

Am I damaging my child?

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SUMMARY

The podcast episode addresses a parent's concerns about potentially damaging their child due to challenging dynamics and emotional responses. The host reassures the listener that they are not alone in their struggles and explores various factors contributing to parenting challenges, including stressors, cultural backgrounds, and the child's neurodivergence. The discussion emphasizes the importance of understanding both the parent's and child's needs and the impact of societal pressures on parenting.

- Many parents experience difficulties connecting with their children, especially during challenging behaviors, leading to feelings of guilt and inadequacy.*
- Stressors in a parent's life, including cultural adjustments and work demands, can affect their emotional responses to their child's behavior.*
- Understanding the origins of one's trauma and unmet needs is crucial for effective parenting and breaking the cycle of negative behaviors.*
- Children's behaviors often stem from their needs for connection and autonomy, which parents can better address by recognizing underlying needs rather than just focusing on strategies.*
- Community support is vital for parents, as sharing experiences can alleviate feelings of shame and foster healing.*
- The podcast encourages parents to explore their own needs and develop strategies to meet both their and their children's needs, promoting healthier family dynamics.*
- The host offers resources, including a workshop, to help parents navigate their triggers and improve their parenting approach.*

[Music] hello and welcome to the your parenting Mojo podcast today I want to address a question that unfortunately I hear from parents pretty often which is am I damaging my child an anonymous listener submitted this question recently on the ask Jen a question feature on the your parenting Mojo homepage so uh I have

summing this up in 2 minutes but I have S sort of bad Dynamics with my son who is five and his father has really good Dynamics with him so I'm causing it and I'm wondering how much I'm hurting his development now the sun is in special ed group and considered to have some autistic and ADHD traits and to be honest I'm not sure if it's that rather than just B bad

Dynamics with me so he has behavioral problems due to that and the problem is that when I get triggered and I react I I often just raise voice and sometimes shout back at him but sometimes when it gets bad I said quite hurtful things I don't know how much he understands but I do I do understand how that it's hurting him I do

apologize but it's still bad and when it happens the thoughts of

me hurting his development and these being the formative years uh sort of rush in my head and I get so triggered by this the thought of how unfair it is that it's so difficult and that my failure is hurting him that it kind of grows bigger so how well can I fix it afterwards or do the formative years really kind of set his Destiny and him having me as a mother

make his life R oh my goodness my heart absolutely goes out to this parent and I have a bazillion questions and I wish I had their contact information so I could get in touch with them and ask them about what's going on in their life but unfortunately I don't have that so in this episode I'm going to address the question that this listener raised by bringing up a host of issues that could be at play in this Dynamic and that may

be at play in your Dynamic with your child as well in the hopes that we can support this listener and support you as well right off the bat I think the most important thing to understand is that this listener is not alone this is not a unique experience not knowing how to connect with your child can be incredibly difficult but this is not the only parent who's going through this getting angry at your child and saying

things that you regret is also not a unique experience when I surveyed listeners last year to ask about the biggest problems they were having in their parenting one of the most common responses I received was that listeners were having a hard time connecting with their children when their children misbehaved and then they felt guilty for failing their children and then they felt guilty about failing themselves as well and not being able to be the kind of parent they wanted to be so I hope

this starts off by reassuring The Listener that you're not the only one having this experience and I know that seeing that you're not the only one having this experience can be incredibly validating so the next thing I'm wondering about is the stressors that are happening in this parent life I heard a mixture of Accents in the person's message potentially English mixed with something else and that tells me there's potentially some sort of immigration story happening so maybe

this person's parents immigrated from somewhere else or this person came over themselves directly from another country and I know that in some cases the choice to choose where you live is a real choice and in other cases it's a choice that doesn't really seem like a choice because the circumstances in the place where you are don't seem as though they're going to allow you to live to your full potential or your family to live to their full potential and it

seems possible that moving to another place can allow you and your family to do that and I know that this kind of immigration is almost never trauma-free there's trauma associated with whatever is happening in your country of origin that's the reason why it seems like moving to another country is the best available option there's also the trauma of adjusting to life in the new country which almost certainly has very different cultural practices and which may not recognize the validity of you

and your family's cultural practices the new country may also actively discriminate against your cultural practices and even if it doesn't it can be a real struggle to mesh the practices of two different cultures together in a family in a way that's coherent for the family members and I think it's important to know particularly for those of us who live in the US since unless we identify as indigenous all of our families came from somewhere else that this

intergenerational trauma exists in our families and unless our family members identified as white and Protestant when they arrived in the US chances are they experienced some sort of prejudice and discrimination today we might think of Irish people as being white but they were not always perceived that way by the US immigration authorities people who came from Eastern European countries were often also not perceived as white people from India Pakistan the Caribbean were invited to the United Kingdom by

the government in the 1950s because there were more jobs available than people to fill them and the newly arrived immigrants were stunned to find they were discriminated against by the British people when they arrived even though they had been invited by the British government the legacy of slavery is alive and well in the US as well and all of this can show up in a variety of ways in our families maybe our ancestors had experienced discrimination in their

country of origin and they already arrived with a whole host of challenges and coping mechanisms that they had used to navigate that and then they found themselves trying to navigate an entirely new environment and may have turned to unhealthy mechanisms to help them cope there are plenty of stories of using alcohol to numb the pain associated with work-based discrimination for men for example men hitting women was not just tolerated but was expected women numbing themselves with the endless work that accompanied

more children than they may well have wanted to have and not being emotionally available to children then meant the next generation also struggled to understand their own feelings and navigate those without the unhealthy coping mechanisms and so if we're wondering why we have big reactions to our children's behavior and we aren't considering what we learned about misbehavior and what happens to the children when they misbehave from our parents and caregivers and what they learn from their parents and caregivers then we're

