

333: Wisdom From a High School Principal Life Coach



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jody Moore

[Better Than Happy](#) with Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 333: Wisdom From a High School Principal Life Coach.

Did you know that you can live a life that's even better than happy? My name is Jody Moore. I'm a master certified life coach and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And if you're willing to go with me I can show you how. Let's go.

Hello everybody, welcome to the podcast. I'm so excited that you're here today. I have an amazing guest to introduce you to that you are going to love. Before we get into my conversation with Ben and I'll tell you about him in just a minute. But don't forget that we have the annual gift pass available right now.

If you're looking for a Christmas gift for somebody who likes this work, who is a podcast fan or who has found power in the model and the tools that I teach inside Be Bold we take everything so much deeper. People tell me that all the time, they say, "I didn't think I was going to really get a lot new by coming into Be Bold. I can't believe how much is there, first of all, and how much deeper my understanding and ability to apply these tools became by joining that program."

So if you want to purchase an annual pass to Be Bold for somebody, you save over \$100, you save two months' worth off of the paying the monthly price. And you'll also get a copy of my new book with it that you can give with the membership or keep it for yourself, whatever you want. So you can get that at jodymoore.com/gift.

Okay, so I am very excited to introduce you to Ben Pugh. Ben is somebody that I have known for a few years, kind of known from afar. I didn't know him as well until I finally brought him on the podcast and we had this amazing conversation. I thought that you would get a lot out of hearing from Ben because first of all it's kind of nice to hear somebody else who teaches and uses similar tools to what I use but has a different style, a different

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approach. I think the men like hearing from more men life coaches so there's that.

But also Ben was a high school principal before his coaching practice really took off. And he has some of the most amazing stories and the most amazing insight about how to navigate raising your teenagers and what it's like to be a teenager in the world today. And how do we guide them without trying to control them? And how do we just love them unconditionally? And so I am very excited for you to hear from my friend, Ben Pugh. Let's do it.

Jody: Okay, Ben Pugh, I'm so excited that you're here on the podcast today.

Ben: I'm excited to be here. I've wanted to be on your podcast forever. And I actually feel like we just had a conversation today because I was listening to some of your podcasts but you probably don't feel the same.

Jody: I was talking at you at least.

Ben: Yeah.

Jody: Okay. Well, I'm glad we finally made it happen. So let's start with an introduction. Tell everybody a little bit about who you are and what you do.

Ben: Alright. So I'll start kind of a long time ago because this is relevant to who I am today.

Jody: Let's go way back, tell us the good stuff.

Ben: I want to tell you about when I was 13 years old and I accidentally lit my school bus on fire with rubber cement.

Jody: Oh my goodness.

Ben: Yeah. And I always tell, this is part of who I am. This used to be something I was super afraid of. But when I was a high school principal I

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used this story to save one of my students' lives. I don't know if it was that scary. But when I was 13 one of my friends stole some rubber cement. He asked me to keep it in my backpack. I knew exactly that it was stolen and that as the 13 year old I was, I was like, no, I'll just keep it in my backpack, it'll be fine. On the bus ride home, luckily it was towards the end so all the good kids were in the front and us few knuckleheads were in the back.

My friend's like, "Hey, pass me over the rubber cement." And as I'm digging it out one of my friends was like, "Hey, I've got a lighter. Let's see what happens." So I take the lid off. Back when I was in school we used rubber cement for everything. You had to paste your test behind this pretty background of construction paper or something. Anyways, I took the lid off, my friend lit it on fire and it went up in flames so fast. I tried to put the lid on and I couldn't.

I tried to throw it out of the bus window and I missed, I hit the little, tiny bar in between the open windows and sent flaming rubber cement all over the back of the bus. I burned a hole in my pants. My friend got a hole burned in his shoes. And we were in a lot of trouble. And I remember that was the first time I was suspended as a kid. And my mom was like, "All the kids that I knew whoever got suspended are either dead or in jail."

And then I had to go to church and my church leaders were like, "Yeah, you're not going to be able to serve in mission because we don't send arsonists out to represent the church." But as I've gotten to know Jesus a little bit better, I think, no, that's exactly who He wants to send [inaudible]."

Jody: Actually we do. My goodness.

Ben: And I did serve the mission. And several years later I became a high school principal. And I didn't think that I could. So I just got lucky and things fell into place. And I was a high school principal.

Jody: Okay. But what made you choose that route? I'm curious.

Ben: Honestly.

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Jody: Going from being this sort of rambunctious child?

