

# Ericka Souter How to Have a Kid and a Life

**Ericka Souter:** [00:00:00] research shows that a mother's happiness is more central to a child's emotional well-being than how much money she makes, how much time she spends with them, or whether she's a stay at home or working mom. And I think people don't realize that

That was Erica Souter on psychologists off the clock.

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**Yael Schonbrun:** I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston based clinical psychologist, assistant professor at Brown University, and author of the upcoming book Work, Parent, Thrive.

**Jill Stoddard:** And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of be mighty and the big book of act metaphors.

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**Jill Stoddard:** I'm here with Yael to introduce today's episode with Erica Souter, where we talk about her book, how to have a kid and have a life. And I really appreciated this conversation with Erica, you know, parenting, I think can be. So incredibly complicated, you know, there are elements of it that are such a joy, but also elements of it that are really, really challenging.

And we talk about so many different things. And one thing it got me thinking about that I really appreciate is when I think back to my mom, as a parent and her [00:03:00] generation, I think that she really struggled a lot, but didn't feel like she could really talk openly about that. And I think it was sort of Oprah that came along and kind of like made it okay for women to talk about.

The challenges of parenting like that. It's not all puppies and rainbows and roses, and that it can be really lonely and really vulnerable. And there's so much pressure and judgment, you know, to feel like you're making the right decision as if there's a right and wrong decision. , and then the added pressure of feeling like you can't talk about it at work, because there will be negative consequences. We talk in the episode about this hashtag secret parenting and. You know, I know that when I have felt particularly lonely or frustrated, I have so appreciated having other mom, friends who I feel like I can be really open and honest and vulnerable with in talking about some of the challenges [00:04:00] at something that's made it a little bit less lonely for me.

And so, yeah, I'm curious what reactions you had to the episode.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Well, I thought it was a terrific episode.

, for a number of reasons, including the emphasis that you guys give and, and sort of the voice that you give to the importance of. Being happy in your own life and how important that is for our kids, right. Our own happiness matters. And this is something I write a lot about in my working parent book and, , Erica sites, a lot of really fascinating research.

And I just wanted to give another study that I think is really cool. , it's a nationally representative study of mothers of different working statuses. . So for us, Parents who, exclusively were stay at home parents versus parents who worked. And what they looked at was how working status related to the mother's happiness and to the child's happiness and development. And what they found was that working status mattered much less.

Then satisfaction with the status. So if [00:05:00] you were happy with your status as a stay-at-home parent, then that was good for your happiness and it was good for your child's happiness and development. If you were happy with working outside of the home, then that was good for your happiness and for your child's development.

And so the importance that you guys talk in a great length about finding your own happiness and filling your own happiness cup is just so.

**Jill Stoddard:** Well I love that so much and it really makes me wonder, you know, I like to say there are a lot of right ways to do things and, and it makes me, I'd love to see research that investigates a number of different areas like that, that, like, if you decide what is best for you and your family and sort of own that decision.

Whether it's the way you sleep train or the working status or any of the thousand other decisions we make as parents. Like, I wonder, you know, if that would extend, I think there's a lot to learn from that in terms of making decisions about what's right for you and your family and sort of owning that.

And of course we talk about judgment [00:06:00] and the episode too, and how it can be challenging to worry about what everybody else thinks. Right. But like really kind of determining what works best for you. That's a really interesting study.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, And to that, to that end, you know, bringing things out into the open that we feel fearful of judgment about can help us to normalize our own fears that, you know, other people's. We're going to chime in and say, oh

my gosh, me too. Or, or we're going to sort of get, you know, the feedback that, oh, why were you worried about that?

I actually admire you for that. And so I think you guys talk about, you know, the hashtag parenting in secret and Emily Oster. I remember right after she came out with her second book, crib sheet had this sort of viral hashtag movement of parenting in the open. And there, it was so wonderful because there was.

Just a slew of parents, posting pictures of their kids, artwork in their offices, where, you know, on the zoom that you usually have. People who were kind of pointing the camera away from any evidence of their parenting. And now people were kind of be more intentional about saying, you know, I work [00:07:00] hard. I do interesting things in my professional life, and there's also this other part of me.

And so embracing the wholeness of ourselves and recognizing that we all have some fears of judgment that that's pretty normal, but that if we can. Bring our fullness into the open that we'll often find a lot more acceptance in place to kind of, , you know, meet other people who feel similarly than we might anticipate, which is such a wonderful opportunity.

**Jill Stoddard:** I love that. That gave me literal goosebumps. When you said that that's so great. And you know, we at the podcast, we all love Emily, her and I think one of. The biggest gifts that she has given to me personally. And I'm sure so many other parents in, in reading Crib sheet or in, in listening to her episode that you guys did on crib sheet is she looks at all the science about these decisions we have to make as parents.

Should you breastfeed or should you bottle feed? Should you let them cry it out or should they sleep? You know, co-sleep in the bed and I'm going to way over simplify here, but the bottom line was kind of like. It's all fine. [00:08:00] Like in the end, that's all fine. And whenever I see any of her research, I just breathed this huge sigh of relief that like, okay, maybe we can just let go a little more of some of this stress.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah.

With most things, you know, she finds like, it kinda doesn't matter. They're like, that's not as important as we make it out to be, but there are a few things.

And some of the examples you guys talk about, for example, finding community that actually does matter. There's lots of ways to do that. You know,

developing for yourself and for your kids, a sense of belonging really does matter how you do it matters less, whether it's through camper extracurriculars, whether you find mom, friends, you know, through your kids or through your own hobbies, that those kinds of things do matter.

But so many of the things that we're led to believe matter deeply matter very little, and that's what the science convincingly and compellingly shows us. And so those things we can learn to let go of based on the evidence.

**Jill Stoddard:** I love that , okay. So enjoy [00:09:00] this episode with Erica.

hey everybody. It's Jill here and I'm thrilled to introduce today's guest Erica suitor. Who's here to talk to us about her book, how to have a kid and a life, a survival guide.

Erica suitor is a nationally recognized voice in parenting news and parenting advice. She has over 20 years of journalism experience and as a frequent contributor on good morning, America and other national broadcast outlets, where it's her job to speak to parents across the country about the issues, controversies and trends, most effecting families. Her new book is how to have a kid and a life of survival guide. Eric, his work appears on the bump, what to expect cafe mom and mom.com all high traffic parenting sites that reach millions of moms each month. Her writing has also been featured in people, magazine us weekly, essence cosmopolitan, self, and web MD.

