

The Goals of the Preschool Years *C2C Podcast Episode #20*



- Jody: In this episode, we are backing up all the way to the years leading up to officially homeschooling. Jenni and I always say that homeschooling is really just an extension of parenting. You know, we're all our children's teachers from day one, and we all teach our kids that the cow says "Moo!" and the dog says, "Woof!" Now that's not much different than B says, "buh" and J says, "juh," there is a great deal that we can be doing from birth through kindergarten that will set our kids up for a successful launch in official homeschooling.
- Jenni: Yeah. I mean, we're all homeschooling all the time.
- Jody: Always.
- Jenni: I don't know that- obviously we don't think of it in that way, but what we're about to talk about in this, um, Jo, is that we can, even from birth, be as intentional about our education of our kids, preparing them for those, you know, academic learning years, right from the beginning. So that's what we're gonna go over and talk about today.
- Jody: I think, just like we were talking, I think that people do it and they don't realize they're doing it. And when the official homeschool word comes out, they get freaked out and our initial reaction to them is "We are doing it already."
- Jenni: Yeah.
- Jody: We are just continuing.
- Jenni: And you're not being- you maybe aren't being deliberate about it.
- Jody: Right.
- Jenni: So we're going to talk about ways you can be deliberate about it in the preschool years. But first, I just want to say, um, we do have a Facebook group where we connect with people and answer questions and ask - sometimes ask you questions. So we do a Facebook live video once a week to give some specific, um, tips and hints. And so, um, if you're interested, go to Facebook and search for the group called "Homeschooling From Cradle to Calling" and request to join, we would love to add you. We love - the more the merrier. So Jody, you said this earlier today, and I think it's a really powerful thought. And that is, um, as parents, we have agency.
- Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Which means that we're allowed to make choices. And I think parents - and we have resources and we can do things. We can learn things and we can grow. And, um, I think that as parents, a lot of times, we don't know that we have that right. So, like, I've seen a lot of parents become paralyzed by, um, doctors.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Right?

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Like, "Well, the doctor says..." Well, so what? The doctor is just an opinion. You're the decision maker.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And for parents that send their kids to school, it transfers to the school or the teacher. You have agency. You're in control here and you get to make choices and you can learn new things. You can question anything that comes to you. You can analyze anything that comes to you. Um, you can learn anything that you're not sure of. Anything that you're not certain about. "Why is my kid doing this?" Google it.

Jody: Well, here's the thing, too. You're with your kid 24/7. The doctor's not. Your mother-in-law's not. Your sister is not. So if you have a question or you think, unless you're the fear-based paranoid parent, which there might be a reason for that, but if you're questioning, if your child is not hitting a milestone or your child is struggling in an area, you might be valid in your thought. And if that's the case, you have agency to do research on it, to come up with a - find a tool, have a plan, seek advice, wisdom.

Jenni: Yeah. And you know what, that's not - if you have a concern about your child, don't get tricked into thinking that you're a bad parent for having a negative thought.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: You're sensing something and there's probably something to it. It may not be anything, you know, it might be something that's easily resolved or, you know, maybe a little bit of tweaking, but it might be something significant. And you should listen to that. Now, if you've got the spouse who gets angry and says like, "How could you think that about our child," gently say to your spouse, "You know, I'm with this person all day. And I get to see them in ways that nobody else does."

Jody: Right.

Jenni: "And so my concerns are valid. My concerns are at least worth looking into."

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Um, so today's episode is really meant to be kind of a jumping-off point. Um, we're not going to go into a whole lot of specifics, but it's meant to jumpstart

your thinking. And from here, we would encourage you to just do some research and make some plans for your little ones. Um, Pinterest can be your best friend, just Pinterest ideas. I remember - gosh, I wish I had Pinterest when my kids were little, my big kids.

Jody: I know.

Jenni: I remember I was home with my two biggest kids by myself. And you know, I had had a career. I was a journalist. And so being home, I wanted to embrace it like a job. Like I got up in the morning, I kind of had a plan. I, you know, we did some things. I was working towards something and I had no idea what to do with these two babies. They were babies. And I was like, "What do I do with them all? Like, I don't even know what to do." And there wasn't Pinterest and there wasn't Google, really. No Google didn't exist. But if they did, nobody knew about them back then. This was a long time ago, a couple of decades. Um...

Jody: Just a couple.

Jenni: I mean, the internet was there and you could look stuff up, but it wasn't like it is now. So I remember calling a mom who had, um, three kids and they were all - her youngest was a year or two older than my oldest. So she had experience, you know? I looked at her as the veteran. And I called her one day and I was like, "So give me some ideas about, like, what I can play with my kids." She acted like I had three heads. She was like, "What do you mean?" I was like, "Well, like, I'm home all day and I want to do stuff that's exciting and stimulating for them. And I don't really have any ideas." And she was like, "I don't know, just play with them." Like....

Jody: That does not help the person who's asking the question.

Jenni: No, I ended up going to Barnes & Noble and I got a book and the book gave me some great ideas and then I did something else that was super helpful. So if you're not sure, and you know you want to do more stuff and you're not sure, you do have Pinterest, thank goodness. But also you can get into Facebook groups and ask questions. People have great ideas.

Jody: Beautiful.

Jenni: And the other thing I did that you can do, too, is I joined some "Mommy and Me" programs. Check to see if your library has something. Look for - I'm - I belonged to Gymboree at the time. Um...

Jody: At this day and age, you can even find your homeschoolers. Some homeschool groups have baby stuff. Yeah.

Jenni: Yeah. Our homeschool - We have a local homeschool music program and they have a music baby program and you will get some really...

Jody: Our kids love that.

Jenni: I know, and you'll get some really, really great ideas. So, um, let's talk, first, about the goals in these years. And let's break this down into two categories. Let's talk about from birth through around toddler, which is around two, let's

say, um, just before they turn three, and then we'll talk about pre-K, which is around like three and four. So what are the goals in the birth through toddler years? Well, first and foremost, probably the - I think the most important goal of all is communication.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Because if your child, and I know this from experience, I have a child on the autism spectrum and his number one struggle, especially in those years, was not only could he not communicate with me, but he did not understand my communication with him.

Jody: So hard.

Jenni: And it was so hard and I felt so helpless, because I could see that he had needs that I didn't understand, because I didn't understand them. I couldn't help meet them. And as a parent, oh!

Jody: It feels hopeless.

