



MINDFUL IN MAY

**Dr. Elise Bialylew, founder of Mindful in May (mindfulinmay.org) and The Mind Life Project (www.mindlifeproject.com) and author of The Happiness Plan, interviews
Suzanne Tucker**

Suzanne Tucker

Suzanne Tucker's life's purpose is to help our society evolve the way it nurtures, educates, and disciplines children. A mom of four, physical therapist, and parent educator with a focus on attachment since 1992, Suzanne has been teaching mindful parenting classes for over two decades. In 2016 Suzanne was inspired by one of the parent graduates in her class to found Generation Mindful, a social-mission driven company creating educational tools, toys and programs that connect the generations playfully and build emotional intelligence.

Elise Bialylew: Welcome, Suzanne, to the program. I'm so excited to have you here. I'm a huge fan of your work. I can't wait to share this with the listeners that may not have discovered what you're doing, but before we get started, I would for you to share a little bit about your story and a bit about your background and how you came to be running this organization called Gen Mindful.

Suzanne Tucker: Well, thank you so much. It's an honor to be here. My background, it's all taken me right where I am as things happened. I've been a physical therapist for 25 years with a focus on holistic health and attachment. What that showed up for in my life 20 years ago, I met my husband. We opened a health center here in our hometown of St. Louis. He is also a physical therapist, and he shared my love of healing, body, mind, and spirit.

Suzanne Tucker: As physical therapists, I think you can think about we're healing the body. In truth, it's always the heart and the mind when we have a physical ailment. We've really been about empowerment, education, and holistic health, our whole journey. When I started having children, 18. 19 years ago. I was pregnant with our first 19 years ago. I became really fascinated with conscious and mindful parenting. I actually was already very fascinated with this work and reading and studying. I became a certified educator of infant massage and was really inspired by attachment and really felt like we could change the world if we just started early enough, supporting and educating our families.

- Suzanne Tucker: That was sort of my journey. I was teaching a class two years ago when the idea for Generation Mindful came to me. It was actually through one of my positive parenting class participants. She was telling me a story. At the end of the class, she raised her hand, and she said, "Suzanne, I almost lost it on my child last night." You could see the tears in her eyes, and she said, "I mean, lost it." She was going to hit him. She said, "But then I heard those words in my head."
- Suzanne Tucker: I love mantras. I feel like mantras really carry us. The words that she heard in our head, we use in class a lot, were connect before you correct. Connect before you correct. For whatever reason, that was her pause button. She said she got down low. She looked him in the eye, and she did all the things, right, that we've been talking about in class. How was that possible for her when she was about to hit her child, and then she moved to this space? I had heard miracles. I've heard them through the decades, but this one spoke to my heart because, at the end of her story, she looked at me in the eyes and she said, "How do I do that again? How do I help my husband do that? How do I help my child's teacher do that?"
- Suzanne Tucker: She was so alive, and I said, "I don't know, and I'm going to figure that out. I literally went home and Generation Mindful started to unfold, and I knew that the answer was playful. I knew that it was practical, and I knew that it could come in a box, that it was something we could touch, something we could do in order to get to the be part. That was sort of my long story, but I hope it helps your listeners out there understand how it came to be and to do Generation Mindful.
- Elise Bialylew: Yeah, wonderful. We're going to dive into Generation Mindful, and what it is, what the purpose is, and some of the tools that you're offering. I think they're brilliant, but before we do, I just wanted to also fill in an important gap, which I am quite amazed by, which is the fact that you actually have four children. Is that correct?
- Suzanne Tucker: I have four children. They are 18, 15, and twin eight-year-olds. They really have been the teachers along this whole way. Their personalities are all different, and they've taught me so much.
- Elise Bialylew: Yeah. I understand you've been sort of running groups of parents in positive parenting and through mindful parenting for a very long time.
- Suzanne Tucker: Yes, through our health center, actually, what we call Brentwood Center of Health.
- Elise Bialylew: Yeah.
- Suzanne Tucker: As my journey unfolded, I realized, "Hey, I need tools. I need support. I need community. My needs dictated the journey, truly. We brought in baby sign language. We brought in yoga. It just unfolded, and it came to a critical mass where I thought, "This community is vital for my own well-being, for my

family." A friend of mine actually said, "Suzanne, you have to take that globally. Don't be selfish." If you think you need it, other people need it to.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah. Yeah. Wonderful. Before we get going to the specifics of what you do, I'd love to hear your definition of mindfulness, how you kind of understand it. There's obviously a lot of different ones, but what does it mean to you?

