

## The Goals of the Elementary Years *C2C Podcast Episode #17*



- Jody: If you hang around Jenni and I for more than five minutes, you'll hear us talk about homeschooling with the end result in mind. And actually we talk about doing most things with the end result in mind. When it comes to homeschooling our kids, we tend to think of their education in three phases, elementary, middle school, and high school. Well, in today's episode, we're going to talk about the goals of the elementary years. Understanding our goals is what it means to homeschool with the end result in mind. So stick around, maybe grab a cup of coffee and eavesdrop on our conversation about what we believe the true goals of the elementary year should be.
- Jenni: You know, before we jump into this, Jody, I just want to say that we do have a Facebook group called homeschooling with the end result in mind, and we just started doing weekly Facebook live videos. So, um, if you're not already a member of the group just on, on Facebook, go in and search for homeschooling. No. Did I say homeschooling at the end result in mind? That's not what it's called. It's called "Homeschooling From Cradle to Calling." That's funny. It's called homeschooling from cradle to calling. So go search on that search on those words, and you should find the little group, uh, request to join. And then on Wednesdays at 1:00 PM Eastern time every week, we'll have a Facebook live video about a different topic.
- Jody: I totally get why you said that is, it's almost saying the same thing. We, everything we say is with the end result in mind from cradle to calling, which is saying the same thing.
- Jenni: Yeah, I know. Well, okay. So Homeschooling from Cradle to Calling," and then you can like our Facebook page too From Cradle to Calling." So the Facebook page doesn't have the homeschooling word in it, but, um, that just, we post some articles and we tell you when we're going to have a Facebook live video and we post blogs in there.
- Jody: We like to talk.
- Jenni: A lot.
- Jody: We do.
- Jenni: Let's talk right now.
- Jody: Let's do it.
- Jenni: About, um, the elementary school years. So when we say elementary, we, I guess we kind of mean something maybe slightly different, because I think to some degree, we're also talking a little bit about pre-K. Oh yeah. It's really just

about whenever they're ready to start some sort of active, formal academic learning when they're really kind of ready to start reading a little bit, writing a little bit. That's kind of what we're talking about up until we hit the middle school years, which is just around preadolescence. Right? That just before that, just like in those tween years.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Fifth grade maybe is a good marker. I think it's what most people consider elementary ending of fifth grade.

Jody: Yeah. Well, some six.

Jenni: Nah, that's the old way.

Jody: Oh, stop it.

Jenni: That's junior high.

Jody: I liked the junior high.

Jenni: Junior High was seventh and eighth grade. So you went to grammar school or elementary school through sixth grade. I can always tell when people are older, when they call it junior high cause nobody calls it that anymore. They say middle school and now it's sixth, seventh and eighth.

Jody: You be making fun of me. Knock it off.

Jenni: So fifth grade would be your last year of elementary or ground. Okay. So we have four basic goals that we think are the main goals of this season. And when you have this in mind, Jo, when you know this, then you can make some really, um, important choices about ... You don't feel the same pressure to like, Oh, I get it. Ancient history don't today is fine.

Jody: No. Because you're not even going there yet.

Jody: But you can, you certainly can. And you could do some really fun stuff with that.

Jody: There's no obligation. Y.

Jenni: You're not, there's no pressure. Right? You don't have to like get through ABeka science curriculum when they're in second grade, it's not necessary because here are the goals that we think you should think about first and foremost, build a foundation of learning tools. Number one, they have to learn how to learn and how do you do that? Well, you have to read, so we need to teach them how to read.

Jody: And they probably need to know how to write.

Jenni: Well, and before we, yeah, but even before we move on to writing, like they have to be fluent readers. They have to really read comfortably. And I would say they, even by the end of grammar, school need to be able to read something and see a movie playing in their head.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Lots of kids make it through middle school, high school, even into adulthood and don't have that skill. And so then they hate reading. It's torture. But if they can like really get lost in the reading and see a movie playing in their head, they can have a vicarious experience. And that's a really important goal for reading.

Jody: Well, without that movie, it's almost like you're kind of just decoding.

Jenni: Ugh, it's torture.

Jody: And it feels like you're trying to process. And you're trying to comprehend where if you have the movie, there is an element of a visual happening and you can plug it.

Jenni: You're a part of it. So it's, you're watching it unfold in a sense, right. You're not trying to figure out like, wait, what are they saying? And like, it's almost like, it's almost like the difference between it's like becoming fluent in a language. They say, when you can think in that language, you don't have to translate anymore. Then you are fluent. Right. Well, but like up until that point, when somebody says, you know, "Hola," you have to go "wait, that means hello. Okay. Hello." Right. Okay. So, um, so writing, you said writing is another tool for learning. They have to be able to physically write, we're not talking about grammar.

Jody: No.

Jenni: We're talking about the physical activity...

Jody: Good luck with that.

Jenni: Penmanship. Yeah. Um, and also in order to write, you have to know how to spell what you're writing. So spelling is an important part of those grammar years because they have to be able to spell whatever they're going to write down. Um, and then I think also when it comes to writing, we can lay the foundation for future writing skills by doing copy work. That's the old Charlotte Mason method where you have them copy something verbatim out of a classic, something good, good quality writing. Um, and that, you know, it's amazing when they do that for years, for years, as part of their daily exercises, they start learning, um, punctuation and capitalization rules. And even some very basic grammar almost by osmosis.

Jody: Um, one of the things I was gonna say, uh, when we're teaching them spelling, you know, they learn like we use a lot. We, we launched off of Spelling Power. We didn't use it in its entirety, but you know how we,

Jenni: Yeah, we, we kind of like kind of DIY-ed it.

Jody: So one of the things I say in my head, and this is actually from when I was a kid, but it is one of the spelling rules is, um, "I before E except after C," and I still to this day, say that every time I write an E-I-E like, if it's, if I'm like, if it's got I-E together and I'm like, "I before E except after C," okay.

Jenni: And "When two vowels stand side by side, the first one says its name with pride."

Jody: It's just so funny the things you remember. I mean, you know, I'm older and...

Jenni: Yeah, we're kind of old.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Anyway, so, um, the other aspect. Okay. So copy work can morph in the upper elementary years into, um, what is it transcription, but what is it called? Um, what do they call that in Charlotte? Mason, it's not copy work. It's.

Jody: Transcription.

Jenni: It's not that; they call it something else and you're listening and you're probably in your car going, go hard going, saying it, "It's this!"

Jody: So, so send it to us. S.

Jenni: Recitint or I forget, uh, we're going to go with transcription, but basically what you're doing is you are reading a paragraph to your child from the piece of literature or better yet, my favorite way is have a sibling read to another sibling, that takes you out of the equation and frees you to do other things. Um, and then they, um, transcribe it. So they write it down...

Jody: Dictation.

Jenni: Dictation! That's what it's called. Ding, ding, ding, ding. Jody gets a prize!

Jody: Oh I won a prize. I like a win a prize.

Jenni: You this way then now at that point, that later point, they have to know those capitalization and punctuation rules and be able to write it down and even spelling to a degree. Right. Right. Okay. So that's writing and then there's math. For math, in the elementary years, I think we need to teach them the basics of math. So that would be, um, addition. Okay. Wait, I have a fun game that our dear friend, Mr. D math, if you're not familiar with Mr. D Math, we have a little nugget for you. Go to [mrdmath.com](http://mrdmath.com). He has, um, homeschool programs. You can do a self-paced video based course, or you can have your kids do an online live lesson with a real teacher in a virtual classroom.