Jenni: You just want to meet their needs. You want to meet their needs. That's our heart's desire. And I remember that was my greatest prayer in that season - And I would cry out to God, "Give me insight, give me wisdom to understand what he needs. And then give me the wisdom to know how to meet that need."

Jody: Well, he answered that prayer.

Jenni: Boy, he sure did. Oh my gosh. I'm so grateful for that. But, and actually, what was really cool about that, Jo, is God, as I was praying those things, God brought me opportunities to take all these amazing workshops and seminars and courses and to work with experts and specialists that not only helped me with Griffyn, who had autism, but literally helped me to understand all of my kids after that.

Jody: Well, I have to tell you, it's through that stuff that, you know, us talking and you teaching me what you went through with the autism part, especially when he was young, but it does - It helps the average typical kid.

Jenni: Yeah, the neuro-typical kid. Yep.

Jody: Yes. I mean, it was amazing!

Jenni: It totally did. It was such a blessing. It was a blessing to all my kids. I thought in new ways that I had never thought before.

Jody: Well, I have to tell you, and we joke about this, because we often say "I'm a lot like Griffyn, because I'm quirky in that -" I am. But I am.

Jenni: Yeah. And you have like some sensory struggles like he has. Yeah.

Jody: And so, now it helps me understand my own kids, grandchildren, and...

Jenni: And yourself.

Jody: ...and myself. I'm like, "Oh, that's why. Oh my goodness. I'm a little autistic in this area. And that's okay. Like, I embrace that, now. Where, before, I thought something was wrong with me.

Jenni: Right.

Jody: Right? So we can help our kids through a lot of this stuff.

Jenni: And it gave you tools to be able to, and again, we're talking about communication, Jo, it gave you tools to be able to communicate your needs.

Jody: Yes, totally.

Jenni: I remember we used to do a lot of our work in the early days, Jody and I have been working together for over a decade. And in the early days we used to work in Panera. Where it was loud and they had free WiFi and they had, um...

Jody: All the tea you can drink.

Jenni: And we just would sip tea and eat salads all day.

Jody: And the mac and cheese.

Jenni: And then there's the mac and cheese.

Jody: Which we cannot eat anymore.

Jenni: And the bread bowl. I think I would die from one bite.

Jody: I know.

Jenni: So, um, but one of the things that this whole experience helped you to understand that you didn't understand before was that there are people who actually struggled to filter....

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni:sound.

Jody: Oh, my.

Jenni: And so a lot of times, it would be really - but once you understood that that was a struggle for you, that you had a hard time, you were able to put some systems in place where if it got really loud, there were different things we could do so that you could better hear me so that you - And then you didn't feel so flustered.

Jody: Well - And that's what would happen. And I'll tell you what, the lie you believe in those situations, and it could be anything that you're struggling with, but the lie that you would believe is that there's something wrong with you.

Jenni: Yeah.

Jody: And it was my brain, or it was my problem or I was A.D.D. or some goofy thing, right?

Jenni: Right.

Jody: And so I would cup my ear a lot of times, just so I could hear your voice and we could function in that. There are all kinds of different ways I would sit and do, so that I could make it so I could communicate effectively.

Jenni: And because I knew that that was an issue, I could do a couple of things to help meet that need. Um, and so with our babies, that's sort of the principle, here. Once you begin to understand their needs, then you can adjust the way you're interacting with them and help meet those needs. Right? So we want to give our kids the ability to communicate at a very early age. Jody, right now, you and I are taking, um, one of the great courses on - that's a company "The Great Courses" and they offer, um, great college courses to the average person. Um, we recently discovered that Audible, which we love Audible, Audible offers the great courses for Audible credits.

Jody: Super fun.

Jenni: Which is awesome! So we're taking a course on all these scientific studies that can help parents, right? On parenting. And in that, one of the things that he talks about is how, um, this was one thing that really did blow my mind, that they figured out that new - that infants - infants can do some basic math.

Jody: It's super cool.

Jenni: That was super cool.

Jody: I know! I was like, "Wow!"

Jenni: When we begin to understand how much our newborn babies and infant babies can process. So Jo, you and I had a really interesting little glimpse into this years ago. One of my kids, um, was a really early talker. Um, he actually started talking one week before he turned six months old, which is really young for most kids. In fact, we found out, well, we - yeah, in this course, we found out that the average age for language to begin developing, first words to begin is around a year. So this was half that time. But what it did for us was fascinating. It helped us to get a glimpse into the way babies think.

Jody: No. So we were walking around going, "I wonder what that baby's thinking about right now?"

Jenni: Right. Because Matty Jay could tell us things that we never knew. So this - one, there was two things that stand out in my mind. One was, we were just talking about this earlier, Jo, you and I, but one was that he was just a few months - I mean, he was only been talking for maybe a month. So he was about seven months old and I was in Walmart and we were walking past the clothing section. I mean, not even browsing the clothing, we were literally like hightailing it past the clothing section. Right? And he saw something on a shirt that his older sister likes and he pointed to it and he said, "Eden." And I thought, "Oh my gosh, these little kids are making all these connections that we never knew about - that he was thinking about Eden at seven months old.

Which was infant still. Um, but then the other thing that happened, he was a little bit older, but it really gave us insight into how little kids think. He was three, but again, because he had started developing language so early, by the time he was three, his language was very advanced for a typical three-year-old. Extremely. So he - we were in the grocery store and....

Jody: It looked a little funny actually, when he would talk, because you were like "Did that just come from him?"

Jenni: Yeah. "Did he just say that?" Um, and so, uh, but what it made us think was we wonder if - it didn't make us think, like, "Matty thinks on a different level." What it made us think was, "Do all kids think on this level?" And he's just verbalizing it. So at three, he was sitting in the cart in the grocery store and he was holding a container of strawberries. Um, and this stranger was just trying to make a conversation. And he said, "Hey, buddy, do you like strawberries?" And Matty just glared at him and did not answer. And of course I was always like, humiliated, because...

Jody: That was Matty.

Jenni: Yes. I always wanted to be like, "Please don't talk to him. This is not going to go well" So I just, like, you know, did that awkward parent thing, like, "Oh yeah, thank you. Bye." And we ran off, you know. So then I finished my shopping and it'd been a while. Like, I checked out, I unloaded the groceries, I got him in his car seat. I buckled him in and it wasn't until I was pulling out of the parking lot that he said, "Why do grownups do that?" Now at this point, I had no idea what he's talking about. 'Cause it had been a long time, it was no longer on my mind. And I said, "Do what, Matty?" And he said, "Why do they talk to children like that?" and I said, "Like what?" And he said, "Not like they talk to grownups."

