

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 month, we'll 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: Before we jump into this month's topic, we want to remind our listeners that though we're pretty good at finding resources and we have experience as parenting our own children, we are not child development experts. Our choices don't need to be your choices. There's no judgment here. We're all doing our best with the health and well-being of our families in mind.

Caitlin: And I think that's the perfect disclaimer to lead us into this month's topic. We are all doing our best, but sometimes our best is not great. This month we are talking about parenting and life fails and empathy, and how we can walk through those parenting and life fails and still survive? We're really excited this month because we are joined by one of the world's best colleagues, Mandy O'Brien.

Katie: Yeahhh!

Mandy: Hi.

Caitlin: Welcome, Mandy. Thank you. Do you want to tell us a little bit about what you do here in the library, how long you've worked here, what your favorite color is?

Mandy: All right. My favorite color is blue. I'll start with that one. Let's see. I have been in and Skokie Public Library since April 1999, so we parted like it was 1999 when I got here. So it'll be 25 years this April, and I love it. I've been doing booking with a buddy, which is a fun program for a number of years, where we pair up emerging readers with teens and they spend a few weeks reading together over the summer. And we also, in addition to reading, they get to develop a friendship and we play a lot of different fun group games. And it's just a it's a great program that I don't know. I didn't realize I should be promoting that year, but registration for that starts in June. I also spend a lot of time doing storytimes, particularly with two year olds. I do the, the Terrific Twos program, which used to be called Toddler Time. And during the pandemic we kind of morphed it a little bit. We have a little bit more fun and play now in story time. We try to incorporate that just because play is really important to kids. Two year olds need to learn how to play. Not so much structured, but just kind of being guided in play. So it's been a really fun program. I love to do the Cool Summer Reads. We do our summer reads where we recommend books for third, fourth and fifth graders. What

else do I do?

Katie: And you have the best sidekick. Schmoranges

Mandy: Schmoranges! Thank you for reminding me about shortages. Schmoranges just has been working here for less than 25 years. Schmoranges just has been here about eight years and he is my puppet friend. He comes to a lot of storytimes. I also have some other puppet friends, Tiny who, Tiny doesn't speak and I think it's more just speaking is a big draw for him. I unfortunately, he's not in the room with me, so I can't have him talk. But he does have a very unique voice. That's fun.

Caitlin: I think we should talk maybe about why we brought Mandy onto the show. And one of the reasons, in addition to just being somebody that we love to work with, and we've called you out a number of times when we've talked about our emerging literacy programing and storytimes, but I think one thing that you do that's super unique is working with those puppets. But also you do a lot of work with building empathy and building, like very child-specific learning, which I think is really, really cool and really special. And you've done a lot with the Fred Rogers Institute. Is that something that you can talk about?

Mandy: Sure. I'm part of the educators neighborhood, which is a cohort. It's a community of practice with a group of educators internationally, and a lot of them are informal educators, which as a librarian, that's what we are. We educate informally. So there are also people who work in museums. There are people who work with animals and kids, people who work in wellness programming, therapists, clergy. There are a number of teachers as well, and it started out as a program for more traditional educators where they would meet in Pittsburgh area and discuss and share episodes of Fred Rogers and look at his philosophy, his intentionality, the way he spoke to kids, the topics he discussed and shared. And they expanded it during the pandemic, and it really became a whole new thing. Right now it's international and there are about 400 people involved. It's been a really great experience.

Katie: That's awesome. Do you have a favorite Mister Rogers episode?

Mandy: Well, it's funny. The episode I shared with Caitlin is one I really like where X the Owl all makes a big mistake and that that falls into failure.

Caitlin: I'm glad you brought up the Mister Rogers episode where X the Owl messes up when Katie and I were talking about what to do for this program and we started thinking about failure and making mistakes. Immediately both of us keyed into you work...

Mandy: And because of a failure, who makes mistakes? Thanks. I'm kidding, I'm kidding. I'm very human.