She received her bachelor's degree from Georgetown university [00:10:00] and master's degree from the Columbia university graduate school of journalism. Erica. Welcome. I'm so glad to have you with me on psychologists off the clock.

**Ericka Souter:** Thank you. I'm so excited to talk to you. This should be a fun conversation.

**Jill Stoddard:** Absolutely. And I think a much needed conversation. I love the title of your book because sometimes it certainly feels like as a mom, it is really hard to also have a life outside of being a mom.

**Ericka Souter:** oh yeah. I mean, it was, I, you know, I spent five years interviewing moms across the country for the buck and you know, and I didn't have a title picked out before talking to them. I knew the kinds of things I wanted to write about. I wanted to find out more about what. They were going through and their personal lives and in their professional lives and then their social lives.

And, um, that the title just kind of manifested from that. And I know that listeners can't see that's the cover of the book, but the stork is not dropping a baby. It is dropping a bomb. So, [00:11:00] and that just felt so appropriate based on my conversations with all of these women.

**Jill Stoddard:** Well, that can certainly be how it feels. You know, you have all of these ideas about what it's going to be like to be a parent, and then it doesn't necessarily meet those expectations and it can feel like it's more like a bomb than a baby that's dropping into your life.

**Ericka Souter:** Absolutely. You hit the nail on the head. It was all about unmet expectations or unrealistic expectations about what parenthood would be like. And I think on a basic level, yes. People are excited, right? They they're excited to have a baby and they do all this prep work, but all the prep work they're doing is stuff it's like getting a crib.

It's getting a car seat, a wipes warmer, which you don't need, by the way, for anyone out there who hasn't, I consent, you do not need a wide swarmer. It is like all of these things that we think is, are going to prepare us for motherhood or parenthood. And in reality, there's so many other things we need to start thinking about and talking about because the emotional [00:12:00] stress of this change in your life is so huge.

And I feel like so many of the women I talked to and I did talk to men as well. They just weren't quite prepared for those changes.

**Jill Stoddard:** Well, it's such a great point about the stuff, right? Like we buy the stuff, we take the classes, so many classes, and I think that it's during a time where we feel vulnerable, anxious, and it's a way to, to gain a sense of perceived control. If I do the research on all the car seats and I buy the car seat and this helps make me feel a little relaxed, but then what we're not really paying any attention to is like, and you talk about this in the book specifically is like, what do we want our marriage to look like?

Assuming that we're a coupled parent, um, you know, talking about some of the things. Maybe somewhat more important than the stuff, but they're also, you know, I think there's a lot of things that happen after a baby comes the stuff gives you the perception of control.

And then the reason the baby feels like such a bomb is because then there are so [00:13:00] many things that really feel out of your control that are very uncertain that really, you know, stimulate that anxiety. And maybe it catches us

off guard because we're feeling pretty prepared because of all the stuff, but it's almost like focusing on the wrong things.

Does that make sense?

**Ericka Souter:** makes perfect sense because I, what I found when I was talking to people and I'll explain to you how I talk to them, I would say. Scheduling interviews. Sometimes they did group interviews sometimes. And I did a lot of one-on-one interviews, sometimes just two people or a couple, or what have you. , the whole idea was to make people feel comfortable, that they can kind of let loose and relax and just really share what was going on with their lives.

I asked nothing about people's children, no milestones. No. How are you getting into college or preschool or whatever? None of that. It was, it was basically like, so what's your day, like, what is your most stressful time of your day or why, what was the most surprising thing about this shift in your world or your relationship?

And what I found is that, like, people just never had these conversations, like even when it [00:14:00] came to, , you know, Plants have a baby. You, , you're so excited with your partner or your spouse, and you never talk about, , what is our philosophy on discipline? Who's going to take off work when the baby is sick.

, how often will in-laws visit? Well, we have a babysitter or will we do, daycare and do all these things, you know, then they have to talk about them then becomes these urgent, stressful conversations. And that I felt put a lot of tension on relationships. So I wanted to encourage people to have conversations.

So each chapter deals with a different issue, but it's like, well, here's what you need to do. Here are the 20 questions you need to ask each other before the baby arrives, you

**Jill Stoddard:** Well, I love what you say about how have marriage after having kids or, or couplehood. I should say people don't necessarily have To be married, but couplehood after having kids becomes more transactional and I had never heard it put that way. And when I read that, I [00:15:00] thought, oh God, yes, like that is spot on.

And you talk about how, instead of that, we do all the planning for the stuff, et cetera, not having these conversations and that it's just this sort of like wing-it mentality.

Like we'll just figure it out. And then, you know, and I, I mean reading this, I just thought, yup. Yup. That's me. That was us. We that's exactly what we did and how many issues could probably be, , avoided if we were talking about some of these things. And, and so not just with romantic relationships, but you have a chapter on friendships, mom, friends, building community.

So let me, I want to actually back up for a second because, you know, you often hear, , this metaphor about how, you know, when you're on an airplane, you put your own oxygen mask on first, before you put it on your child, you know, and so metaphorically to mean we.

Care of others, unless we first take care of ourselves and you actually cite research, like there's strong data to support that this is true. And that our kids [00:16:00] show a variety of better outcomes when they have parents who are taking good care of themselves. So I thought, you know, this feels like it's kind of a good jumping off point for a book about how to have a kid and have a life.

, and you, you have some suggestions for questions. We can ask ourselves to assess whether we're attending to our own needs, , across some different domains. So maybe we can kind of start there, like, can you share some of those questions? Like just to get it like the first step of having a kid and having life is making sure we're taking care of ourselves.

**Ericka Souter:** Right. Right. And I think that there are just some basic questions that are sort of the book with that. , I felt if you've answered no to these, it's time to take a pause and rethink how you're living your life. And so I'll go over the questions. The first is, am I nurturing my marriage or partnership? , number two is my career headed in a good direction.

If you have a career, , number three, do I have supportive friends to turn to, or do I feel good about myself? Five? Do [00:17:00] I nurture any of the passions I had before kids and six, have I created a social life or hobbies that have nothing to do with my children? And the reason I put these questions in there, as most of the people I interviewed the answer is for no.

So most of these questions, and these were all things that were such pain points in their life, in terms of them feeling fulfilled or feeling like they're doing something for themselves or feeling as though, you know, where did I go? Like, what about me and what I want, none, you know, questioning these things doesn't mean you don't love your children and you're not grateful for your family.



It means that there's, there's a whole, there's something missing and it's okay to take some time to fill it and to focus on it.

