking about it a lot. When I was a kid. It was kind of a mix. I like to talk to people, but I also get really tired if I'm talking to people a whole lot and sometimes I just can't do it. And putting myself in social situations that didn't make me feel comfortable. I didn't realize that that was something that like I didn't have to do. So I wanted to be a performer really badly when I was a kid. So I thought that that meant that I had to keep putting myself in increasingly public situations, and it made me kind of miserable. And it really wasn't until I was a full grown up that I realized that that was a real thing and that I need to give myself breaks in between social encounters. And one of the books that I was reading as I was thinking about this topic, actually, there's two of them. Christine Fonseca seems to be the person who is talking about introversion and extroversion, and she's got two books.

One is called "Quiet Kids: Help Your Introverted Child Succeed in an Extroverted World," and the other is called "Raising the Shy Child," and it's advice for helping kids make friends speak up and stop worrying. Both of these books address social anxiety disorder, but one of the things that I thought was really interesting as I was reading was she talks about introversion and extroversion as tools to sort of help your kid that's experiencing anxiety and excessive shyness overcome them, like how can you be a resource for your kids? But what I thought was really interesting was how she talks about some people identify really hard with being an introvert, and some people identify really hard with being an extrovert. And some people are like, I am both, I'm an introvert, and she's like, I hear that. But I think and I do agree that it's a spectrum, but I think that, like you will have tendencies towards one way or the other way and one way that you can tell where you fall on that spectrum is if you've had just one of those weeks where you leave on Friday and you're like, I did all the things I talked to all the people, I was on 100% of the time and it

was banana pants. And now I'm very tired. What do you want to do at the end of the week? Do you want to go out with your friends and tell them about what a banana parts week you had? Or do you want to go hide in a hole?

Katie: Hide in a hole.

Caitlin: I also want to hide in a hole like I would like to hide in a hole and put the lid on. And it's just me in there, all the blanket. It's like it's like a nest. I can make a nest in that hole. But I thought that was interesting. And it's given me a different way to think about my kids when they're feeling anxious or when they don't want to do things. And I have kids that fall on opposite sides of the spectrum, which is very interesting to experience. So Desi, he is he's he could just be in that hole with me like we could just be like in the hole together doing our own thing and it would be fine. We could be in there forever. And during the pandemic, it was interesting because I'm sorry, during the lockdown and it was interesting to see like, like most of us, me, Devin, Desi, we were all fine. But Haven is little extrovert and that's that was my first clue that that's how she was experiencing the world because she was like, Get me out of here. I need to talk to friends. When am I going to get to hug somebody? So I don't know if that's the same dynamic in your family, but it was been interesting.

Katie: Yeah, I would say like Orson is definitely more of an introvert, but it's interesting that now as he is getting into that older age group, he's eight and a half now that I find he's actually falling more in the middle because he definitely enjoys talking to people. He chats up anybody that he comes across, but he also really enjoys being at home and like being by himself and reading. So it's interesting now that he's getting older and his personality and he's really coming into himself, I find he's more in the middle, which is, I don't know, that kind of stuff just really is so interesting to me.

Caitlin: Yeah, you'll have to ask him if at the end of his school week he wants to head to the bar at.

Katie: Please don't do that. But actually last night... Edwin is in preschool, He's five and he'll be going into kindergarten next year. And he brought up last night about going to kindergarten and how he won't know anybody in kindergarten. So he definitely falls more on the social anxiety end of it. I think once he's actually in a situation and he's familiar with it, then he's comfortable and it kind of melts away. But like that kind of pending thing that's going to happen or, you know, school, it's like a few months down the line and he knows it's coming. I mean, he's going to be asking these kind of questions all the way up until that point, which I totally get. You know, he's like, am I going to make any friends? Are people going to want to play with me? And, you know, it's like they're questions that I think we

all understand. But, you know, it's like, how do you really reassure them in the moment that it's going to be okay without saying like, oh, don't worry about that.