missing a big part of the picture we also have to consider what's going on in this parent's life right now are they working full-time and trying to juggle economically valuable activity with being a great parent which is what society expects of them are they working in a demanding job where they have to be on an even keel all day then they get home and they find they have no capacity left to deal with their own child who's

having big feelings I see that a lot among teachers who are trained to manage children's behavior in the classroom and it takes all of their strength and patience to be able to do that all day and then they get home and they snap with their own children are they parenting a child with special needs full-time and not getting enough of a break are they parenting full-time and wishing they had an outlet like work to be able to find their own

identity as a person that isn't wholly tied up with parenting are they getting enough sleep how's the division of

labor in the home since the parents said that their partner has a good relationship with their son I can imagine the partner is more than minimally involved as a parent which is great but when things get hard between this parent and the child what happens does the partner blame this parent if the parent has done a lot of reading and researching on

parenting and on managing their anger does their partner use this as a way to belittle a parent and show that their own methods are clearly Superior does the partner participate in household task not just the execution of them but also the scheduling and management of them what's the division of labor related to the emotional climate of the home does this generally fall on this parent even though they're having a hard time with it all of these factors can

contribute to mental and emotional weight that this parent may be carrying that is unrecognized in the family that contributes to a narrowed window of tolerance so when the child misbehaves the parent has less capacity to respond in a way they want to respond the next Factor at play is the child's neurod urgency I'm not exactly sure what the status is of this since the parent says the child has some ADHD and autistic traits which implies to me

there might not be a formal diagnosis in place or that does seem strange given though the child is in some sort of special educational setting I know that even neurotypical children's behavior Can appear to be baffling to parents so for example many children will resist going to bed because they miss the parent because they want to have a greater connection with their parent they would rather do it in a way that didn't involve the parent yelling at

them but they will take take the parent yelling at them over the parents Speedy exit from the bedroom at bedtime which ends the possibility of connection we might think well why don't they just ask to play with us and maybe they have asked to play with us earlier in the day maybe we said we were busy or didn't have time or we thought their need for connection was met because our need for connection was met this can often happen

when we spend a lot of time with our children doing things like chores together that the child doesn't perceive as connecting so I often hear from parents but we spend all day together how could I possibly squeeze any more connection time into our day but from the child's perspective the activities are not necessarily connecting and 10 minutes spent doing something of the child's Choice can make an enormous shift in the dynamic at bedtime as the child's need for connection has been met

earlier in the day it's really important to try and see this from your child's perspective if possible because otherwise you can get into what one parent told me they experience as fighting realities so a child might say well you never spend enough time with me you're always on your phone and then the parent feels guilty about that and tries to defend themselves and say I do spend time with you and both of those things can be true we might be spending time

with our child but we might be doing it in ways that don't truly fill their cup and meet their need for connection and we might also be managing our guilt over that and our big feelings about other things that are happening in

our days by spending time on our phones instead of dealing with the feelings that we're having if you're having trouble understanding your child's needs I'd really encourage you to go to your parenting mojo.com quiz there's a super short really easy

question set there that you can answer a few questions about your child's behavior and we'll give you help to understand what are the most important needs that they're having and also some strategies you can use to meet their needs on a more regular basis once again that's at your parenting mojo.com SL quiz I think that one thing that's important to see here is that there's a dynamic building in this parents part relationship with their child which is

heading toward our dynamic between adults where we kind of coexist instead of just discussing your challenges so when we become adults and we perceive our partners spending a lot of time on their phone we might not say anything we might allow resentment to build until we can't take it anymore and then we explode and our child hasn't yet learned to bury their feelings and needs and so they ask us to spend more time with them even though the requests might be a bit

imprecise they can't fully articulate that the way we're spending time with them isn't meeting their need for connection they know they want to be connected to you but they don't quite know how to ask for that in a way that we can receive over time when our response is to do this arguing over realities where we say I do spend time with you the child learns they can't win they stop asking us for our time and then they may repeat

this dynamic in their relationship with their partner later in life I worked with a family years ago whose child was hitting the parents often not in response to any particular provocation but seemingly randomly when the parent was just standing on the other side of the room the child come running across the room and hit the parent child was around sex at the time and had been potty trained for years and and would also save their poop each night uh in

their underwear having held it in all day and it turned out that the child was having extreme distress at the reward and Punishment systems that were being used in their school and I know that changing schools can seem like a dramatic strategy to try and it may not be available to All Families for this family it made a world of difference when the family changed to a school that used different practices the hitting and the nighttime pooping stopped and these

are neurotypical children whom we might expect it would be relatively easier to understand their behavior when we add neuro Divergence into the mix it can get even more confusing one thing it took me a long time to understand about ADHD is the hyperactivity and name attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and I couldn't understand why we would give already hyperactive children stimulants and then when I looked into it I found that children with ADHD have brains that are constantly looking for

more stimulation and medication can provide some of that stimulation which allows the child's brain to relax now I'm certainly not advocating for medicine as a cure for all ADHD because in many cases I think it creates a

slippery slope that can lead to the need for other medications to manage symptoms from the ADHD medication but when we see this need for more stimulation in a child with ADHD we can look for ways to provide it which

then helps their brain to relax it doesn't seem as though this child has any siblings but often we'll see children with ADHD hitting their siblings as a way to provoke stimulation from their sibling they're either looking for their sibling to play with them or potentially even for a push or a hit back which provides its own physical stimulation this parent doesn't say what kind of behavior is leading to their own triggered meltdown but if stimulation seeking behaviors are

a part of it then addressing the child's need for stimulation is likely to provide a sense of calm for the child's brain which then means they won't behave as often in the way that the parent perceived to be difficult and then the parent won't be triggered as often the same kinds of things can happen related to autism since we don't know what kinds of behaviors the child is doing let's just pick a random example right maybe