Jody: It's kind of like h\aving a curriculum and a math lab, all in one. Like,

Jenni: It is. It's awesome. So go to [mrdmath.com](http://mrdmath.com), but Mr. D did years...when we first met him, I want to say it was like 11 years ago.

Jody: Yup, it was.

Jenni: He did a little, he did a little, a little parent workshop at our local homeschool co-op and, um, and he, he asked us a really fascinating question about math. He said, what is addition? So as you're listening, I want you to try to answer this. Um, and we came, I can't even remember, I mean, he let us go on for a while. And everybody just.

Jody: This was all moms...and dads.

Jenni: We were like, "Increasing!" And he was like, "Increasing what?" Like, and finally the answer to the question was it's counting. Addition is counting and we were all like [gasp].

Jody: Duh!

Jenni: Yes it is! Right? I guess in that sense, subtraction is counting backwards.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Um, so addition, subtraction, multiplication, division. Those are our basics. I mean, there's other things too. There's shapes. There's. I mean, there's all kinds of stuff in basic math, but we're laying a basic foundation of, of numbers and numbers are a language. Math is a language, and we're teaching them the basics of the language. So, um, and the elementary years, facts, understanding drills and learning math facts is really important. And we love games. In fact, uh, RightStart Math has an entire game book and they've got phenomenal manipulatives that you can use to play amazing games with kids. Right Start Math has great stuff and it may be it's it's um, they've got some rhymes and music you can listen to the teaches math. So anyway, that's a, that's a great place to check out for math. Okay. So those are your basics for learning and everything beyond that is icing on the cake because what is goal number one of the elementary school years is to build a foundation of learning tools so that they can learn independently and learn on their own. Now, goal number two is to cultivate a love of learning.

Jody: That's so important. It's so important.

Jenni: It's so important because if we, if we make school drudgery, then...

Jody: You're teaching them to hate it. You're just teaching them to hate, to learn, in general.

Jenni: The message that we're sending them is that education is, is one of life's drags. It's a big drag that you have to like... it's like bitter medicine that you have to take.

Jody: Well, if, and if you watch them at this age, they're excited to learn new things. There's nothing like it.

Jenni: Jody, I'm excited to learn new things.

Jody: I know, I know.

Jenni: I have ...

Jody: No, no, no, no. We had to pick up, pick out our Audible books, the other day.

Jenni: Oh my gosh! It was a two for one sale.

Jody: It was like, it was lollipops in front of us. And we were like, which one do we get?

Jenni: And was so torturous because we wanted all of them because we just love to...listen..I love to get ready in the morning. And I will. I use my phone. Thank God for phones. I'm grateful because...

Jody: My husband's just broke. He had to go buy a new one today.

Jenni: If I had to, if I had one device in the, in the modern world that I'm, it's my phone because I...

Jody: You don't leave home without that.

Jenni: Oh my gosh.

Jody: Don't leave home without it.

Jenni: The camera...

Jody: You got the watch, but it's not the same.

Jenni: It's not, I have my watch, and I'm grateful for my watch but.

Jody: It's not the same!

Jenni: The phone...

Jody: It's a mini computer.

Jenni: So in my bathroom I have these strategically placed all over my house. I have the little suction cups that go on the back.

Jody: No, they're called piggies.

Jenni: There...It looks like a little pig without a head.

Jody: It's little piglets.

Jenni: And it's a suction cup that stands...that sucks onto the back of my phone so I could stand it up. Cause I have one of those big honkin plus phones. I like a giant...it's like a small tablet. It's like picking up like a, like a book and talking on a book. But anyway, I love to when I'm getting ready in the morning, if I'm cooking and the kids are not there to have conversation with me, if I'm folding laundry and I don't have a kid available to chat, cause conversation we know is so important, right? I will, I will put a documentary on or I'll listen to an audio book. I love that my phone is waterproof. I take it into the shower and I stick it on the ledge in the shower. And I, and I listened to audio books because I love to learn. But the point here is we want our kids from an early age to absolutely love learning. It's exciting! Goal number three, to discover interests and to discover their own talents. This is going to lay the foundation

Jody: For the whole rest of their academic. Not even academic their life.

Jenni: All of it.

Jody: Yep.

Jenni: Everything.

Jody: Yep.

Jenni: They have to know what they're interested in.

Jody: That's right.

Jenni: And I have to tell you, we have seen so many, so many, so many cases of older kids who genuinely have no idea what they're interested in. And they have, there is a void in them and you can feel it

Jody: Well, you what it boils down to? If they don't discover their interests and talents at a young age, what you find is they don't even know themselves.

Jenni: I was just going to say that. They have a hard time developing identity.

Jody: Yeah. There's no, self-awareness they have no idea who they are and they feel lost in the world.

Jenni: They do.

Jody: And so let's, let's just, let's just not do that.

Jenni: But it's awesome when you can start this in elementary.

Jody: Oh yeah.

Jenni: I mean, okay, listen...

Jody: It's going to happen at some point.

Jenni: If you're listening, and you don't have elementary kids anymore and your kids are older and they haven't figured out what they're interested in, it's never too late. I mean, you figure out what you're interested in when you're 50,

Jody: But ideally...

Jenni: But we want to shorten the learning curve here. And ideally it's the elementary years. And so

Jody: Well, you know, it, it, it, it launches them at a much younger age, and it shortens that curve of wasting their young adult years, trying to figure out what they're going to do the rest of their lives.

Jenni: It's so true. Uh, and then the fourth goal here is to cultivate independence. And

Jody: That is my favorite. I'm not going to lie. It is my favorite.

Jenni: You know, actually, I have to say, Jo, this is something that you and I both, um, throughout our parenting years have had lots of people who've come and been around our families comment on is that our families tend to work together like a team really well. Um, I remember the first time. So if you're listening, this is a sidetrack, and I'm not going to go deeply into it, but you can always message

us and ask for the story. Cause it's a really cool one. Um, when I was 41 through ancestry.com, I found my real dad and I didn't why wasn't looking for my real dad. I didn't know that I didn't know my real dad. I thought I did know my real dad, but I didn't.

Jody: Very interesting story.

Jenni: And it was a very great story with a super happy ending. And I, so that was five years ago, and he came that year with his wonderful, precious wife and they spent a week with us. Now, they really, we all did not know each other that well yet. And, and you know, here we are, we have seven children. Well, at the time we only had six. And, um, and we had a whole, we planned a whole week of super fun stuff. I mean, we live in Southeast, Southwest, sorry, Southwest Florida, um, on the Gulf of Mexico and we live in a super fun place. It's the amusement park capital of America. We've got..

Jody: Beaches.

Jenni: Of course the beaches. We've got really cool historical sites that are very different from anywhere up North, very artsy communities. We live in a really artsy community. So there's tons of, we live in a college town. There's ton. And in our college here, our big college in our actual town is Ringling College of Art and Design. So we've just got really cool stuff to do here. So we planned a whole week of super fun stuff, right? And every day was jam packed and we packed food everywhere we went. And so one of the things that they commented on Jody, that we've heard year after year after year, is that they were amazed that all of our kids work together so well, like a well oiled machine to make everything happen seamlessly. Like the car got, you know, go into the beach. Oh my gosh is an act of Congress.

Jody: No it is.

Jenni: When you have kids. There's like, you need special food that's beach acceptable.

Jody: Beach friendly.