Caitlin: Right. Yeah, You don't minimize it. Yeah, I actually have an answer for you.

Katie: Go for it.

Caitlin: So as I was reading some more of these books, I found this one. It's called "Making Friends: A Guide to Understanding and Nurturing Your Child's Friendship." Most of the book is about facilitating friendship, but there's a chapter on navigating issues like excessive shyness. And the author of the book, she has a really helpful concrete list of things to do to help build confidence around socializing. So she says that things like making a checklist are really good and things like practicing conversations like this is what you're going to experience when you get to school and you're going to meet new friends and here's how you introduce yourself. And here are some questions that you can ask. I find things like concrete lists really helpful because it's it's like, okay, here's practical information that I can take and I can like check things off as opposed to like, you know, like, here's just generalized advice, which, you know, is also good and helpful. But having something concrete that I can look at and try, I find really helpful. She also talks about if you have a kid who tends towards that sort of anxious feeling about making friends or if they do sort of tend towards introversion or shyness, don't use the word shy to describe them, at least not around them.

Katie: Oh, interesting.

Caitlin: I thought that was interesting too, and when I read why it made sense, and it's because if they think that you are perceiving them in this specific way, then that becomes their identity. And it helps them. They don't have such a flexible mindset.

Katie: I'm totally like replaying in my mind sometimes, like when you're introducing your kid to somebody or you're in any situation, it's like, Oh, are you being shy? You know? And it's...

Caitlin: I wonder if using words and I think about like how we talk about kids when they come to talk to us at the kid's desk. I wonder if using words like feeling blank, you know, like, or, you know, are you feeling shy today? That's okay. You know, sometimes I feel shy too. Then it becomes less about the identity and more about the feeling. I wonder if that helps.

Katie: Yeah, or maybe it just saying like, How are you feeling? So that they can, like, identify what they're feeling is without you kind of bullying into like a particular feeling.

Caitlin: Another thing that, um, this is Elizabeth Hartley-brewer. She's the author of "Making Friends." Another thing that she suggests is if you have a little person who's quiet and shy and we do see that a lot in the library, you know, kids that are nervous about saying hi to us at the desk and I don't I think it's like best practice across the board, like we do not force that interaction. But I think sometimes caregivers and parents feel nervous about, you know, is my kid being polite if they're not making that point of contact with you parents and caregivers out there, we don't care. It's totally fine. Your kid does not have to say hi to us.

Katie: Show up as they are.

Caitlin: Exactly. Especially if they want to show up in costume. We love it when kids show up in like full Batman. That's very, very fun for us. Anyway, Hartley-Brewer suggests that if you have one of those kids that's a little bit quiet and they do make that contact with you, stop and listen to them fully. And that is the thing that I struggle with. And I think it's because my brain is always going about 5 million miles a minute. But like actually stop and fully listen to whatever it is that they are saying. Because if that kid feels like they are important to you in the moment, they're going to feel like they're important enough or competent enough to have those interactions with other kids. I thought That was really helpful.

Katie: I really like that. I have a back to that is definitely more for older kids, meaning like probably eight and up. It's called "Why Do I Feel So Worried: A Kids Guide to Coping with Big Emotions." And it's by Tammy Kirkness and I really like this one The author comes out it it's for definitely for both kids and their caregivers. And she kind of talks her about her experience that she had as a kid with a lot of with being worried a lot and having a lot of feelings that she couldn't identify and kind of how to get past them. And so it's kind of like a choose your own adventure kind of book because it is asking she has a lot of questions and it's like so like on a scale of 1 to 10, how strong are those feelings that you're having right now? Or, you know, what are you feeling in your body then? Yeah, and then so ask a question and it's like, so if this is what you're feeling like, are you feeling clumsy, Are you feeling hot, Are you feeling worried about school? Then turn to page 44. So it's like something where a kid can kind of go through this. It's not like one of those books where it's like you go from A to Z. It's like you can skip around, you can see like, oh, other people have feel these things like my worries focus on this particular thing. But oh, other people get worried about that. I don't worry about that. But it's like realizing that like

everybody worries about something and there are ways to deal with that. And that I think also just opening up that dialog with the grown up and being able to have those conversations like, you know, we've talked about previously too, it's so important. I mean, if you could make talking about anything like this fun. Yeah, this book actually does that, which I think is just amazing.