**Jill Stoddard:** well, it really struck me, , like I said, everybody's heard that oxygen mask thing and yet guilt, you know, the mom guilt persists the idea that like, if I dare to take time for myself to do something outside of my role as a [00:18:00] parent, that I am, you know, harming my child in some way that I'm selfish, that I should devote everything to this kid.

And, you know, I think it's really important that there's actual data to support that this simply is false. And that if you struggle to make time for yourself, maybe to think about the fact that like we know through science, that your kids will actually be better off. You know, it doesn't mean you're neglecting your children. In fact, it's a way to offer better care for them in the long run.

**Ericka Souter:** Absolutely. No one ever thinks that, you know, what I found is so many parents were living their lives, overwhelmed and frustrated, and the idea was like, well, my kids were okay. Well my put my kids. Okay. The most important things that my kids are happy and they're okay. But so there's so much research that tells us that, happy, , couples, right? Couples who communicate, who have a good relationship. That doesn't mean everything has to be perfect, but couples who are happy, if you, if you live in a, you have a couple, , that affects the children and children in a positive way. [00:19:00] So working on your relationship is very important.

But in addition to that, research also shows that a mother's happiness is more central to a child's emotional well-being than how much money she makes, how much time she spends with them, or whether she's a stay at home or working mom. And I think people don't realize that and in why should that, because that's not the popular message about motherhood, right?

The messages that give, give, give, give, give, and it's all about everyone else. And it's not about you, but the fact of the matter is if you are not happy or you're not doing something for yourself, it is very unlikely that you're being the kind of mother or partner that you want to be.

**Jill Stoddard:** Or model, you know, that's something I think about a lot. And, and that specific finding you just cited. I remember when I was reading the book writing, wow. You know, in the margins, there were a couple of different stats that I hadn't heard before, and that was one of them. And what I often think about with my own kids is I want them to grow up with, [00:20:00] certain views about.

You know, men, women, couples, motherhood, fatherhood, partnership, all of those things. And they're not going to learn those things based on what I tell them, they're going to learn based on what they see. And so that's been one of the things that's really motivated me to, , you know, to work on. Having, for example, an even division of labor and responsibility in my marriage, you know, because I don't want my son to grow up thinking like, oh, I'm a man.

I can sit back. And if he's heterosexual, you know, let my wife do all the work for me or have my daughter grow up thinking this is all her responsibility. And so even though it's something that has been a challenging journey, my role as mom, like that role. The value of mine is something that's really helped motivate me to do that.

And same goes with, , you know, making time for myself having a life outside of just my role as parent or a partner. ,

So I hope that that's something people find helpful.

**Ericka Souter:** I really do too, because what I found [00:21:00] was there are some people who seemed, you know, when I was talking about these things resistant to this idea of carving out a significant. There are time for themselves and, and they're, and they're still, they're stressed, they're overwhelmed, they're tired. They're burned out all of that.

And then I'd ask us like, well, would you want your daughter to live this way as a grownup, as an adult. And that resonated more than me trying to say, oh, but you deserve to have time for yourself. But, so I love that you brought up that whole modeling aspect of it because it's not for a lot of people.

It's not until you say, well, do you want your kids to be, feel like this when they're grownups? And then that really resonates with a lot of people because we don't want our kids. No one wants their kids to suffer in any way.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah.

**Ericka Souter:** but you also shouldn't want yourself to suffer in any kind of way. If you can make things a little better for yourself and it doesn't have to be these major shifts, you don't have to like sell your house and move to Hawaii and live on a beach, Jack and surf [00:22:00] all day.

That is not what is required. It, it really is different for every person. And I even have a worksheet in there to try to figure out what it is that you want or need or

what it is. Do you feel like you're craving, , at this point in your life? And I think like that's what people have to kind of do some work, right.

To ask themselves really important questions because could be different for every person. And you just have to figure out, make little baby steps to make changes and.

I just think it's really important for people to, you know, there's something that they want to do or something that they feel like they need or something that's going to make them fulfilled outside of their role as partner or a parent. , they, they can do it, but they can do it in baby steps. You don't ha doesn't have to be this huge change the next day.

It could be working toward a goal. And that might mean just taking 30 minutes a day to do research on a new career or a new activity or taking class one day a week to help build your skillset or starting, you know, for some people people's hobbies. I mean, I met a woman [00:23:00] who I know she didn't realize her passion was kombucha brewing

**Jill Stoddard:** oh my God.

**Ericka Souter:** and, and for her, that was enough.

She does it. She, you know, she sells it at local. This is ours and it just became something that's really important to her and it makes her feel good, you know?

**Jill Stoddard:** that I just interviewed and Eve Rodsky who I know, you know, she actually endorsed your book. She gave you a blurb and she's actually our only three time guest ever. So I had her on twice to talk about fair play, but also most recently to talk about unicorn space, which this reminds me of is this, you know, this idea of having space outside, being a parent, a partner, or even a professional.

And so kombucha brewing seems like such a perfect unicorn space. And I have a girlfriend who took up horseback riding again, you know, she had done it when she was younger and now, you know, her, her, her children are now grown up. So it's been easier for her to carve out that time. And another friend who I talk about in that episode, who took up trap, he's [00:24:00] flying.

**Ericka Souter:** Wow.

**Jill Stoddard:** And I just find this, like, so inspirational, these, these non parenting spaces that moms have been able to find that are really bringing just like zest back into their existence and then making them better moms in turn.

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah. Yeah. When you make time for, you know, it's contrary to everything we, you know, we think about, right. You, if you take a little time away from everyone else and focus on yourself, it actually in the end gives them more. Cause it gives them a happier parent. It gives them a more content parent, a parent who feels they have more balance in their life.

You know, that's another thing. I talk a lot about balance and you know, it doesn't have to be this equal wedge. Like everything doesn't have to get an equal wedge in your balance wheel. Right. But you know, but you have to make time for yourself. So

**Jill Stoddard:** right, right. But even if it's one hour a week, , that can be enough, especially as a start.

**Ericka Souter:** yes, if I.

**Jill Stoddard:** [00:25:00] wedges may vary depending on stage of life. You know, if you've got, I don't know, like a 10 month old twins that you have to have your eyes on every single second. So they don't choke on the marble that got left on the floor.

You know, that I know for me, my kids are eight and 10, and my, because my husband and I practice Fairplay, we have an even distribution of labor in the home and both of those factors have freed up so much time in my life. So it's far easier for me now to, you know, have a life than it was like when the kids were little.