Jody: Think about the concepts that went through that kid's mind to put all of that together. And he was able to verbalize it. How many kids think like that...

Jenni: But don't know how to articulate it. He felt patronized is what happened. When an adult would talk to him in that sing-song, kiddie voice, at the age of three, he felt patronized. He felt like he was being talked down to and condescended to. And he didn't like it. Um, and it really did give us a glimpse into it. I wonder how many kids think this way? So communication is our goal in the birth through toddlers. We want to give them the ability to communicate. And there's lots of things we can do as homeschool parents to help that. Number one, talk to them all the time. Like, all the time. And so Jody, we would call this narrating. We didn't make it up. But like, so, you know, from the time they're born, we would narrate what was happening. Like, um, "Okay. Time to change your diaper. I'm gonna lay you on the table. And now we're gonna take off your old diaper. Oh, that's yucky." And then, um, pause and let them respond. And any little sound they make, and we do this instinctually, but any little sound they make you respond to that, like it's a conversation.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: So they, you know, babble and you say, "That's right. That's how you feel. Oh, I didn't know that. Tell me more." Um, reading books with them. Even as newborns is helpful, they may not respond in a way that tells us that they're getting it.

Jody: But they are.

Jenni: But what we're finding out from this class is they're getting a lot, right? Um, songs, rhymes, all those things, help them to develop language and to understand it and making eye contact with them, make sure that they can look at you. And when you're talking, draw attention to your mouth. So you can even - if they're looking at your hand, you can move your hand up to your mouth so that they look at your mouth or point to your mouth so that they look at your mouth. Um, that's really helpful. And then also from about two months on, um, sign language.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: So I would recommend that you get a book on baby sign language, um, because you will be able to communicate. I read this one book on baby sign language, and it was really fascinating. Um, a very young child, and I can't remember how young, but a very young child, pre-verbal, um, was afraid of elephants. And she heard a noise outside and she was afraid to go to sleep. And she was able to communicate all of this through sign language. She communicated that she thought an elephant was outside.

Jody: Because of the sound she heard.

Jenni: Because of the sound she heard. And so her parent, understanding what she was communicating through the sign language, was able to communicate in words back to her. "Oh, honey, that was a car."

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: "It's not an elephant. You're safe." And that's a really important message that we have to communicate to kids. We say that. And we, in fact, we did a, um, and we're going to talk a little bit at the end of this, we're going to hit on some of the truths that we want to communicate.

Jody: And one of the things, this is important. Because I have to tell you, I had this question when, um, Ari, my grand-baby, who, um, we kind of did some sign language and stuff with her. 'Cause I thought that was so cool to do. And we really worked with her on it, but I was under the impression I'm like, "Oh, we have to do it... the sign-language way," and you don't, it doesn't matter. It's - it- All you're doing is creating a language.

Jenni: Communicating.

Jody: Right. That's it. And so as long as it's the same as you and them - right.

Jenni: (inaudible) ...and they can understand it, you're good to go.

Jody: So, the book is great. There - you can go online and find different things too. But if - sometimes, like, my kids, Ari in particular, has kind of made up her own in different ways that I understood and that'll happen. And it's super fun when that happens.

Jenni: Yeah. And a book will just kind of give you a jumping-off point and give you some ideas that you might not have had.

- Jody: Right.
- Jenni: And it'll help you understand a little bit about the mechanics behind this. It'll give you some ideas about when to utilize it, how to teach them new signs, even if it's one that you make up. Um, there are - there is a little bit of a process to teaching it. So a book is super helpful. So the first goal is communication. Our next goal is their gross motor development. This is their large muscle groups, right? So, um, things like, you know, eventually this isn't right out of the gate, obviously, but things like, you know, jumping, running, those are gross motor skills. Um, so one of the things that we've heard time and time again, is to give baby's tummy time. It helps them learn how to push up. It develops strength in their neck and their back and their arms.
- Jody: Well, and even if - it was kind of cool. In one of the lectures, we heard that, not that this is cool, but it was good to know is that because of the SIDS, they're laying babies on their backs now. And so they're not developing those neck muscles and back muscles like they used to when they had them on their tummies. So tummy time is very important.
- Jenni: Yeah. So all of the gross motor milestones are becoming more delayed, because of a lack of...
- Jody: That was very interesting.
- Jenni: Yeah. Um, so, and then, um, doing different range of motion exercises, again, these are all things that you can Pinterest you can, or Google, you can say "gross motor development activities for babies," or put your baby's age in there for "six-month-olds, for one-year-olds." Um, again, mommy and me classes are great ways to develop as they have like mommy and me, yoga classes. They've got stretching time for mommy and me, for newborns, all different kinds of things that you can do.
- Jody: One of the things we used to do all the time, um, is make up songs. You know, we make up songs. I know you guys do too. And, um, we would always make up songs for all these like little exercise. We call them baby exercises. They were just things we made up and we would start "stretch her arms, stretch her legs, cross them over," and we'd sing little songs to go with it.
- Jenni: They do little bicycles with their legs, and then there's fine motor development, which is going to develop a little bit later into the first year. But, um, but things like, you know, putting small objects like Cheerios into a small container, one of the things that my kids used to like to do, I would go to the dollar store and get, um, a toothpaste holder. I mean, I'm sorry, a toothbrush holder, those long narrow tooth brush holders. And it's got two halves, which they love. And then I would give them a little bowl of Cheerios and they would just take Cheerios one at a time and put them into those containers. And that's a great fine motor development. You can use those wipes containers that have like, um, the plastic ones that have like the small hole for the wipes. And then you can get little plastic toys, not anything they're going to choke on. Maybe like magnet letters or something like that. And they can push those through and just put them in.
- Jody: Those are kind of hard to find those. You can also use those flushable containers, the hard ones.

Jenni: It's the hardest - yeah hard - you want something that's a little bit deep so that they can, um, you know, really try to get stuff in there. So again, Pinterest fine motor development activities for my 14-month-old. Um, the next kind of area to think about is their visual development. And again, this is homeschooling, you know, we're homeschooling our babies and we're doing it kind of intentionally. Um, but we read this study years ago, Jody, that was so cool. And it was about these, um, babies that had been born in indigenous cultures. I believe they were in Africa where they spent a lot of time, like, laying down part of the day under a tree.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And so they had amazing, they had developed amazing depth perception. They could see 3D images really well, but they, these same kids when they got a little bit older, could not understand what they were looking at when they saw a two-dimensional photograph, because they hadn't developed those eye skills. So, um, giving them....