the child gets hyperfocused on talking about a particular topic and when the child's interrupted accidentally or unavoidably the child has a meltdown to adults and particularly to neurotypical adults this Behavior can seem mystifying and also one that should be changed after all nobody in the real world is going to accommodate our child's need to talk for as long as they like without being interrupted but when we see this from the autistic child's perspective which is something that autistic adults

can help us to do we can see the child is speaking for a long time maybe partly because it's extremely difficult for them to reather their thoughts once they're interrupted they may also perceive an interruption as an indication that we don't care about their thoughts when this isn't actually true so when we understand this behavior from the child's experience we can put systems in place to help us both I'm not saying we should never interrupt the

child again because there are times when it truly will be unavoidable but if you've ever been interrupted in the middle of saying something that was important to you then maybe you can get an inkling of what this might feel like which might increase your willingness to try not to interrupt the child whenever it's possible and in the circumstances where it's unavoidable for example there's some kind of emergency happening or something slips out before you're able to stop it we can take steps like

remembering what the child was saying before they stopped which may allow them more easily to pick up their thought process again after the interruption we can also try to reassure them that the interruption doesn't mean that we weren't interested in what they were saying and that we will pay attention again once we've dealt with the interruption at that point it's possible the child will be better able to cope with the fewer interruptions that are now

happening so the child won't have an eruption which means the parent is then less likely to melt down as well I also want to point out the two levels of triggering that the parent mentions in their voicemail so there's the initial perceived misbehavior that brings about the first incidents of triggering and then afterwards when the parent Compares their behavior with their child to the standard of behavior they want to achieve with their

child there's a second trigger in that's

happening as the parent sees the huge gap between the two and I think it's really important this parent knows they're not alone in experiencing this either many parents have some sort of compass that they may feel in themselves is the leading them towards the way they want to parent or perhaps they've read a lot of books they listen to a lot of podcasts on parenting and Child Development and they've arrived at the experience of having a compass in a more

analytical way either way of getting to this point is totally fine the challenge happens when we have this compass pointing to where we want to go but all we have to help us get there is a seemingly random set of tips that aren't really connected to one another so we might have read or heard that connection is the thing that's most important to children and maybe someone like a therapist has given us certain tools like telling us to take a minute before

responding but in the moment when our child refuses to do what we've asked them to do or hits their sibling for the 10th time today and we start to feel overwhelmed and stressed out then all of those tips and scripts just fly out the window and we just cannot be the calm person that all of the books are saying we should be in those moments we might shout at our child or even if we're able to keep our voices calm it's possible we

will find ourselves saying things like why would you do that which is a rhetorical question that we don't actually expect our child to answer and to which they're likely to respond with a feeling of Shame and we can know that we want our children to feel our love and know that we love them no matter what and we can also know that in these kinds of situations that may well not be their experience we might even worry

that our children are afraid of us we can know that we want to make a change and spend a lot of time on energy working on it but it might seem as though the change we're looking for is not happening fast enough so these are some of the things I see coming up in the voicemail itself and now I want to help us put that into context and understand what kinds of situations might trigger us because if we

understand these we may be able to better see them coming and potentially change our situation so that we avoid void the triggering environment and then the second idea I want to think through is to push back a little bit on what parents have told me about this being something within them that needs to change and consider that maybe the problem isn't within us but is within our wider Society so let's start by looking at the categories of triggers and there are

nine of these that I'm going to draw from neuropsychologist R Douglas fields's book why we snap and these can be remembered using a mnemonic which is life Morts with meaning death in French so the mnemonic means life deaths so there are nine of these anger triggers and I've have reached out to Dr Fields to understand whether these have been scientifically validated in some way they do seem to be written from his positionality as a middle class white

academic but I also see ways to fit types of triggers that he doesn't necessarily consider directly into these categories the reason it can help to understand these categories is because if you know the kinds of things that are likely to trigger you you can avoid your trigger and or take steps to manage them more effectively so I'll say all nine categories and then we can look at each one in a little more depth so the nine

categories are life or limb insult family environment mate order in Society resources tribe and stopped and so let's look at those one by one the first is life or limb which is the idea that almost anyone and most animals will defend themselves in what is perceived as a life or death attack we may have experienced violence when we were children or more recently than that and when our children do things like hit us or hit each other it can remind us of

what we experienced it's possible that we learn to react to our parents anger with our own anger but it's also possible that we experience one of the other triggered responses which are flight so removing ourselves from the situation as fast as possible freeze which is potentially getting stuck between fight and flight and fawning which is doing anything we can to make the aggression from the other person's stop so while I agree that almost anyone will defend themselves in what is

considered as a life or death attack this anger does not always take the form of lashing out we might hit back we might shout or rage at our child which we could perceive as an expression of anger but for some people particularly women although not only women the most adaptive response when confronted with our parents anger will be to leave the situation as quickly as possible or to try to please the adult to get them not

to be angry anymore so they weren't won't hurt us when our child does something like hit us our brain may misperceive the hit as if it had come from a bigger stronger parent when we were children and react as if a life or limb threat were occurring which then prompts the oversized reaction from us the next category is insults which Dr Fields says will easily provoke a rage response and these underlying family feuds there are means of establishing

dominance Dr Fields tells us to bear in mind that it's the perception of an insult that triggers the rage even if the action was not intended as an insult and I think this is important in our families when we consider things like the idea of respect many of us learned in our families of origin that respect is the same thing as obedience which means a child who respects a parent will do what the parent says but if we look