And we were homeschooling because of the pandemic and I was doing 75% of the household responsibilities, you know? So I think there are also contextual factors that make this harder or easier. There's certainly obstacles. ,

**Ericka Souter:** there are. And I did talk. Do you try to address that because everyone's situation is different. And I talk to a lot of people who didn't [00:26:00] have the tree of hiring sitters or hiring help. I do think that if you can, you have to leverage everyone around you. So I met these moms that were in California and they lived in this little neighborhood.

And what they did is that they kind of traded daycare with each other. Right. So, , and it would be like, so let's say and wanted to take a yoga class two days a week. So then her kids go to Jennifer and Fred, , for that evening. And then, then she gets there. I mean, they kind of just figured out this system, this matrix that allows each of these households that are on a budget to have time.

Some, some people use it for day. Other people used it for, you know, different things that they wanted to do. And yes, that takes some organization. It takes, you know, a little effort to organize it all, but they all felt it was worth it. And they had this plan in place. Right? So now they all have days. And so they work around their free day when their kids are at so-and-so's house for like [00:27:00] three hours.

And sometimes we have to get creative, creative in that way. And then there are people, you know, when you live in a city where, and I called them, , familial deserts, when you have moved someplace where you have no family around and you kind of have to just build your own village. And so I talked to people who, you know, they had lived in a building and look like New York city or Chicago, And they had elderly neighbors who are lonely.

And so they kind of created their own like, , extended family with these people who come for holiday dinners, then help watch their kids, or then they'll help them do grocery shopping. Now it's, it's a, it's a form of extending ourselves that we're not always comfortable with, but I feel in this day and age in order to just, it, it just helps.

It helps you as a parent who just feels the weight of all this responsibility. But it also helps in terms of loneliness because there are so many people who are lonely and craving human interaction.

**Jill Stoddard:** Well, humans were [00:28:00] never meant to do this alone and you know, we've just ended up in this, at least in the United States, in Western cultures, you know, this incredibly individualistic society. That really encourages, you know, do it on your own and be quote unquote, strong and independent. And I just, I think that that harms us so much both in terms of like how impossible it is to do it all on your own and, and certainly that loneliness piece as well.

I loved your chapters on building community and the importance of friendships, but not just finding like any mom friend, but finding the right mom friends. So can you talk a little bit about that? Like what ha what, what do you mean by kind of the right mom from the wrong, and then like, what are some

ways that we can go about finding those right mom, friends, or even like deepening the existing relationships that we have that I think sometimes [00:29:00] like go by the wayside when you're crazy busy with trying to raise kids.

And if you're working outside the home and all the things.

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah. So one of the things that was seemed to be really key to a lot of moms was cultivating a group of. You know, and having mom friends and what I found, you know, of course I talked to people who've struggled to find mom friends, and I wanted to give advice on that. But I was really, it was really kind of interesting to talk to the women who had mom friends, but still felt kind of lonely and not really connected.

And so I wanted to dive deeper into that and what it felt like is that, you know, just because, and I write that as like someone had a uterus occupied at the same time as you, that is not a recipe for a BFF. So it has to be more than just having kids the same age. I know that it's the easiest way to find people because we're in the same, like maybe mommy and me class, you go to the playground at the same time or what have you, but, , you have to dig a little deeper and they, and the person you meet may not be your [00:30:00] person and that's okay.

But you know, you ask yourself these questions, like, you know, Do you have similar values, right. , do you enjoy talking to this person? Do you feel uplifted when you leave interactions with them or do you feel more depleted? Do you get the impression that they're telling your secrets or, or talking about you behind your back?

You know, all of these things hurt us, right? Like we, if we leave an interaction with a group of friends or a friend feeling, , worse than when we arrived, what are we doing to ourselves? And so I really want people to kind of examine their relationships and more, isn't always better. Right? And there's no rule that says all of your friends have to be in this one group.

You could have friends that, , you like doing different things with, like, I have a mom who run, who's also a writer and we love talking about writing and politics. And I have other mom friends that we'd love to dish out reality TV and the hangout and have coffee in the mornings. And you know, it's not, we have to kind of [00:31:00] change this idea in our heads, but what.

Uh, mom group is and what it does for us, we should be uplifted and feel loved. We should be able to be vulnerable around these people. We should be able to

share our ups and downs and not feel judged. Like, no, you don't want your friends to be the kind of friend group who only talk, you know, share the good things that happen.

Right? You want to be able to also say, I got into this argument with my husband last night, we're not talking it's blah, blah, blah. Or I'm worried about my kid. Who's doing bad in school. And you know, they, they should be people that you share all parts of your life with. And those are the kinds of kinds of relationships that sustain us and help us through parenthood, which is so hard.

So I wanted, I really wanted to like encourage people to dig a little deeper when it comes to their friendships.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah.

And there were so many good points you made in here. One is the importance of putting in the time and, and I think this comes back to that first comment you made about like so much of this book [00:32:00] is about expectations that like, you know, we go out all enthusiastic, like, okay, I'm going to do it. I'm going to make some mom friends. And then maybe I meet someone and we have coffee one time. And then we don't meet again. And or that, like, you don't have that deep. I can tell you every single thing after meeting with you twice. And I don't remember off the top of my head, but you even cite the statistics around, you need to have, it was like 30 hours to have a casual relationship, 60 to have a good friendship and 90 hours to have like a deep, close relationship those hours.

Aren't exactly right. But it was a fair amount of time that you have to actually put in and not just put in talking about the weather and the traffic patterns, but being your true, authentic self who's talking about, you know, being vulnerable. Like you're only going to connect. If you let yourself be vulnerable and seen.

And I think That's such an important reminder because otherwise it can get really discouraging. Like I'm putting myself out there and it's just not working, but maybe that [00:33:00] expectation is a little bit off because you got to really put yourself out there for a fair amount of time before a relationship feels truly connected.

**Ericka Souter:** you do? And I think like you're right, it is 90 hours. There was a researcher out of the university of Kansas who found the formula for a good friendship in terms of time. And he did say you needed to log 90 hours for someone to be a good friend. Now that sounds daunting. That's like a job right. In our minds, like 90 hours.

That's

**Jill Stoddard:** I mean, that's meeting what weekly for two years, right? I mean,

**Ericka Souter:** it sounds sounded daunting to me. But then when I started thinking about how much time I spend texting. Certain mom, friends, right. Or just like chatting with them to have having coffee with them or volunteering together at our kid's school or having a dinner with them.