Jody: It's so interesting.

Jenni: So interesting. Giving them lots of visual experiences. Also, even with - we were saying this, Jo, we were talking about this earlier. We were saying that, um, that also - giving them a lot of experiences helps develop language too, because it means a lot more. And it cements in their brain a lot more in a more concrete way when you're at the zoo. And you say, "Look at the zebra!" as opposed to pointing to a picture, a photograph of a zebra and saying, "That's a zebra."

Jody: Well, plus if you're out and about, you're probably going to, if you're still narrating, you're probably to be saying things that you wouldn't normally say, not just in your house. You're saying new things, because there's new objects and new things around you.

Jenni: Yeah. That's really true. And they're - visually, they're experiencing all different kinds of things when you're giving them different - so even - experiences like you don't have to go to the zoo, you can walk around your neighborhood.

Jody: Right, right.

Jenni: Just give them lots of varied visual experiences along the way. And as that visual development happens, they'll begin to learn how to track their eyes. They'll learn hand-to-eye coordination. Um, then of course, this is near and dear to our heart, but for your babies, you can start - it's never too early to begin developing emotional intelligence. And so for babies that looks like, um, starting out by just naming what they're experiencing. So from the time they're newborns, when they appear to you to be frustrated say, "You were frustrated," remember Matty Jay used to say that, "I frustrated!"

Jody: Oh yeah.

Jenni: "I frustrated!"

Jody: And he said it with some great emotion and facial expressions. Yeah.

Jenni: Yeah. But, and then, you know, they're giggling, "You're happy. You're - that's funny!" you know?

Jody: "You're sleepy."

Jenni: Yeah. Right. "You're sad." And then when they get a little bit bigger and they're three and they have to go to a birthday party, for the first time of a friend and they have to watch their friend get all this attention and get all these cool toys, they can cry. And you can say, "What you're feeling is jealous and that's normal."

Jody: I just went through this with Ari, literally days ago. Rhema had a birthday and we were talking about Rhema's birthday and she goes, "I want it to be my birthday." And I said, "Your birthday will come, but today it's Rhema's."

Jenni: Yeah. "You're going to get a turn. We take turns." Right? And so this is, um, and you - Jody, you had a really cool coping mechanism that you taught Ari that helped a little bit to develop her emotional intelligence, because right from the beginning, they do need to develop coping mechanisms for when they're upset. Talk about that.

Jody: So one of the - she was really struggling with anger. Like, she would really get angry. And what we figured is she didn't know how to deal with it. She didn't know what to do with it. And, um, what we did was we - I did a little bit of research and one of the things I found was that breathing out like blowing calms your nervous system. And so what we would do with her is when that would happen, I literally talked her through it. Like, I was talking right now and I would say, "Ari, okay, listen, you're really upset. You're angry." I could - typically, you knew what was happening, but even if she wasn't, we would say, "You seem to be very upset. So right now, I need you to just blow and blow really hard. Like you're blowing out a candle or you're blowing a balloon. And once you are able to blow all that out, let's talk about what's going on." And she did it.

Jenni: Ari was like two. Not even two, before two.

Jody: She was little. And she would do this often: (blowing rapidly) like that's what you would hear (blowing rapidly again). And - but what started happening was I no longer had to say that. When she was really frustrated about something or really upset, it didn't take very long and she would be standing there. She'd be upset. And she'd look at me. It must have been like the trigger of, "Okay, now I need - she's going to tell me to blow." One thing that we made sure...

Jenni: It's like you were the visual.

Jody: I was the visual - yeah.

Jenni: Focal point.

Jody: Exactly, and she would stand there and look at me and blow. And I knew she was going through her coping mechanism. The thing that I trained my family not to do was to say to her, "Calm down."

Jenni: Right.

Jody: Because I know, for me, it makes me mad.

Jenni: That makes you more mad.

Jody: It makes me more mad. And I said, "Don't say those words to her, give her a tool, stop telling her to do something she doesn't know how to do and give her the tool." And so that's what we did. And I'm telling you, it worked. That may not be the thing that works for your kid.

Jenni: Well, but that is a sensory thing. And so, one of the things I wanted to say, I had mentioned earlier that having a child on the autism spectrum actually proved helpful to all of my kids. Um, when my - I had five kids all right in a row. So when I had five children all in the house that were very young...

Jody: That's a lot of personalities happening at once.

Jenni: A very small age group. I mean...

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Um, Griffyn was eight when my fifth child - so my oldest was eight when my fifth child was born, but he was on the autism spectrum. So he was eight going on four. So, developmentally, when I had five children, my oldest child was seven. Cause Eden - I mean, Skyler was seven when Eden was born. So five kids, let's say seven and under, um, was challenging. And so one of the things that I did, and I took this out of a page from the autism handbook was, um, we had a sensory space and all of my kids benefited from it. And so in that sensory space, it was a tent. We had a little tent and in the tent was a beanbag chair. And in that tent, I - well - I alternated some different things. We had a weighted blanket in there, which all the kids loved.

Jody: Yeah. I would love that.

Jenni: When they were stressed out, that's where they wanted to go. It took all the stress away. So you can call that, like, the cool-down zone. Um, I had, because we knew about blowing, I had blowing toys in there. I had straws. I had straws that made a light whistle that you could blow into. Um, and all those things were helpful.

Jody: Blowing works, man.

Jenni: It really does. And especially when they have to blow hard. So if you can have a small straw that they can blow into, it really is helpful. I don't mean like a coffee stirrer small, but you don't want something huge.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Um, and we had one of those crazy straws and it made a really cool whistle. So some of my kids like that and some of them didn't, um, we had squeazy toys in there. We had stuff for them to look at, like almost like a mini lava lamp-type thing, just little stuff that you would get like at the sharper image. And I kept just - inside there, I kept the beanbag chair and I kept like a little crate, like a small little cube-size crate. And it had some of this stuff in there that they could go in there and they could play with this stuff that would help them to

feel calm. And they were only allowed in there when they needed that space. It wasn't just like an alternate playroom, you know, a play space. Um, but again, that is - those are all giving our kids coping mechanisms. You know, I have different kids now, even at, like, I have one kid who's a teenager, he's 16. And when he is stressed, he will come to me and say, "Can you hold my hands?" I mean, it's so funny. Like this big boy, who's like over six feet tall, will come to me and say, "Can you hold my hands?" But I know that when he does that, he's telling me "I'm stressed out." But all that starts when they're babies, like you said, giving them coping mechanisms. Another message we can start even at, um, in those up to, you know, early toddler years is obedience. And obedience in the early baby toddler years is, right out of the gate, what do we teach them? "No." And we say it just like that. Right? We would go, "No." Like low, soft. Let's not scream. We're all tempted to, but here's the thing, you know, I have parents who - I've been with parents, you probably have, too, Jody, who like laugh. They think it's funny that they're screamers and be like, "Oh, I'm definitely a hothead." And I'm thinking, this is actually - we got to fix it. Because A - number - well, number one, that teaches your kid that you're not serious until you hit fever pitch. Who wants to live like that? And then B, it teaches them not to respect your authority. We talk about the four Cs of authority, Jody. And one of the - the first one on the list is to - that you're calm.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: That you're calm. You're calm. You're cool. You are collected. That's all they first C - calm. Right? And we need to be in - how are we gonna teach them to get control of themselves if we're not in control of ourselves?