Caitlin: Because I think this is part of your work in the library is talking to kids in a very honest way. And also, I know how thoughtful and intentional you are about building that rapport and making sure that kids know that they're human because you're human and we're human and nobody's perfect. Thinking about my own kids and the moments that they have, that they feel like they're not doing things the right way has influenced the way that I look at myself when I feel like I'm not doing things the right way. And I find that helpful, you know, what do I want to project to my kids about myself as a human being in the world? And I feel like some of that I've learned from you and some of that I've learned from watching them, and some of it has to do with perfectionism. And Haven, Haven is she's an artist and she really, really likes to immerse herself in whatever art thing that she's doing at the moment. If she can't master it right away, she used to get really, really, really frustrated and that was hard. As somebody who is sort of a dilettante, like, I like to pick up different things and try them, It's hard to watch somebody else struggle through that process.

Mandy: I think one thing too is normalizing mistakes is really important, not just for the kids, but for the parents. And I am not a parent. I make that very clear to people, so I don't want to give off that I'm giving parenting advice. But when I do talk to parents, I sometimes can see it as a non-parent like, Wow, you're being really hard on yourself. And that's hard to see. It's hard to see kids making mistakes and thinking that they failed. Failure is such a loaded word.

Caitlin: Yes.

Mandy: And I think we have to sometimes fail to succeed and that's a huge thing. You were saying something about Haven not giving up or giving up trying things. I know as a kid I would sometimes want to try something and then I'd give up. And I reached a point where I think I, through my parents as well. I had to stop and say, is this something I want to keep trying at? And it's okay sometimes to give up. It's okay to say, you know, this is not what I want to do. Not everything works like that. But a lot of things you have to kind of step away from and that's not failure. That's just kind of prioritizing what you want to do and what you need to do.

Caitlin: It is reframing the concept. And I think a couple of things have helped me with that reframing. One of them is a program that you ran several years ago, the Beautiful Oops program. It's based off a book, right?

Mandy: Yeah, it's Barney Saltzberg wrote a book called "Beautiful Oops." And he actually had a companion book that was like a workbook

for kids. But then I took it a step further and we talked, we had a mindfulness program, and we did some. It was meant for parent and child or caregiver and child. And a lot when, when people registered, a lot of them were taken aback, oh, I thought this was just for my kid. And it's like, Well, no, we want you. We want to do this as a family. And see, sometimes kids are afraid to tell their parents when they, they failed or they feel like they're on the path to failure because they don't want to get in trouble. And that's when you really need to turn to your grown-up and talk to them.

Caitlin: Yeah. So I think the conceit of that book, if I'm remembering correctly, is that there's, there's, and there are a number of books like this, I think *The Dot* is like this. And then there's another one also where like there's an artist and they make a mistake and then they build rather than giving up or crumpling the paper or throwing it away, they build on to whatever the mistake was and it becomes something else.

Mandy: Yes.

Caitlin: And that has been super helpful conceptually for her, for her and for me. You know, if you mess something up, you just kind of have to go with it. I was working on a, I crochet, and I was working on a blanket this weekend and I just kept getting frustrated with the way that it looked. And I was only like halfway through. And I kept looking at the stitches and thinking like, This isn't how it's supposed to look in my head. And I talked myself through it. I was like, no, just push. Just like push through it and see what it looks like in the end. And honestly, like, I think it does look pretty good. My initial concept of it has changed, but I'm happy with the way that it turned out, and I think Haven has gotten there a lot as well. The other thing that's helped reframe that word failure, which I agree with you, is a totally loaded word, is a concept that was drilled into the kids, I think, when they were in kindergarten, and that was "mistakes help us learn." Both of the kids came home saying it like a little mantra. And it's true. I mean, it's an engineering concept, right? Like it's scientific method. Like you test it and then you best it. And I love that. I love that for all of us. Like, you can't just start off and do something perfectly. Like you actually need to go through and test it and see what works and how you can make it better.