at another definition of respect we can see that it can also mean to recognize the worth of a person or thing which does not necessarily have to be tied to obedience we parents can get into trouble when we want to recognize our children's worth and also have them recognize our worth and then we ask them to do something and they refuse or we ask them not to do something and they do it anyway and deep in our brains we

remember that old meaning of respect that we were raised with that equates respect with their obedience and we perceive that because our child is not obeying us that they disrespect us and of course another way of saying a person has disrespected us is that they have insulted us we can make really big shifts in our ability to navigate our children's behavior when we perceive that their behavior is their best attempt to meet their own need it

doesn't say anything about their level of respect for us meaning their recognition of our worth as a person it just means that they see they have a need and they have chosen a particular strategy to help them meet that need they will almost certainly be willing to try another strategy that meets both of our needs if we can propose it and as they get more practiced at doing this they become better able to generate these strategies themselves if you want

to dig deeper on this I'd suggest going back to episode 207 on how to not be a permissive parent where parent Diana thought that her daughter was speaking to her in a way that was bossy and inflexible and rude and Diana came to see that perhaps her daughter was actually doing the best that she could when Diana shifted her perception that this Behavior was an insult to her she no longer felt triggered by it the third

category is family and Dr field says animals will protect their offspring and family members against attack or other threat we see this in a mother bear protecting her cub or when people are killed when they come between an moose and their baby and this is perhaps one of the most basic of all instincts and animals as well as people I see this most often among parents who have more than one child where one child regularly verbally insults or physically hurts the

other child it's most often the older child who is quote unquote attacking the younger child although that Dynamic may be reversed if the younger child is particularly socially skilled to us adults it might seem like one child responds in a very irritated way towards the other when sometimes it's warranted when the sibling's been pestering the child but other times The Sibling might ask a simple question and receive a disproportionate response parents can experience this as heartbreaking and on

the surface this is about finding what's fair without taking sides we want our children to get along and we tell them we love them and we tell them we love them equally but it's not okay for them to do this to each other but each child probably feels like we're taking the other child's side even though we're trying not to do this there's almost always a deeper level of meaning in these sibling struggles for us as

parents and this is usually linked to our experience in our families of origin it can actually cut both ways we may have had a terrible relationship with our siblings perhaps even experienced verbal or physical abuse often at the hands of an older sibling and we may feel afraid that our own children will repeat the dynamic that was so difficult for us to grow up in or we may have an amazing relationship with our own siblings and desperately want our

children to replicate this relationship for themselves so they can experience the love and support that we experience and their squabbling indicates our failure to create this relationship between the two of them so we're trying to process this information about our own family of origin and how that's showing up in our siblings Dynamic today and as we try to figure out at the same time what's fair in their current squabble it's no wonder we don't have enough capacity to be able to respond in

a calm way one idea that can really help here is to sit down with each child not at a time when they're actually

squabbling at another time and ask them what kinds of things that we do and say really fill their cup and help them feel connected to us and this is where we see that treating children equally doesn't actually meet either child's needs one child may want us to build Lego with them every day for 10 minutes while

another child wants to make sure we see their performance at dance class once a week once we see and meet each child's unique needs they start to care a lot less about what the other child is getting which leads to fewer fights that are instigated because our children are trying to connect with us which means we feel triggered less often the fourth category is environment and Dr field says that most animals will protect their own environment their

territory and home because home and territory provide the basic necessity for survival Dr field says that border disputes between neighbors are a common trigger for violent attacks that may be instigated by trivial matters like an encroaching tree or a shortcut across their property and I think that where this can come into play in our families is less related to the protection of our home and more related to the protection of our bodies many parents who spend a lot of their days in

caregiving roles also spend a lot of their days touching and being touched some people thrive on touching and being touched and other people prefer a greater degree of personal space between them and the people around them it can feel disregulated when we like to have personal space and our children want to climb on us and hug us and be within three inches of us 24 hours a day so in this case a border dispute becomes a

dispute over the border around our bodies which we can think of as a body bubble we will each have different size body Bubbles and when someone pierces our body bubble we can have a big reaction this can be very difficult to navigate with young children but as our children understand the idea of no we can know that they understand what it means to want to be touched and not want to be touched very often when a toddler

says no to us it's because they don't want to be touched they don't want us to put their shoes on or to rub them with a scratchy cloth in the bathtub when we honor and respect their knowledge and find ways to work together like bringing shoes with us or guiding their hand while they wash themselves in the bathtub we respect their sovereignty over their body bubble and we can explicitly refer to their body bubble as

we're discussing these issues and then when we feel touched out we can refer to our body bubble and physically make motions with our hands indicating the size of our body bubble asking our child not to be in our body bubble when we're having a hard time if we ask our children to leave our body bubble but we don't respect their body bubble then chances are our request is not going to have much of an impact but if we've been

having conversations with them about their body bubble and showing that we respect their body bubble hopefully also find a way for them to feel connected to us without being in direct contact with us then they're more likely to respect our body bubble when we ask for it the m in life Mor is represented by mate which Dr field says is violence to obtain and protect a mate which is a rule of the Jungle this is the trigger

for violence in domestic disputes infidelity attacks by jealous lovers since this one is less related to our relationship with our children I'm not going to consider it further here the next category is order in society which exists among other social animals but is highly developed in human beings because our species is so utterly dependent on social order for its survival and I actually want to put this one off for a few minutes because it has a lot in

common with the last category which is stopped okay so we're going to put the O off and come put it in with the S at the end consider the r first which is the category of resources while money issues can definitely be a triggering issue for relationship between partners I don't see anger related to money showing up as directly related to anger between parents and children in the families I work with but there are other kinds of

resources that are extremely valuable within our families our children may consider the resource of our love and time and attention to be the most valuable currency in the family and when they proceed another child is getting more of that currency than they are this can provoke anger in them we may also consider our time and energy to be both valuable and limited resources and when it seems like our children are using more of those resources than we are it