Suzanne Tucker: Yes. For me, my living definition of mindfulness is present to the moment with joy and ease. I think, for many years, I only lived by the first part, present to the moment. I thought mindfulness was being in the present. In truth, mindfulness can bring a lot of guilt with it, particularly to the mother mind. That's where I lived. My first five years of motherhood, I wanted to do everything right, I really did. I set that bar really high. It actually pushed me out of my joy and out of my mindful space, I would say, because when you're striving for something that's just always out of reach, you can never really be fully right where you are.

Suzanne Tucker: It came through life and actually through loss. We've had five miscarriages. I'm, in fact, a mother of nine. It was mothering ... Yes. It was mothering those five that we lost that was my greatest spiritual growth in motherhood. That's when I clicked on the back part of the definition, joy and ease. I had an aha moment with my fourth loss, Lily, where that all came to be for me. I think that mindfulness is having that sort of embodied experience where we're really fully alive. When we're fully alive, they're going to feel that joy and ease.

Elise Bialylew: Thank you. I found, including myself, many parents have this feeling of ... It's a great aspiration, mindfulness, meditation, but I'm just busy surviving here. I'm just busy surviving. I don't have time to meditate or be mindful. How do you see mindfulness or this awareness, how does it look in the context of motherhood from your perspective? What does it mean? How does it look?

Suzanne Tucker: What it does not look like is with our legs crossed, sitting on top of the mountain, shining. I mean, it can look that way. On Thursday, at 10:00 AM in my life, it looks that way. Now, I have that once a week practice where I'm getting there and doing that with my community, but I've really realized that, for me, mindfulness is present to the moment with joy and ease.

Suzanne Tucker: What that looks like is when my little guy turns to me and says, "Look, mom, look what I drew," that's my practice. I sometimes have to consciously turn my body, make the eye contact, take the deep breath, and then be present in the moment, share a moment of joy. Oh, my goodness, tell me about your picture. That is, for me, life-giving. When I thought I had to do it right, it was yoga every day or this or that, but when I really took on that it's a way of life, that it really is my breath, that I can be breathing all day long.

Suzanne Tucker: Children are great teachers. They're constantly present to the moment with joy and ease. They're like little puppy dogs that are around us, looking for the fun all the time. If you wouldn't take on mindfulness as a practice in motherhood, you've got the perfect little teachers. A lot of the challenges that we're facing can actually be helped with joy or playfulness. That's one of the

main tenets of my work is playfulness and how can we actually create cooperation and get things done through faithfulness, through having that playful heart, playful spirit.

Elise Bialylew: Well, I'd love to dig deeper into the playfulness because you've obviously had so much experience, both personally, through bringing up four kids, and then through the teaching and your research and investigation. Speak to us a little bit about ... There's many different challenging stages of parenting and childhood, but I'm really interested in maybe focus a little bit on the earlier toddler years that can be so challenging. It's probably self-interested as well given that I have a three-year-old.

Suzanne Tucker: I'm sure there are many, many people out there with three-year-olds.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah. Yeah. Tell us what you mean by playfulness, and maybe even give us some specific examples from the people you've taught or your own life of where you brought play into challenging moments.

Suzanne Tucker: When I look at parenting, I think about relationship. A lot of people see parenting as something we do to a child. I always say parenting is not something you do to a child, and people say, "What?" No, in truth, it's relationship. It's who I am, who they are, and the tools that we have in our relationship.

Suzanne Tucker: First of all, I would hit the reset button and think of parenting that way. If you look at it as a relationship and you look at where they are in their brain, I like to parent from a place where I say, "I want to parent brain to brain. I need to know where am I in my brain, and then I want to get comfortable recognizing where is my child in their brain."

Suzanne Tucker: At a very simple level, if you think of the triune brain, the prefrontal cortex, which is green, ready to learn, present, calm. Yellow being very emotive, and the middle brain, a beautiful, beautiful place, very susceptible to stress, that middle brain, the hippocampus is in there, and then the red light brain, being the brain stem, fight, flight, or freeze.

Suzanne Tucker: If we are going to parent playfully, we, first of all, need to notice where am I in my brain and where is my child. Where a playful spirit can come in handy is if you have a yellow-brain child on your hands. That is going to look like clingy, whiny, fussy, demanding, not happy, wanting to be in charge. They're not full-on tantrum on the floor yet. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Elise Bialylew: Oh, yeah.