Katie: I really like, especially the programs that you've done Mandy with like the intergenerational, like parents and their children and sometimes even grandparents will come to things like that. Having everyone be a reminded that, even though we are different ages and we're different parts of our life, we are all in the same place in some ways. Like we can all learn something from being together in a program like that or, you know, sharing that time together. And I think for a lot of parents, I think some people are very forthcoming with when they've failed or made mistakes. But I think for some people

it's hard for them to admit that. And I think when you're in a situation like that where everyone is in it together, it's harder to not be present in that moment and admit where you actually are.

Mandy: I was really lucky. My dad was like, I, I compare him to Mike Brady on The Brady Bunch because he always, like told us little he'd have little lines for us or he'd use his childhood as an experience to teach us lessons and some of the mistakes he made, hoping that we wouldn't make the same mistakes. But, you know, he also knew we had to make mistakes. And that's part of growing up. And one thing he always told us, like in regards to failure specifically was, I wouldn't love to see you come home with an F, but if you came home with an F and you truly tried your best on that, whatever that test or quiz was, that would be okay. But the reminder that, like, you do have to try your best. And I also, talking about libraries and whatnot, they're are special place for me, not just because I've worked in one for 28 years, but because my childhood librarian, Ms. Lee, she was she was my favorite librarian. English was her second language. She would mess up when she was reading books all the time. And I love that about her. It was so beautiful to me. It was a beautiful thing to see her struggle to read. Not that she was struggling to read, but messing up a word or whatever, because as a kid you didn't see that on TV or even from your own parents when they're reading a book. Maybe they did. But she was very clearly, you know, sometimes would struggle. And she was wonderful, though. And what she put into those books and those storytimes she would read, you know, "Caps for Sale." And a few weeks later, another librarian would read "Caps For Sale," and they would read it so much more melodious in a way. But it didn't have the, the genuine the beauty that Ms. Lee put into it. So I feel like, you know, I'm one of those people who is always like falling down. And you kind of turn it into a dance sometimes, but sometimes you just kind of fall down and you're like, "this is me. I just fell down." But, you know, I just normalizing that for, for people and, and letting them know it's okay.

Katie: Have you always been like that?

Mandy: No. I, I was as a kid, I would. I see this in storytime a lot where there are kids who don't participate and then their parents say, oh, they go home and they do all the songs. I was afraid to be imperfect. I'm not being critical of the criticalness around me as a child, but there were a lot of critical people in my life when I was a child. Not, they thought it would be helpful. And I'm not talking specifically about my parents, but other people in my life and they would criticize certain things, so I didn't want to do something wrong. So I was afraid of making mistakes for a long time. And then as I grew, I slowly learned these lessons and my father was great, my mother was great. I had some wonderful teachers along the way who showed me it was okay. And really, it wasn't until like probably my thirties when you just hit that point in your life where you're like,

I don't care. I don't care anymore. And I don't say I don't care anymore because I still worry about what people think. But I've gotten over the years. It's to the point where, like I will go out in public wearing the craziest thing and the people who are with me, my husband or friends or whatever, sometimes I could see they're a little embarrassed and it's not something crazy like a wig or something. It's just a shirt that might look bizarre.

Caitlin: I don't want to interject right now. Just a comment that Mandy is wearing a shirt that is covered in Spider-Man.

Mandy: Yes.

Caitlin: When she talks about wearing a shirt that is colorful or interesting or flamboyant, she is telling the truth.

Mandy: Well, I have what I like to say is kindergarten chic, because I like to just feel that's how I want it to be. I have this Winnie the Pooh shirt I loved in kindergarten. I'm still looking for an adult version of it. I do have a few Winnie the Pooh shirts, but I don't have the same. And it's just it just makes me feel safe and fun. But you got it. Sometimes you have to explore things to see who you are. I always like to say, when we expect we know what other people are thinking. We have to kind of figure out what we're thinking. And that in itself is hard. In another program I really like to do is journaling programs for kids and teaching kids how to journal to let their thoughts out, because that way you don't keep obsessing over your thoughts, but you really get to figure out the root of why you're thinking what you're thinking and sometimes solve some problems.