Caitlin: I haven't read that one, but that sounds really great. I mean, one, what a great empathy builder and two, how empowering like you get to like you said, like you get to identify your own feelings and then flip to the page that matches with that. That's really cool.

Katie: Yeah. And I think it's one of those that you could sit down and actually do with the child. It's like you might be feeling us or a certain way about a certain thing on that day, but maybe the child is different and then you can talk about kind of like help each other, work through them too. Yeah. Which, you know, I think the one of the most important things that I've taken away from the research that I've done is not diminishing the way that your child is feeling. It's like we never want someone to diminish how we're feeling about a certain thing. We want people to just as you were saying, listen, just listen without interruption, letting you say what you need to say, say or how you're feeling. And I think, you know, just letting a child come to you as they are is just the most important thing that we can do.

Caitlin: Yeah, I, I really sat with that for a minute as I was reading it and it made me think about the way that I parent because, I mean, like I said, my brain's always going a million miles a minute, but also because of like aforementioned anxiety. And I am a humongous people pleaser. I find myself when I am not, as you know, I'm not the public-facing librarian person. I'm the parenting person. I want to fill those gaps. You know, when somebody is talking to my kid and actually giving them the space to communicate, I find myself wanting to be like, ha, you know, they're don't you want to say blah, blah, blah, or, you know, say blah blah blah. And I like I find myself wanting to complete the sentences for them or respond in a way that is like charming or is going to make whoever is talking to them like them rather than letting them be their own authentic self. And I'm going to stop doing that. I'm going to try to stop doing that.

Katie: It's really hard. It's really is very hard to take yourself away from that place you're used to going to. Yeah, it's it's hard to recognize that in yourself and to kind of get to it before you do it.

Caitlin: It really gets in you. Yeah. You know, another thing that I read that I thought was really interesting and I'm going to tell it to you and see if you identify with any of these things, because as I was doing all this research, I think everybody does this because we're all

human beings. But like, Oh, I see myself in this, in this thing that I'm learning about. But they were talking about this is Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer again, talking about making friends and the issues that that come with social anxiety and extreme shyness. And she was talking about how everybody has a comfort zone. And that comfort zone, if you're doing really well and you're feeling healthy, that comfort zone is flexible. So you can extend it depending on your circumstance. If this is not the case, if kids don't feel safe in whatever social situation that they're in or their home space, they can create what's called a safety barrier. And it looks a couple of different ways. So it can manifest as being a clam. This is also alliterative. And, you know, I love alliteration. So it's a clam. So you're very quiet and you're withdrawn. It looks like you're hiding in your bedroom where you always have a book or you are always on your phone or your computer. It can look like a clone. So you're like perfect in every way. Or you could be a clown. So you're disruptive. And you, you know, you're the class clown. You take attention because you are trying to control whatever that scary social situation is. And definitely I identified with the clone.

Katie: Yeah, totally. I think we all can identify with that in some way.

Caitlin: See, I wonder if we all can though, because I was talking to my neighbor about this introvert-extrovert thing and I'm like, everybody wants to hide in a hole, right? Like, why wouldn't you want to hide in a hole? And my neighbor was like, You would not believe the week I've had. It has been completely bonkers. And I was like, Oh boy, you need a hole. And she was like, I got to get out of here. I'm going to go find some friends and hang out with them. We're all going to have a glass of wine and it's going to be great. It's really good to blow off some steam. And I was like why did you want to talk to more people? So I wonder. I wonder if it's everybody. I mean, I feel like, yeah, of course, everybody wants to never make mistakes, ever. But I bet there are some people out there that are like, you know what, mistakes help us learn.