Ben: I just made dumb decisions as a child. I got suspended lots of times. It's hard being overweight and having the last name, Pugh. And when you sit down at the cafeteria table and everyone's like, "P U." And they get up and leave and you're like I can see the humor but it doesn't feel funny. So I don't ever look back at myself and see myself as being a bad kid making dumb decisions.

I was talking to one of my cousins recently. And they're like, "How did you change? What changed?" And I'm like, "Honestly, I don't feel like I've changed. I have always just been doing my best." And I remember my mom being like, "How can you be failing? How can you?" And I love my mom by the way. I am so grateful for how she parented me because this is kind of what has turned me into who I am today. But I remember her saying, "Why is this so hard for you?" And I'm like, "I don't know. I'm doing my best."

So I'll tell you kind of, I lived a life of fear. I built houses with my dad. We did high end construction work in Salt Lake City. And I was just always afraid that someone would find out that I lit my school bus on fire and that I had been suspended multiple times as a teenager. I love football. So I volunteered to help coach football at a local high school. I was like, "Man, wouldn't it be cool if I could just be a teacher. Too bad I lit a school bus on fire years ago."

And we happened to be building a man's house who was a principal at the school that I later became the principal of. And this is around 2008 when the housing market crashed. And he's like, "You're an awesome guy. If you ever want out of construction, come talk to me, I'll put you to work at my school." And the housing market crashed so I called him up and was like, "Wherever you want me." And he was like, "Sweet. We need a substitute teacher." A few months later I became a tutor mentor.

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And then within about a year they were like, “Finish up your college. We’ll hire you to be a teacher right now while you finish up your school.” And I was like, “Sweet, yeah, let’s do it.” And a while later I became the high school principal. And this is where my story kind of comes full circle. I had to suspend a kid for smoking weed in the bathroom. And his dad was a big, huge native American man who was just so mad. And he’s just yelling and swearing at him. And I was like, “Oh my goodness, I’m going to have to probably get beat up by this dad to protect his child.”

And so I’m like, “Hey, time out. Let me tell you about the first time I got suspended.” And this silence comes over in my office. And I tell the story. And I’m like, “I lit a school bus on fire and I turned out okay. I’m a high school principal.” And he elbows, this dad elbows his son, he’s like, “Hey, at least you didn’t light the school bathroom on fire.” And he was just chuckling. And he’s like, “You know what? Maybe you’ll be a principal someday.” Completely changed the mood. And that’s when I was like, “Oh my goodness. I can offer hope. I can offer these new beliefs.”

And I was familiar with Brooke Castillo at that time. I started listening to her podcasts and there’s 15 episodes. And I was like, “Oh my goodness. I think I could share this with parents as well and help them stop worrying that their teenager has ruined their life.”

Jody: Here’s what’s fascinating about this is that that experience you had that you thought was your weakness, it all of a sudden now is your strength.

Ben: Yeah, 100%.

Jody: In this scenario, yeah. I love that.

Ben: And my mom, I was talking to her the other day and she’s like, “I’m so sorry about your childhood. We yelled. We spanked too much. It wasn’t always pretty.” And she just starts crying and I’ve really improved my relationship with my mom as I’ve understood. No, my childhood was

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perfect. That's exactly what I needed so that I can now help other moms, or dads, or their teenagers.

And as I told her, I'm like, "Mom, no, I loved my childhood. When you told me, all the other kids either died or went to prison. Yeah, that was a little scary. But guess what? I have learned that you were just parenting out of fear. And you were doing your best. And you were ashamed." I spoke at a high school graduation not too long ago, I invited my parents. She still turns just bright red when I talk about lighting the school bus on fire, like that's my kid.

Jody: Like that's my child.

Ben: But that's exactly what I needed to be who I am today.

Jody: I love it. Okay, so you started listening to Brooke Castillo at The Life Coach School, her podcast. I met you years ago at one of Brooke's events. There were 30 of us there or something.

Ben: I've told that story before. "Yeah, I was in a room with Brooke and 20 other people, and Jody was there." And people were like, "No. No, you weren't." Yeah, back in the beginning and it was awesome.

Jody: Yeah, you were.

Ben: And she sold me on being a life coach. Actually she didn't. She didn't close the sale. And I was like, "I can't afford it." And it was so powerful what she did. She turned everything around and she sold me on me. "Yeah, go pay off your car. Go do this. Go do all of that and then you'll be ready to come back." And sure enough...

Jody: So let me pause for a minute and just explain for our listeners. So this was a – it was a one day event where Brooke did lots of coaching. I can't remember what the day was called.

Ben: Yeah, how to be happy.

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Jody: Yeah, how to feel better, something like that.