Caitlin: I think that's really helpful and in kind of beautiful for kids, too, because I don't know. I think when I was a kid, I really thought that adults had all the answers and it didn't really occur to me that my own thoughts and feelings were like, I don't want to say valid, but kind of valid. And I think one of the things that I try to consciously do with my own kids is, is show them that I don't have all the answers and that I make mistakes all the time and so that their mistakes are fixable. And one of the ways that I do that is acknowledging when I mess up, apologizing when I make a mistake, and letting them know how, you know, we can do things differently in the future. And I think that that has made a big impact on the way that they treat each other and they treat me, which is really nice, especially as Desi is going into his teenage, he is in his teenage years now. And I can tell that there are some changes that are happening. You know, emotionally with him, like he's a little bit gruffer, especially when we get him up in the morning. But there has been acknowledgment when he talks to us in a way that's unkind or unpleasant, like there is sort of that I'm going to step away from the moment I'm going to come back into the moment and say, "I'm really sorry that I talked to you like that. This is why I did it." Get into

the why and the impact I had of I have a friend who drilled into her kids when they were really little, this whole apology framework that was like, I apologize for X, this is why the thing happened. What can I do to make it better? And it was very formal and it was kind of rote, but it worked.

Mandy: Yeah.

Caitlin: And now her kids are old. And I think that that framework is, is part of their, their mindset.

Mandy: Yes, that's it. Well, it's interesting. A lot of things are rote and formal when you're trying to like thought journaling, very rote, informal. And it's like, "what am I doing?"

But after a while you start looking at it and it really does help you to have that formality there.

Katie: Well, and I think that's also how we build empathy, is like, you know, realizing in a certain situation how you've acted or yes, you said has impacted somebody.

Caitlin: Exactly.

Katie: Or, you know, seeing a situation as an outsider, but being able to empathize with what that might feel like.

Mandy: Think about another, Books build empathy. And I don't want to bring this to books, but that books and animals.

Katie: You can always bring it to books.

Mandy: Yes, I should always.

Caitlin: It turns out, it's a library podcast.

Mandy: Yes, that's true. That's true. Wait a second. No, but books and animals are two tools to, and I don't want to call animals a tool, but they are, you know, sometimes families with pets. You learn because an animal can't express things the same way that that a person can. They can't tell you. And in a book you get exposed to different, whether it's told first person. And that's, that's a whole thing where you're in somebody's head, which is amazing. But if not even third person just reading about somebody's experience. Yeah. And connecting them to yours. I know empathy has become almost a product nowadays, which is kind of sad to me. I think our goal as humans is to continue to, to develop empathy and to continue to learn. That's not our only goal, but empathy is something that we build on. It's not something that you're just automatically born with.

Katie: We've talked a lot on previous episodes about like how we can

use books. Like if there is a conversation that you need to have as a family or if there's something that has been weighing on like an emotion that's been kind of hanging over your head or your self, books are a good way to enter into that conversation and a safe way, both for the child and for the parent. Because I think even though a child like as you're saying, may look to you and think that you have all the answers as parents or just as adults helping children, we know that that's not the case or we feel like that's not the case. So I don't know.

Caitlin: We're just doing the best we can do.

Katie: The best we can.

Caitlin: With the well-being of our families in mind.

Katie: And spend winter break at the library. We have events and activities to help their little learners grow, play and discover. Find the event in our show notes

Kate: One thing I also wanted to say is I think another way of saying kids are building empathy by having these conversations with them. I think a lot of things that I have read for today have also said, like having these conversation openly with kids is also like kind of building resilience to when you're able to confront a situation and know what you did or didn't do to kind of help get yourself through it. You're able to learn from that and then kind of build upon that for the next time you may encounter the same situation or something drastically different. But those feelings that you had and what you went through and the conversations that you've had with the people that you love, you kind of call back to those, and those help you pull you through.

Caitlin: That is such a great point and I don't think I ever looked at it that way. But you're absolutely right. Every time that you allow yourself to be vulnerable, every time you allow yourself to fail, every time you let that humility in, you are becoming stronger and more resilient. And I kind of love that.