can also provoke a lot of anger in parents I also see anger related to resources being directed outwards in places like the school system where parents are unable to access resources for their children that would support their children's learning so for example if the school denies a child access to certain accommodations or even refuses to assess the child to determine whether the child should receive accommodations parents may experience extreme anger at their inability to access what they

perceive as needed resources we actually have the T in life Mor as well to get to before we put the O and the S together and that t stands for tribe and the description is that humans requiring a tight social structure for survival will fiercely defend their own tribe and Us Versus Them imperative rules in families this can unfortunately show up in struggles for resources where parents believe that their family doesn't have access to as many resources as other families

especially when those families are in a resource constrained environment like school so families might advocate for classes or extracurriculars that they perceive will help give their children an advantage without considering the impact of fewer resources being available for other children who would benefit from different Services both families involved in this kind of scenario may become very angry when they proceed that they are being denied access to resources or that resources they have once enjoyed access to are

being taken away okay so let's finally return to order in society in its combination with the category of stopped so violence is used to enforce the rules of society to ensure fairness to correct transgressions Dr Fields gives examples of imprisonment fines firing someone from a job and revoking a professional license as modern practices of forcing people to comply with the rules of or Society through violent action he describes these these actions as violent action so if the person still does not

comply we forcefully remove their Liberty and things of value with an intention to harm and punish the individual who transgresses rage attacks frequently break out in response to a perceived social injustice Dr field says that this trigger often incites mob violence I want to consider this trigger alongside the last in the Life Mor mnemonic which is stopped so Dr Fields says that animals will struggle violently to escape restraint even to the extent of gnawing off their paw if caught in a

trap and while we can certainly think of isolated cases of people physically hurting themselves through to to escape a physical trap the more interesting aspect of this to me is being restrained cornered imprisoned or impeded from the liberty of pursuing one's desires which will trip this trigger of Rage the stopped trigger is what motivates individuals or groups to seek Liberty through violent actions such as Revolution and War so now you start to see the connection between the violent

action through the stop trigger and the mob violence through the order in society trigger and I want to link these two things together using Dr Jennifer mullen's framing from her excellent book decolonizing therapy so if you close your eyes for a minute and imagine a mob and you picture what they're doing the shapes their bodies are making what they're wearing and if you now take a closer look at what color their skin is you may picture the kind of image of a darker

body that's often shown alongside descriptions of mob and raging and riots and it reminds me of the news coverage after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans where a sample image of a black person carrying groceries is accompanied by the caption a young man walks through chest deep floodwater after looting a grocery store and a comparable image of a white couple is captioned two residents weighed through chest deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store

when we see a quote unquote mob we see unjustified violence and Dr Mullen says that quote there are perfectly healthy explanations for why a group of people not a mob would demand Justice and Freedom the release of rage is in itself an ancestral Bellow for safety Justice and a demand to be heard end quote and the reason I'm most interested in these two rage triggers is because I think they show up more often than we realize

in our families I'm preparing a module of content for the parenting membership on the topic of anger and rage so I've been doing a lot of reading on this topic lately we'll explore the idea of mom rage specifically in an upcoming podcast episode through an interview with journalist minad Dubin in a couple of weeks her book is among the best I've seen of the many books discussing mom rage because it doesn't just acknowledge that Mom rage exists but also proposes

strategies we can use at both the personal and policy levels to address it I'm following minad dubin's lead here and not referring to parent rage because Mom rage is not divorced from gender there are power dynamics at play in the oppression of mothers which leads to anger and that are not recognized if we assume moms and dads experience this rage in the same way Mom rage sits within a broader category of Rage about our position as women and alongside rage

that some of us may feel about the oppression of people of color particularly if we identify as a person of color as well as rage about our economic circumstances as we realize that no matter how hard we work it will never be enough as much as I would love to explore all of those issues in depth what I will say for right now is that black women may experience the most Rage of all as they bear the brunt of

racism gender-based discrimination as well as economic discrimination so perhaps the angry black women stereotype well obviously a harmful stereotype is actually Justified I would be pretty angry too as I was exploring the rage that women experienced I found one of the most useful books was Sarah Chimal's book *Agave Becomes Her* it's very readable but you can tell it's my kind of book because it has 64 pages of notes and references and it's pretty hard not to be angry when you read about the

higher rates of depression and anxiety disorders in women which isn't only because women seek help more than men do but because they're experiencing more stress and anger women are more likely to experience shame than men which we saw in the voicemail that started this episode as we see that second level of triggering brings out a feeling of shame in the parent who left it shame infuses parenting because we're all supposed to be perfect parents all the time at the

same time as we manage our body weight and body hair and our smell and everything else about ourselves to ensure that we are desirable to men Sarai Chimali describes giving a talk to students at an unnamed College in New England about feminism and gender and violence and she had a conversation with the students about their ideas about gender inequality and the conversation turned to sexting and a 19-year-old man at the back of the classroom asked what's the difference between sharing a

picture of my toaster and sharing a picture of my naked girlfriend either way the picture is mine another student asked I mean if she gives it to him what does she expect Chimali says that the young man's choice of a toaster was fascinating he ached the woman in the photograph with an actual tool perceiving both in terms of their instrumentality they were inherit possessions to be used and lacking in self-determination a toaster coincidentally contains War slits and

produces consumable pleasure if the woman unlike a toaster had any boundaries that should be respected they were easily done away with in the subtle shift from subject to object stymied and laughing to myself I couldn't figure out how to answer his question in the scant few minutes left women and toasters are different did I really have to explain this out loud end quote when our young men today can't perceive that a young woman has agency and a right to privacy