It really does add up. Right. You are developing good friendships, even in the moments you don't think you are,

**Jill Stoddard:** Right? Even the texts count toward your hours.

[00:34:00] Yeah.

**Ericka Souter:** do count. Absolutely. And so, you know, so we are creating these bonds because I think that to be honest, we, in this country and in other countries here, that UK is experiencing this as well.

We have an epidemic of loneliness. So we have moms who are surrounded by people and they still feel lonely. And that's, and the reason is I think it's the types of relationships that they have. And, you know, it's interesting in the UK, they actually, at one point ahead appointed a minister of loneliness.

That's how bad the problem was in the UK. And they found that there was, you know, it was across all groups. So you have single people, married people, um, elderly, you know, young. And I do think that we have a similar problem here. And one way to, you know, help men in that situation is to deepen your relationships with people.

And it may not be that person. You thought you were going to be buddies with. You know, I really like [00:35:00] encourage people to talk to that quirky person that they may not have. It was on the surface look like they have much in common with that person could be end up being as my kids as your ride or die,

**Jill Stoddard:** yeah, totally like, your, your neighbor. You talk about a neighbor of yours in the, in the book that is somebody that you wouldn't have really expected

to have a close friendship with. That became kind of like a rider guy for you.



# Marker

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah, so, you know, even in my own personal experiences, I share a lot of in the book as well. You know, I moved into this building. I had a new baby. I didn't, none of my friends were moms. This woman lived down the hall. She couldn't have been more different. I would have never spoken to her.

Had I not been home on maternity leave. And she had a two year old and, you know, she wound up helping me during a really low point in my new motherhood. And I would have never expected that I would've never interacted with her. Had we not been neighbors down the hall. And she became a really important part of my new motherhood circle.

So we, we started hanging out and she was, um, [00:36:00] a really, you know, kind of like a crazy character, you know, she. Lots of people did not like her in our building. It was so bad where our super wouldn't even take her holiday tip me into the year.

He just couldn't stand her personality. But I remember I was at home and I had been laid off on maternity leave and my husband was traveling and I had put so much in my career. My career was the most important thing in the world to me before I had kids. And it was, and it was actually my biggest fear of having kids that it would somehow affect my career.

And then the, it

actually happened the self fulfilling prophecy, prophecy, and she knocked at the door cause she's always like, you know, she knocked at the door and she was like, you know, she called, she called me and she was like, Hey, what's going on? I was like, you know, I can't talk right now. I just, I can't talk.

I just we'll connect in a day or so. And I hung up and then literally like 15 minutes later, there was a knock at the door. I opened it. It was her, she had a chai tea latte for me in her hand. And she was like, here, take this, sit down. She put [00:37:00] my baby to sleep. She cleaned the bottle. On, you know, and sterilize them, cleaned up my kitchen and then sat down and she's like, do you want to talk?

And in that moment it was the nicest thing anyone had done for me, like, because I was so down and I was so sad and I didn't know what, you know, it was so devastating to be laid off from a job. I thought was really significant to

my identity. And, she didn't know what was going on with me, but she stepped in and she wanted to help me.

And I feel like that person had I not just been relaying to interact and develop a bond of some sort with this person, I don't know. I don't know what else I would have done in that moment when I was really down. And I had no one there to support me at that time. So I,

**Jill Stoddard:** have been a real missed opportunity.

**Ericka Souter:** yes, yes. So I say like, you know, be open and again, test it out.

If it's not for you, if this person's not for you, you know, fine. But give people a chance is I guess the [00:38:00] point of that.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. And to be open-minded for sure. Well, and kind of the flip side of this, this was another thing you said that I thought was fascinating, which was about toxic friendship. And, you know, you, you give some examples of questions to ask yourself, which would you actually talk to some about this? Are they talking about other people behind their back when they're with you?

You know, there's a number of questions to sort of assess whether this might be a toxic friendship. But the thing that I found really fascinating is you said don't necessarily break up with those people because part of what might be causing our loneliness is having to keep starting over.

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah.

**Jill Stoddard:** And that like really whisky I'm actually getting goosebumps Right. now.

Just thinking about it. Like that was really kind of an aha moment to me. And I think you make the point that like, you know, you get different things from different people and you want to deepen the right relationships where you can be vulnerable and have intimacy and get those needs met, but there can be other kinds of.[00:39:00]

Relationships. So, do you have any thoughts or do you want to share with, with listeners? I was going to say readers. Do you want to share with listeners, like how do identify these relationships, how to decide like whether to, to break up

or not, and like what you might do differently. If you decide to keep this person around,

**Ericka Souter:** Right. So yes, I do have a section on toxic mom, friends, and I think most of us have been there at some point when we're like this friendship just isn't, this doesn't feel good.

**Jill Stoddard:** I took a picture of one of the pages of your book and sent it to two friends and was like, this immediately made me think of our, this mutual friend we had, that we all had an experience with as a very toxic mom. And they were like, spot on.

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah. I mean, there are like, I think that the questions were, you know, are you starting to feel excluded on purpose? He, or she say hurtful things. Does he, or is he, or she overly critical of you? , is she sharing things you told her and competence, which we talked about earlier and does she say nasty things about other friends when they are not around [00:40:00] all of those things make us uncomfortable?

Right? Cause we're like, oh, it was the same thing happening when I'm not around. And she's saying to them about me or is he saying to him about me? And I think those are the kinds of things you should. That should definitely be red flags. But here's the other thing, right? We, if you know what someone's like, when someone, what is that quote, someone shows you who they are, believe them and then

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah, I think that's Maya Angelou. Who said that,

**Ericka Souter:** Yes. And so, but you can decide, well, you know what, this is the person who, when we have like, mom's night out and they're there. Know, I can laugh with them. I can have a toast, a drink with them or whatever, but this isn't the person that I'm calling at two o'clock in the morning when I'm worried about like, is this a fever?

Or if this is something or this isn't the person I'm sharing the ups and downs of my life with this, isn't the person who's going to celebrate me genuinely and, and put that person in their box. Right. You know, what kind of relationship you can have with them? Maybe it's just the fun going out person. So I feel as though yes, it, uh, lots of people think, [00:41:00] oh, dump the toxic mom friend.

That is a possibility. And I've done that myself.

I, you know, I think it's, I, I, I couldn't take the stress of having a toxic mom friend personally, but if you have a huge friend circle and this toxic, person's a part of it, just limit your interaction with that person and know that you're getting what you need from other people.