Mandy: Yeah. I like to think like when I make a mistake, I kind of tell myself and mistake. I don't mean like a calculating mistake. I mean like a mistake with a misstep with a friend or family member. I like to think, okay, afterwards, after I've been completely traumatized by like, "oh my gosh, what did I do to that person? I like to stop and say, I'm going to try not to do that again." It doesn't always happen. We're very human. And that's, that's another thing. I feel weird when it comes down to social emotional learning and talking about it, acting like and I know you guys put your disclaimer out there, but we're humans are not experts. We're only an expert in being ourselves. And we're not even really that I make about a million



mistakes a day, probably, but that might be a slight exaggeration. But, you know, we make mistakes all the time and it's just we do have to learn from them and learn what not to do again and build that resilience.

Katie: Yeah, I think building that resilience is also another way of saying it is just like knowing yourself better. And I think for me that's kind of where I fall now with mistakes. I was a lot like you, Mandy, when you and your were younger saying like I had I had to be perfect and it was very difficult for me to not feel like I couldn't do something and do it well and do it the way that I thought people wanted me to or that I should do it. But now that I'm much older and like I've been through different life experiences, for me, when I approach this situations a lot differently. For me, it's less about what other people think and more about Did I do the best that I know that I could? Or did I bring my best self? Or a lot of times the way I think about it is, this is me, this is who I am. If that doesn't make you happy, if that doesn't work for you, then fine. But it's interesting to me to like, think about how the idea of a mistake or the idea of failure or being a failure can change over time and change as you grow and you learn and you have conversations with people.

Caitlin: Yeah, I was that kind of kid too. And also sort of embarrassed about being different in any way or, you know, liking things that other people didn't like. One of the things that my kids came home from school saying is, "don't yuck my yum," which sounds borderline disgusting to me, but I also think I like it as a concept. Don't yuck somebody else's yum. I spent a lot of years pretending like I didn't like things like show tunes or, you know, Simon and Garfunkel or whatever nerd thing that I was into in high school when the rest of the kids that I knew were into cool things. Do you know how much time I wasted not dancing at parties or at weddings like I spent so many years.

Katie: We all did.

Caitlin: Why did we do this to ourselves? I'm really trying to.

Katie: It's FOP0.

Caitlin: What's FOP0?

Katie: Fear of Other People's Opinions.

Caitlin: Oh, fear...foo-poh. Foh-poh? Foh-poh.

Katie: Yeah. I didn't coin that.

Caitlin: It's real?

Katie: Yeah, it's real. Pho. I think his name is Michael Gervais. I forget what book he wrote, but, yeah, he. There's an article that willing to in the show notes which basically he talks about like a lot of us perceive failure based on how we think other people perceive us. So it's like we're so focused on other people's opinions of us that that's how like that's how we center own imperfections or failures because we perceive the way that people are thinking about us.

Mandy: It's, it's true, though. It's like that whole theory of like you're so concerned about what people are thinking, but everyone else is so concerned about what people are thinking. Nobody's looking at each other. They're just thinking about themselves. There's that I remember as a kid. I people would always be like, you know, you dance to the beat of your own drum, Little Mandy and I did. I did my own thing. And then the teen years hit, and for a few years there, I was like, restrained in what I felt about myself. And should I like this, shouldn't I? And it was really hard. And then I, you know, started meeting some other kids who were different again. You know, I grew up in a real small school, so when I was little, everyone was different. Everyone. There weren't cliques. There were 12 of us. There weren't. We couldn't have a clique. And when I went to high school, I went to an all girls high school where we all wear uniforms. You couldn't tell. But then when we did social things, it was very much, you know, you had to wear certain clothes, you had to do certain things. And I fell into that for a brief period because I thought I had to and, and because being a teenager is hard, you want to feel that, that tribal whatever that connection. But once I let that go, I it was it was amazing. I still struggled and I've struggled. Like I said before, I struggled into my thirties with worried about what people thought, but I was still trying to be secure in who I was. And that's something I'm proud of myself for. I have to look back to the little Mandy. All my friends had these Strawberry Shortcake shoes, and I went to go get them and they didn't have them in my size, but they had the Miss Piggy shoes and my size. And I loved Miss Piggy, so I got them and my friends were like, "what?" You know? But then they were like, Oh, those are kind of cool. So then I thought, I'm the only one with these Miss Piggy shoes. That was kind of cool and different. But was there part of me that still, when the Strawberry Shortcake girls got around and did a little dance to the theme song and I was sitting there with Miss Piggy, I felt a little, you know. So it's, you know, but there is the fear of pleasing others, is what you're saying FOPO. And I think we all we all struggle with that. And if we still struggle with it as adults, think about what kids are going through and some of the stuff they don't talk about. I often like to really hearken back to my childhood and think about that. What I what I struggled with and maybe what other kids are struggling with. And I do agree, Caitlin, that the 70s, 80s, 90s, you know they weren't as empathy driven, but there were there was a lot of character education. I mean think about like on Saturday mornings when they would have like "Something to Grow On," with, and Michael J. Fox would appear there and he'd be like "peer