and to consent over the use of her image this isn't just an academic discussion this res represents years of subtly and not subtly learned lessons about the value of women's bodies Chimali notes that the women in the classroom didn't appear to feel offended by the toaster boy assertion if anyone was indignant it was toaster boy who thought that his property rights were being disrespected toaster boy's assertion of property rights sees a woman's body as existing solely for his pleasure the

women may experience a momentary sense of power as she shares the picture of herself and receives approval for it but she probably does not consent to her image being shared with everyone else in their class it's hard not to be angry when we learn that almost 35% of 5-year-old girls restrict their food intake and more than half of young girls think they're too fat a finding that holds true across the globe women's perception of pain is distorted and ignored with

men receiving more painkillers than women in emergency rooms anger is the single most important emotional contributor to pain this is especially important in women who report feeling more stress and are less likely to externalize their anger meaning to express their anger rather than turn it inward as anxiety or depression anger releases specific stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol that have a direct impact on health cortisol affects the immune system Alters digestion influences growth and reproductive system as well as mood Behavior

motivation and desire women who repress their anger are twice as likely to die from heart related disease but two hours after an Extreme Rage Outburst the risk of a heart attack increases five-fold the chance of suffering a stroke four-fold so we can't win either way repressed anger is considered a risk factor in a host of other ailments like autoimmune diseases where the body attacks itself researchers have described a link between a quote extreme suppression of anger and breast cancer

particularly in black women anger does not cause these illnesses but it almost certainly impacts their incidence and prevalence among women we may already be familiar with statistics on women's work in the home where 85% of women do housework cooking Home Maintenance or care work related to health and finances on a typical day compared with 67% of men married mothers do almost three and a half times as much cooking and cleaning and child care as married fathers do in the United States a survey

showed that men engage in relaxing and entertaining activities 35% of the time that women are doing chores for a woman that number is almost half at 19% we still think of taking responsibility for children's emotional and physical needs as primarily women's work and some men undermine efforts at equalizing the distribution of work in a 2014 survey in the UK 30% of surveyed heterosexual men admitted to purposefully doing household work poorly so their Partners would stop asking and do the work

themselves it's no secret that discrimination exists in the Working World too an analysis done in 2015 of women's labor between 2006 and 2010 found that despite the fact that over half of college graduates are women and discrimination is supposedly illegal the top job for women in the United States was exactly the same as it was in 1950 secretary or Administrative Assistant this was followed by teacher and nurse women also comprise the majority of low-wage service workers and more than

90% of paid domestic and healthcare workers in the United States the more feminized a job the less people will pay someone to do it it when women enter a particular field the median salaries in that field drop when men go into a field salaries rise the Bureau of Labor Statistics says that 26 of the 30 highest paying job categories are male dominated while 23 of the 30 lowest paying job categories are female dominated it may seem like education is

the ticket out of the wage Gap so women incur 65% of student loans as they seek higher education wage gaps don't disappear when they graduate so these loans are harder for women to repay and also because women's work is much more likely to be interrupted by pregnancies unplanned pregnancies Child Care elder care and medical emergencies women are much more likely to be harassed than men across Europe more than 81% of women report being harassed before the age of 17 this

number is 84% globally with many saying they were harassed starting as young as nine or 10 in 2013 half of 95,000 LGBT TQ people surveyed by the European Union said they deliberately avoided public spaces because they feared being harassed chamali says quote in my experience most men don't learn as boys to think about how different their experiences are from those of the girls and women around them men learn to regard rape as a moment in time a discreet episode where the

beginning a middle and an end for women rape is thousands of moments that we fold into ourselves over a lifetime it's the day you realize you can't walk to a friend's house anymore or the time when your aunt tells you to be nice because the boy was quote just stealing a kiss it's the evening you stop going to the corner store because the night before a stranger followed you home it's the late hour that a stepfather or father or

brother or Uncle climbs into your bed it's the time it takes you to write an email explaining that you're changing your major even though you don't really want to to avoid a particular Professor it's when you're racing to catch a bus hear a person demand a and then turn to see it's a police officer it's the second your teacher tells you to cover your shoulders because you'll distract the boys and what will your male teachers do chamali says that sometimes there is

a Dawning realization among men and it is painful she says one father I know whose daughters were on the cusp of leaving for college said to me one day quote if you think about rape it will drive you crazy I don't know if he was more upset before after I told him they were already past a red zone that 44% of rapes occur before the victims are 18 end quote the kind of narrative that make avoiding rape women's

responsibility are everywhere I recently read a fantasy novel aimed at tweenagers to my daughter and the first book in the series was set at their grandparents house where the older girl and younger boy siblings fought and they defeated evil monsters there were the usual ideas about gender Norms sprinkled throughout the book things like women always being described as pretty and slender or fat and their prettiness not being mentioned but these ideas were not overwhelming so I was blindsided when we started the

second book in the series which was set of the children Children's School where gender Norms are policed as a routine part of the school environment we could barely make it through a single page without having to discuss an idea and we had a particularly long discussion when the girl character Kendra was trying to get one of her friends to accept a ride home with her rather than walk home with a boy that Kendra knew was a goblin we

stopped to talk about why it was the girl's responsibility to keep herself safe acknowledging you know all bets are somewhat off when you're trying to keep your friend safe from a goblin but the goblin was posing as a boy

and the broader narrative was the author was teaching girls it is their responsibility to keep themselves safe from boys my husband piped up to say girls actually do need to keep themselves safe from boys and I asked

where are the messages teaching boys not to attack girls there are hundreds more examples like this and rage Becomes Her with women not being believed about their credentials as a doctor with chimali not being believed when she said she was a speaker at a conference rather than a host whose job it was to take the male speakers from one event to the next and with the tone of everything we say being policed and if we still come