Jenni: If you are not beach people, you don't know like this is a big deal. You need certain furniture that you have to carry with you to the beach. And you need to make sure you're hydrated, and you need certain coolers. You need a water cooler and a separate food cooler, and you need the sunscreen, and you need all the toys. I mean, it's a lot. And so...

Jody: You need sand mats and the right bags, and you need to pack it a certain way cause the sand is going to infiltrate everything you do.

Jenni: Yeah, you really do. You have to really be calculated. We go to an amusement park. It is such a big deal that like we have whole blog posts on how to handle an amusing part. But man, we've got it down to a science, Jody Hagaman, you have mastered this, and you have taught us well. I am jer little padwan, and I have learned well from the Jedi master of amusement parks, and we have, um, and we are set up and we have awesome, full, giant days with all our family. And we need nothing.

Jody: Super fun!

Jenni: You know, we live in a place where we have an entire year called the rainy season. It's from June to November where it rains every single day.

Jody: No, it's a day rental downpour.

Jenni: Right, and it can be sunny, and two seconds later, the wind picks up. You're like, "Oh..

Jody: Here comes the flood.

Jenni: Take cover! It's like a monsoon. And it lasts for about 10 minutes. And then you're, it's a beautiful sunny. You would never know it rained.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: But you have to be prepared for those things.

Jody: Oh yeah.

Jenni: And so, um, so all of this comes back to elementary school years. It's these years where we cultivate independence, where we teach them, we lay the foundation for how to clean, how to, how to pack things, how to care for themselves, how to, you know, cut their...

Jody: How to takedirection.

Jenni: Yeah. Okay. So I am going to say something about that, and this is really important and it can start even before they read. But I noticed something when my daughter who's now 21 was a little girl. I would say to her, "Okay, Sky..." I'm making this up. But I would say like, "Okay, Sky, I want you to go upstairs. I want you to make your bed. I want you to put your shoes on. I want you to bring your backpack downstairs." She would come downstairs, no shoes, no backpack. And I'd be like, "Sky, what? You didn't put your shoes on and get you backpack." And she was like, "Oh, you told me to make my bed." And I realized over time, if I gave her a list of three things, auditorily, she would hear the first one. She would hold that in her mind, and she would go do it, and the rest were lost. And that's when I realized, "Oh, she needs a list!" That kid wasn't trying to be disobedient. She's not an auditory processor. She still doesn't process auditorily well, which is amazing because she's a musician. My husband too. He's a musician...does not process. It's funny because I've found a lot of musicians are actually visual learners.

Jody: Interesting.

Jenni: Isn't that interesting?

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Um, and she, she sees a lot of things when she hears, she translates it into pictures that are powerful for her. Um, and she's very kinesthetic. I remember one time we were, um, I was teaching her numbers and we were doing this

thing where I would tap out and I would tap. Like, I don't know if you're going to hear this on the mic, but I would tap. Like, I don't know if you heard that.

Jody: I heard it.

Jenni: I tapped three times. Right. And I would say, I would tap on the table like that...

Jody: Knock three times...

Jenni: And I'd say, "Okay, Sky, how many?" And she would look at me with a blank stare, and she could not get this. And then I don't know, must've been God, because I finally said to her, "Lay your head on the table, put your face down on the table." And then I tapped on the table, and she felt the vibration, and every time I did it, she got it. So, so my point here is those were skills. I had to figure out how she learned, and then I could help her cultivate independence. So I could initially make her list with pictures on it, and I would Google pictures, Google images. And I would put a picture up. I want you to do these three things on a clipboard. And she would check them off when she did it. And then when she could read it was easier cause I could just jot them down, and she could cross them off. But Jody, that's really important giving them how to take direction. It's going to be different for every child. So let's just review that quickly. Um, the, and in our show notes, we'll have this list for you. The goals in elementary school: build a foundation of learning tools. Number two, cultivate of love of learning, number three, discover interests and talents, and number four, cultivate independence. So if you don't have a place to take notes, you're listening in the car or in the shower like I do. Um, go to [fromcradletocalling.com](http://fromcradletocalling.com), click on podcasts. And you'll, uh, you'll find...

Jody: Not to be confused with the Facebook group that is Homeschooling...

Jenni: ...From Cradle to Calling.

Jody: But join that too.

Jenni: Yeah, absolutely. So, so then that leads us into, um, now we understand what the goals are. So now we need to know what we're supposed to do day to day. And so we have a little checklist for you for the elementary years, and you'll customize it to meet your family's goals, but we call these "The Boxes" to check for those of you who feel comforted by checking off boxes.

Jody: Yes, that would be me.

Jenni: Here are some, some boxes to check for the elementary years. And the first one is what we call the "Daily Do's." These are the academic things that must be done every day. And we'll get to what those are in a minute. The second one is to make sure, and this is actually we're duplicating ourselves here because it's in the Daily Do's as well, but make sure that at some, on some level you've covered worldview. And we do that every age, elementary, middle, high school. But, um, at the, at the elementary level, Bible stories are really important. Um, and, and, um, there are some great world, even elementary age worldview curriculum. Summit ministries has great worldview curriculum. Having them memorize Bible verses, those kinds of things. Um, third on the list is exploration because we want to give them, this is the time, as we said,

where they need to discover their interests. So they need to explore to do that. And the way to discover their interests, the way to explore is through experiences. So we say all the time, you know, you can't sit around the table and brainstorm an interest. You can't Google an interest. You have to experience something and have that your child has to experience something and have that flicker of that sparkle, that light, that, you know, that aha moment, um,

Jody: That aha moment leads to curiosity and digging and searching and just wanting to dive in it and live in it for a while.

Jenni: Yeah. Um, and it comes from maybe field trips, um, scouting programs doing different badges are great. Um, letting them experiment with science experiments, letting them cook with you. Um, reading is an experience.

Jody: I was going to say, sometimes it starts with a book, hearing a story and learning something new in that even.

Jenni: Doing, going to museums, doing camp programs, seminars, workshops, classes, all that stuff,

Jody: Travel really instigates some things.

Jenni: Absolutely. So we need time for that every day. They need time to explore. Then there's character building and constitution. So when we say character, we mean how they kind of treat the outside world. Are they kind, are they generous? Are they, um, are they obedient? Are they, um, honest. That's how they interact with other people. And constitution are those inner skills that are gonna lead to their own success. So, um, that would be like their grit, their stamina, their emotional intelligence, those kinds of things.

Jody: Excellence.

Jenni: Yes, yes. A sense of excellence, uh, um, a desire to be excellent. Right? Um, and then another check box, and this is really important. And I think it's something we should make sure that we're doing every day is conversation. In a little bit in this episode, we're going to talk about, um, some, the five basic truths that we need to focus on, communicate communicating to our elementary school aged children. Um, but a lot of these truths come about in our conversations with them. I mean, it also comes about in our day to day actions, but our conversations with them are so important. So use the car time to talk to each other or listen to books on audio, but don't only listen to books on audio, make sure you're leaving time to talk. And if you are listening to a book on audio, pause frequently, talk about what's happening. Um, ask them to guess what they think is going to happen. Tell them what you think is going to happen. Try to listen to books you haven't heard before either. So you can have as much curiosity and interest as they do. Um...

Jody: And if there's a book they hate, stop.

Jenni: Yeah. Yeah. Unless it's one that you know is going to get great, and you want to encourage them to stick it out.

Jody: Cause man, you don't want them to hate reading and hate sitting during that time.