pressure..." and he'd do a two minute clip. But I mean, there were moments like that. So we had that. It was just different. And I think I think we've learned what we that we do need to have these conversations with each other, though.

Caitlin: Yeah, I agree. I agree. We'll see. It's like a grand experiment, right? I mean, so much of parenting is but like, I'm trying really hard to not in the same way that my parents did because my parents really did try to be like, your, you know, your uniqueness is is great. Like everybody just be yourself, you know, all that good stuff. But also, like my parents were not like other people's parents. Like I could tell. And I think I started school late enough. I was eight before I started school, that I was like, something's not adding up. Like, I haven't known these kids my whole life. And I can tell that there is something different about my family. And my family is telling me that it's cool that we're different, but I'm not sure that I'm buying it. So I'm trying to figure out how to get that messaging into my kids. And the way that I'm playing it right now is like, you're going to have so much more fun if you just like what you like. It's more fun because it is. It is more fun to wear the shirt with Spider-Mans all over it. If that is the shirt that you want to wear and if that is the shirt that makes you feel good about yourself. I have a sweater with a unicorn on it and I look in the mirror and I don't think it looks good on me, but it makes me feel great. I love my unicorn sweater. It just...

Katie: All the reason to wear it.

Caitlin: I know. And I do. I wear it all the time because it makes me feel awesome. Even though when I look at myself, I'm like, it doesn't look certain but feels awesome. And that's what I'm trying to, like, impart. We'll see if it works out. I mean, so far so good, I think. Mandy, you mentioned that it wasn't until you were really a teenager that those feelings of like ruh-oh, like, yeah.

Mandy: They catch up with you at some point, right? I mean, I don't know if the layers or the steps of development are the same for everybody. And so maybe we shuffle them around a little bit like a Tetris where like somebody experiences one level before. But yeah, the teen years that it did come back to me and sometimes those really confident little kids who are so confident and they you see them get older and, and they're struggling and vice versa.

Katie: So Orson just started playing soccer this far and he kind of got into it during summer camp at school. There are some kids, a few kids in his class that are like super into soccer. So he's like, you know, still learning the game, learning how to be part of a team and playing together and all that. But he gets really he would get really down on himself like there is he did score one goal this season which I think like pumped him up but mostly you know he's just there on the

field and he would get kind of down on himself after the game. It's like, oh, you got all of you did a great job. He did a really good job. I saw you out there. You know, you're doing your best and whatever. But he would get really upset. "But I didn't score a goal." That's what he would say. And it's like, but you were part of the team. None of what happened on the field could happen if you weren't part of that team. And so that is one reason why I think participation trophies or some sort of recognition for everybody who is part of the team, whether you're the best or you're just like middle of the road player. Everyone provides something regardless if you're like the one that actually makes the SS, the one that actually makes the goal, the goalie that makes the save or whatever. And none of that could happen if you weren't there. So we've been struggling with Orson in a lot of ways. It reminds me of myself, like when I was younger, just really getting upset. If he isn't able to be the best and it's, it's just so hard to have those conversations. You know, we homeschooled last year and we were to kind of have a lot of days where he got really upset at me and it was tough. And then flash forward to this year, he's in third grade. And when he first started, there is a spelling test that everyone was taking, and I use the word test loosely, but, you know, the teachers just wanted to see like kind of where everyone was, where they were coming in with like their spelling and writing and all that. But he got so upset and we really try to have these conversations with him all the time. Like we don't care about the end result, We don't care about a trophy or winning first place or getting an A or any of this. We just want you to feel good, to be yourself and to show up. You know, just be there, be you. That's all. That's yeah, that's what you can do.