Katie: Totally, totally. You know, it's funny, I often work on Saturdays and I work with one of our wonderful coworkers, Laura P, and she's always like, you know, do you have any, like, plans for tomorrow and whatever? And I'm like, Laura, you know me well enough to know by not that I'm going to be at home doing laundry, trying to hide from my kids, you know, like it's like after working Friday, Friday night, Saturday, I mean, I am dunzo dunzo. And so finally on this Saturday, that's when I was just like, Laura, you know the answer.

Caitlin: I will be lining my hole with comfy blankets. Oh, you know what else I was thinking about? Which, I was thinking about the way that kids make friends with each other. And this kind of goes back to you talking about Edwin going to school for the first time and how

he's been in preschool. So he sort of has this baseline for like what that young social interaction looks like. I was homeschooled until I was eight, so I never had that like foundational like, this is how we meet people and this is how we share toys. And I have a sister, but, you know, I mean, it looks a little bit different when you're in this like, insulated home school sphere. So by the time I got to school, I felt like everybody already knew how to do everything. And I felt like a real fish out of water, like I didn't know how to talk to people. I was talking to kids the way that I was used to. Talking to grown-ups was just different. And so little things that I think happen really naturally that kids do for and to each other, like as part of like the work of play that was completely foreign to me. Like I watch my own kids and how they how effortlessly they move in and out of friendships with people that they don't know very well, like at the playground or like at school. And I've watched things happen, you know, here at the library when we're observing kids playing and they're in the kids room and, you know, like a kid will grab a ball from another kid or like a kid will be like, I don't like your dress or something like that. And I think about how deeply that would have cut me, would have cut me, you know, like me, eight year old, like used to expressing myself creatively in many different weirdo ways. And how that would have wounded me to the point where I was like, That's it. I don't I don't talk to people anymore. I don't make friends anymore. And I wonder, like, is that a thing that just happens innately when kids are around other kids? Do they learn how to communicate with each other and how to navigate those sort of complex social roles? Or is it something that they're teaching in schools? Like is that part of their social emotional curriculum? Do you know?

Katie: I mean, I think it's, I think it comes through by the work of play. Yeah. I mean, I think that's how kids really develop skills around being around each other and how to navigate different feelings and emotions that come from that. I mean, that's what I think. But one of the things that I read too, which I found interesting, is that some of this, you know, anxiety that people experience is also genetic. So I think or, you know, learned behavior that we learn, you know, from our family members that we spend a lot of our time with growing up or, you know, the kids that we spend a lot of our time with. But I think most of it comes is kind of like innate and certain way. So I think a lot of us are predisposed to feelings like this, you know, just like depression runs in a lot of families. It runs deep in my family, but it doesn't run deep in my husband's family, you know? So it's like all that stuff is just I mean, I'm not a scientist, obviously, but or, you know, I don't study psychology in that way. But like, it's so interesting to me how a lot of these things are not necessarily like learned behaviors, but they are just part of who we are.

Caitlin: Yeah, I think that's true. One of the things that I found hopeful when I was looking at all of this is that there are, you know,