Jenni: No, you want them to love it. Um, and then another box to check at the elementary school years is unit studies. Now this is where you can do your science. You can do your, um, nature, nature study. You can do your history. Um, you can do geography. Right now I have a unit study that I've done with a number of my children that literally spans years. It takes multiple years to get through it. Um, and I do it concurrently with other unit studies, but my eight year old right now is going through it. And it's a 50 States study. I think we're going to do a Facebook live coming up here soon where we just teach people how to do this. Um, and basically what we do is it started with way back when my oldest, no. Not my oldest, my second oldest, um, got a subscription to, we had Highlights magazine. I had highlights as a kid. Did you used to get that as a kid?

Jody: Yeah, yeah.

Jenni: I couldn't wait to find the hidden pictures.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Well, Highlights has a program, a subscription program called Which Way USA. And it comes with two states per package and you get a map and you get an activity book. And the activity books are so fun, they're puzzles, but they're really fun. So from that, we started, um, diving deeper into each state, and we would color in the state flag. And we learned about the bird and we spent a day learning about like Matty Jay this week is studying California. And he learned about the quail, and he learned, he got, had, I found on Google, um, a coloring page of quail. So you could just Google, like "quail coloring page." And I found a bunch of them. I found a really cool one. And then I put together, um, uh, some links on for kids on quails videos and some pictures. So he could figure out the markings, and he colored in his picture to look like a quail. Uh, we added quail to spelling list.

Jody: You didn't talk about quail hunting though. Right?

Jenni: We didn't. But I did talk to him about quail eggs, that they are a delicacy. And I, I, one time had a funny story where I was at a very high end restaurant in New York City. And I was quite uncultured, I suppose. Um, I was teenager, and they had quail eggs at the bar, and I wasn't old enough to drink.

Jody: They eat them raw, right?

Jenni: No.

Jody: Are you sure?

Jenni: Uh, they didn't here at all, but you know what they looked like? They're very small, right? So they looked like, I think around Easter time, there's these candies that are speckled and on the outside there's chocolate in the middle. Well, that's what I thought it was.

Jody: Oh no!

Jenni: Imagine my surprise, when I put the whole thing in my mouth, and I chewed it. It was a little hard boiled quail egg, and it was on this cute little stand that looked almost like a tree, and it had these little eggs and you could just take them. And since I wasn't drinking, I was a teenager. Other people were having a glass of wine or something at the bar. I popped one of these in my mouth, all excited to get this chocolate with this candy shell. No! So we, we told that funny story. Anyway, the cool thing I ended up doing with the unit study, which now I'm doing with Matty Jay. So if you're listening and you want to participate in this with us and you live in a state outside of Florida, go to [fromcradletocalling.com](http://fromcradletocalling.com) and email us, cause I'm looking for families. We did this box exchange. It took us 18 months to get through it.

Jody: So fun.

Jenni: We found a family in every state. I actually found two just in case somebody didn't come through in every state in all 50 States. Plus we did Puerto Rico and, um, we did an a box exchange where I sent them or Skyler and I at the time sent them, uh, we lived in New Jersey then, and we sent um saltwater taffy with a story about how that was invented in New Jersey. And we sent them all kinds of, we sent them some fun facts about New Jersey. We sent them all kinds of tourist information, pictures. Um, we sent them something from nature that grew on a tree in our backyard, and we sent information about that tree and they sent us a box about their state. And we got some of the coolest things. Somebody in Louisiana sent us Gator jerky, alligator jerky.

Jody: Oh my gosh.

Jenni: Somebody in Alabama sent us cotton, um, grown in their yard from, from a cotton plant with pictures of them in this big cotton field. Um, in Indiana, they explained to us what Hoosiers were and where that came from. And there's I guess, an Amish country in Indiana. And they sent us some really cool note cards that they had bought and the Amish country there. And anyway, we had the most fun, those boxes were like, it was at Christmas every day for 18 months.

Jody: That's so fun. Kids love to get something in the mail.

Jody: That's a unit study!

Jody: Oh yeah.

Jenni: Unit studies that go on and on, or your could be a quick unit study. It can be one you do in a couple of days where you just learn about a particular thing. Let it be interest-led. But anyway, that's an important box to check: unit studies. And the last box, Jody, for for elementary is life skills. So really be intentional about this. Think about the skills that they need. If you're not sure Google it, what skills do you...email us.

Jody: There are whole books out. Yeah.

Jenni: You can find a whole book on it, but we'll give you ideas of what kind of skills to build. Um, but teach them how to make their bed, teach them how to use the toaster and how not to use the toaster.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: How to use the microwave and not to put metal in it.

Jody: Oh gosh.

Jenni: You know, don't try to microwave your matchbox car or the cat.

Jody: Nope. I had a microwave set fire once. Nope.

Jenni: Yeah, exactly. So, um, so okay. Now we promise, we would say, what are those Daily Do's? Well, they're going to be different I guess, for every family, right?

Jody: Yeah. But you know, I think there's a, there's a skeleton. That's probably pretty prevalent. I mean, I, you know, if you're listening, I'm sure that Bible and worldview is probably an important piece of that. A vertebrae on that skeleton. And so, you know, you mentioned earlier about Bible stories and it was so funny because the other day, my 21 year is getting ready to get married, and she was talking with her fiance who wants to go to ministry school. And we have a lot of fun conversation at our house. And he was saying he was not raised in the Bible scriptures and stuff like that. So he doesn't know a lot of the stories, and he doesn't know a lot, but he's learning and he's like wide eyed and excited. And so he'll come to Syd and he'll go, "Oh, you probably already know this. You probably already know this." And she, she looked at me and she goes, "Mom, I had such a realization. I really know Bible stories really well because you read stories to us. Dad read stories to us, and we read a lot of Bible stories, but I didn't really focus on memorizing the scripture." And she goes, "That's going to be my goal now. I want to memorize the actual scripture, so I know exactly where it's at in the Bible." And I just thought that was really fun. And I thought, you know, that was our focus. We wanted them to understand the concept. We didn't do so well on the memorizing of like they, some of them, the basic ones they knew, you know what I mean, the popular ones, but I think it's cool that she can look back and say, I know that story. And I know what that story means to me. And I know what God spoke to me in the story from a little child.

Jenni: Yeah. And I think that's really a really strong foundation for, um...

Jody: Elementary.

Jenni: For elementary.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Um, and, and giving them some worldview. Summit ministries has a great worldview curriculum. Um, there's also this thing that we did with our kids, it was just stories that we read. And it's a series of books called Pearables, but it's like P it's like the fruit pear. I think if I'm not mistaken, pear anyway, it was these just as little stories about this kingdom, and it communicated all of these truths and, and it laid a foundation for worldview. Um, and we're not talking about middle school here, but, but at the middle school level, I, one of the things I do like to do is I like to help them understand the layout of the Bible. So they understand, you know, the books of the law and then they understand the wisdom, and they understand history.

Jody: We need to do a thing on that.

Jenni: Yes. That we do, because that that's a really helpful, maybe we'll do a Facebook Live on that too.

Jody: I love it.

Jenni: Okay. So, um, next, so Bible/Worldview is the first Daily Do on our list. The second Daily Do on our list is reading and, and every day they're doing something to help until they're fluent readers, they're decoding, they're reading out loud, but also really important. we're reading out loud to them. And so, one resource we want to share with you is the Read Aloud Revival. Go to...Sarah Mackenzie has an amazing website, awesome resources, a wonderful podcast, um, that will inspire you and give you great ideas for how to incorporate out loud reading into your, into your life, how to incorporate audio books.