Ben: Yeah, that was the one, which I'm always happy. I just wanted to go and meet Brooke.

Jody: Right. It was awesome. I remember thinking, I always love watching Brooke coach. And I was there because at the time I was working for The Life Coach School helping sell coach training. And we offered coach training that day. Even I remember at the end of that day saying to Brooke, "You didn't really sell it." She mentioned it, she's like, "This is what coach training is. And if you want to do it, here's how it works and here's how it costs." And she took a few questions.

But I asked her later, she could have really sold it and pushed it like you said. She said, "No, no, no, I don't want to put anyone into that that isn't quite ready. I don't want to sell people on it. For their sakes, I want people to be successful if they're going to go through my program. And they have to be able to sell themselves on it." And so she really does have really good intentions. And I have worked in lots of sales jobs where the intentions are a little bit less authentic. And she really is just so abundant that she doesn't need to talk anyone into coming to coach training.

She needs to find the people that are ready. And if you're not ready she wants to point you towards creating your best life. And if you choose to come back, great, and if not, she still helped you.

Ben: That's had a huge impact on my life because I'm always like, "I don't need you to do anything. But if I can help you believe in you, that's the most powerful gift I can give you." And that's what she gave me I feel like. I left that thing like, man, she's totally right, I can pay this off. I can do all this work. And I will be ready. And that's when I remember really being sold on the life coaching stuff. The podcast is cool and it's cool to really learn.

But to come away from just a one day event and have a completely new vision of yourself, a new belief like, no, this is who I am and this is who I can be. And they connect and it's amazing.

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Jody: That's so great. That's been my experience with coaching too. It's one off experiences that are transformative. And then there's you before that and there's you after that. And it's pretty awesome to witness and experience.

Ben: And there's you in the middle. And sometimes it's uncomfortable. But it's trusting that, no, no, there's me in the middle somehow, I don't know how but it connects to exactly who I want to be.

Jody: Where I'm going, yeah, I love that so much. Okay, so then at one point you did go to coach training.

Ben: Yeah. Probably my last two years. So I was a high school principal for five years. I went to coach certification. I had my call with you at the time. I don't know what you did for The Life Coach School.

Jody: It was still a while ago. What year did you get certified as a coach?

Ben: 2018.

Jody: Okay, yeah, so it's been a few years, alright.

Ben: I remember you were kind of taking people through that process of being like, "Are you committed or are you not?" Which I love. "You know what I feel like? You're not really committed. So we're not going to waste your money." But you just really again, helped me believe in me and I tried starting my business while being a high school principal. But that was just really hard. And I know all the coaches listening are like, "Well, that's a thought."

But I took the school from a 55% graduation rate to 88 in the last three years. We dropped suspensions from 200 a year down below 20 a year. And we just did amazing, amazing things. And I remember coming to a point where I was like, "Man, I'm a certified coach, I'm not using this." And I felt really guilt. But I looked at all my results at the school and I was like,

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“No, I have totally used those tools. They’re benefitting me in my life exactly how they’re supposed to.” And all of a sudden the guilt was just gone.

And I was like, “Awesome, I’ll just use those for coaching when I’m ready. And right now I’ll use them to be the best principal that I can be.”

Jody: Love that, yeah. And I think a lot of coaches experience that so I’m really glad you’re sharing that, that these tools are applicable in your life as a parent, as a spouse, in your job. If you want to go start a coaching practice, great do it, but it’s not necessary to benefit from whatever it is. And I’m not here trying to sell The Life Coach School. I’m just saying, whatever you choose to expose yourself to with tools of personal development, first and foremost they are for us to work on ourselves.

And to me, that alone is worth the price of whatever I pay to further my knowledge of understanding. But then second of all, we have opportunities all around us to use them. So anyway, okay, so how long have you had your coaching practice? And you’re not working at the high school anymore or you are?

Ben: No. I am not working at the high school. So I worked on the Ute Indian reservation. I actually got fired from there twice, [inaudible].

Jody: Congratulations.

Ben: I know, I feel the second time kind of validates things, like, “Guys, have you fired me and brought me back?” And yeah, it’s good. So I’ve been doing my own coaching for about two and a half years now. I started in weight loss, I was like, “This will be easy.” And I found out, I’m not passionate about weight loss. But I am passionate about helping parents and their teenagers. And after enough people were like, “Every time you start talking about weight loss we end talking about parents, and teenagers, and how to help them. Maybe you should coach in that area.”

Jody: Maybe that’s your forte.