Jody: Right.

Jenni: So quiet, low tone voice. "No," and that's the first thing we teach them for obedience. We also, Jo, around the time that they're walking, we teach them "come when called." And we do whole little exercises.

Jody: It's super fun, actually.

Jenni: It's a training ground. It is. So you get them -

Jody: It's a big game.

Jenni: I'm going to tell you - I'm going to give you a little peek inside - my game that I play with them is I let them have at the container cabinet, you know, where you keep all of your...

Jody: Tupperware.

Jenni: ...plastic storage containers. I - that's always a super fun place for my babies to play. And so I - that was always an engaging activity. And I would open up the cabinet and let them have at it. And then when they were really engrossed, I would go in the other room and I always enlisted an older kid to help. But if you only have one child do this with your spouse at night, or your mom, if she comes over during the day or your sister or your friend. Um, that person is stationed by the child and you go in another room and you call the child's name. So if the child's name is Rhema, like my child, then you would say

"Rhema," and the person helping you, your confederate in this, is going to say, "Mommy's calling you. We have to go to mommy." And we - and you have that person go "Coming." And then they take the baby's hand and the baby has no idea what's happening at first and walk them over to you. And you give a big, huge hug and kiss and you make a big, "You came when I called you, YAY!!!" And then you go do it again. And if you do that two or three times, your kid starts to understand that this is a game and they get excited about it. And then the confederate does less and less and less helping.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And you do a training session of that until that first time, they kind of get it. And then you wait a couple of days, you do it again. And then you wait a couple of days and you do it again. And then after that, they just get it. And every time you call their name, you make a huge deal. "You came when Mommy called you!"

Jody: Well, because in our houses, I don't care how old you are when we call your name. The only response is "Coming."

Jenni: And if you're 25, the only response is "coming." In fact, I have, um, a couple of adult kids that are here. Well, one who just turned 18. And then I have my oldest on the autism spectrum. And still every once in a blue moon, I'll get - I'll say their name, "Seth," and I'll hear, "Yeah?" And I'll go, "You want to try that again?" "Oh, sorry, Mom. Coming." Because I don't want to scream across the house.

Jody: No.

Jenni: I might need to call you from across the house. But then I want to have a conversation face to face. If I can come to you, I'm going to do that.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: It's not just about me being the boss of you. If I can come to you, I will. If I'm calling you, it's typically because I need you in this room.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And so I don't want - oh, here's what I - whew. This can make me mad like nothing else. It doesn't typically happen with my kids, but I hear it in other houses and it just hits me in the wrong way. So the kid says the child's name like, "John!" and the kid goes, "Yeah?"

Jody: Oh no. Uh-uh. Mm-mm.

Jenni: No! No, no, no, no, no. It is "Coming!" And we can start that before they're two.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: As soon as they can walk. Probably walk well. I mean, if they're still trying to get the hang of walking.

Jody: It might be crawling.

Jenni: Let's not overwhelm them. Yeah. But when they can walk really well, that's when you want to start that. And Jody, you mentioned too, that's a great time to start saying like, um, so when you ask them to do something, you can say, "We obey the first time. Good job. Yay. You obeyed the first time." They may not understand what you're saying, but as we get into the preschool years, three and four, it will already be a foundation and they'll really get it. And then last of all, even in the baby years, we can start to help them develop a concept of God and Jesus and the Bible. And we can do that by having a picture Bible for them. That's their Bible. And we can read stories from that on a regular basis. And we can talk about God and Jesus in our daily life. And when they get hurt, Jo, did you remember our little ones? Like, not even talking yet? And they would get hurt and like, they would hand you their arm to pray for them? Right? And they bow their head and close your eyes as you pray for their hurt arm? And then they say, "Amen," and it's all better. You know, right? So we pray for them when they get hurt. We pray for them when they're sad.

Jody: We sing Bible songs. We even learned, um - well, we'll talk about that in a minute when we...

Jenni: Oh, our little mantras that your kids can say, um, before they go to bed and when they get up in the morning, little things they can speak over their little spirit? Yeah, we'll definitely talk about that. So then you get into the three and four-year-old age group, that's the preschool age range. And now we're really starting to get them ready for academics.

Jody: Yeah. This is when they realize they have a mind of their own.

Jenni: I feel like the terrible two's has a bad name, because it's really all about the three-nager. I - three is a....

Jody: Two was much easier than three.

Jenni: Oh, my gosh.

Jody: Three is like, "Whoa!"

Jenni: Then they get into four and then things start to get better. Life does start to get better. And it sometimes takes 'til they're four and a half, but yeah, it does start to get better and then five, they are a dream. But reading is, um, we start preparing them for reading in the preschool years. And we do that by paying attention to sounds identifying sounds just the other day. Um, I don't know what triggered it. It was sort of an organic conversation in the car, but something happened and, uh, Rhema asked a question about a sound and we said, "No, that's B and B says 'buh'," and so like the whole rest of the way home, everyone in the car came up with words that start with "buh." "Baby," "Ball" and "Boy" and "Balloon." And like everyone was coming up with sounds.

Jody: It's funny.

Jenni: Until she started to get it because we want them to start paying attention to sounds. Um, rhymes can help with that, you know, cause they hear the repeated sound. So doing lots of nursery rhymes and helping them memorize poems and things like that. And of course, our favorite, out-loud reading. Read out loud to them from the very get-go, daily, multiple times a day. We have

read studies that say that you should read a minimum of three books a day to try - minimum. And dads should read, they - what was that study? I think you found that?

