

S3 E5 It's About Connection! Not Stuff

Hi everyone, welcome to the Meditation Momma podcast. We're in our third series and this series is dedicated to the moms. And the title of today's episode is, It's About Connection. It's about connection. It's not about the stuff. And especially if we're falling into that place where it's starting to get intense, right? Here we are, it's that week right before everything is going on and...and it can get a little intense. And if we can remember that it's not the stuff that matters, it's the connection, it's the people, it's touching that place inside us that makes us feel, feel full, connected. That's what's gonna fill us up. That's what matters.

And magically, when we touch that place, all those other thoughts and feelings of not being good enough, not doing a good job, they literally dissolve. They dissolve away and we feel content, we feel whole, we feel happy.

So hi everyone, I'm Caren Prentice. I am the founder of Meditation Momma and this series is for moms, but I know now that there are a lot of you dads and grandmothers and grandfathers and people who have no kids who are listening.

And so I just want to welcome you also. I'm just so grateful you're here and I hope you will find today's episode quite valuable. So here's, I'm going to start with a question. I'm going to start with a question and the question goes like this. It's a would you rather game. Would you rather moms, would you rather have your kid load the dishwasher or would you rather have the relationship?

Would you rather your kid was a really good student, got really good grades, or would you rather have with a relationship? Would you rather be right or have the relationship? Yeah, right? Man, it's hard because yes, I really do want my kid to put the dishes in the dishwasher. I feel like it's an important part of training them to survive on their own once they're out of the house.

I really do want my kid to do well in school because that's an important step in their future. And yeah, I do know what I know and I do want to be right and I know I am right, right? That's where we go. And short term, of course we feel that way. But part of our job as moms is to step back, step back, step back, take the long view and to recognize that in my experience, you probably can't have both. And there are going to be many, many times on our road as a mom where we're going to have to make that choice.

What's more important? The chores, the school, me knowing what I know, being right and giving them advice and telling them how to live their lives or the relationship. I'm going to tell you, I'm just going to let you know that really, ultimately it's the relationship.

Because here's another question for you. Here's another question. Do you like to be around people who are always kind of scolding you and telling you how you could have done something better, telling you their opinion of everything you do, judging you, fixing you, solving all your problems for you? Hmm, sounds a little like that inner critic, doesn't it?

And we don't like being around our inner critic and we don't like being around people like that. Most of us don't. It's suffocating. It's invalidating. It sends us a message that there's something wrong with us that we can't manage on our own, that we're screw ups. And so one of the gifts of becoming a mom is we have the opportunity to recognize those patterns that our inner critic has brought, all the modeling of our past has brought, and we see them come to life with our kids.

And this simple question, would I rather be right or have the relationship, helps us just refocus and put our attention on what's going to actually fill us up, which is the connection. Because, I mean, to just go there, how many of you dread going home and being around your parent, your mother, because she's so critical. She's always got a better way to do something. She's always telling you how you could do it better. You don't want to be around it, right? And so for so many people, going home for the holidays is a dread. It's like, the family dynamics. and you're going to have to put up with all of that.

Well, start now. Start now with your kids. Start now, put the relationship first. Life is going to take care of your kid. They're not going to, they're going to grow up to be who they are here to be. And I just have to tell you for all of the nagging and, and thinking I was training and molding my kids, you know, they became who they were meant to be. And the damage I did by being so hard was, was something I regret.

And it wasn't until so much later in the game that I learned to put the relationships first. And I am so grateful I did because even as I did it later in life, as my kids were older, when I learned this, what happened was that I have relationships with my children. They like to come home for the holidays. They like to be here. And one of the things that really helped me learn this was there was a period where with one of my sons, he was just...struggling in college, not quite able to quite stick with it, and a pattern that had already been evidenced, and was probably in college because it was important to me and his father.

And he was home one day and I just lost my shit. I just lost my shit and I yelled at him. And I remember we were standing in the dining room and I just screamed at him because he was just...What was wrong with him? How come he couldn't get it together and he was wasting our money?