across as too loud or too shrill or too angry we're put in our place approval from others is important among members of social species like humans and so women tend to seek approval from higher ranking males this means that the same men who put us down are the men whose approval we seek the evidence suggests the energy it takes to manage our feelings and our bodies firstly to keep ourselves safe and secondly to gain and maintain the approval of men requires an

enormous amount of our energy and time that is energy and time that we do not have to spend meeting our own needs so we have less capacity when our children ask us repeatedly for help getting their kns met it's hundreds of wasted hours and so much wasted brain capacity that could have been used on things that are meaningful and instead we're used on trying to keep ourselves physically mentally and emotionally safe I also think it's important to come back to the

idea that we mentioned earlier that we don't have to have personally experienced violence for violence to touch us Dr Jennifer Mullen ties together a lot of threads from different sources to understand the ways the intergenerational violence has affected us Dr Mullen describes 37 founding practitioners in Psychology and their theoretical or assessment contributions all of these founding practitioners are white most are men none have acknowledged the efforts of intergenerational violence on us and our families this can happen when our own

parents experienced violence directly and pass on the effects of their trauma to us Dr Mullen quotes the Aboriginal healing Foundation as stating that quote the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation when trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next so what we see learn to see as normal we pass on to our own children end quote to be more

specific when our parents experience violence especially in their own families and they grew up with a model of what it means to be a parent which they then passed on to us as they raised us whereas my men's book my grandmother's hands is also relevant here he says that quote when European settlers first came to this country centuries ago they brought a millennium of intergenerational and historical trauma with them stored in the cells of their bodies today this trauma continues

to live on in the bodies of most Americans end quote man's larger point is that white people didn't arrive in what is now known as the United States and suddenly start killing indigenous people out of nowhere they had

been the victims of trauma through experiences like seeing people being hung drawn in quarters or being beheaded in public spectacle as punishment for a crime white colonists brought this experience of trauma with them and then began enacting it on indigenous

residents this means that although black and indigenous people of color have experienced on average a far greater depth of violence violence also runs like a thread through white families even if our own parents never hit us so with all of this in mind we returned to the parent who left me that voicemail saying their poor relationship with their son is their own fault and wondering if this is damaging their son given the evidence we've reviewed I feel

very confident in saying this is not the parents fault it is not the parents fault they were born into a culture of violence and may have experienced violence in their own family and that they are almost certainly living their daily life without getting their needs met it is not their parents' fault that they've had these experiences and we now know enough about children's development that we can say that this may May well be having some impact on this child

Research indicates that having one parent with whom the child has a close relationship can be an important buffer but obviously the situation is not ideal it's a tragedy that this parent lives in a cultural and historical time where their needs are not being met and now we finally understand the impact of this on children in a way that we haven't in the past and this means that even though it's not this parent's fault this situation is happening it is this parent

responsibility to try to make some changes and these changes should not just happen at the individual level we have to advocate for policy changes to recognize the value of care work to provide help for people who provide care work and to provide culturally relevant mental health support we are and have been very close to achieving some of these goals in the past but we haven't fully realized them yet and this means that we are in the

unfortunate position of seeking individual level fixes to what is in large part a societal level problem this shouldn't be where we are and yet this is where we are the alternative is to pass on our traumas to our children which I think it's safe to say that none of us want to do so I want to offer some general thoughts to help this parent and hopefully other listeners as well who find yourself in this position and This

falls into three main buckets the first is that it can help to understand the origins of your trauma if you don't already know this a therapist can help with this and sometimes just the Insight that comes with this knowledge can create some kind of shift even without the person learning any new tools although this is fairly rare beginning to heal from that trauma is important too understanding the parents unmet needs and starting to take steps towards

meeting those needs is crucial and the most crucial piece of that crucial step is understanding the difference between needs and strategies we use to meet our needs so taking a bath is not a need taking a bath is a strategy to meet a need for self-care when you say I need to make dinner that is not a need making dinner is a strategy

we are choosing to meet our need for food which could be met by going to a restaurant picking up

food throwing a frozen pizza in the oven or having cereal for dinner throughout our days we probably find ourselves saying to our children I need you to I need you to put on your shoes I need you to brush your teeth I need you to stay in bed and in all of these instances we are not expressing a need we are expressing a strategy we have chosen to meet our need and we use the word need

to make our strategy sound more important than our child's strategy when we understand the need underlying the strategy we've Chosen and that our child is resisting in this moment then we find ways to meet both our real need and our child's need as well if we haven't had our needs met for a long time it can be hard to see where to even start doing this I'd recommend using the needs list at your parenting mojo.com needs so you

can be sure you're identifying a need rather than a strategy as you look at that list notice what changes You observe in your body when you see yourself thinking yes that's what I need and either getting excited or experiencing a sort of settling you can be reasonably sure you've identified a need of yours that isn't being met right now and is important to you and next try to brainstorm at least 10 ways you can get that need met in my book Parenting