there's there are those concrete lists and there are lots of resources and books out there, you know, like the one that you brought that are specifically for kids that, you know, you can write down feelings and there are strategies that you can use. And you know, how we love to use a picture book to talk about issues or to model behavior. I have a couple of picture books that I think exemplify those tactics that you can use. The first book that I have is "Too Shy to Say Hi." It is written by Shannon Anderson and illustrated by Hiroe Nakata. So Shelley's the main character in the book. She is she has a lot of animal friends and she's really comfortable with those animal friends, which I thought was really nice, but she's not really comfortable around human friends. Nobody is making a big deal about this in the book, and I think that's awesome. So Shelly just gets to be Shelly, so it's okay until it's not okay with Shelley anymore. And Shelley decides that she wants some human companionship. So the book, as part of this narrative, it's not like real didactic, like here is what you must do. But Shelley tries some different things to help her feel better about going into making new friends in her. And that's that's a thing. And she takes a breath to help center herself. I thought that was really nice. And in the end of the book, she ends up making some friends, which is really cool, just taking that step and saying like, Can I eat lunch with you? Is a seat taken? Yeah, I mean, so it's simple, huge.

Katie: Huge thing. Huge for a kid. Yeah.

Caitlin: And it's nice that it stops and says like if you're feeling panicky in the moment, here are some things that you can do as you're moving forward. You know, don't focus on the big picture, focus on the small steps. And the other book that I have is called "Gustavo the Shy Ghost," and it's written by Flavia Drago, and I love it. She did the illustrations, too. They're so cute. So Gustavo is also very shy and he also uses different tactics to make friends. But what I like about this book is his tactics don't work. They do not work for him, and a lot of times they don't work. And that's okay. It's not about like you try something once and then you give up. It's like, okay, that didn't work. You move on and you find something that does work. Gustavo has something that he does feel really good about and that's music. So he takes that thing that, that makes him feel happy and he leverages it against the nervousness. So he has a he decides he's going to have a concert and he invites his friends to the concert and it doesn't work. His friends don't show up. And Gustavo gets kind of bummed for a minute. But then he's like, You know what? I love music and I'm going to play music anyway. And it makes him feel amazing. He accepts this about himself, like he knows that he has this thing that he's good at and that makes him feel good. And because he feels good about himself and because he's playing the music in a way that he likes and enjoys, friends come, they come and they see his concert and they have a bunch of different excuses like, you know, I wanted to buy you flowers, but I got lost on the way to the flower shop and that's

why I'm late. So ends up really happy. But what I really, really like about this book aside from everything, is that Gustavo never fully comes out of his shell like he still is an introverted, shy ghost. And it's never like, you know, like in in too shy to say hi. The end of the book is Shelly having fun on the swings and it looks like she is part of the group. Gustavo remains quiet and it just says that his friends accept this about him like he is just they're quiet, shallow. I love it. So much because probably making these baby steps and making a friend, it's not going to solve every scary feeling that you have. You're probably still going to have those feelings. I still have them, and I'm in my mid-forties.

Katie: And I think it's important, too, because letting kids know like you're not a problem to solve, like being shy is not a bad thing because in a lot of ways it's kind of if anything, it gives that person a moment to step back and observe a situation and being like, Do I really want to be a part of this? And sometimes that's better than the people who just like, throw themselves at something. And we all know how that And yes, we do. And that's so good.

Caitlin: I love it.

Katie: I've got to read that one. So I have "Little Unicorn is Shy." By Or Aurélie Chien Chow Chine. And I love this one. Well, first of all, because it's a unicorn.

Caitlin: Oh, yeah.

Katie: Who doesn't like unicorns? Little unicorn is often shy and often has lots of different feelings. And I like this one because it's a very interactive. So the author's asking the child to identify how you feel and also how the unicorn might feel. And so when the unicorn isn't feeling well, his main change is color, and the color shows what he's feeling.