Suzanne Tucker: Okay. That's more of a red-light brain. There's different strategies for a red-light brain. For the yellow brain, and that's where kids hang out a lot of the time is in that yellow brain, silly play works beautifully to help them move into the green brain. Okay? Let me give you an example. I have two wild toddlers, my twins were three years old in their room, bouncing off the walls, jumping, just everywhere, and it was bedtime. I could feel the words forming

in my mouth, like stop, no, we're not going to play, you have to get the jammies on, it was all the things, the no, the not, the don't, the can't.

Suzanne Tucker: I just was ripe. It was about to come out of my mouth, and I paused, and I breathe, and I thought, "That's not going to work out well for you, Suzanne. That is not enrolling." In that moment, I paused, and that's really what I wanted the listeners out there to focus on, that magic pause button that we all have. The practice of meditation and mindfulness is wonderful outside of parenting, but where it really makes the difference is it helps us find our pause button when we're in the thick of it, right? It makes it easier to find that pause button.

Suzanne Tucker: In that moment, I reset, and I became playful. My kids were being kitty cats. They were all over the place, so I said, "Oh, my sweet, sweet kitty." She was jumping up and down, and at that very moment, I said, "My kitty is so sleepy. She is so sleepy, and I want to get her pajamas on her. She's just so sleepy." I was just so playful and enrolling that she came right over, mid-jump, turned into a sleepy kitty, came over and purred. We got her pajamas on. The whole night unfolded with make-believes around the kitty cats.

Suzanne Tucker: If you can meet your child where they are, sometimes, that can happen, right, where you're just ... You become imaginative, especially if they're in their playful spirit, so cleaning up toys becomes feeding the giant. Brushing teeth ... We've done an Olympic sports. Welcome, it's Team USA with Colin Tucker here with his toothbrush. Colin, how are you feeling? What I love about it is I never do the same silly thing twice. Well, we fallen into some routines, but these things come out of nowhere. You know. I'm sure you've had an experience-

Elise Bialylew: The more that you kind of do them, the more generative it is, I find. Yes. Yeah.

Suzanne Tucker: If you do find one that's working for your child, you can repeat it because there something about ritual, playful ritual, that's one of the tenets that we talk about in classes, not only play but playful ritual because children like to know what's coming next. When it's a ritual ... When we get out of the bathtub, we would sing a song about being a stack of potatoes, and then I would throw them on their bed. Where is the sack of potatoes? Throw them on their bed in their little towel. Well, I was doing it until I could barely ... I mean, they're nine, and they'd still like me to do that, right?

Suzanne Tucker: Whenever you're out there and you're having trouble, if you can't get their hair brushed, think about something around hair brushing. Get them clipped into their car seat. We used to do Buzz Lightyear, to infinity and beyond. We're getting in the car. We're getting in the rocket ship. Every child at a different age and a different interest is going to have a different thing that kind of gets them excited, but yeah, I hope that's ...

Elise Bialylew: Yeah, very helpful, very helpful. I think, for me, personally, when I went into the beginning of motherhood, it's like such a mindset shift because, my whole life, I'm not being that playful, actually. I'm in my job, whatever, and then

you have this little being, and it's just ... It is joyous because it catalyzes so much imagination and creativity, but for many of us, perhaps it's not natural initially. There's a big mindset shift of this is how we operate in a child's world. Yeah, no, it's really helpful some of those suggestions you've given.

Elise Bialylew: A lot of the teaching that is within the aware parenting or mindful parenting is about talking about sort of allowing children to really experience big feelings allow big feelings, they're okay, but I'm interested in your perspective around the balance between making room for big feelings, for particularly, like toddlers in those early years, versus containing and setting boundaries, so sometimes around boundaries versus allowing.

Suzanne Tucker: Yes, thank you, what a great question. I love the balance between ritual play and boundaries and independence. Children are seeking independence, we're seeking outcomes, like, "Do this. Do that. I've got to go there." Right? Ritual play can actually be a great balance to their needing independence, us needing to get the things done, those boundaries or those guardrails on the road of life. It's not all fun and games. It's not just a song and dance where we can pause everything that we're doing all the time to be silly and enrolling.

Suzanne Tucker: One of the things that's really important is that even though we're always saying that emotions are safe and emotions are sacred, and you're always allowed your emotions because that's just what we do in our home, we allow for emotions. That doesn't mean that your emotions get to hijack my day, right? There's a balance, and I have said, "I see you're very sad. Would you like to come down with me and we're going to start breakfast, or would you like to sit here and cry some more." Right?