Beyond power I give an example of a parent who has a need for connection and you might do things like ask for a hug or a kiss or a backrub you could call a friend or a relative go for a walk with a friend or relative you could do something special for another person or Express appreciation for something another person's done for you you could make make a point of looking a person in the eye when you're talking with them or

remember a previous connecting conversation with them if they aren't available right now you could learn how a person who is important to you likes to receive love and do something that helps them to meet that need you could share something interesting with them that's happened to you you could be honest about how you're feeling you could make a point of listening intently to them and not interrupting them you could do something new together play a game be silly together do something to

show them that you're on their side you could tell them you love them you could meet someone new and do any of these steps with them and this is by no means all of the strategies you could use to meet a need for connection and there are tens if not hundreds more so make a list of the 10 to 20 strategies that call to you the most for whatever need is most important to you and stick them

somewhere you'll see them often you might make a point to do one of them each day you could start a journal so you can see how doing those activities helps you to shift your mood and your outlook on life and of course you probably have more than one unmet need so you can do a similar process ESS for your other needs the next step I would try would be to choose a conflict that you're having with your child that occurs regularly

and this could be something like putting on their shoes brushing their teeth getting them to stay in bed or any of

the other typical parenting struggles next try to get underneath the strategies to the needs so you've been saying put your shoes on or brush your teeth or stay in bed remembering those are not your needs look at the list of needs see if you can identify the needs that lie underneath the strategy you've chosen which may be things like ease and

collaboration and rest now think about the strategy your child has chosen which may be resistance they're saying no I won't put my shoes on or brush my teeth or stay in bed what needs are underneath their strategies very often with young children the most important needs are for autonomy and connectedness so if they want to decide what happens to their own body and or they want to feel connected to you they will resist your requests that don't help them meet their

needs now make a list of the strategies you think it help both of you to meet your needs and if that's too hard to do all in one go you could first consider strategies to meet your needs even if your child may not accept all of them and then try to put yourself in your child's shoes and imagine all of the strategies that would meet their needs even if you as the parent might not find all of them acceptable when you put

those two lists together what do you see are there areas of overlap if you were to modify one of the strategies would that make it more acceptable to the other person the third of the three big three buckets that can really help us is finding Community it's one of the biggest challenges parents can face because at the very moment when we need Community the most we find that we don't really have it even if our parents live

close by and are willing to help with child care they may parent in a way that's so different from our values and goals that we hesitate to ask them we might see that we do things very differently from many other parents around us which creates a disconnect it can seem like the only other people we can ask for support are other parents with young kids who are so busy they wouldn't possibly be able to help I've

worked with parents who think they can't ask anyone else for help and they were unless they are actually legitimately dying I think we need to radically re-evaluate what it means to give and receive support one thing I've noticed from the parents I work with is that when we make an initial ask for help it isn't an imposition on the other person but rather a gift that allows them to ask us for help in the future and when

we conceive of our community is much broader than just other parents with young children we open up possibilities of getting our needs met in creative ways many retired people have time on their hands and feel lonely many parents of young children wish for time alone and it probably seems like we're stretched impossibly thin there are obvious synergies here to ask for and offer help there's more to it than this of course but the three big ideas of understanding where your trauma

comes from and beginning to heal that hurt understanding your needs as well as get them met more often and understanding your child's needs so their behavior becomes easier to cope with and then finally creating a supportive Community are the critical components of not passing on our trauma to the next Generations because we aren't just talking about this one child we're also talking about all the children down the line who

may be affected by it today if we don't do

something differently just like we've been affected by nobody making those decisions in our past it's a lot of responsibility but what we're also looking at is the possibility of true thriving true thriving for ourselves not just so we can be better parents but because we're whole people and we have a right to thrive true thriving for our children who come to see that their whole selves are acceptable to us and lovable by us just as we wish we had

been accepted and loved by our own parents and caregivers and true thriving for all the generations to come which happens because we here today have the insight and courage to interrupt the cycle it is difficult to do this work alone and I don't believe we should do it alone we'll hear from a parent in a few weeks who has found that sharing honestly and openly with friends she trusts about how she's exploded at her children helps her to heal the shame

that she feels so she doesn't just tell the friend I exploded at my kids but instead says exactly what she did exactly what she said that she's feeling so much Shame about shame thrives in secrecy and hiding and so sharing our experience with people we trust helps us to feel less shame I created The Taming your triggers Workshop to address all three of the main topics we need to show up differently for our children we learn

the real causes of our triggered feelings we begin to heal from the hurts we've experienced we learn how to identify our needs and our children's needs and you get support in doing this in your unique situation so even if the needs seem completely incomprehensible right now we help you figure it out and then we work together to find strategies that can meet both your child and your needs and when that happens more often you explode less often and finally we

create community I've worked with parents who have experienced huge shifts on day one of the taming or triggers Workshop when they see hundreds of other parents introducing themselves and explaining that they're doing the best they can and they still explode at their kids and all of a sudden they perceive their own parent who had caused so much hurt in them in an entirely different way and that shift can produce insight and forgiveness we share the things we're

ashamed of knowing that we're almost certain never to run into the other Workshop participants in the grocery store we get practice asking for help and then receiving help and offering help to others that we can take out into our real lives as well it's a deep powerful intense experience that leaves participants truly changed it's not just a set of tips and tricks that leave you better able to hold the lid down on your simmering frustration but that truly

nurtures and heals all the parts of you that are hurting enrollment for this season's Workshop will be open very soon on Sunday September 29th the 10-week workshop gets underway on Monday October 14th you can join the wait list now at your parenting mojo.com taming your triggers and we'll send you a coupon code for when enrollment opens we'll also invite you to a Master Class that's happening on Friday September 27th at noon Pacific and we're going to do this

differently from master classes we've done in the past we're going to send you the recording of a previous year's presentation and then we'll spend all of our time together live doing Q&A and coaching and the coaching tends to be incredibly impactful for parents both the parent who's being coached and the parents who are watching who see that others struggle in very similar ways that they do and that we truly can find strategies that meet both our needs and

our children's needs I'd love to see you at the masterclass on September 27th and in the full Workshop as well you can sign up for the masterclass and uh get the coupon code by joining the workshop wait list for the full taming your triggers Workshop all of that you get a your parenting mojo.com slamming yourt triggers and enrollment will open again for the full workshop on Sunday September 29th so master class on the 27th you get the recording before

that to watch at your leisure and then if you come to this recording after the 27th you'll be able to enroll in the full Workshop which opens on the 29th so I'm so looking forward to meeting you in one or all of those places [Music]