And when it was over, I felt as small as I'd made him feel, as small as I'd made him feel. And I was talking to a mentor of mine. knew she had had 10 kids, had grandkids, great grandkids. And she said to me, your job is to believe in him.

What if you say to him, instead of being so worried, what if you, because that's your fear, that's my fear coming up, my fear about is he ruining his future? And what if I just started saying things like, I believe in you, I know you're going to figure this out. She literally gave me those words to say, I know you'll figure this out. And when she said that, it was like a light bulb went off in my head.

And I realized, wait a minute. This kid has always been able to figure things out. He always figures everything out. In fact, I go to him to figure things out. What makes me think he's not going to figure out his own life? And from that moment on, I started changing the way I talked. I started saying, I believe in you. I know you can figure that out. And I just backed off. And all that other inner critic that was in there, afraid for his future and all, I just let it go. And I believed in him.

And it changed me and it changed him. It changed our relationship. And it took a while, right? And I think many of you moms out there know exactly what I'm talking about. And what I've learned was to give him the gift of believing in him. A gift that wasn't about stuff. It was about a connection. It was about the relationship. And

We have this thinking that says giving gifts is about giving stuff, giving stuff. And really the most important gift we can give anybody is the gift that says, see you, I notice you. A gift that of connection. And another thing that helped me learn this was

I have a few stories for you here in this episode about how I learned this was in the early 90s of my husband first started these, those years of in and out of jobs and us, you know, not just not having a lot of money. I had started a Christmas tradition for us. It's called candle time where I wanted to foster a sense of connection from us and between us and take the emphasis off the stuff because there just wasn't the resources for a lot of stuff. And so it was this beautiful tradition we would sit together and we would connect and we focused on learning to give things without any expectation of return and to give things like kindness.

But after about three years of this, I wasn't that strong in my belief that it was really about connection. And we had a Christmas was coming, we didn't have a lot of resources, but I got scared.

I got weak. felt like I was letting my kids down and my husband and I decided we were gonna just put the stuff on the credit card and we were gonna give the kids big gifts. the boys got those huge, you know, those battery powered little cars and things that you drive around your yard. We got two of those for the boys and they almost took up the whole living room. And I don't remember what exactly we got for the girls, but we got something of the same kind of, you know, big, big gift.

And I noticed that really, okay, those were nice, but what we were actually talking about that Christmas was the other part of our tradition, which was on Christmas Eve, we would plan these baskets of little goodies that we would secretly leave on the porches of some of our friends or people we knew in the community. And that's what we were talking about was how much fun we had as a family figuring out how to secretly sneak up to somebody's house, knock on the door, ring the doorbell, and then get away before they could discover us. And I think we had, the kids each got to choose a family and we had so much fun. And the stories of almost getting caught, falling, and that's what we were talking about. That's what was connecting us. It really wasn't about the stuff that we tried so hard to get for our kids.

And it was just one of those moments where I noticed it wasn't about the stuff. What we were focusing on and what filled us up was the fun we had together, connecting as a family. And one of the reasons we had developed that tradition in the evening was because I had really given some thought and spent a lot of time learning what it meant to really give.

And I had heard this teaching that when you give a gift, you want it to be a gift with no strings attached. A gift is given freely. No expectations, no parameters, no obligation, just freely, freely given. And part of that Christmas Eve tradition was a way of trying to teach us to give freely because part of our agreement between us was we would never, ever, ever reveal that it was us who dropped that off. And boy, we kept that. It was a solid secret for us as a family, just us. And people would ask us if it was us and we'd say, what are you talking about? We don't know anything about it. And we would just hold that as a giving that we had given with no expectation of appreciation, acknowledgement, or anything like that. Right?

And so what was so beautiful about learning to give that way was it also allowed us to learn how to receive in that way. And the following year in 1998, that was a big year for us as a family because it was probably our lowest point financially. were close to losing the house. There just wasn't any money for Christmas. I mean, literally, there wasn't going to be a Santa or anything like that.