Jody: It was before bedtime. If the dad reads to them, their academic success is like, it's like 30% greater or something like - it's really, it was pretty cool. Um, yeah. Ari's is in the stage now where she has to read the book to me.

Jenni: And that's great.

Jody: I know. It's constant. And we read it 10 times.

Jenni: Yeah, well they do really like that. And that's a really important thing. They like to read the same books over and over, because then they become familiar with the book.

Jody: Well, I had read that they - when they - they will literally exhaust a book and it's because they're still getting something- It was out of the- It was a Read-Aloud Revival Podcast I listened to. And she was saying, um, one of the people she had on said that they will exhaust a book and they're going through that book until they drain what they need out of it. Like they're still learning. And then once they kind of process that book, they'll move on to the next one. I thought that was kind of cool.

Jenni: And we need to allow that to happen.

Jody: Like, their brains know.

Jenni: Okay. So you know what? You'll know - you just walk this line. Like I - the - Rhema has one book in particular that it's not a very long book, but she literally knows the entire book by heart.

Jody: So cool. That's fun.

Jenni: It is. Except if it was up to her, that is the only book we would ever read. So every once - and it is because she feels such victory in being able to say those lines and she feels like a participant.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: So we want our kids to, quote-unquote, read the book to us, but we also need, sometimes, to press the issue and say, "Okay, you read that book to me. And then I'm going to read this book to you." And even if they protest, "Nope, that's how we're going to do it," because we do need to give them that out-loud reading experience. Um, your girl loves to have you tell her a story. A made-up story.

Jody: That is Pappy's department, because Mimi stinks at it. But I'm telling you, he, it's so fun to sit outside of that bedroom door and listen to what's happening inside the bedroom. And I can hear him literally, she's laying in her bed and he's on the floor in the bedroom and he's acting out things and he'll make up all these stories.

Jody: So awesome.

Jody: And she's like interacting, going, "And then what? What happened?" And it's so fun and he's so good at it, because he's - he can tell a tall tale. Let me tell you. And he's very exaggerated and dramatic in his storytelling and it's super fun.

Jenni: Yeah, and then they -

Jody: Don't ask me to do that.

Jenni: And it's actually a great pre-reading skill. Um, but you bring up a good point, Jo. We don't have to be great at everything.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Like, we can do the things with our kids that we enjoy and the things that we're good at.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: So, if you would prefer to read the story yourself and then act out a fake story, do that.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: You know what, once they become familiar with those stories, you can ask them to act out the story for you.

Jody: Which she does.

Jenni: Yeah, mine too. We have this one book that I love. It's called "Wild," and the drawings in it are just beautiful and it's a great - she loves this book. And um, and sometimes she - she'll want to act out the crazy things that this little baby girl is doing. Um, and that's all great. Dramatic play is a great pre-reading skill. These are all really strong pre-reading skills. We also want to prepare them to write. And so this is something very deliberate that we can do. Um, they need strength in their hands and they need strength in their wrist in order to write. So we can do some very deliberate things to help them. One of the best exercises that you can do to help get your preschooler ready for writing is cutting. You can draw - what I liked to do, I started this with my, um, my third child who had a lot of, um, fine motor weakness. So I did lots of activities to build up his fine motor skills. Um, and I would draw a picture of a little honeybee and then I would make a line across the page and draw the beehive. Real simple. You don't have to be an artist. I'm not. Um, and then he would just cut across the page from the honeybee to the beehive. And then once he got good at that, then I made the line from the honeybee to the beehive wavy, and then I would make it spiky. And then I would make like little, um, like, boxes almost like across the line, like angles across line. Um, once they can do that, then you have them cut out pictures. You can even have them color a picture in a coloring book and then use the black lines to cut out what they've colored and glue it onto something. All of these are great pre-writing skills, even gluing and pasting, great pre-writing skills. Um, use an easel or a blackboard on the wall, um, because - for drawing and painting, because they have to bend their wrist up at a 90 degree angle and it develops wrist strength to do that. Or you can pick up their feet or have a bigger sibling pick up their feet and have them

walk like a wheelbarrow on their hands that helps build up their wrist strength, which is really important for writing.

Jody: We practice handstands in my house.

Jenni: Yeah. Ari's not gonna have any problems with wrist strength at all. She is so- that is her gift and she is so physically adept. Um, and then math prep, um, you know, we can teach them, of course, counting. Um, so there's, you know, rote counting just one through ten or whatever. Um, and then teaching them that that equates to something. So after they can count automatically, the - I mean, row counting, then we can teach them that those numbers correlate to a number of objects and teach them how to count a number of objects. Um, one thing I think parents don't think about a lot is time concepts and teaching time concepts. So what you can do is get yourself an old fashioned egg timer. I mean, you could use your phone. Set the timer on your phone, but, um, you can say something like, um, "Okay, we're going to go in 10 minutes. I'm going to set a timer." Now, this is a great emotional intelligence skill, too, because transitions are often really hard for kids. So giving them that timer helps them make the transition mentally, but it also begins to teach them the concept of time and how long certain things take. So talk about things like, um, you know....

Jody: "We're going to share this toy. You're going to get it for three minutes. Your friend's going to get it for three minutes." Our kids run to us, going and "Start the timer, start the timer!"

Jenni: They totally do. But then even things, like, you can stretch it out and talk about a day, a week. So what you can do is you can, um, cut out a picture of a place you're going to go, we're going to go see Grandma, get a picture of Grandma, put it up on the calendar and then say, "We're going to Grandma's in three days." One way, you probably already do this, but one way that you could help them understand it is three sleeps.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Um, and, but then go to the calendar and cross it off, like, "Okay. We had one day."

Jody: Except Ari counts naps as a sleep.

Jenni: I know, well, Rhema calls them long sleeps and short sleeps. She said, "Is it a long sleep?"

Jody: "Or a short sleep?" That's funny.

Jenni: And I do say long sleeps. So, um, so, but then show them on a calendar, "We're done with this day. Now it's the next day. We have two more days to Grandma. One more day to Grandma. Today's the day we go to Grandma's!" They begin to understand time. And that's a deliberate thing. We can teach them and their preschool program. And then of course, shapes is also a math skill. Um, this is a great time in the preschool years to start identifying and working on their mindset.

Jody: Oh yeah, we're doing that. Aren't we?

Jenni: Oh yeah. So if you have not read the book "Mindset" by Carol Dweck...

Jody: So good. It's life-changing.