Jody: She's fun. She has authors on there. And then sometimes they're reading the books to the kids.

Jenni: Yeah, and sometimes it's on Zoom, so you can see it too.

Jody: Super fun.

Jenni: So, so that's a resource that we strongly recommend. Um, and then our third Daily Do at the elementary level is writing. So it's not grammar. I mean, look, if you are like sold out on teaching them what a noun, a verb is, go for it. But, but grammar is complicated. It's very abstract. And it's something that I think kids brains are not really ready for. The example I always like to use is like a pronoun. A pronoun was very complex. I mean, first of all, you have to understand what an antecedent is. And then an antecedent is the noun for which the pronoun stands. I mean, there's just a lot of complexity is to, um, you know, understanding of preposition and understanding what the object of the preposition is and understanding what modifiers are. And this is all complicated stuff that their brains can really begin to tackle in middle school. But at the elementary school level, let's teach them the mechanics of writing. Like we said, like a copy work.

Jody: How about we teach them printing? And then we teach them cursive.

Jenni: Yeah. How about they're taking that out of schools?

Jody: So teach them how they're going to read the founding documents?

Jenni: So how about in kindergarten now in public school, they're teaching them parts of speech.

Jody: I'll tell you what I heard that I bought fell out because I was like, how in the world are they teaching that? How is that even possible?

Jenni: Right. But,

Jody: But you can't read a founding document to save your life.

Jenni: But don't teach them cursive.

Jody: No.

Jenni: That's craziness to me.

Jody: It is. It really is.

Jenni: Um, and then of course, like we said, spelling, that's an important part of, of the elementary school level, um, writing curriculum. And then, um, four on that list is math. And like we said, basics, drills, games, but listen, if you, we think memorization is super important when they're little. So if you want to have them memorize poem, Andrew Pudewa, who we adore, over at [iew.com](http://iew.com) has an awesome resources for teaching our kids memorization.

Jody: Oh he does.

Jenni: So head over to [iew.com](http://iew.com). If you're not sure what to do, just drop them an email and say, you know, "Hey, I heard, heard you guys talked about from Jenni and Jody. And, um, I want to teach my kids memorization. What's the best way to do that?"

Jody: Yup.

Jenni: Um, the, before we head out and this is a little bit of a, a deep conversation, but Jody, I think it's important to convey this in the elementary school level throughout all we're doing with them. Right? Um, there some truths that we want our kids to really accept as truth. We want it to become a foundational truth for their, for the entire life that they live ahead of them. Um, these truths change in the later years, but in the early foundational years, there are five truths, Jody, that you and I think are so important that we communicate with our kids. And so this is really something we're not just going to start in elementary school, it's going to start from birth and this will be the truth that we teach them up until the start of adolescence. And so the first truth is that they are worthy of love and connection. And so is every person they meet.

Jody: So I think sometimes we give that truth, and we forget the last part of it.

Jenni: Yep.

Jody: And we forget to really help them understand and develop that every person you meet is worthy of that as well. That's important.

Jenni: And the second truth is that, um, our children are not an extension of us. They're their own people. Um, third truth is that they are an important part of every community that counts them as a member. The fourth truth, and we'll break these out in a second. The fourth truth is that they have a right to feel safe and protected. And the fifth truth is that they are inherently strong and capable. They're not weak. So let's look at these one at a time because these are so vital. And it's part of, as homeschoolers, we get to weave these truths and build a foundation of these truths throughout every day that we are with them and we're working with them. So let's look at Truth #1: you are worthy of love and connection and so is every person you meet. You want to take this one?

Jody: Well, you know, I was just thinking that, um, what's so important about this too, is that, um, when we speak harshly to our kids and when we do and say things, because we are stressed, we are not communicating that they are worthy of love and connection in that moment.

Jenni: We're communicating the opposite.

Jody: We are. And I think it's important that we develop as, as adults and work on ourselves. As we work on ourselves, we will be able to be better in communicating these truths to them. And they will really have an understanding. Um, you know, every, every child, God knit together in the womb

Jenni: We're all created in his image.

Jody: We are all created in His image.

Jenni: Every person on the planet.

Jody: And you know, the word tells us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. And if that's the truth, then we have to convey that. So, you know, you're, our children are worthy of our love as parents. And, um, we have to remember that they are worthy. They're worthy to listen to their conversation. They're worthy. Um, when they say they're hungry and they're cold, you know, when I was a kid and you know, I love my parents, I had great parents, but I'll tell you, one of the things they used to do is I'd be like, "I'm cold, fine." "You're fine. You'll get over it." And, and I learned that that shut me down.

Jenni: Yeah.

Jody: And so I think we have to teach our kids. Okay. So you're cold. So let's figure out how to fix that.

Jenni: And it undergirds this truth that they're worthy of love and connection because it tells them that they're worthy of our love.

Jody: Right, right.

Jenni: Right?

Jody: And they're also loved and valued by God. We have to teach them that. They don't, they don't just know by osmosis who God is. They have to have an understanding that He created them and He loves them even more than we do. And so is everyone else around them. God loves them too. And there we're all unique. We're all different. But He loves us all.

Jenni: So we have to value and love all people.

Jody: Exactly. Exactly.

Jenni: So I would say this can be tough because it's true that our children can take us to the deepest and darkest places of anger and frustration like no other human being on planet earth.

Jody: No, sometimes you want to kill them. Like you feel like you want to kill them.

Jenni: And I think in those moments, maybe one of the things we can do is we can, and when maybe we write it somewhere, so we remember, but when we feel that anger that can also serve as, as a reminder to us to stop and pray in that moment and ask God to remind us that they are a reward from Him. Like in that moment, when we want to rip the kid's head right off their neck, we have to stop. That has to be the little red flag that says pray right now, and ask God to remind you.

Jody: So if they're a reward, we have to remember that they're treasured and they're valued and they're worthy. And so we have to walk that out. That is not always easy.

Jenni: And when we, when we do this intentionally, you know, we are actually feeding their souls with this message, which this vital message. And as homeschoolers, we have some unique opportunities that maybe not everyone has to the, to the degree that we do. We can crawl up on the couch and read a great book to them. We can take them outside and explore all the things that live outside plants, animals, bugs. Um, we can call them into the kitchen with us and help ask them to help us make dinner. And all those things are communicating this truth that they're worthy of our love.

Jody: So one of the things that, um, someone had said to me years ago is I was in a situation, and I was feeling very undervalued, and the person said to me, "Jody, you need to go where you're celebrated and not tolerated." And I was like, "That's it!"

Jenni: So our kids to be celebrated, not tolerated!

Jody: Right, and so what that looks like is when you're knee deep and buried in the computer and you're writing and doing your thing and your child walks into the room that you pause, even though it's an interruption of your process, or you're in the middle of something, and you say, "Hello!" I, we sing, you know, Ari, the little three and a half year old in the house. Every morning she wakes up, we sing a good morning song, to her.

Jenni: Yep. Me too.

Jody: You know, it's, it's, it's, we are valuing her and celebrating her in that moment.

Jenni: This all ties into what we're about, you know, helping our kids, our whole message is to, um, homeschool our kids from cradle to calling -- it's all about their calling. And when our children understand that they have value, they can much more easily accept that they have a purpose.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Because they feel valuable. But on the flip side, if they feel unworthy of love, they may also feel unworthy of purpose. And that's, that's really a valuable, I mean, a vital thing for us to understand. Our kids are worthy of being loved. Like you said, they're worthy of being celebrated and heard and respected. They are worthy of friendship.