Caitlin: I think, like if you're consistent with your messaging and I know that you are, I think it comes out at some point like, he's hearing you. Both of my kids went through this and around the same age. Haven's in third grade now, so hers was a little bit before, but like, "I can't figure this out. I'm stupid." That's not a word that we use in our house. That is not in our vernacular, that is not in our ethos. Like we don't talk like that. We have the same family structure that you have where it's like and like you were saying, Mandy, with your dad, where it's like, just do your best. I don't care if you don't get an A, it doesn't bother me. I certainly wasn't an A student. I am a terrible test taker. It doesn't matter as long as you try.

Mandy: One thing my dad said to me, which I'm like, "huh?" When we were kids, he was like, You know, if you get straight A's, there's no where to go up. So then I'm like, Oh, so you're giving me permission to be a B student? So I kind of was like, Ooh, all right! No, but I still strive for the A, but it's true. Like, you can't you tap out and you know, and also I do find it interesting that competition and compare they both start with that c, o, m, p. I don't know Latin I don't know if there's I don't even know that that's but but compare and competition and how much competition involves comparing ourselves

to others, how much we have an internal competition within ourselves. I, I some people are conflict averse. I'm not pro conflict but I am competition averse. Like if you put me against somebody, you know, unless it's maybe a Trivial Pursuit game, I don't get really competitive. And that's, that's an issue I have with sports. I have issues of sports because I'm so unathletic. I'm also dyspraxic, which means physically I'm just clumsy. So I never really engaged in that as a child. But the one thing I do like about sports is the teamwork, you know, building that together. And when you see a team that's kind of magic together, you know, you think of the 90s era Bulls and all that magic there. I watch the Bulls because it was it was just they had a really great way. Another team I think had magic was the Harlem Globetrotters. I know they're kind of a fake group, but they still they're amazing and the way that they worked with each other. But you know, it's hard in childhood sports sometimes. Some, some of the parents get so competitive, the kids aren't allowed to have fun. And then there are teams where the kids are just having so much fun that they aren't learning the fundamentals and they aren't, you know. So it's, it's finding that. So I find sports very difficult. And if I were a parent, I would probably, I hate to say it like avoid that with my kids. I don't I think my husband...

Katie: Yeah we have up until now. But I have to say I've been very pleasantly surprised because I was worried about that. I was like, where are the crazy parents that are going to be like on the sidelines, like, you know, berating their child or, you know, getting mad at whomever? But I haven't seen that. And again, it's just like AYSO, you know, it's kind of like your entry level soccer situation. But, you know, it's like they don't keep score. It really is just supposed to be fun. And so that's like what I try to say with Orson, It's like what matters is that you're having fun.

Caitlin: I think you hit another important point. My kids are really, really different learners and they have things that they each have things that they're really good at that are really different. Another thing that I'm trying really hard to emphasize in my house is that just because you don't know all of the things doesn't mean that you're not smart and it doesn't mean that you're not capable of learning. It just means that you learn differently. And they do. They learn so differently. I mean, Haven is so arts and feelings motivated. You've never seen somebody like look at another human being and interpret what it is that they're feeling and thinking based on that and adapt to that. She's very emotionally intelligent and Desi's really math-y and really science-y and he's always thinking about the way that things go together and they've always been that way. And rather than being like, well, if you just tried a little harder at math, you could be just like Desi. It's like, No, let's explore these sides of you that are, you know, really intelligent in different ways because that's being human too. We can't all be the same way. That's also being a librarian it's like everybody knows a little bit of

everything. And there are ways to find out information which is really fun and cool.