Jenni: We can't recommend it enough. It's really an important book, I think, for parents, especially homeschool parents to read and understand, because kids come to, um, a - the world it seems, in some ways, hard-wired.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: So, um, in my kids, I have seven kids and for whatever reason, most of my kids have a growth mindset naturally, but I have one child who has a fixed mindset naturally. And I - and we've talked about this, Jody, and wonder - one of the things that we can do to help - a fixed mindset believes that your traits are fixed and not changeable.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: So either you're smart or you're not. You're talented or you're not. You can do this or you can't. And the whole book goes into why having a fixed mindset is really detrimental to their life. Um, a growth mindset believes that all traits are learnable, that all skills and abilities, most skills and abilities are learnable and changeable. Um, and so it's a much more successful mindset because kids don't quit. They don't give up. They don't feel like they need to place blame or feel ashamed.

Jody: Often because the fixed mindset won't even try something.

Jenni: They won't try. So when I saw this rear its head was with my sixth child and one of the things she talks about in the book is that, um, children who are praised for abilities often develop a fixed mindset. Well, unbeknownst to us, that's exactly what was happening with Matty Jay, my, um, sixth child, who's eight and a half. He, all his life, he's the kid who really started to talk at a very young age. And so that was a very obvious, uh, ability that he had and one that drew a lot of attention, unintentionally. And so we would be out and he would say something a little bit startling, like when a five year old says something is a rhetorical question or the four-year-old is playing with toys and says, "This one is a decoy," you know, just these really big words that - and so what that elicited from the people around him was praise of, "Oh my gosh, Matty, you're a genius."

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: "Wow, Matty, you are brilliant. You are so intelligent." And that's what he heard all his life. And he began to identify with that. In the book, she talks about how detrimental this is. Well, I saw it. I saw it play out. Because when he was like official, quote-unquote, kindergarten age, we thought, "Okay, well, let's start teaching him to read." He hadn't really shown any interest prior to that, because I have some kids who showed interest in the preschool years and started to read in the preschool years. But he didn't. So we waited. We sat down and the very first reading lesson was when it showed itself, it was the first time he'd ever tried. So of course I didn't expect him to get it. I mean, you know, I've I taught five kids to read before that. So I knew a little bit of what to expect. But he had never learned how to read. So he didn't know what this was

like. Well, because he didn't understand it in the very first lesson, he literally turned to me and said, "You said I was smart. And that's a lie. I'm not smart. I'm stupid. I can't do this." And he wanted to quit and I was shocked and scared for him. Oh, my gosh. Guess what I'm seeing. I'm seeing a fixed mindset. "Why try? I can't do it. I - you said I was smart. You lied. I'm not smart. I can't do this one thing. So clearly, I'm stupid."

Jody: Right.

Jenni: That's the fixed mindset. So in the preschool years, instead of praising the outcome, the product, let's start praising the process. Because that develops a growth mindset. So, um...

Jody: And just like Matty was labeled, we have to watch those labels.

Jenni: Right.

Jody: "You're so smart. You're -" even like...

Jenni: "You're a great artists, what an amazing dancer you are,".

Jody: Yup.

Jenni: No, what we want to say is, "Wow, I can see you really use your imagination. Boy, it seems like you worked super hard on that."

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: "That's impressive. The amount of work you did is impressive." You're praising the process.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: And not the outcome.

Jody: So get the book. Moral of the story. Get the book.

Jenni: He did eventually learn to read.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: But I had to talk him through it. I had to start telling him that, you know, this is a process and nobody gets it right the first time.

Jody: Which leads me back to that - that is our job. We are coaches. We are...

Jenni: Mentors.

Jody: Yeah, and we're leading these kids down a direction of help. They're - they are born with certain deficits, if you will. Right? And so it's our job to kind of figure those out and help them along the way to help them - the goal. The full, healthy whole adult.

Jenni: And so, Jody, just you said something really powerful. You said we're their coaches. If we take a coach mentality, we won't get caught up in - I could have - I suppose I could have gotten mad at him for that. I mean, it sounds crazy, but I think it happens.

Jody: I'm sure.

Jenni: Um, I suppose I could've gotten mad at myself, maybe. I mean, again, that sounds foreign to me, but I think it does happen. We can't get mad at them, or ourselves when they have an issue, it's just basically a struggle that they need - it's a problem that needs a solution.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And our job, like you said, is to coach them through it.

Jody: We have to be careful, too, if we have a fixed mindset in certain areas, because we can actually have these fixed mindsets toward our kids about things. And we need to be careful of that. So we need to...

Jenni: Not feel like that's just how they are and they can't fix it. We can fix anything. They can...

Jody: Or feel embarrassed, in a sense, because our kids can - Mm-hmm.

Jenni: That's crazy. Don't ever be embarrassed by something your kid does. It's not you doing it. It's your kid.

Jody: I mean, Ari picks her nose, but I'm not going to get embarrassed by it.

Jenni: I have kids who pick their nose and eat it in public. I mean, it's gross and we can tell them.

Jody: (laughing) You just said it on our radio - podcast!

Jenni: I know we did radio for years, so we tend to say radio. Um, but yeah, so, um, helping them identify their feelings again and at the three and four-year-old stage it's a great time to start helping them identify other people's feelings. So you can do this in books. When you're reading a book, you can point to the picture of their face and you can say, "How is she feeling? How do you think she's feeling?" And then when they tell you, if it's accurate, you can say, "How did you know? What?" And if they don't know, give them the answer. Like if the child's angry, you can say, look at her eyebrows, see how crooked they are? They're squeezed together. That sometimes means you're angry," right?

Jody: This is so helpful to help them develop social awareness, right? And to be able to interact in conversation. Because how many times do we say, "That person does not pick up social cues?"

Jenni: Well - and one of the ways that you can help your kid to really be able to identify this is to, um, is to get them to mimic those feelings. So, one of the things that we read, Jo, is that we - it was in the book "Presence" by Amy Cuddy, which is another great book. Um, we learned that the way that we empathize with people is by literally making their facial expressions, mimicking

them in a microsecond, we don't even realize we're doing it. But what was fascinating was they did this study and people who had gotten Botox, right? Your face is partially paralyzed. Well, over time, those people became less empathetic, because they couldn't mimic people's facial expressions. That's fascinating, isn't it?

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: So, and you notice it, like, when somebody feels sad, what do you do? You go like, "Oh," and like, you make the same face that they're making.

Jody: It's probably why all these actors are in all these social justice...

Jenni: Because they have so many - they're brimming with empathy, like, maybe too much.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Sometimes it's really good. And sometimes maybe too much. But for these little kids, what we can do is when we're reading a story and the person in the story is angry, we can ask them to identify it, tell us what cues they picked up on. And then we can ask them to make an angry face. "Show me what angry looks like. Oh yeah. That means you feel angry, doesn't it?"