A couple weeks into the month, we got a check in the mail from my sister for \$500. And her husband had received this money, and I don't remember why, and he had looked at my sister and said, should we send this to Caren and Bill? My sister was blown away at his generosity, and they sent it to us. No strings, no expectation, no repayment, no obligation. And we were able to receive that gift without shame, without, my gosh, I'm gonna have to pay them back. It was just a pure receiving of the love and the caring from them. And we paid the bills and we kept \$150 out and we each had \$25. This is like literally the week before Christmas. And...

We decided we would take that \$25 off. would go to Saturday market and that's what we would have to get gifts for each other. And it was so fun because people would gather up and it's like, okay, let's pool our resources to do this for so-and-so and another opportunity to connect, to care, to think about what mattered to somebody. And we had so much fun and we felt so rich and we came home from that and you know, we wrapped our little things up secretly and that those were our gifts for each other.

No big Santa, no big power wheels, no none of that. Just that \$25 per person that we had. And we felt really, really good. We felt really, really connected. We had learned to give freely. And especially from the previous year, I'd learned that it wasn't about the stuff. And we learned to receive. And so when we went out that Christmas Eve, because we weren't going to give up our little, we called it our little SSS, our super special secret surprise. We went out that Christmas Eve. We got lost because there was no GPS back then and we were trying to find some places, people that we didn't really quite know where they lived. And so the evening went a little long, but we had so much fun. was so, so fun that time together.

So we come home Christmas Eve late, where our hearts are full, we're feeling good as a family, even though there's no money. And we come home and on our porch are five baskets. And one of those baskets had a turkey for our Christmas dinner. And the others were obviously carefully planned out with things for the boys, for the girls. And we were overwhelmed and so deeply touched, each one of us so grateful, our hearts so full, because we were able to receive the gifts that people had left us on our porch without shame, without, gosh, know, there's, we're, don't have the money everybody else has. There was none of that shame. There was just a complete sense of gratitude and a free a free open heart to receive what was coming our way. And so we went, we sat down to do that Christmas Eve part of our Christmas tradition where we sit around the candles and we share and I can't tell you how rich and close we felt to each other. We were complete.

But our minister had given me a little envelope and said, please open this on Christmas Eve. So we did. And as we opened it up, there were four gift certificates to them all for the kids. And there was a little extra cash there for Bill and I to use. And we were, and the gift certificates were of like \$100. And at this point, it was so not about the stuff. Our hearts were so full. We were so filled with giving love to those people.

We'd shared our gifts with that night, and with each other and receiving the love, we were just, we were, I don't know how to explain it, we were connected. We were filled with love and we understood what it meant to give and we understood what it meant to receive. And even though that was so much money for us at that moment, it was like the frosting on a cake that was already yummy. It was like the cherry on the sundae that really was a sundae that was so good.

And we were so aware of life itself stepping up. And it was as if life was saying to me, you learned Caren, well done. You understand that connection is more important than stuff. Well done.

And so moms, I hope I've made my point that in this last run up to the holiday, Let go of your agenda. Let go of what you think it's supposed to look like and open your heart and find the moments of connection because that's what's going to fill you. It's not the stuff. And let, let life work its magic. Let, let yourself show up for life as it is, your children as they are. Find the connection. Find the acceptance.

Let that inner critic dissolve into the background and see if you can allow the magic of the holiday to reveal itself to you. Through what? Through love. Through love. Through love. Through love.

Thank you so much for listening. I hope this was helpful. I hope it was meaningful. I hope it opened your heart, touched your heart, and inspired you to have the courage I didn't have that one Christmas where I had to go buy those power wheels and just trust that connection is enough. Connection is not just enough, it's what it's all about.

So I hope you enjoyed this last week leading up. If you would like to check out our website, we have some resources for you moms. We also have our moms program. We're opening it up this January to welcome in new moms. You can learn more about it on the website. And until next week, and we do have an episode coming up for you next week, is a very, very special, special holiday episode for you. Please know that I value you.

I appreciate you and I know, I know that you are doing a good job. Well done mom. Well done. Thank you for being here and I'll see you next week. Bye everyone.