Suzanne Tucker: At the time, I think it was my son was about five, and he wanted to stay and cry some more. I'm thinking of you. I love you, and I'm going to go because I have three other children that need breakfast and they need to be out the door by 7:30. In that circumstance, if I'm invested in you being happy as opposed to you being allowed to feel, then I'm not going to be able to move on with my day because I have to stay here until you're happy.

Suzanne Tucker: It really starts with, where am I in my body, when there is an upset, and I can have boundaries if I can stay in my center. When I get off-center, and then I start yelling or being short or critical or harsh, that's where I feel like I'm losing it, I'm losing my power, right, and I'm losing connection, and I'm losing permission for my child to feel. It really is a practice, it's a practice of noticing. Name it to tame it. Feel it heal it. Then allowing for the feeling, but it doesn't mean that the behaviors or the actions are always acceptable. Right? You can have rules and boundaries.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. On the topic of boundaries, a specific example that comes up, I mean, toddlers are infamous for having difficulties with transitional moments, so whether it's like going to bed or getting the car or getting dressed to leave the house. Could you give some advice or suggestions around the issue of, let's say, the bedtime and like a boundary around bedtime, the child that's like, okay, leaving the bedroom all the time at

bedtime, or wanting something else, another story, another tickle, another something just prolonging that whole thing? How would you approach time?

Suzanne Tucker: Bedtime, well, and that's where your ritual is going to come in. For instance, with did two books, two books every night. I would read two books. They would want more or less, or I would want less. Sometimes, they would want more. No, we did two books. It's very important that I set that cadence. It was going to be two books, even, let's say, I had extra time. I wanted them to be very familiar and comfortable with the ritual because I knew the greatest gift I could give them was clarity and predictability because bedtime was very important that it go well for us with having two two-year-olds or two three-year-olds, whatever age they were at the time.

Suzanne Tucker: One thing you can do is really look at your rituals and say, "Are they clear and predictable, and did we create them together?" Once you've created them together, your bedtime ritual, make it as concrete for your little person as possible. That could mean coloring pictures and laminating and literally sticking them on the wall. When they get sidetracked, you can invite them back to their concrete thinking mind, where were we? Then they'll take power. We were here, mommy. We just brushed our teeth. Well, what is next? We read the book mommy or you sing the song.

Suzanne Tucker: The more that they can feel in control and powerful and predictable, then on those really rough nights where everybody is just turning into a lion, you can go back and rest into your ritual. I like to be fluid like a tree. Right? If we're so rigid, then we can't flow. When the wind blows, our branches want to wave. If we're so rigid, our branches break. The wind blows, and they break.

Suzanne Tucker: Parenting is beautiful time of practicing intuition, and tuning into your body and saying, "What does the moment require of me? What am I able to do right now and be in integrity with myself? Maybe I just shut it down, and it's done. I am in the I am done place because I know that that is my highest and best right now is to be clear, firm, and it is done, or maybe it is a night where I say a need for my child, and it was a scary day or was a new day full of new things. I see that there's a greater need, and that extra snuggle or I lay down with him in bed?"

Suzanne Tucker: I feel like bedtime is a time where we're often very empty and depleted. There's our needs and their needs that are up against each other. Sometimes, the best way to take on the bedtime troubles is not in that moment, but earlier that day, what did I do for myself today? Right? We want to think holistically too. How have I been filling my child's power tank all day long, so that we're not really at it just now at bedtime? I think we get sort of hyper-focused blinders with that time issue. It's like, "Okay, our point of power is only right now." We need to know what to do right now. Sometimes, the answer is a bit more holistic.

Elise Bialylew: Wonderful, and I really appreciate your perspective of having a ritual, having something solid that's there, but then being flexible enough that your kid is not a robot and neither are you. Depending on the demands of the day, you would kind of, like I tree, just-

Suzanne Tucker: Yeah.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah.

Suzanne Tucker: Yeah, I had this beautiful moment with my twins unfold, where I was sitting there, and I had asked of them, and it was get your jammies on, we're doing jammies and we're getting to bed. Then another 10 minutes had gone by, and I was going to lose it. I wanted to be like, "You guys," and I caught myself, and instead, I said, "Hey, guys, what are we doing here? What's going on? Why aren't we getting to bed yet," is really what I wanted to say, but I was able to stay in the wonder of it? What's going on?