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Ben: But it's not a thing yet. Everyone's like, "But yeah, if it were a thing, you would be the guy." So I just made it a thing and Joey Mascio and I have created The Firmly Founded Parent and the Firmly Founded Teen. And we just do what we're passionate about. We help parents and we help teenagers. And it's the funnest thing I've ever done. I loved being a high school principal. I always am like, "Man, it's a good thing I got fired because I never would have become a life coach. I just would have done that forever."

But now I am so happy with where I'm at today and just using all the skills and the tools that I learned from The Life Coach School and as a principal. And just bringing them in and saying, "No, no, I can help you with your teen. And I've seen it work with all of these teens and let's get to work with you as a parent. And I promise you that will help your teen more than anything else."

Jody: Okay. So tell me this, Ben, I want to hear your thoughts on when a teenager is struggling in various ways, misbehaving, getting in trouble, or feeling down, or whatever. I would imagine, correct me if I'm wrong, but I would imagine you're seeing all these things, you and Joey. Why is it so important? Because I think a lot of times as parents we think something has gone wrong with my kid. Can you fix my kid? Can you coach my kid? Which is by the way, not going to necessarily fix your kid but that's what we think.

So why is it so important that the parent or parents are getting coaching as well?

Ben: Yeah. I'll give you one of my favorite examples. I had these parents hop on a call with me and they were like, "Our son, he's smoking weed, he's drinking alcohol. He's making all these dumb decisions. He needs coaching." And the kid's sitting there sheepishly like, "Yeah, I've done all of that." I'm like, "Dude, do you see a problem with any of this?" And he's like, "Well, yeah." And I can tell he's just telling me what his parents have told

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him. And I'm like, "No, no, you personally." And I can tell he doesn't. So that's when I shifted my focus to mom and dad.

And I'm like, "Guys, he's not ready to change and I can help him. I'd love to help him but he doesn't see a problem in this. And the fact is in the model it's neutral. It's a circumstance. And I can help you two." And what ended up happening was mom and dad hired me. And went through some work. And the kid got in trouble again. I can't remember exactly what he did.

But the mom was like, "I'm so proud of myself. I wasn't yelling. I wasn't catastrophizing. I showed up as the parent that I wanted to be. And I realized most of my suffering was just my own recreated suffering from what I was making it mean", and blah, blah, blah and all this. And I was like, "Wow, that's amazing." And she's like, "And I know you've already met with my son but after I handled it that way he actually wants coaching now. So would you still be interested?" And I was like, "Yeah, of course."

But I always tell parents, "The biggest bang for your bucks, the most sure investment is you. We can coach your teen all day long and if they don't want anything to do with it, it isn't going to benefit them. But I promise you, as a parent you have the power to be the change that you want to see in your teenager. And human beings, we're herd animals. We can't help it. We just follow the herd. And if you change as a parent I promise you, in some way that will positively impact your teenager."

And one of the other examples I use, I like Tom Brady. I used to not like Tom Brady but as he just keeps on winning you're just, you're like, okay.

Jody: How can you not like Tom Brady? Come on.

Ben: Well, it was the Deflategate thing. I don't know what his role was. But he's still awesome. And I've heard stories about him where they're losing a football game and he gets into the huddle and he has this maniacal grin. "Guys, we have them right where we want them." And he's just very complimentary to his team like, "Hey, guys, good job. You've done it

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enough to get us here.” And he’s very positive and helpful like, “Hey, this play, we’re losing now but I promise you, after this play, we’re going to win.”

And the whole team just gets pumped and inspired. And I think most parents show up as – I don’t know, some other quarterback that we don’t like. He’s like, “You guys suck and this is all your fault. And you’ve lost us the game. You’ve ruined us.” And when we realize human beings are herd animals, you get to choose how you show up in your herd, in your family. And you can be this other quarterback where everyone’s down and worried that, man, I’ve ruined my life, or I’m a mess, I’m broken.

Or we can be the Tom Brady that’s like, “No, no, nothing’s gone wrong, we have them exactly where we want them, guys, we’ve got this.” And when you show up with that mentality as a parent, one of the things that parents come to me all the time, they’re like, “I want my teen to have more confidence. If they had more confidence they’d get better grades.” And I’d be like, “Okay, how do you feel about your teen?” “Oh, well, I’m just so worried that they’re not getting enough grades, they’re doing whatever it is.”

And I’m like, “Okay, if you want your teen to have more confidence the only thing you can control is how much confidence you have in your teen. And if you want your teen to have more confidence you be that change that you want to see in your teenager. You start having confidence in your teen.” And I just, I want to help all parents realize nothing has gone wrong.