Jody: Yes. Good friendship.

Jenni: Like, like loyal friendship. They're worthy of pursuing their passion. They were going to talk about community in a second, but they're important to their community. They're worthy of discovering God's call on their life. And then they're worthy of us training them, specially, for that calling.

Jody: It's all part of, I think of everybody uses this quote, but it's, "Train up a child in the way he should go." Well, where should he go? Right where God's called him.

Jenni: That's right. And when he's old, he won't depart from it.

Jody: That's right.

Jenni: Yep. Um, and then of course, all of this funnels into, if our kids are worthy of love, so is everyone they meet.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Because, because every human is created in the image of God, that's why.

Jody: You know, I hate to bring up the dirt of what's happening in our world right now, but this is the problem.

Jenni: It is the problem.

Jody: It really is. And if we value the people around us and we value ourselves, then it's going to be a whole different place. And why shouldn't we? We're all valuable. Every single person.

Jenni: You know, what, what I'm seeing happen right now in our world is I'm seeing, Jody, that people are...Matt and I were on the beach last night, walking. We were talking about this. We were talking about how...

Jody: Because we live in beautiful land.

Jenni: We do, because we were, and we were talking about how, um, we're living in a very hostile time right now where people, people speak very harshly to each other and, and they do it because they are more focused on the message than they are on the person they're trying to convey the message to.

Jody: It's true.

Jenni: And they believe that they have the moral high ground.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: And because they think they have the moral high ground, they think they have a moral, um, almost mandate to, to teach the people around them, except it's coming down...

Jody: And reprimand.

Jenni: Reprimand. That's really the word I was looking for. They have a moral mandate to reprimand everyone around them. And it's, and it's, it's showing that their, their heart and their focus is on the message and not the person that they're trying to convey the message to.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: If you believe strongly in something, and of course we all do, then you want to convey that to people out of love, not out of your own, because you know what happens over time. When we when we dehumanize the people in our, around us, we've we can easily fall into a Nazi Germany part two. Those people thought they had the moral high ground too.

Jody: Oh, there's that.

Jenni: They did. Um, you know...

Jody: You just made me think about..In that whole attacking cause a lot of it is in social media, but a soft, what is it? A soft tone turns away wrath?

Jenni: Yes.

Jody: And a harsh word, stirs up anger.

Jody: Yeah. And so I...

Jenni: Here's the, here's a thought. Well, I'm sorry. Go ahead, Jo.

Jody: No. I'm just, we need to teach our kids that like, we need to teach our kids that it's not your place to be the Holy Spirit, for one.

Jenni: Okay. And let's think about this. Jesus said that the way we treat other people is how we treat Him -- what we do to other people we do to Him. Would we ever curse Jesus out?

Jody: No!

Jenni: No. We would speak to him with reverence. That's how we're supposed to be speaking to each other.

Jody: That's good.

Jenni: It's a really big one. Um, all of the prophets and the law hinges on how we love God and how we love people. So it's a truth that we communicate every single day to our kids and how we treat them and how we treat the other people in our home and how we treat all the people outside of home that we interact with day in and day out.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Well, let's talk about the second truth, which is you are not an extension of us, your parents. This one's SO BIG!

Jody: The people don't get this. They think they get it. I'm cracking up because everywhere we've gone to speak. And we talk about this. They're like, "Oh, I don't believe that. But, you know, I told him he's really good at this. And that's what he has to do." And I'm, we're like...he's not an extension of you.

Jenni: Jody, it just happened this week. So one of the things that we do on the side is we...

Jody: I know where you're going.

Jenni: We consult with, and we counsel families on...now we use Zoom. We used to use Skype, but now we use Zoom, and I love Zoom.

Jody: I know, me too!

Jenni: Oh my gosh, I love Zoom. Anyway, so, um, so we do Zoom, and we did a Zoom call with, um, a mom and a son just recently. And you know, in that call, one of the things we said, this son is, is 18 now. And he, he was having a lot of struggles with his last year of homeschooling. Um, and we said to the mom, "You know, I think you're going to have to just take...back...take a step back, and let him steer the ship on this one.

Jody: Take your hands off. Yup.

Jenni: "This is his, this is his life. And you could be his wise counsel when he comes to you for counsel."

Jody: I was going to say, when he permits.

Jenni: But he has to initiate it. He has to come to you and ask you. Otherwise, because we have given him a bunch of suggestions, and he really had a very clear idea about what he wanted. Now, yes, we saw some potential pitfalls, and his parents did too, but sometimes we just have to let our kids experience those things, um, for themselves.

Jody: Okay. And the, and the, and the waiting until you're child comes to you and asks for your wise counsel, doesn't look like this in the process. "Well, if you think that's wise..."

Jenni: "Well, fine. You know, I won't tell you 'I told you so' when you fall flat on your face." That's not what we're talking about.

Jody: No!

Jenni: And actually, so what happened was she agreed with us initially. She was like, "Yeah..."

Jody: And we're like, "Ok, she gets it. Alright."

Jenni: At the end of the conversation, she was like, "So now what if we..."and she just put her hands right back on the steering wheel, and she was going to drive that ship. And we were like, "Oh no, no, no, you got to take your hands off." We do not own our children. We do not have the right to control them. We do not have the right to take success for their credit for their success. And by the

same token, we also don't have to take responsibility or blame for their failure. Right.

Jody: Big one, there.

Jenni: Big one. Don't take on your children's failures as your own.

Jody: So here's the thing. Here's how you can test yourself. If you're trying to maneuver an outcome, a specific outcome, you are trying to control.

Jenni: How about this one? You think your child's an extension of you if you feel shame over your child's mistake.

Jody: There you go.

Jenni: Or faux pas, or, you know, whatever terrible thing they did, if you feel shame over it. Now, if you told your kid to do it, that's a totally different thing.

Jody: Well, there's...

Jenni: But, but most of the time when our kids make a bad choice, it's not because we told them to make that choice. In fact, we probably told them a million times not to do that.

Jody: You know, if we really think about this, and we put ourselves back into our teen years, whether it's 14 or 18 or 19. And we think about if our parents tried to control us or tried to tell us what to do and how we resented that we might have a different perspective.

Jenni: Yeah. What if we, what if you think about this, think about some of the stupid stuff you did as a teenager. I don't have enough time. Do you think your parents are to blame for that? If you do, I would suggest counseling.

Jody: Yeah. And because on your big girl pants, cause it is all you girl.

Jenni: It's all you, and it's okay. The minute you recognize that, then you say, okay, I made a mistake, and I don't have to make that mistake again.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: But, but the same is true of our kids. Our kids made a mistake. It's not, it's not our doing. It's their mistake. And you know what? They also get to learn from that mistake. They get to own the lesson. They get to, we don't have to feel shame, and we don't have to make them feel shame.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: They make mistakes. Sometimes they take, you know, tracks...we don't, they take paths we're not thrilled with. I'm not talking about letting our kids, you know, do whatever they want and run crazy and, and, and make.

Jody: No but we do...

Jenni: Obviously, we want to give them wise counsel.

Jody: Right, but we do have to let them explore things that we might not like. I'm going to be really honest with you. One of my kids was heavy into country music, and I hated it. And I mean, I hated it to the point where I'm like, "You're not playing that around me." Well, that was awful.

Jenni: Cause she loves it.