Suzanne Tucker: They took their two little hands, they put them like this, crossed them, and they had each drawn half a heart. They're twins, right? They connected. They were not five years old, and I just breathed into that moment, and I was so grateful for the moment. I had to show up for the moment, right? I could've squashed that moment. For everyone out there, I get it. I get the struggle, and there's no one right way. When you let go of doing it right and you just sort of show ... Like, okay, I'm going to choose present over perfect. Each time I'm challenged, right? Each time I'm challenged, the invitation is to breathe and just show up again. That means I'm going to have boundaries, but sometimes, my intuition is going to give me a little moment like that.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah, and the other beautiful moments as well that you would miss if you're so rigid about. Yeah.

Suzanne Tucker: That's true.

Elise Bialylew: We've talked about sort of the transition, bedtime, what about ... When you have a toddler, you really see the true nature of humans, and it's pretty savage, can be pretty savage until there's meaning of how to be a human in this world.

Suzanne Tucker: There is fighting and spitting. Believe me, kids hitting their heads against the floor and in the wall, why? We look at this, and we're, "Huh, what have I done wrong, and who am I raising?" I always joke that every family that I've ever worked with in class, they fear that they're raising a psychopath. What is this? When we-

Elise Bialylew: It's such ...

Suzanne Tucker: Yeah. When we can-

Elise Bialylew: It's such common that [crosstalk 00:26:38].

Suzanne Tucker: ... normalize it.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah, I heard you say that. I was like, "Oh, thank God."

Suzanne Tucker: Right? We can kind of laugh, and we can look at it and stay curious instead of react because so many of us go to, what will this be like in college?

Elise Bialylew: Yeah. Yeah, that's true.

Suzanne Tucker: What is my time going to like when he's 18? We kind of jump the tracks because of our worry and fear.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah. You spoke about the red brain, which is really what we're talking about here, so a kid that just lost it. That might manifest-

Suzanne Tucker: Lost it.

Elise Bialylew: Particularly, when it manifests in ways that are unacceptable. If there's a physical acting out, a hitting, a biting, can you speak to what you discovered in this mindful context around managing this, from your own experience?

Suzanne Tucker: Right. With the red brain, there's a couple things that work. I like to pretend someone dropped me. I'm at the zoo, and they dropped me down with the gorillas, okay? I'm in the gorilla cage right now. What do I do with my body? I am not going to be standing over that gorilla and be all up in that gorilla's face, right? I'm going to get down as low as humanly possible. It's likely that I'm going to have sort of a humble body [inaudible 00:27:56]. I might even curve my body in, and I might not look directly at the ape of the gorilla.

Suzanne Tucker: It's not very different with a three-year-old, okay? When they're losing it, the one thing I want people to remember is instead of telling them we love them because that's what we always want to do, or getting very logical and rational with them why they should not be losing it, I took you to the zoo today, you had a lollipop, how can you be sad? Those two things, either being logical, right, or reasonable, or rational, those or some of the worst things we can do, or trying to engage the talking brain of a toddler that's losing it.

Suzanne Tucker: What you want to do is get down low and affirming them not that you love them, but they are safe. That's what they're reacting to. They feel not safe, and the best survival instinct they have in that moment is whatever they are doing. Look at the behavior, not as misbehavior, but look at it as a form of communication. If you can stay in the moment and think to yourself, what is going on? Almost with a court reporter voice say, "I gave you a blue lollipop, and you wanted a red lollipop, and now we're losing it." Right? It's just the facts of what is.

Suzanne Tucker: Do not try to talk your toddler off of their feelings. Notice what's happening, name what's happening for and with them. Then help keep them safe. Some of the words I like to go back to are your space. I might even say, "I know you don't want to hurt me, and I won't let you hurt me. You're safe." If they're, I hate you, and I'm hitting, I know you're so mad. You're reframing for them. You're so angry. You're so mad. You're so disappointed. Maybe it's just disappointment, you wanted the orange one, and you got the blue one.