So just adopt that belief, trust it. Just be like, “Man, I heard this dude on Jody’s podcast, he lit a school bus on fire and he became a high school principal. And he completely turned the school around so you know what? I’m trusting, no matter what mistake my teen is making, they’ll be okay. That is part of who they were always meant to be.”

Jody: That’s right. Okay, so a couple of things I want to expand on that you touched on here that I think are really, really powerful. So are a lot of your clients, members of the church, or you get some of both?

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Ben: I'm about half and half. I intentionally did not focus on members of the church. I get about half and half.

Jody: Yeah, okay. That's fine, I just [inaudible].

Ben: But they all get my LDS teachings. We talk about Alma the Younger and Alma the Elder all the time. It doesn't matter what faith you are.

Jody: I love it. It's just a useful story, it doesn't matter.

Ben: Yeah, it's a powerful example, let's just use it.

Jody: Yeah, okay. But regardless, so if I'm a parent who for whatever reason my value system says, "Smoking weed and drinking alcohol when you're a 16 year old boy or whatever, not useful." I think sometimes, Ben, and correct me if I'm wrong or tell me what your experience has been. But I think when we try to coach parents and say, "Listen, nothing's gone wrong here. This is fine. We don't need to freak out about this. We need to, rather than try to change your child", which of course we want to guide the child, and hold the child accountable, and whatever else.

But rather than freak out about what's going on with your child, we could just relax and decide this is okay. And I think that what people hear is that we're saying you should abandon your value system, that it's okay for people to behave or for teenagers to behave in these ways. And one of the ways I like to speak to it is, "Listen, I'm not saying that you would change the fact that you want your child to stop doing these things. I just don't want you to need your child to stop doing these things."

So in other words, you can hope for that, you can think that that would probably be better, that would be in their best interest, that would make life easier for everybody. But let's not wait for it before we decide to relax and be rational, and logical, and trusting, and compassionate, and all the things that serve us. And so I like to sometimes lay it out that way. Of course you want that but right now I see that you need it. And we've got to clean that part up.

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Ben: And I do want to say, this is where it does get muddy as parents. And it's easy, I've been coaching parents for a long time and I have a different perspective. I got in trouble and I turned out okay. But as a parent myself and as a dad I know how hard it is to be like, "But no, these are our values, let's go." We all follow. And one of the things that I have found super beneficial when it comes to coaching, I love teaching the model.

And I love telling parents, "You own your results. You are 100% responsible for whatever results you're creating. And you can continue believing that you know what, my values are the right values and you need to believe in my values and that's fine. What result will that continue to create for you?" And as parents this is a process. I have some parents that I've worked with for a month and they're like, "Oh my goodness, I get it, yeah, let's go."

And other parents that we're months in and they're like, "I think I'm starting to understand that. I think I'm starting to understand that if I continue to think this way, if I continue to believe that my values are right and theirs are wrong I'm going to keep fighting with my teenager." And this is one of the things that I feel is the most powerful thing that I teach to parents, your teens are working within their model. They don't believe in the model. They don't even care about the model.

I can't tell you how many teens are like, "Don't teach me the model. I hate it. My parents use it." I'm like, "Don't worry, we're going to talk about a different model that's slightly different but the same". But I always tell parents, "Your teen is functioning within their model. And the most powerful thing you can do as a parent is to trust that they own their results and that they're in control. And they can just keep on banging their head against a wall, or smoking weed, or doing whatever it is. And you as a parent can trust that, hey, you own your results.

And if you ever want different results I trust that you can create those results." And that's kind of the example that I try and show parents. I was tired of the results in my life. I changed my life, I went on a mission but I still

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didn't believe in myself. And I go through this even with weight loss or whatever else I'm working on. It's kind of like I have to just bang my head on the wall a few times and realize okay, yeah, I do control this result. And if I want a new result I have got to do some work up here in the model.

And just when you trust that your teenager, they don't believe it now but they have the power to in the future and that's all they need.

Jody: Well, and in the example you gave earlier where the parents got a handle on their own emotions, that's when the child was like, "I kind of maybe am interested in some coaching." It's when we as parents are sort of adding to the problem, you might say. There's this child who's smoking weed, drinking and whatever, is struggling in certain ways. And like you said, creating in some ways a negative result for himself. And when mom and dad are also upset and mad, or worried, or whatever. Then that's more problem on the child's pile.

And so it's easy to start blaming, well, the reason I feel so bad is because my mom is mad at me. Or the reason that everything is so hard, and these are unconscious thoughts. But I think that's what we start doing is we start projecting our problems, we think that they're coming from the people outside of us. But when the parents clean it up and the parents are just happier, more content, more peaceful then it becomes more obvious I think that I'm creating my own problem here. My mom's not the problem anymore.