So, I mean, for some people that works better than cutting them out completely.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Yeah. It's, it's such a great point. ,

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah. It's important that you don't have to like dump every toxic, you know, you don't have to dump a toxic mom friend, but I think you have to be real with yourself about where, when a relationship is beyond repair and when it is time to move on. And that's also a really important skill we need to develop as women and moms,

**Jill Stoddard:** Absolutely setting limits, having boundaries.

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Jill Stoddard:** And if you're setting limits and having boundaries and people are pushing against them and the relation, if you're trying to create a relationship where maybe this is just the fun mom that you , go out with two group [00:42:00] happy hour, you know, if that still is toxic, even in that context, then maybe at some point it's something you, you decide to.

And we had, Nedra towag on the podcast and she wrote an amazing book about boundaries. So if people are interested in a more detailed discussion about that, that's a good place to go to. Oh I know what the other thought I had was that list of questions.

This just dawned on me as you were reading them, this is a way that we can assess whether we have toxic friends, but also you could ask yourself like, am I that person, you know, am I talking badly about my other friends behind their backs? You know, and there's a function to this. Like for some people that feels really bonding and the purpose of it is.

to try to be close.

And there's a lack of recognition that this can actually do more harm than good. So I think if there are listeners that are like, oh shoot, am I the toxic friend? You know, that's an important way to become self-aware too.

You know, and if you're noticing that people are enacting a lot of [00:43:00] boundaries with you, or seem to be breaking up with you to do some like soul searching about what may be needs to be different so that you can not be lonely to, that would be a lonely place to be, you know,

**Ericka Souter:** it is. It is, Let's talk a little bit more about judgment. You know, you also talk about these, like so-called mommy wars, where women are judging each other for, you know, working versus stay at home breast versus bottle co-sleeping versus crying.

**Jill Stoddard:** I mean, any of the thousands, tens of hundreds of thousands of choices we have to make as moms. And you know that we're doing this judging when women are probably feeling like the most vulnerable or insecure, and you have a really interesting take on this and on this concept of judgment, which isn't necessarily just judgment is bad.

Don't judge. So I'm wondering if you can tell our listeners a little bit about your take on judgement.

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah, well, definitely mommy judgment was one of the biggest issues that, , women talked about when I interviewed them. And so at first I was like, well, how can [00:44:00] we eradicate judgment? Like, what is the solution to this? And what I realized there is no solution. I swear, I talked to every researcher in the whole area of this, these kinds of issues.

And there is no solution because there's something about being judgmental, that's innate, but it also doesn't have to be wicked. Right. Because when you make a judgment about someone, it just means that you are, they have made a different decision or they've made a decision that doesn't align with your values or what you want for your family.

And that's okay. So we just start accepting the idea that we are going to judge and we are also going to be judged, but if we. We have to ask ourselves when we do judge, where does it come from? Does it come from a nasty place? Are we wishing bad on someone? Or we're trying to put someone down that's when you stop yourself and be like, okay, do I need to do that?

And usually when people do something like that, it says more about what they're going through than what the other person's going through. So I just feel like if we just accept that judgment, it's going to [00:45:00] happen, it would just be easier to deal with. Right. And then also understand if someone is being

nasty or unkind and, you know, judgmental in that way that has more to do with their own insecurities.

**Jill Stoddard:** Totally. And I, yeah, I think that's exactly right. That if I'm being really judgmental, it's more about my discomfort, that if you're choosing something different from me, then maybe I'm choosing the wrong thing. And that is all coming from a place of, I really want to be a great mom. I really want to make the quote unquote right.

decisions.

And it's hard to recognize, like there's a lot of right. ways, ways to do things and you have to choose whatever works for you and your family and what works for your family may be different than what works for someone else. And you're allowed to have opinions and you're allowed to choose based on whatever information you have and then, you know, to each his own or to each her own or teach their

own.

**Ericka Souter:** right. Just, just accept that, that person's going to do things their way [00:46:00] and I'm going to do it my way. , and what they do has nothing to do with me. And I know that's hard for some people, but that is just, I mean, otherwise you're going to go insane, comparing yourself to other people and you know, it's, it's just, it's not worth it.

**Jill Stoddard:** And it really like it.

it is like . Drinking poison and expecting someone else to die. That it's like, if I'm just going to sit here in judgment and think all these nasty thoughts about somebody else, like that's not really affecting them in any way.

It's not going to change their behavior. It's not going to change anything. It's just going to make me feel terrible. So, right. Like there's just really, no, , it, the function might be to try to make me feel better about my own decision. And that might feel better in the short term, but like really it's harming me in the longterm.

**Ericka Souter:** it is because it's just this negativity that eats away at you when you become so preoccupied with someone else's choice. It's like that, that can't be healthy. And that's, that's not a good feeling, right. When you're like so

annoyed or angry at someone's choice and you, you know, [00:47:00] How's that affecting you in your day and your mood, think about that.

Is that really worth it?

**Jill Stoddard:** Right, right. Let's talk a little bit about. Work women who work outside of the home, moms who work outside of the home. , you know, which of course like this can be one of the obstacles to having a kid and having a life. And you cite some, you know, pretty disturbing statistics. Like the gender pay gap, for example, is even larger for women with children versus women, without children. And you talk about this hashtag that I actually hadn't heard before, which is hashtag secret parenting. So can you talk a little bit about this and then like what your suggestions are for, for what we do about.

**Ericka Souter:** Well, there's definitely, , motherhood penalty. There's I'm not going to say there's a fatherhood penalty because that actually has shown not to be true,

**Jill Stoddard:** The opposite is true right? Like they actually are more likely to get raises and promotions once they become fathers and women. It's the opposite. Yeah.

**Ericka Souter:** It's the direct opposite. And you know [00:48:00] what? I, when I talked to a lot of women who worked in a variety of areas, like from law to a sales clerk to, , production, to advertise, whatever it was, a lot of them felt that when they came back to work, they weren't seeing. Dependable or as capable or as dedicated.

And the research bears that out research shows that hiring managers and employers don't think of mothers as being as you know, reliable or as being as dedicated. And I think a lot of us don't expect that because so many people have built up careers before they had children and it's kind of devastating to take this hit, right?

And it can happen in subtle ways. It can happen in variable or overt ways, but can also happen in very subtle ways, but not getting certain accounts or not getting certain promotions are not being allowed, opportunities of child free people. And so I felt that this is something you should be aware of.