- Suzanne Tucker: Instead of just missing and denying, I'm helping that feeling regulate. That's the main thing. We're going to look at the physical body and what can help that body regulate. If they're dysregulated because they're hungry, they're tired, they're in a new place, or they're stressed, remember, we can get defensive really quick. We think it's our relationship or something we did, it can just be the circumstances.
- Suzanne Tucker: If that is the case, there's nothing you can say or punish this child enough that's going to re-regulate them. They need to be fed, held, brought to bed. Leave the stuff at Target and go because nothing is going to re-regulate this child if they're hungry, tired, and they need a nap in that moment.
- Elise Bialylew: Yeah, and what about physically quarantining? I mean, in the context in toddlers, when they're together, and there's like-
- Suzanne Tucker: Oh, okay. I like to keep everyone safe. That's my first thing. I like to use the words all done or stop as opposed to no because stop tells me what to do not what not to do. I like to use words that are helpful to the child in that moment. Then, yeah, we separate the child. I was giving a talk the other day, and a child bit another child. We were at a moms' group, and they were two and a half. Immediately, the mom wanted to say, "No, that's bad, and you have to sit over here on the chair."
- Suzanne Tucker: I asked because we were talking about time-ins and positive discipline, I asked, "Could I work with you right in this moment? As opposed to standing up here and talking to you about these theories, can we just take this on as a teaching moment?" She was like, "Yes." The other mom whose toddler was yes. We got with the little guy and I said, "Ouch, that hurts." Right? First, we took care of the little one who had been bitten. Are you okay? We'll take care of you.
- Suzanne Tucker: Then with the one who have done the biting, we said, "Ouch, biting hurts. Did you want the toy?" Because he wanted the toy, right? The biting was his way to communicate, I would like the toy. He was yes, okay, so can we ask for the toy? Can I have the toy when you're done? We break it down and we model, and then he asked for the toy when he was done. Then guess what happened? The little kid who had the toy didn't really want the toy anymore. Gave it to the kid who wanted the toy.
- Suzanne Tucker: We're modeling social-emotional skills, right, basically, and that's what's happening. We're breaking it down, and we can look at it as restorative justice too because we are taking care of the one that had the injustice done to them, but then we're helping the one who "do the injustice," learn from the moment, so they can do better next time, as opposed to shame them because what was going to be future for this two-and-a-half-year-old? He was going to sit in a chair, going, "I did what I thought was right. I wanted the toy, so I did it." We could tell him all day long, "Biting is bad. Biting is wrong." If we don't fill the need, then we're going to the same behavior.
- Elise Bialylew: Oh, that's wonderful. That's wonderful. Let's move on to some of the practical tools that you offer through Generation Mindful. I'd love to talk about the

Time-In ToolKit and then the PeaceMakers. Maybe we can start with the Time-In ToolKit, and particularly, also any anecdotes or stories that you've got from the younger children that are responding to this.

Suzanne Tucker: Sure. Well, the Time-In ToolKit was born out of private coaching I've been doing with families with two and three-year-olds where they were really struggling with big emotions and behaviors at the same time, not listening, not cooperating. The root of a lot of the misbehavior was that the child was struggling to name their emotions. They didn't know what they were feeling, and they were really acting out. I realized I was having the same conversation over and over about how to teach to this and how to get underneath the misbehavior as opposed to react to it. How do we respond to it?

Suzanne Tucker: To be responsive and sort of more holistic in our approach with a two and a three and a four and even a five-year-old, we want to be working on social-emotional skill building. We know that children love to play, and they respond to playful, concrete things. The idea was to create a calming corner or a space that a child sets up themselves that has the tools they need to calm and learn to regulate their body, and not only to calm their body, but to tune in and notice what they're feeling and to name it, and to allow for it and for feelings to be declared as safe in the home or in the school.

Suzanne Tucker: We can tell a child all day long it's safe to feel, but if we don't make space for feelings, they sort of pick up the cues that, really, it's not safe to have feelings. With the Time-In ToolKit, when you open the box, it's really everything you need to create the corner with your child, things like posters, pictures of emotions, of children feeling different states, feeling states, and really simply bottom lining it down to just four colors and four main feelings.

Suzanne Tucker: We talk about red being angry or scared, yellow being joy or happy, high emotion, high pleasant feeling in the body, green being low emotion but pleasant, so that's sort of our calm, and then our blue, which is low energy and low, not pleasant. Right? You have these four mood states, four colors. Everything is sort of built along that. The Time-In ToolKit comes with the PeaceMaker cards, which you asked about. I'm going to give you one story. You asked about the Time-In ToolKit and how it looks for children.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah.

Suzanne Tucker: I've just read a story from a mom who sent in a little video with her story, and her two-and-a-half-year-old would not change her diaper? For two weeks straight, it was a constant battle of wills. The mom had got the Time-In ToolKit and set it up in the middle of this strife. One week in, they were already using it, the little two-and-a-half-year-old was using it.

Suzanne Tucker: In this moment where mom wanted to change the diaper, and the little one did not want to have her diaper changed, the mom had the wherewithal to say, "Well, how are you feeling? Let's go over to our calming corner and you can show me." The little two-and-a-half-year-old, it's a 30-second video, she goes, "I sad." She touches to the poster the sad face. The mommy goes,

"You're sad. Do you know why you're sad? It's because of the diaper changing. What can we do about it?"