Caitlin: With your library card you have free access to Hellosaurus. This award winning interactive platform is home to favorites like "The Wiggles" and "Love, Diana." Learn how your child can enjoy skill building activities In our show notes.

Caitlin: All right, friends, we've talked a lot about all the different ways that we can fail. And—and there does is a vocabulary word this month is plethora. We can fill in a plethora, a myriad of ways. So we talk about what kept you going this month.

Katie: Caitlin.

Caitlin: Yeah? What's been keeping you going?

Caitlin: Lots. I'm actually have a great month. This weekend, I had three days off in a row or two and a half days off in a row, and so Friday I spent mostly by myself and then I came in to hang out with you guys a little bit for our cool some reads meeting, which was awesome. And then Saturday I just puttered. I had like such a colossal putter and it was the best I crocheted. And then I questioned my crocheting and then I had a little crisis of crocheting, confidence. And then yesterday we went to the Martin Arboretum and just walked around and there was a heron there and it was just standing in the water. And then I saw it eat a fish. You could kind of see the fish wiggling around. And it was weird but cool. We went out to lunch and we haven't, I mean, I don't know about your kids, but my kids are like, just not like they have historically not been the most fun to sit at a restaurant with. So it's like you don't like anything. And I don't know, like, but they all like all of us. We got brunch food and there's that in all vegetarian restaurant and Haven just got a plain quesadilla and she was eating it like somebody was feeding her like caviar and truffles. Like she was like eating it like, "this quesadilla is so good. Like, it is the best thing that I've ever eaten." And Desi had a grilled cheese sandwich and he was like, I would never eat grilled cheese like this before. It was just legit just a grilled cheese sandwich and a quesadilla, it's really funny, really funny. So that's what's keeping me going. And I think, you know, just I love the holidays. I know they're stressful and unpleasant for some people, but this is my favorite time of the year. I love the rush, I love the lights, I love all of it. The hustle and bustle. I love the singing. I am very excited about holiday music. This is this is my jam. It's my time to sparkle.

Katie: Oh, my gosh. I don't even know. I think what's been keeping me going is my good friends at work, honestly. You too included. It's just really nice. Despite everything that happens on the job and just in life in general, having nothing to do with work. It's nice to be

able to come to a place where, you know you're going to laugh and like smile and at least have some moments during the day where you feel like yourself, and you feel good, and you feel understood. And I think it goes good with our conversation today because, like, I really do feel like I can be my full self and that feels good. You know, sometimes things feel really bad, but that always feels good to me. And I think I've been thinking about that a lot this last month.

Caitlin: That's nice.

Katie: Yeah. Mandy, do you want to join in the fun?

Mandy: I'm kind of like, just. I feel a little emotional after hearing that. I know, it's like, but it's. I think Thanksgiving is a time of thanks. So being thankful for the people in your life. You know, work is not family, but when you have great friends at work. It makes you spend a lot of time with these people. When people are caring, compassionate, smart, funny, it's just great. One thing that also is keeping me going is tomorrow I go to the airport not to fly, but to pick up my, my best friend and her two teenage daughters. And I get to see them after not seeing them for over a year. So that's nice. I'm not looking forward to driving to the airport and what I saw on the news, they're like, Tuesdays the worst day. And I'm like, Oh great. And so they might just see me like circling around while they're there with coach and I'm just going to be frantic because I hate picking people up, but I'll do it. I'll do it for them because it gives me a chance to see them before they go off with her mother and spend Thanksgiving with her family. I think this time of year is family and friends.

Caitlin: I love it.

Katie: That's it for us this month. Remember to keep in touch with us. We'd love to hear from you. Email us at Podcast at Skokie Library. Dot Info.

Caitlin: And don't forget, if you have enjoyed this episode or previous episodes, rate and review us on your favorite podcaster.

Katie: This has been Katie and Caitlin with "Your Family, Your Library" produced by Amber Hayes and sound engineered by Paul Knutson.

Caitlin: By friends!