And I see this happen too, you kind of spoke to the – it's a fascinating dynamic which is parents have to stop needing their child to be different in order to feel better. And this is true whether your child's making bad choices, your child is getting picked on at school, your child is struggling with depression and anxiety, it all still applies.

Ben: Sexuality, that's one of the huge ones [inaudible].

Jody: Sexuality, yes, all of that. Stop needing it in order for you to feel how you want to feel. Just do the work to feel how you want to feel even with

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your child as the same. And ironically enough sometimes on the other side of that, then the child does start to change. It's just a fascinating, fascinating dynamic. The other thing you mentioned that I wanted to kind of tease out a little bit when you were talking about Tom Brady and the quarterback example. I love that example.

It's almost like in our herds like you talked about, we're herd creatures. Within the herd there are certain people that have a little bit more authority possibly, or whose opinions we trust a little bit more. And as parents that's us usually, even if we think our kid doesn't listen to us. We are the ones with a little bit more authority anyway.

Ben: And they can't help it, they're just patterning you.

Jody: That's right. And so it's important that we pay attention to the belief system we're operating from because they will borrow our beliefs, or they have the potential to borrow our beliefs. When you described Tom Brady in the football game saying, "Listen, we've got them right where we want them. I know it looks like we're losing but we're right where we want to be." He's giving those other players the opportunity to borrow his belief. And he's Tom Brady so they're like, "Alright, if you say so."

Ben: Why wouldn't we? Let's go.

Jody: Okay, we trust you. And that belief is so powerful. And as parents and a lot of parents tell me, I'm wondering if you hear this, they tell me, "No, no, I don't tell my child that I'm worried." I'm like, "No, they know, trust me, they know."

Ben: And they maybe don't know but subconsciously they're just following your lead. And here's the things about parenting, we all have the one experience, we're like, I hated it when my mom did that. I will never do that. That's one conscious thing that you can either decide that I am going to do or I'm not going to do that my parents did. And 99.9 of everything else you do is just subconscious, here's what mom and dad did, here's what I'll do.

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Jody: That's fascinating. Or here's what my understanding of what a mother or father should be, or should do and it's unquestioned, unexamined, yeah, that's an interesting way to think about it. Choose more intentionally who you want to be as a parent. I always use the example of the flight attendant. Our children are going to have turbulence in their lives. They're going to create it or it's just going to come along in other ways. And we're the flight attendant, we're the one kind of in charge, helping, serving drinks.

And when there's turbulence if we're like, "Oh no, what's happening", then all the passengers on the plane are also like, "Oh no, what's happening?" But if we're just calmly – I remember sitting in the back of the plane once and the flight attendant was sitting back there knitting. It was kind of a long flight and she was knitting. And there was all this turbulence and I was nervous. And I'd look at her and she just kept knitting. And I remember being like, okay, everything must be fine because she's still knitting.

And that's the thing is we have to be, if we're freaking out it just feeds the idea to the child that something might be really wrong here. So yeah, I love that.

Ben: And I want to speak to something that you pointed out. So many parents are like, "Well, I don't tell my teen I'm worried." And it would be easy to be the flight attendant that's behind the scenes in your mind like, oh, no, I hope we don't crash. But on the outside I'm just knitting. This is where the power of thought work comes in. You can identify all of these thoughts, oh no, this isn't working. Something's broken. They have ruined their life. And you can question those. And you can choose new thoughts.

And so it's kind of like the duck on the water, but underneath the feet are moving, keeping them up, keeping them moving. And that's kind of what I feel makes a really good parent. We're doing the work between our ears. We're doing the work constantly. And that's one of the things that I found in The Life Coach School podcast and all of these resources. I would get these aha moments and it all makes sense. And I'd be like, "Oh yeah."

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But then an hour later I'd go right back to being human and struggling with this. And that's one of the things I remind parents like, "No, we still have the work to do. Let's keep managing our minds." And one of the most powerful things that I believe parents can do is identify what is outside my control and what is within my control? And once you identify that, just focus on what you can control. And do your own mental and emotional work to manage that. And just trust that everyone else will manage what's within their control.

Jody: Yes, I love that. So I guess, let me just ask you kind of some final thought type questions here. And then we'll make sure that people know how to reach out and contact you and contact Joey if they want help for their teenager, coaching for their teenager. So one of the things that converts highest on my Instagram page ever, my highest converting posts are when I give tips for parenting basically. Here's how to help your kid who's anxious. Or here's how to guide a kid in this way.