Suzanne Tucker: On the Time-In poster are all these things that we can do about it, all these calming strategies, and she said, "Read book," and she pointed to read the book. Then she goes, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear," and pulls out the book. The whole thing took 30 seconds. The mom said they read the book, and the child felt safe and powerful and connected, and there were no problem, change my diaper. Not only in that moment, but no longer going forward with that going to be their issue. They've been doing this two weeks, and this very empowered moment for this little one where the mom got to help her through it, helped her with that regulation.

Elise Bialylew: Amazing, that's so [inaudible 00:38:08]. I think, for many people, surprising because I think that, up until more recently, maybe underestimating the capacity of two-and-a-half-year-old to know what they're feeling and to learn these skills.

Suzanne Tucker: Yes, two-and-a-half, three, we usually say three to nine. I was actually very surprised to have this. With one week of using the tools, this little two-and-a-half-year-old took it on, but I can tell you another story that really inspired me is sort of the flip side of the coin. This was a mom who set up the calming corner, have been using it for months, and months in with her girls were, I think, six and three, she was wondering, is it doing anything? Is this working?

Suzanne Tucker: She wasn't using timeouts. She was using time-ins. Chaos remains. Children are still children. They are still non-cooperation at times. They are still not wanting to clean up the room or treat their sister nice. She shared a story where the two girls were fighting. They didn't want to clean up the room, and they were fighting over it. They were treating each other badly, and she said, "I think we need to go over to our calming corner and name how we're feeling and do something about it."

Suzanne Tucker: It was the six-year-old, and she took a picture of them all on their own, going over there, and pointing at the things, and doing what they needed to do, and they also chose read a book, and the six-year-old sat on her lap and they read the book together. Then they went and they cleaned up the room. The mom said, "Oh, my gosh, it is working. Something is happening here."

Elise Bialylew: Yeah. Wow. That's extraordinary. That's amazing. Then would you like to talk to the PeaceMaker cards?

Suzanne Tucker: The PeaceMaker cards, so part of the Time-In ToolKit are the PeaceMaker cards. The PeaceMaker cards are mindfulness cards. They're a set of mantras. There are some very simple mantras in the deck, and then things like, I'm a leader or mistakes help me learn and grow. Here's one. I'll pull a little elephant. Mistakes help me learn and grow

Suzanne Tucker: The idea is we have all these big ideas we want to share with our kids, but really, when are we doing that. When are we talking about the growth mindset and mistakes help me learn and grow? When are we affirming in them that they are powerful and free? When are we having these deep conversations? I set up this card to be so simple that we could pull one card a day, and it would open us up to sharing our bigger thoughts, ideas, from the inside out, right? What does that mean to you when you read that, and you're five?

Suzanne Tucker: I had a little guy who pulled I shared my ideas and my feelings, and the mom said, "Well, what are your ideas and feelings?" He paused. She recorded it, and he was like, "I'm thinking about bumblebees. Do they swim?" I mean, it was just a peek into this little one's brain where he is at the moment. PeaceMakers are just daily playful affirmation to pause together, and it really is a mindfulness practice, and it involves both of our social-emotional skills because we are practicing just our listening and our social skills at the same time.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah. Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful. I wanted to draw out something I heard you say in an interview, which was, as parents, we need to let go of happy as our barometer. I feel that was such an interesting line. I don't know if you remember saying that or the context.

Suzanne Tucker: I do.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah, would you speak to what you meant by that?

Suzanne Tucker: Yes, it's such a great insight. I've been asking for decades. I have a mom group, and when people come into the group, I ask, "What is your greatest hope for your child?" 9.9 out of 10 times, it is to be happy. Just to be aware of what our goals are as parents, what's driving us, I think it's important to pause and ask ourselves, what are my goals?

Suzanne Tucker: One thing I noticed in positive parenting class was that, at times, our goal for our child to be happy can interfere with our ability to be present in the moment with what is. It can take away our power to be with what is, and also to have boundaries because if my goal is your joy and happiness all the time, then I've just given my power away. I can't be powerful in the moment to what is because I'm fixated on a different goal, and my goal is you being happy.

Suzanne Tucker: For instance, if I have a boundary around bedtime, and we eat at dinner, and then when we're done dinner, we're done with food. My child wants to learn to be able to trust that when I eat, I eat at dinner, and I don't eat at bedtime. If I am wanting them to be happy, and they're hungry, and they're not happy, then I'm not going to be able to stick to my ritual. I'm going to be like, "Whatever, whatever you want. Let me go get you whatever you want."