Like, we don't talk about this. No, one's going to tell you when you're at your baby shower, [00:49:00] that, oh, by the way, your career's going to take a big hit, be careful, you know? So I wanted to write about this and so that people can

be aware and hopefully it won't happen to you. And hopefully, , Suffer significant changes in your rear because you have a family, but you might.

And, , so I, I just thought that was really important to be aware of.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah.

And I think with many of the topics that you talk about in the book, it, the answer often comes down to communication. And, you know, I remember

When I interviewed David Smith and Brad Johnson who wrote a book called good guys. That's about how men can be allies for women. , and specifically in the workplace. And they talked about a story where, , a woman was passed over for a promotion and the.

The supervisor, the manager said, oh, well, this promotion requires travel. And I just assumed since you had kids or had a baby that you wouldn't want to travel. And, and I think that, so much of this bias is implicit. There may even be good intentions behind it.

Like, oh, I just wanted to protect your [00:50:00] time. Cause I know this is important to you, but there are these assumptions. And you know, that, that part of what we can do is to try to communicate more openly about, you know, goals and the role of children. But going back to this hashtag super parenting, this was born out of a place of Like, don't tell anybody at work that you have a kid, right.

Because you're going to be screwed. Yeah.

**Ericka Souter:** you know, I talked to it's just so it's not funny, it's, it's sad, but also like you can't believe it. , you know, executives, like, you know, people feeling like if they know, , how young my kids are, then I may not be promoted or I may not get certain accounts or when women were interviewing for jobs, they hit the fact that they had kids.

And then later it would be like months later, they're mentioning something in passing and their boss. Like you have kids, you know? So a lot of women feel the need to do this secret parenting so [00:51:00] that they're not penalized in the workplace. And then we have situations where people. Are, you know, people may know that you're a parent, but you know, you always get kind of the side-eye when you have to leave because their kid's sick or you have a little league game or something like that, where they try to schedule their day and



make, you know, make it seem like they're leaving, but not for their kids or their family.

And to kind of secretly get as sneak away. Maybe they're scheduling like a work lunch with a client or something like that, but they're really going to see their kid in their school performance. And it's just really kind of sad that you have to hide this part of your life because in actuality, parents, women, mothers are they're better in terms of organizational skills, they're better in budgeting.

They're better in, getting things done early. I mean, there's just so many skills that you have as a parent because you have all of these other responsibilities that, you know, these skills make you a very, very good employee, but for some reason, we're just not seeing that way.

**Jill Stoddard:** Right. Th there's, There's all these [00:52:00] assumptions out there that aren't based on actual fact. And, and of course, I think it's important to say that, you know, these are organizational and systemic issues and really like the onus shouldn't be on us as individuals to try to fix this problem of course, and the wheels of change, spin at the absolute slowest pace ever.

And so, you know, it's like in the meantime, my hope is that the more we talk about these things, right again, communication, almost like a grassroots effort, that the more transparency there is, the more communication there is. The more awareness there is of things that you just mentioned, that like mothers actually make great employees.

And how can we make sure that the people at the top who, you know, are often white men, privileged men who have. Sometimes, like, I forget what the statistic is. Eve Rodsky talks about this. I want to say it's something like, I always get these wrong, but I can always look it up. We can put It in the show notes, but it's like 70% of the men in the C-suite are [00:53:00] married to women.

They're like CIS, hetero white, et cetera. They're married to, , women who aren't working, who are basically taking care of everything at home. And so those men that are in positions of power, who are making decisions are making them based on an experience that is not the same as like most of the people that are working below them.

And so that creates a real obstacle to some of this organizational and systemic

**Ericka Souter:** It does, but one of the, here's the, one of the benefits of this terrible pandemic we've lived through. People are more focused than ever on

emotional wellbeing and balance. And I find that a lot of companies are listening more and trying to create a more balanced life for their employees. And I also find that employees are also being more honest about their childcare issues and their need to have a time to shut things down.

Now it's not always easy in every industry. This is not something [00:54:00] that has, is going to be solved in the next year or two. I think it's just going to take time and the change of the way we think about parents and caregiving and, , and helping to support people who are caregivers. But I do see a shift.

There's definitely a shift in work culture that is paying more attention to the emotional and mental health of.

**Jill Stoddard:** you think part of that can't, you know, we know that the great majority, if not all, you know, that, that like all of the workers lost to the workforce during the two years, the first two years of that pandemic were almost all women. And I do think that that's part of this kind of like great awakening of like, oh my God, they were almost all mothers.

I should say that it was just impossible for women to, you know, homeschool and parents and work and do all the things. And many of them ended up leaving, leaving the workforce. And I wonder if that's part of what's like opening eyes in more Corp, corporate culture, other kinds of work settings.

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah, I think there's been a lot more [00:55:00] media attention to the part women play in the great resignation and why women felt the need to resign from their jobs. And there is this, you know, we're paying much more attention to what it means to be a caregiver and what those responsibilities look like and how unfair that extra.

, I don't want to call it a burden, but your extra responsibilities you have as the primary caregiver and a full-time employee. And this isn't just people with kids. These are people who are core caregivers who are taking care of elderly parents or six spouse or partner. So I think all of these issues are being brought to the forefront because during the pending.

So many people quit their jobs or lost their jobs, or people are trying to balance the jobs with home. And there was no clear delineation between home and work, everything merged together. And so, , I feel like it's created a lot more discussions and a lot more, , managers and people who run companies.

They don't want to lose more good people. And that's some of the other thing about the great resignation, you know, a lot of companies now are in desperate need of, of employees, right? So [00:56:00] for the, I think one of the first times I feel like there's this shift where employees have in certain industries have more power than they've ever had, where they can ask for flex schedules and they can ask for certain amounts of time offers certain, you know, days in the office in days home.

And that is because of all these things that have happened to us during the pandemic.

**Jill Stoddard:** And the proof has been in the pudding for the people who have remained in the workforce. They're more productive, not less since they've had more flexibility since they've been working from home, you know, so whatever fears there have been about, oh, well, if I grant flexibility, work from home, et cetera, you know, that productivity is going to dip in the opposite has been true.

And so I think there's been some, you know, experiential learning there too.

**Ericka Souter:** and it's, but I do love what you said about communication. Like when, you know, when you are a new mother or you're a mother and in the workplace, you know, you have to kind of sell yourself. You have to let them know what you're capable [00:57:00] of, what you've done, what your wins are, what your successes are. I think typically we don't typically we don't boast about our accomplishments, right?

That's not something women in general do, but I feel like we need to, that we need to let our employers know, , leading up to our maternity, leave, all the things that we've done, all the things on our plate, , , where we add value to the company. And then when we get back, letting them know that, you know, here's what, I provide here's what I do.