Jody: She loves it. And I was telling her that I hated a piece of something that she loved. I hated a piece of her. And so I finally had to come to a place where I said, "You know what, let help me find some of the country music that I actually like. And you know what, I did, and now we have fun. And she actually has on her phone, an album on her phone of, of music I love, that's country music. And when she gets the car, she's like, "Well, we gotta play the music mom likes," but it's her faves too. But we came to a middle ground and, and I'll tell you, it's genuine. She knows, I love it. And she loves it. And it's where we meet. And it's so fun.

Jenni: You know how many times we've heard parents, kids have an idea. They want to make some crazy thing that of course we know isn't going to work, but we don't need to tell them that. Okay, listen, we're not going to, obviously not going to let them, you know, blow up the house. Well, we're not going to let them potentially harm themselves or someone else. But if it isn't going to hurt anyone or anything, who cares, if it isn't, if they think that they can, you know, do this thing, let them figure out on their own that it doesn't work. Like, because they're their own person. Right?

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Okay. So, um, the truth number three is you are an important part of every community that counts you as a member.

Jody: Starts with the family, just sayin.

Jenni: That's their first community.

Jody: That's it.

Jenni: Our household is their first community.

Jody: That's right.

Jenni: And they're an important part of that community, which means, first of all, their interests and their tastes and their preferences should be important.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: Like it's part of your family culture. And we need to embrace that. You know...

Jody: We're not talking about being a short order cook here, but what we are talking about, if your child...

Jenni: Yeah, you're not going to make a different meal for every kid.

Jody: But if your kid has her own room, and she wants to paint it some funky green color, let her. Let her do it.

Jenni: Yeah, no, totally. And I also mean things like, you know, I've got a kid who loves musical theater and so our whole family watched Hamilton together, you know, and, and we do things that our kids that, that speak to them. And every kid contributes to that. Every child contributes to that community. Um, my youngest son is my only, no, he's not my youngest child, but my youngest son, who's number six out of seven. He's my only kid out of seven who loves video games and he loves video games. And so I've never been a huge video game fan, even for myself. Like I just, I'm not a gaming kind of person like that, but because he loves it so much, it has become a little bit part of our family culture. In fact, he and his dad started a YouTube channel called the, the Matty and Daddy channel, and they do Minecraft videos, but that has, that has influenced our family culture. So

Jody: Well, now on the same token, I was going to say it's important too, when you're part of the community, to help within community.

Jenni: Yes.

Jody: So when you know, my favorite is when I'll see something on the floor or out of place, and I'll say, "Hey, Syd, can you grab that?" If I hear, "Well, I didn't do it," I'm gonna be like, "I'm on knock you out. You are part of this community. You pick that up."

Jenni: Okay. So the community has a pool of needs.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: Food needs to be made. Cleaning needs to be done. Driving needs to happen. Um, in some houses, diapers need to be changed. Praise the Lord, that's not the case here anymore, but it had was not too long ago. Um, you know, education has to happen, reading needs to be taught. And, um, there's okay. So there's a set of needs. And then there are a pool of people who can meet those needs, right? So right now in my house...

Jody: In this season...

Jenni: In this season. So, so in my house right now, um, I've got a three year old, who's almost four, and she represents the needs of the community. She is not meeting any needs at the moment. She is...

Jody: Oh, she meets my snuggle needs.

Jenni: She meets our, our emotional needs. She is not meeting any physical needs, and she creates a lot of the physical needs.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: She needs to be watched. In fact, she is curious, and she is not, she doesn't, she's very social. If you know the enneagram, she's a high seven, strong seven. She's the enthusiast, but she's the, she's the walking party. And because of that, she wants to be interacting with people all day long. She's not the little girl,

like my child number five could play by herself for hours. That is not Rhema's story, at all. Um, but I also have a kid in the house who can drive...two, I have two kids who can drive. They meet lots of needs in that way.

Jody: Right. Right.

Jenni: Um, my, my daughter, who's turning, um, by the time this airs, she will have already turned 14. She's, it's actually in a few days, she's turning 14. She's our, our cook right now, we get Hello Fresh for, um, and she cooks for...Jody, you and I are on a really restrictive...

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: ...way of eating to lose weight for our two children getting married -- we each have a child getting married this year. And so I don't want to cook dinner for everybody cause I'm eating a very specific way. So we order Hello, Fresh, and the 14 year old cooks for herself and the other siblings. And so, um, that's what it means to count them as an important part of the community. Number four is you have the right to feel safe and protected. This means a lot of things. I think, first of all, it's communicating to our little kids that God is always with us and he protects us and that God gave them a mom and a dad who are also here to protect you. Right. But there's other ways that we, um, keep them and help them to feel safe and protected. We pray for them, right. We pray for them before they leave the house. Um, if they are feeling afraid before they go to sleep, like all these are all times to pray for them.

Jody: I think part of that is, is validating them first. Yes. And otherwise it's, it's, it's back to why that's not important. That's not important. Right? Let's validate it. And then give them tools.

Jenni: We want to teach them that they should not be mistreated. Right. If they encounter a bully, then we want to teach them how to stand up for themselves and get help. And if it doesn't stop, then we want to get involved. We are not afraid of man. No, we will protect our children in that way. That's a message that we communicate. We want to tell them that when adults mistreat them or treat them in, maybe in a way that feels disrespectful to them, that we're not going to tolerate it. You know, when my Matty Jay was, um, I want to say it was about six. He has this, this fiery, like Auburn, reddish hair that everybody comments on. Right? And we were doing a volunteer outreach at a church actually. And there was a, an older man. He didn't mean any harm by it, but he, Matty did not know him. He was a stranger to Matty, and he came over, and he put his hand on his head, and he like tousled his hair, you know? And he said, "Wow! What great head of hair you have." Well, Matty jerked his head out from under that grasp, and he looked at him and he said, "Would you ever do that to an adult?"

Jody: Matty.

Jenni: And I know that like for a brief moment, I had a little crisis in my heart because no, we don't want our children to be disrespectful. But you know what, at that moment, the more important message to communicate, there are lots of times and places to communicate respect.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: In that moment, what I needed to communicate to my son was that he has the right to declare boundaries over his physical space.

Jody: That's right.

Jenni: And no adult can touch him without his permission.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And so that's how we protect our kids. Um, when an extended family member demands a hug or a kiss from our child, and the child expresses discomfort, we respect their physical boundaries. And we tell them that they're safe and protected by just in an honoring way, in a respectful way, asking that extended family member to please understand that they don't feel comfortable and we're going to respect their boundaries.

Jody: You know, another big one is making sure our kids know and understand that when they tell us secrets, we are going to keep those secrets safe with us that it's not going to be repeated. It's not going to come back against them in any way.

Jenni: And that we respect their privacy.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: Okay. This is a, this is going to step on some toes, and it is going to challenge some strongly held beliefs about our role as parents. But please hear us out on this. We just beg you, our children need privacy. In fact, Jody, I think we would go as far as to say that they have a fundamental right to privacy, and respecting their boundaries and giving them a strong sense of privacy is one of the ways that we communicate that they are safe and protected. Our children, even our littlest people, need the freedom to think their own thoughts without the fear of being invaded. Right? So, okay. I don't know when kids start keeping a diary if ever, but I did when I was seven, which is the elementary school years. And I have given all my children a journal or diary, and I have said to every single one of them, there is a rule in our house that I promise you, will not be violated under any circumstances. And that rule is that when you write in this book, you can leave it on my nightstand and trust that it will never be opened, and I will never ever read it. And you might think you're worried for them. You want to get to know them. We'll get to know them then, but you don't have to do it by violating their privacy. And if you're worried for them, get some outside help, get some counseling, talk to a pastor, do not invade their space. Their privacy is they're going to make mistakes. That's part of growing up. They might make some huge mistakes.