Jody: Ari's got that one down.

Jenni: Um, we're still in the goal of obedience. Right? We still want them to be obedient. Um, and so now we take it a little bit further. So instead of just saying, "that's awesome, you obeyed the first time." We can now teach them the definition of obedience in pre-K 3 and 4, obedience means immediately, cheerfully and thoroughly. It means the first time with a happy heart and all the way.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Right? So those are the three things, immediately, cheerfully and thoroughly. And over the years of three and four, we can really break those things down. What does immediately mean? It means right now, right away.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: And what does it mean to be cheerful? What does it mean to do to obey thoroughly? It means to not just take that and throw it on the floor in your bedroom, Mommy wants you to put it away. That means it goes back in the box, right? Which is a great life skill. Putting away. Let's teach them to put away. Let's teach to self feed. Let's teach them to get dressed. Right? Um, let's give them some character at this stage, you know, feeling kind and generous and thankful and all those things we can start talking about at three and four, um, social skills at three and four. Taking turns, sharing, being polite.

Jody: Yes. There you go.

Jenni: Um, this is a good one, Jody, you brought this up the other day - earlier today, I think, when you talked about, um, kids at this age can start learning when to get help.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: So if they're angry and they can't fix it, um, give them the power to say, "Mom, I need your help." And they come in and they're like "MOOOOMMMM!" Say, "Mommy, I need your help."

Jody: Ari yells that for me across the room, she'll say, "I need your help!" And it's really - I'm like, "Boy, she's learned that young." You know, it's awesome.

Jenni: It's so powerful, because you know what, when they're eight and they're at their friend's house and their friend is really not treating them well, and they've tried to work it out on their own, they can go to their friend's mom and say, "Mrs. Smith, I need your help."

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Um, "Sam won't share, I've asked him and I don't know what to do." So - and that's a lot - you're going to get that parent - they're going to get that parent on their team a lot better and faster and more effectively.

Jody: "He won't share!!"

Jenni: Because especially - because some parents, sometimes, if a kid comes to them about their own kid, they feel defensive and they feel like they have to defend their child and they have to make excuses for their child. But if your child is coming to them without that spirit of blame, but they're coming to them with, uh, "I need your help," they're going to get that parent on their team. We talked about this last little segment, we're gonna talk about really quickly, um, is the important truths that we want to feed their - nourish their soul with, from birth to - all the way up until adolescence. But it starts right in the beginning. I mean, these are deliberate things we want to communicate. If you go back to the podcast that talks about the goals of the elementary years, we'll break it down and we break it down. We go through it in detail. So you can always go back and listen to that one. But, um, so we won't go into detail, but we just - it's worth reviewing them. So our first truth that we want to share with our kids and really communicate is that they are worthy of love and connection. And so is every person they meet. And Jody, you had mentioned this earlier. One of the things we're starting to do now with our, um, little girls who are - Rhema just turned four and Ari's almost four, she's getting close. So the end of three, um, we're starting to give them these little, um, things to say before they - right before they go to bed and then right when they wake up. And so you can customize it to yours. But I know before we go to bed, um, we're having them say, "I am brilliant. I'm created in the image of God. God has a plan and a purpose for my life. And Jesus loves me." And what that tells them is that they are worthy of love and connection. So is every person they meet. And the second one is you are not an extension of us, your parents.

Jody: Right.

Jody: You're your own person, right? Which means we're not going to take on their crap when they make a mistake, we're not going to feel ownership of it. We're also not going to try to control them, by the way.

Jody: Exactly.

Jenni: Three, you're an important part of every community that counts you as a member. So the message in this stage is that they're important. That they are important. They're an important part of our family, um, their needs are important. And we can start that from the time that they're babies, they are important, their needs are important. We're not going to ignore them. We're not going to say, I know this is going to step on somebody's toes, but here's what we're not going to say to our preschooler. "Well, you go in your room and don't you come out until you're happy."

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: No, they're important.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: And if they're upset, it's important. So...

Jody: Let's validate them. Let's hear what's happening. Let's find the root and come up with a tool or an answer.

Jenni: Yeah. I mean, even if they're having a reaction that's inappropriate...

Jody: Right.

Jenni: ...it's because they're three.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: And so what they need from us is like you just said, Jody, a tool to have an appropriate reaction. Right? So we're not going to tell them, "Go in your room and come out when you're happy."

Jody: Right.

Jenni: You better turn that frown upside down.

Jody: Because you're just suppressing what's happening.

Jenni: 'Cause you're just telling them to fix something that they don't have a tool to fix.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: They don't know how to make that better.

Jody: Well, they'll come up with a coping mechanism. It won't be a healthy one.

Jenni: Right. I was just going to say, they're going to come back with a smile, but it isn't going to be genuine.

Jody: No. Right.

Jenni: It isn't going to be a reflection of what's happening on the inside.

Jody: And it's gonna turn into a very, very unhealthy coping mechanism when they're older.

Jenni: Yeah. It's going to teach them to ignore how they feel, which in turn teaches them to ignore how other people are feeling

Jody: Well, and they can become completely unself-aware out of it, because they don't tell themselves what's really happening.

Jenni: Right. And so we want them to know that they're important. And they're an important part of this community, our family. Number four, um, you have the right to feel safe and protected. And we talk about that a lot in the elementary school one. Um, and I love this one. Number five, you are inherently strong and capable. Not weak, even that newborn baby.

Jody: Yup.

Jenni: That newborn baby can be on her stomach. And you know what, let me tell you something. Now I don't mean for sleep.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: But for supervised tummy time, you're not just leaving her on her belly and walking away. But I'm going to tell you, they get mad the first time you do that. Oh, they get mad. You know why? 'Cause they can't lift their head up well, yet. And so they're frustrated. They can't see what's going on around them. And - but that's okay, because they are inherently strong. They have the ability to - they - God created them with the ability to develop those neck muscles.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: We're just going to give them the opportunity to do it. We're not going to do a forum.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: Right? Well, we hope that you are going to leave this talk feeling like, "Okay, I'm going to homeschool my preschooler." 'Cause you already are, whether you know it or not. And if you have any questions and you're looking for any ideas, um, reach out to us, reach out to our little community on Facebook, "Homeschooling From Cradle to Calling," 'cause there are people there who have way better ideas than we do. We turn to them when we have questions. Thanks so much.