Katie: So if it's yellow, he's happy. Oh, if it's green, he's scared. Blue is stubborn, purple is sad. So I just I really love this one. Asking like, how you feel today. He loves being silly with his family and his friends. But when he's at school and people are trying to sing or, you know, his teacher and his classmates are trying to sing happy birthday to him, he doesn't like it and he doesn't want to be the center of attention. It makes him very scared and embarrassed, too, which I think is something that we can all identify with. And when he goes to the bakery after school with his mama, the baker tries to give him a lollipop for his birthday, but he doesn't want to take it because that makes him, you know, really shy and extra nervous. So I love you were talking about breathing exercises. And there's a really great one in this book where the unicorn closes his eyes and he imagines that he's wearing a tiger costume. He's breathing through his nose. He inflates his belly and raises his arms in front of him. He

holds his breath and he grabs his imaginary costume with its strong claws and puts it on. And then with the power of a tiger, a little unicorn blows the air out of his mouth and relaxes his shoulders and hands, and he begins to feel stronger because of his tiger costume. And then he's able to kind of go back into the situation feeling like a true tiger, you know, while also being his unicorn self. So I don't know. I just I really love that one. And there's a lot of different books in this Unicorn series that actually go through all of the other different feelings that the unicorn has. So you're able to change main colors with the unicorn.

Caitlin: I want to do that.

Katie: Yeah, it's so great. I love it.

Caitlin: You know, that reminds me of and we do that as grown-ups. I was telling, speaking of lovely colleagues, I was telling our colleague Lorrie that I was nervous about, I can't remember what it was presenting at a meeting or something. And Lorrie's like you need to activate your power pose. An so she stood, she had her knuckles on her hips and she stood up really straight and tall with her shoulders back. And she did the same, the unicorn thing. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath in and let it out. I was like...

Katie: Oh my gosh, that's amazing

Caitlin: I wonder now I'm going to start picturing something when I do my totally Lorrie Fisher Pomian pose. Like I'm going to let out my inner Lorrie

Katie: Totally.

Caitlin: I love that you're coming in hot with the empathy builders.

Katie: Yeah, I've got another one.

Caitlin: Awesome.

Katie: So this is a very oldie but goodie. "The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn, and Chester Raccoon is getting ready to go to school. This makes me think of my son Edwin a lot as I was talking about him thinking about going to kindergarten. But his mom is really, really great about noticing how he's feeling, knowing that he'd rather be at home with her. But, you know, she's telling him now we all have things that we don't want to do sometimes. And even if they might feel scary at first, chances are you'll love it once you get going. So she kind of talks through what school might look like for him, and then she shares a secret with him of the kissing hand and she tells him to hold out his left pa and open and spread his tiny fingers. And she leans forward and gives him a kiss in his palm. And then Chester feels his

mother's kiss rush from his hand up his arm and into his heart. And then she tells him that whenever you feel lonely and need a little loving from home, just press your hand to your cheek and think Mommy loves you, Mommy loves you, and that very kiss will jump to your face and fill you with toasty warm thoughts. Oh, and this is a book that I've always come back to. I just it's just such a good book. So sweet. And I think it's just a good way of something that you can do actively with your child at home if you're experiencing this. And I feel like it's something that in some ways we can even do for ourselves that, you know, I might rather be somewhere else right now, but I can kind of like channel that strength and that that I get from the people that I care for the most. Yes. And bring that with you anywhere.

Caitlin: Yes. I love that book, too. I think it is. It's concrete you know, it really is like here is a thing that you can do. And I used it with Desi when he went to kindergarten because he really, really did not want to go. And, you know, it was effective. And I thought I would do the same thing with Haven and she went off to school and she was literally like, peace out, don't let the door hit your mom.

Katie: Songs and stories with Miss Meleesa during weekend storytime at the library. Find more information in our show notes and see you on Saturday, May 27.

Caitlin: Now I think we get to talk about our reads lists. Yes. Mhm. Katie and I love talking about books and we love reading books and we're both one thing that I really love about this library that's unique. I've worked in a couple of different libraries. I know you have to. Did your libraries do like staff select lists the way that this library does?

Katie: I have been on a committee that selects like top 100 from the year but never ones that are fixed in this way, which was really cool to come in to.