Here's what my schedule is. I feel like we have to be kind of direct and honest about the value that we add.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Be our own advocates. And I think for anyone, anyone who's listening, who's in a position of power. Who's in a leadership position to think about ways that you may be able to change your own. Work culture, like how can I be a boss that supports the, the women, mothers, parents, you know, dads to like, because that's just as, I mean, men have to be part of this conversation too.

Like I need to, [00:58:00] you know, we know that paternity leave is actually one of the best things we can do.

toward women's equality. You know, I keep referring to Eve Brodsky's Fairplay, you know, an even distribution of labor at home is one of the best things we can do to, for women to rise up in their careers.

Right. I mean, so there are so many ways that, that, and these things benefit men And. women equally

actually. And I think when, where are the ones in positions of power to make sure that we're aware of the culture And that we're making sure that parents feel like they are valued and not discriminated against not just feel that way, but that, that they see that that's the case, you know,

**Ericka Souter:** And I love what Eve is doing because she is creating a framework for us to start that process, right? When you start to, when someone sees how hard it is to be a caregiver, they have a different level of respect for being a caregiver. So for men who are, who, who are in a [00:59:00] relationship where fair play is coming into play with, when you start to share that load, you have a new found respect for her heart.

It is to keep all the appointments on tap, making sure there's toilet paper in the bathroom and milk in the fridge and the doctor's appointments, you know, kept and the school activities all scheduled and you know, all of that stuff, all of that, that is that's a lot of. And it takes a lot of mental space and I love how Eve kind of breaks it down and gives us a framework for how to start lightening the load for that primary caregiver

**Jill Stoddard:** Yes. And that it's the conception and the planning and not just the execution. And I will say, I mean, people have heard me talk about this ad nauseum, but it works. I mean, it really like my husband and I were on the verge of divorce and, and, you know, you talk, we keep talking about the importance of communication, et cetera, and having these conversations and for us, and I know many friends who have been in the same boat that [01:00:00] sometimes communication doesn't get, you know, I literally made a spreadsheet to show all the things I was doing versus him versus shared thinking, of course, this is going to do the trick.

Nope. He didn't see it. We do 50 50. And so the communication just hit a dead end and it wasn't until we had a system in place to divvy up these things, conception and planning and execution. Everything changed. And our

relationship is so much better. And like I said, I am freed up to be a mom and have a life because I have a partner who is doing as much as I am.

So now I can actually engage in some of the things that I want to do outside of my role as parent.

and partner. And also if you have a male and a C-suite, who's practicing fair play, that awareness that you're talking about around, gosh, like there's so much that needs to, you know, th that that's going to end up trickling down in that corporate environment as well.

Right. The expectations of men and women, and, you know, et

**Ericka Souter:** I feel like that is that it's [01:01:00] absolutely, that's absolutely true. It really, you know, and so I really would encourage any person out there who is kind of struggling and feels overloaded with things at home. Right. , to have a conversation and it does start with a conversation and then you can, you can, you know, in a book like mine, you have like, here are the questions, like let's, let's talk about how I'm feeling, how you're feeling and what you expect and what I expect.

Right. And then you have a book like is, and if it's like, well, here's a framework of how we move forward to make it better. And she says, it's not a 50 50 split that doesn't always make sense for a lot of couples, but it's about taking ownership of something in the home so that you understand what it takes to see it through, you

**Jill Stoddard:** Right. It's what you, as a couple deem, quote, unquote fair. It's not about the number of tasks each person holds. Yeah. Yeah. Well, we're coming to the end of our time. So let me wrap up by asking you a juicy question about sex. So, you know, many of us are familiar [01:02:00] with the changes that often happen, you know, in a couple sex life, post babies.

And there are myriad reasons, right? Like changes to our body, lack of privacy, feeling exhausted, feeling like touched out. , and you know, research certainly shows that the frequency of sexist reduced during pregnancy and while people have small children, but tends to rebound later on. So is this something you think we need to just kind of like accept as inevitable, but temporary, like not stress out about have patients give ourselves grace or is there something more proactive you suggest either to increase sex during those young kid years or something to do, to like ensure that it does in fact rebound down the road.

**Ericka Souter:** I really think it's important to, you know, drain those years when your kids are really little, , and you're stressed and you're overloaded both of you, by the way, both both parents. I think it's important to keep up intimacy. And if you don't always have the energy for sex and by intimacy, I mean, , touching or asking someone how their day is [01:03:00] or hugging or spooning watching a movie together, there are so many ways we lose even those little bits of intimacy, which drives us further apart.

**Jill Stoddard:** Yeah. Even just making eye contact. I went out to dinner with my husband one night and we, you know, we're sitting across from the table from each other and I.

thought, oh my God, I can't remember the last time I looked in his eyes and we had been home together all the time, you know?

**Ericka Souter:** Yeah. Yeah. So it does, sometimes it takes a little bit of effort, but just to remind you why you love that person in the first place, right. , if you can do more things, kid-friendly kid-free moments, even if it's taking a walk or like I said, watching a movie when the kids go to sleep or, um, having friends over and just cooking a home cooked meal and just things that remind you of how fun it is to be a couple.

And it doesn't always have to be sex. Obviously sex would be great, but not everyone feels like it. And they're tired. And like you said, touched out that is very, very real. But if you keep that emotional connection, I think that it's an easier way to find your way [01:04:00] back to sex.

**Jill Stoddard:** that's great. Well, that is a great place to end, Ericka. Thank you so much. This has been such an interesting and useful conversation. Where can people find you if they want to learn more about you? If they want to find your book again, the book is , how to have a kid and a life, a survival guide.

**Ericka Souter:** Yes, we can find the book everywhere books are sold Barnes and noble, Amazon independent booksellers. I, I encourage you to go to independent booksellers and request it. , and you can follow me on Instagram at, at Erica suitor where I kind of keep, , you know, I keep posting about my, , research and any articles I've written or TV appearances.

I'm often on good morning America as a parenting expert. And you can also follow me on my website, which is just my name, Erica suitor.com, which has a lot of my work on there. So thank you so much. I had a great time talking to you and I'm glad you enjoyed the book.

**Jill Stoddard:** Thanks so much for being here.

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**Jill Stoddard:** We'd like to thank [01:06:00] our strategic consultant, Michael Harold, our dissemination coordinator, Katy Rothfelder, and our editorial coordinator, Melissa Miller.

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