Jody: I, you know, I've known parents to eavesdrop on their kids' phone conversations, and then use it against them or hold it for a later, you know, sneak attack.

Jenni: We cannot, we cannot pry our way into our child's inner world. Um, we are not going to try and discover their most hidden and valuable secrets, right? Because when we do, we send a message to them that they're not free. And for most people, even children, this violates their conscience. When they feel like they're not free. And it arouses a very deep sense of injustice and a very strong

feeling of exposure, and they feel unsafe. And ultimately, we are trying to tell our kids that they're safe and they're protected.

Jody: Right. So we can't violate that.

Jenni: No. We have to, we have to guide them. We have to help them learn how to set boundaries, right? We want to teach them right from wrong and train them to be courageous and to lean into the good choices, right? And step back and away from the bad choices. But then we have to step back, and we have to let them choose. And that means sometimes letting them choose the bad choice, and showing them that we care deeply about them. And we believe that they're capable of making great choices and learning from their mistakes and becoming more wise when they make a mistake. And when we do that, we will often find that they will come to us, and they will tell us. Cause you know why they're going to tell us those things? Because they trust us because we are not going to abuse the secret information.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: We're loyal to them. We are, we hold their privacy as sacred. And so whatever they tell us is sacred. And so they're going to tell us those things .

Jody: Well, and the only way this really works too, is if you are really establishing a relationship, which has a lot of communication, it's been very interested in them without making the field defensive or like, you're trying to, like you said earlier, grill them for information to like harbor and use later.

Jenni: Okay. And the last, um, truth that we want to communicate here is that you are inherently strong and capable. You're not weak.

Jody: So if you don't know the book, *Do Hard Things*, read it, have your kids read it, read it with them. It is so good. Is it's is it, uh, the Harris brothers?

Jenni: Alex and Brett Harris? Yes. It's really important. This is a message. We can send our kids. That's that's a great book for middle school too. But in the elementary school years, you know, we can by by teaching them and helping them to become competent. We give them the confidence that they need to understand that they're strong. They are capable of hard work.

Jody: Andlots of it.

Jenni: And, and a lot of it, right They're capable of learning how to do new things. And if you find that they're afraid, let's hold their hand and walk them through it. Um, they are capable of receiving constructive feedback. We're not talking about making them feel criticized and put down. We're talking about honoring the effort that they put in and telling them we're proud of the effort.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: But what we know, we always tell people to read the book *Mindset* by Carol Dweck, read the book *Mindset*. It shouldn't be like homeschooling like 101. Read that book and understand that when our kids, um, if you want to develop a growth mindset in our kids, we don't have to praise every little thing they do. In fact that will actually give them a fixed mindset. Let's praise their effort.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And you know what, if they're not putting effort in, let's say, "Hey, I know you're capable of learning how to do this. You're not capable of doing it yet. Nobody is when they first start out, but I know you're capable of learning this. So what do you think is holding you back from even trying?"

Jody: Which is a tool that is a tool.

Jenni: That's a tool. Right? They're capable of being a good friend and being honest, even when it's hard. We can feed this message, um, to our kids in all different ways. So Jody, remember a long time ago, our two girls decided that they wanted to put together this dance routine.

Jody: It's one of my favorite stories.

Jenni: Okay. So we had this thing at our 4-H...4-H sponsored it, it was at our County Fair every year was called Share the Fun. And at the County Fair, they had a stage, and it was very well attended. I mean, this was a big crowd on a big stage, and you could sign up and you could, it was like a talent show. Right. And they got evaluated on it and they won prize and they took first, second and third place. And I mean, it was like, it wasn't, they called it Share the Fun, but it actually wasn't just for fun. It was competitive.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Right? So our kids participated in an opera program. My daughter is currently a musician. That's what she, she went to school for that. She went to college for that she's that is her world. So when they came to us and said, they wanted to choreograph this dance, we were like, great, awesome. You know, go for it. And then they came, they're like, "Can we show you our dance?" We were like, "Yeah!"

Jody: We were so excited.

Jenni: We watched the whole thing. And then at the end, we at them and we said, "Well, did you have fun?" And they were like, "Yeah." We were like, "Great, because you're not doing that on stage."

Jody: (laughs).

Jenni: We weren't putting our kids down. Here's what we were telling them. Girls, you are the cutest things on planet earth. And we adore you. And we loved watching that. It Blessed our heart. I still remember. I mean, we were like full joy.

Jody: I know.

Jenni: But not everybody in that audience is their parent.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And you know what we didn't want? That look that for them to have to look in the eyes of the people who are like, "Ooh, that was really bad." It's not that it

was bad, but that's not their lane. And that's okay. They have so many talents. They have so many abilities. And we told them, this is not your wheelhouse, but we want you to do this for fun. Do it all the time. You know, they did.

Jody: Oh yeah, they did.

Jenni: They would videotape their dances.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: You know what? They didn't feel crushed by it. Cause we didn't say it in a mean and critical way.

Jody: No, they actually laughed at themselves in the most hysterical way.

Jenni: Oh my gosh, and you know what? My daughter for years thanked me because she watched other kids get up there whose parents didn't say that. And she watched them be humiliated.

Jody: Yes, and they were, it was horrible.

Jenni: And they were humiliated. And we were like, we're not doing that. You know why? Because our kids are not weak. They can handle the truth.

Jody: Goes back on the same. They're worthy of the truth.

Jenni: They're worthy of it.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: They're worthy of it. You know, my son said just the other day, like he said, one of the things I love about you, mom is you, when you compliment me, I know it's real because you don't tell me I'm good at something when I'm not. He just said it like, he's 16, he just said that to me the other day. And he goes, "It's good to have the mean mom." And then of course he laughed. Cause I'm not trying to be mean.

Jody: Just honest.

Jenni: Household chores are another great way to send this message that they're, that they're not weak. That they're strong. Two year olds can learn to wash, fold washcloths. That's that's, that's the two year old job. They fold they can clean up their toys. Right.

Jody: And the older kids are thrilled to give it to them.

Jenni: Yep. As soon as their kids can talk well, as soon as our kids can talk, you can put all their shirts in one pile and hand them that shirt, and point to that drawer and say, "Put those in your shirt drawer. That's your shirts drawer. Open it up."

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Put those in there, and you can show them that. "No, no, no. We're not going to wrinkle them. We're going to put them in neatly. Let's try it again." And you can build on this so that by the time they're, you know, like my 14 year old daughter who cooks for the whole family, that Hello Fresh is amazing. By the way, I know some people say it's expensive, but I don't think it is. It's about \$32 for a meal for four people. Where we live...we do live in an area where the cost of living is higher, generally higher. And so

Jody: They haven't caught up with us.

Jenni: So, so \$32 for a meal for four people with all the ingredients, everything ready to go and it's good quality food. And she has learned so much about cooking. She's like a little chef.

Jody: And she's super proud of herself too. I love that.

Jenni: But that didn't start when she was 14. I mean, that started when she was really little. I mean, I think she learned how to, you know, dice and mince and julienne when she was probably 10.

Jody: Yeah. In our cooking class. Yeah.

Jenni: Well this has been a meaty episode, and we hope that you've stuck with us through it and that you'll share our podcast with people. And then of course, come back next. We'll have another one posted every Monday morning we post another episode. So we hope that you'll join us again.