Caitlin: I agree. This was my first experience with this where, you know, like we've had like general staff pick stuff, but this is really targeted. So we have three lists in our library. We have the Hot Summer Reads, which are for sixth, seventh and eighth graders. And of course anybody can read anything. We do not hold anybody to their specific, we don't check IDs. But that's that's sort of our target audience. And then our Cool Summer Reads list, which I am on the committee for, that is our third, fourth and fifth graders. And then you're on...

Katie: I'm on Breezy Summer Reads and that is for a K through two. So every year a group on each committee we look for books to add to our respective lists and we look for books that are not necessarily the most critically acclaimed books, but we want books that are going to

resonate specifically with the kids in our communities. And so we definitely try to look through that lens when we're choosing the books for our list. And we definitely want books that are going to spark that wonder and joy, but we also want ones that are going to be funny and engaging and great for an individual to read on their own or for a group to read together.

Caitlin: Yeah, we we read each group. My committee has four people on it. We read hundreds of books throughout the year. And yes, we are looking for those books that spark wonder and joy and sense of humor. We're also we know that there's not one book that's going to appeal to every kid. So we try to have a really wide variety of different genres, different reading levels, skills, confidence, all of the thing. So these books are all located on their own shelves in the library. And we also have lists on our website that you can find that showcase these titles. So you can find links to all of those lists and also some very adorable little videos that we made to highlight them in our show notes. Katie, do you have a favorite book, one that you like really either that you found or that you just like love from your group?

Katie: So this one happens to fit both of those. This is called "If Tigers Disappeared" by Lily Williams, and this is all about the tiger population in India. So I guess from like 1900 to the 2000 as the tiger population has lessened by 96%. Really, Which was just crazy to me.

Caitlin: Wow.

Katie: And it talks about all the tigers, all the nine different species of tigers that are indigenous to India. And what would happen if that specific tiger were no longer alive and how it would affect the ecosystems that they live with. And wow. So I highly recommend this book. This is a great read for a family it even works for a read aloud, I think for a class setting or story time. I mean, I think there's just so much that can be taken away and learned from this book.

Caitlin: Yeah. Yeah. It looks like it has really wide appeal. Those illustrations really suck you in. I'm definitely going to check that out. I think Haven would really like it. Tigers are one of her favorite animals.

Katie: And it's one of those books that read so easily that you don't even realize that it's actually a nonfiction and how much you're learning. So it's a nonfiction that reads like a beautiful story.

Caitlin: That is a gift.

Katie: It's a true gift for an author to be able to accomplish, that

is amazing.

Caitlin: So one of my favorite books on the list, we were in this point where we were trying to wrap up and finish for the year, and we always get to this end point, you know, right at the at the end of our timeline where we're like, we just got to pick. We just have to choose. And I think everybody loves it when I tiptoe in like, okay, I just found one more.

Caitlin: And that's what happened with this one. It's not my ultimate favorite book in the whole world, but I am crazy about "The First Cat in Space Ate Pizza."

Katie: That title is just priceless.

Caitlin: It's, it's the perfect title for the book. It is so funny and it is just riddled with jokes and puns. Some of which are incredibly lowbrow. And some of them are so smart that like, you know, it's like your book where you're like, I just learned something from this joke, which on its surface is incredibly stupid. So I love this book for kids that don't feel confident about their reading skills. I love this book for grown-ups that love a good joke, You can tell that the author and the illustrator, Mac Barnett, is the author and Shawn Harris is the illustrator. You can tell that they just had a blast writing this book. They wrote music that goes along with the cartoons and there are different segments of the books.

Caitlin: There's at one point where there's a whale who's singing and they wrote that whale song. And if you go to the website, the first cat in space dot com, you can find all of these things. You can also find a certificate that puts you in like the fan club, which you better believe I have down downloaded. And they have some cool merch too, but I love this book. I think it's great for a wide swath of the population and I think your kids would really like it.

Katie

They totally would. I think I'm gonna check it out today.

Caitlin

Yay! I'm gonna check out that tiger book.