Suzanne Tucker: Very soon, I become a short-order cook, and I'm getting you food all the time, and I find that I'm now not happy, and I'm triggered. I can't parent you

from my center when I'm off-center. What I noticed as parents, sometimes, when we want to be positive parents, if we don't have boundaries, the pendulum swings and we become permissive. What I always say to people, if you're noticing that you're going from zero to 100 on your child, where you're like, "I've got this. I'm so calm. I'm so patient," and then you're not, it's likely a boundary has been crossed, and you just didn't notice, and you were trying to go with it, go with it, go with it, and then you lose it.

Suzanne Tucker: If that's you, and you're trying to just make them happy, you'll notice that there's no power for you there. You want to reclaim your power, and it really is to their interest and their highest and best for us to take on a different goal, to be present, to allow for feelings, to allow for disappointment. We don't want to rob our child of those experiences that really build grit and resilience and a growth mindset. There really is a higher place than happy all the time.

Elise Bialylew: That's really, really helpful. I wanted to ask you in your rich wisdom and experience as a mother of four what you would share with our listeners who are parents as sort of three of your top wins around parenting. We've kind of alluded to some of them already, but whether there were particular rituals or practices or a particular way you really discovered of managing a challenge that's just helped you so much.

Suzanne Tucker: Letting go of perfect and holding on to being present as opposed to perfect as a goal. If you're really going to let go of perfect, you've got to start getting comfortable with saying no. If you want to say no to a sleepover, can I have a sleepover, and you're not feeling it, the way to say no at the time and then to be very generous and compassionate is, you know what? Not tonight, but let's look to next weekend if you feel like you're really are up for it next weekend.

Suzanne Tucker: There are ways to have boundaries and to say no and have limits that feel very compassionate and kind, and give yourself permission. This is what I would say to myself as a new mom, give yourself permission to let go of perfect and have those limits. That would be number one. Life is a lot easier when I got comfortable having those noes, having limits. I'm not perfect, and I'm going to choose present me over perfect me because perfect me ends up very tired, frustrated and angry anyway, right? Care for myself will factor into the equation.

Suzanne Tucker: Number two would be I am not my child's judge and jury. I'm the guide by the side. That was a big win for me when I really took on, especially when I started having more than one child, that I am not the judge and the jury. I am the guide by the side. What that means is when my children are having a difficulty, the temptation as a parent is to want to swoop in and solve it for them or to be the judge and the jury. I work really hard to notice and instead, to use my mindfulness practice to use my words to say what I see, and to encourage them to come to a completion or to a conflict resolution.

Elise Bialylew: Thank you, and that sort of speaks to mindfulness. It's like seeing what's happening, and then responding with wisdom, like you're actually saying, "Oh, hang on, this is what's going on here. I need to adopt this," and then, yes, make more space.

Suzanne Tucker: Notice the thread.

Elise Bialylew: Yeah, and finally, I'd love to ask you about any books, apart from the tools that you're offering through Gen Mindful, books that you think are just absolute lifesavers, must-reads for newer parents that you've stumbled upon.

Suzanne Tucker: So many. I love The Whole-Brain Child, Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson, love The Whole-Brain Child. I love How to Talk so Children Listen and Listen so Children Talk. Those are classics. I love Marianne Williamson, in fact, any book by Marianne Williamson. She had a book called Everyday Grace, I believe, that I read maybe 13 years ago, and it was through reading that book that I looked at my life as a piece of paper, and I looked at the margins of my life, and I made sure to keep margins in my life. I realized that I had been writing life into every open nook and cranny, and it was really that book that invited me into looking at my life that way and to keeping space, keeping space. There really research so many, but those are a few of my favorites.

Elise Bialylew: Oh, wonderful. Thank you. I also just wanted to offer you space as we close the conversation to share anything else about Gen Mindful, your work that we haven't spoken about that you think is important, you'd like to share.

Suzanne Tucker: I would just invite everyone to look into the community if you are a parent, if you are an educator, or you are a therapist, and you envision a world where children are raised free from shame, and free from punishment, truly. We can raise children, teaching and guiding by example. We need to do it together. We can't do it alone. Anyone out there, it's a free community, and we would love to have you join in the wisdom that you are in your life experiences to the community.

Elise Bialylew: Thank you so much. It's been so wonderful chatting with you, thanks so much for the work that you do in the world.