And I have resisted sharing things like that very much for a long time because I'm such a believer in what you're talking about which is, listen, your kid isn't really the problem here. And we can't coach kids against their will. Or we don't need to fix your kid because actually nothing's wrong with your kid, your child is supposed to make mistakes and go through life. And their brains are still developing and they're still choosing, what are their values. Like you said, their values aren't your values.

They don't even know what their values are. They're experimenting. They're testing things out. They're trying to figure out who they are in the world. So anyway, I'm a firm believer in that and I have been since the day I started my coaching practice because I work with parents too. But I don't know, as time's gone on I still believe that. I still am a firm believer in that. But I also think maybe there are though some tips, and advice, and tools, and tricks that could be helpful for parents.

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I'm just wondering if you have anything, even just one strategy that you share to help parents as they navigate kids, whether it be disciplining kids or guiding kids through a challenge?

Ben: Yeah. So I'll share some tips. Some people might be disappointed because they're not focused on your teen. But when I started my podcast I kind of came across this idea, I was like, what if I just did a five day challenge for my first five episodes? I kind of wish I had all the knowledge I have now and could go back in time and kind of re-kick off this challenge. But the first one I still feel is amazing. Define your role and your purpose as a parent. And notice I didn't say find your role. We're not going on this exploration and looking for someone else to tell you. No, you define.

What is your role? What's your job? What's your purpose as a parent? And really on that day one challenge I invite people, do the thought work, do a brainstorm. Come up with a ton of possibilities. For me, I'm a teacher, I'm a coach. I can't help myself. I am an advocate. I'm on my teen's team. These are just my roles, my purpose. And once you do that brainstorm, the day two of the challenge is to come up with a 10 word vision statement. And write it on – so I have these little 3 x 5 cards that I just have all over my house where I just put them up.

Put your 10 word vision statement and put it up all over the house. This is amazing because your teenager's going to see that and the next time you yell at your teenager, your teenager's going to be like, "Mom, part of your purpose is to be kind and loving, this card says it."

Jody: I was going to say, is that what it says, things like I am kind and loving? And what's an example of what a vision statement might say?

Ben: Yes, I wish I would have – I have one in my room and you would think I would read enough to memorize it, but no.

Jody: You need to put it up in your house in more places.

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Ben: Yeah. It's just in the back of my mind. But mine is I'm a teacher, I teach with kindness and love. And that for me, I learned it as a principal. I was reading a book, I can't even remember what it was called, this is an education book, it would be boring for all you guys. But the thing that it said was, your students, if they could do better, they would do better. And you can't control them and all you can do is teach them. So as a principal I took the stance of, hey, if you treat someone at a job the way you just treated your teacher, you'll probably get fired.

Hey, if you miss as much time at a job as you've missed school, you'll probably get fired. And so I just teach. And it doesn't matter how many times I have to teach, this is one of the things that I feel we get the example from Alma the Elder and Alma the Younger. And for those of you who are members you're probably familiar with the story. Alma the Younger is a knucklehead, he sees an angel, he changes. But when he's teaching one of his sons he kind of expounds a little. And he's like, I was The Gall of bitterness, I want it to be destroyed.

And then I remembered the words of my father. And then he called upon Christ. And for me I'm like, "Okay, that is my job. I'm just going to teach and I'm going to do it with love." And it helps me let go of how my teenager behaves, or reacts, or anything like that. And it's just like, no, Ben, you have one job, to love and to teach. That would probably be my biggest tip.

Jody: I love that.

Ben: Just define your role and intentionally be that parent that you want to be.

Jody: I love that. It kind of reminds me of, I used to be a leadership coach in corporate and when I'm coaching parents I'm often using the example like you said, if this were a job this would be like this. And so as a parent you are somewhat a manager of your children in that you might have certain expectations and that there might be consequences for them not meeting those expectations. But ideally in both a job and a parenting

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situation as the manager we're not getting emotional about it here. We're not getting upset.

We're not taking it personal. We're not getting frustrated, making it all mean all sorts of things. The way I would coach managers is if you have an employee that's not performing it's really simple. Your job is to teach like you said, we want to help them improve their performance. So we need to be having discussions about how do I help you get better at your job? And do you have the tools you need? What's going on? Why are you not performing? But then it's, so just so you know this is the expectation. You need to perform. This is what performance means exactly. And if you don't, this is the next step.