Caitlin: Children in grades one through three and they're grown ups can join us on Wednesday, May 31st for Family Book Club where will read a cool book, then make something amazing together. This month we'll be reading "The Elephant's Come Home," which was actually a Breezy Summer Read book from last year. It is written by Kim Tomsic and it's a beautifully illustrated true story about a herd of elephants who find a new home at a wildlife sanctuary. Learn more in our show notes.

Caitlin: Katie, what kept you going this week?

Katie: Lot's kept me going.

Caitlin: That's awesome.

Katie: But we have been kind of restarting working on some home projects that are forever stalled. I'm sure other people have experienced this.

Caitlin: No, I do all of my things right away.

Katie: So we live in a really old condo, which is great, but there's like a billion years of paint just slapped on there. So we're getting down to the bones, and it just takes forever.

Caitlin: It does.

Katie: But it's kind of one of those where you are obviously always thinking about it because you're living with it and around it. And so like actually reigniting, working on it and getting that passion behind, like getting it done. Yeah. Is giving me an extra, you know, extra feels.

Caitlin: Yeah, lady! Eye of the tiger, breath of the unicorn. Yes, totally.

Katie: And then otherwise I'm just really enjoying the weather, biking and it just feels good to kind of get back in the swing of that. And, um. Yeah. How about you, Caitlin?

Caitlin: I discovered at Costco they have these individual creme brûlées that are so flippin' good.

Katie: That sounds dangerous.

Caitlin: And also, like, I don't know about you, but I definitely get on a track where I'm like, I'm in creme brûlée mode, and then, like, I get to the end of the 12 and I'm like, I am out of creme brûlée mode, but right now I'm in creme brûlée mode. So I just pop the foil off one of those and I have to get creative because I don't have a creme brûlée torch. I do not behave like an adult in a lot of different ways, so I'm not going to tell you what I do to melt the

sugar on top of it. But just imagine that.

Katie: Now I have to know.

Caitlin: No, I'm not telling you. It's very mature and very adult. I will tell you something else that I did that is giving me some life and it is like me becoming I'm stepping into my adulthood and that is that for the past eight years, Devin and I have been sleeping on this like, slab of, like memory foam that we ordered off of Amazon. And we had a king-sized bed at the time because our kids were like in and out of co-sleeping with us. And during the lockdown we needed extra space in our room for a desk. And so I got real resourceful. We found a queen-sized platform bed on I don't know, like Craigslist. And I took that slab of foam and I sawed it. I measured and I sawed it down to a queen-size bed, which, like, functions me. I know it totally worked, but it's like, this is not how adults like this is not like I don't know. I don't know. Maybe it is the most adult thing, you know. Anyway, Devin has, a bad back. I have a bad back too, but I think his is worse than mine. And so he's been complaining about my slab of foam, my sawed off slab of foam for a while now. And so for this weekend we went to a mattress store and we actually, like tried out different mattresses and we have purchased a grown-up bed and it has been installed as as we were speaking earlier this morning, as a text came through from Devin, it's like I got it in!

Caitlin: So I'm very excited to sleep on my adult. Yeah, it probably is a slab of foam to a certain extent. It's just like a more professional.

Katie: Slab of foam.

Caitlin: Right? Like less saw teeth marks. I don't know.

Katie: I'm just visualizing you with a saw in your hand.

Caitlin: I looked cool, I think. I'm pretty sure I looked. Yeah. Like, who doesn't look cool with a saw in their hand?

Katie: Thanks for hanging out with us as we perpetually try to navigate our way through this wild parenting landscape, you'll find links to all the books and resources we discussed in this episode. In



our show notes.

Caitlin: We've probably solved all the world's problems in this episode, but those of us who regularly hang out with little squirrels know it's always something different. If there is something that you'd like us to chat about on a future episode, or you'd like to learn more about a topic we would love to hear from you. Send an email to podcast at Skokie Library Dot Info.