And there should be a disciplinary process that the employee chooses whether they're going to step up or ultimately step out because their disciplinary process will lead them out the door eventually. Now, as parents obviously we're not firing our kids. But it's similar in that the teen is going to choose what they're going to create in their life.

If we're really clear like, "Listen, I love you, I want to help you. What's going on? Do you need help? Let me tell you a great story. But ultimately this is what I expect. This is what's okay in our home or not okay in our home. This is what I'm willing to give you money for or not give you money for etc. And so you choose. And I love you either way. But this is the consequence of this. This is where this path leads. This is where that path leads." So it doesn't have to be dramatic and emotional. And of course we're going to have some clean pain, some disappointment and things like that.

But ultimately I sometimes have to stop with my kids and go, "Okay, this is the time when I need to be a loving manager."

Ben: Yeah. And I always tell parents, "Take the scientific approach." I have kind of changed my role, it's a little bit different for each kid. I have a 14 year old who I just help coach his football team and he is very vocal and willing to tell everyone that he has the dumbest dad ever. But then I have a

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six year old who just a few months ago asked, he's like, "Dad, who's nicer, you or Jesus?" And he just think I'm amazing. And I realize, he has different needs from me than my older one does.

And my job is just to do my best to fulfil my role for them. And if they don't like it, this is what I love about boundaries. So many parents think the boundaries are meant to manipulate and change their children. No, it's just if you do this I will do this. And you can do whatever you want and this is how I will show up. I'll love you. I'll trust you.

One of the things that I would like to share, parents, we've talked about this over and over, they typically think my teen needs to change, they need to be different. Guys, I want to tell you, the only thing keeping you from the relationship that you want with your teenager is your own inner mental and emotional work. I promise you, that is the only thing. Your teen doesn't need to change. You don't even need to change. Just start managing your thoughts and your emotions and I promise you, you can have the relationship of your dreams with you teenager just as they are.

That's one of the concepts I teach, connect with your teenager right where they are instead of over here where you wish they were. Because that fictional teenager doesn't exist. But the one smoking pot, or having sex, or doing whatever it is you hate, they do exist. And if you think about it, that's where Christ connects with us, right where we are, not at that perfect being that He knows we can be. It's like, no, I went and paid for all of your sins, all of your pain, all your suffering, I experienced that just so I can meet you right there.

And that's all we can do as parents. We can't change them. And that's all Christ can really do is just meet us there. So we get to just do that with our teens.

Jody: That is so beautiful. I want to end on that. How do people find you if they want some further help from you, Ben?

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Ben: Yeah. So I have a podcast called IMPACT: Parenting with Perspective, that may or may not be changing to The Firmly Founded Parent. I don't know. Joey and I, we're combining everything. We're taking over the world.

Jody: I love it.

Ben: One parent and teen at a time. And we have a membership for teenagers, Joey was on a few months ago, talked about that. And we also have The Firmly Founded Parent. You can find that at firmlyfounded.com/parent. And as a special gift because I love Jody and I love all of her listeners. Use the coupon code, Jody, and we will give you one month free, that includes all of our group coaching. We might do a book club coming up soon. I'm super excited about that. So we'll see.

And it includes one 25 minute coaching session a month. So I love your outro, you guys, if you don't have a coach, guys, if you still don't have a coach, go take up The Firmly Founded Parent, come on.

Jody: Come on, get a coach. Okay, I love that so much. And I want to state for the record that this is the first time I have ever had a coupon code in my name. So I'm very flattered. I'm going to consider myself an influencer now. But also that I have no financial interest in anybody going and working with Ben. So don't think that I'm promoting him because I want to make money off of you. I just love so much the work that you do. I know it's so needed. I coach on this all the time. And I think especially we need more male life coaches. You're just going to have a slightly different approach, different style.

And so I love the work that you and Joey are doing and thank you so much for coming on. So, firmlyfounded.com/parent.

Ben: IMPACT: Parenting with Perspective. It is a long name.

Jody: Yeah, possibly changing to Firmly Founded Parent but we'll find you.

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Ben: Yeah, we'll see. You'll just find me.

Jody: You'll put in Ben Pugh, P-U-G-H and we'll find you either way. So thank you so much, Ben.

Ben: Thank you. I have loved it. Thank you.

Hey there, if you enjoy this podcast or even if you just find that it sort of piques your curiosity, or it makes you think, you're going to love the book that I wrote. It's called *Better Than Happy: Connecting with Divinity Through Conscious Thinking*. And it's available now at Amazon in print or kindle version. Or if you want me to read it to you, head over to audible and grab the audio version. And why not grab a copy for your sister, your best friend, or your mom while you're there too. Just saying.