**P1:** **[00:00:00]** Hi.

**P2:** Good evening.

**P1:** Hi, can you hear me?

**P2:** Yes, I can, yeah, can you hear me?

**P1:** Yes -- yes -- yes.

**P1:** oh good. I'm going to ask you -- hung on tight let me just get -- I'm just looking for a paper, one second sorry.

**P2:** No problem.

**P1:** All right. Tell me about your little one , but I'm -- I'm going to ask you all about…

**P2:** No -- no it's fine. Uh, so, she is -- so her name is Olivia. And she turns two on the 4th of July.

**P1:** Okay. So, soon.

**P2:** She's 23 months or so.

**P1:** Okay. How is it going? How -- what is she like?

**P2:** Uh, she's hilarious. She's so strong-willed. Jeepers creepers man…

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** …it's a bit hectic some times. But, um, she's -- no she's great. She's -- she's so funny.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And I just like I really -- I mean, look, she can be quite intense, because she requires a lot of input. And she is -- uh, I know all mothers say right, she's like super smart. So, she picks things up really quickly. So, you got to be on your toes to entertain her, because…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …like things don't entertain her for long, because she kind of gets them and moves on.**[laughter]**

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah, so you're just, uh, busy all the time basically.

**P2:** All the time.

**P1:** Yeah**[laughter]**

**P2:** All the time.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …and she's -- she's very active as well. So, she sort of runs around at high speed. Like the first time -- Husband likes to say, "The first time she walked, was the last time she walked." And from then on it was just running.

**P1:** Oh, gosh, okay.

**P2:** Everything is done at high speed. And she's got sort of hundreds of bruises all over her knees and things, because she's -- she keeps falling.

**P1:** I know when you look at them in the bath, they look abused.

**P2:** It was terrible. **[laughter]**

**P1:** Someone may think that I'm actually beating them because, yeah.

**P2:** It's terrible. Anyway.

**P1:** So, was she -- has she been at playschool up until now?

**P2:** Yes, so she started play group at the beginning of this year. And we were a bit kind of, uh, like she was 18 months and we were a bit hesitant to start her before two. And we started her two days a week.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And like by week two, she was just like, "This -- this is my place mother, I found my people. Like leave me alone." So, we actually put her in four days a week, and she was loving it.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Loving it. Like she could not get enough.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** So, she is very kind of -- she loves people and she loves like being around other kids and other people and -- and like she'll take charge, let me not, um…

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** …understate this fact. [laughter] She loves -- she just loves like being involved. God, she's such a joiner.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah amazing. Okay, so she's quite independent, she sounds like.

**P2:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah she's very independent.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And she's desperate to do things on her own. Like…

**P1:** Oh, really. Okay.

**P2:** …and I do try -- like sometimes I do try and let her do stuff on her own but sometimes I'm just like, "I cannot deal with the mess you are about to create. **[laughter]** I love you, and I know that you're independent. I know that you -- you want to do this on your own, but like, I just -- I can't deal right now."

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah, absolutely. So, I mean, obviously the research is about times when moms lose their stuff, basically and whatever that looks like. So, what is it for you? Do you think that gets to you, that triggers you or you find the hardest, whatever it is?

**P2:** So, for me, so I -- I can cope quite a lot with her tantrums and sort of like her not being able to deal with stuff. I -- I can deal with that. My biggest challenge actually is coping with Husband's feelings when he can't deal with her feelings.

**P1:** Okay -- okay, that's interesting.

**P2:** It's managing that. So -- so actually, she and I don’t come to blows if I can…

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** …put it like that.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** Um, I'm just trying to kind of think back…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …um, to a time -- to any time where we've sort of -- you know, actually, uh, when she was very little, I struggled much more.

**P1:** You mean, like newborn phase, or?

**P2:** Yeah, newborn phase where her communication was very limited.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** I really struggled with that.

**P1:** Okay -- okay.

**P2:** Um, I -- I -- you know, people sometimes say, oh, they're -- they are a -- like they're a newborn kind of person. They -- they really like newborns and stuff, I was not that person at all. I really could not cope with -- with being the mom of a newborn. It was not my vibe.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** I just was not winning.

**P1:** What was she like as a baby?

**P2:** Um, she was quite content and a lot of people commented on how content she was.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And she was -- she was very easy when it came to other people. She would go very easily to other people.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** But I -- I just found it very boring -- like quite -- like very boring interspersed with -- with periods of chaos.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Um, and I just -- I -- I had been told like go with the flow, and, you know, like you've got to just like you basically just got to take it like minute by minute.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** And at the time -- so I only had two months' maternity leave.

**P1:** Oh, right.

**P2:** Because I work with my dad, and we're the only two people in the office.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** So, it was very difficult for me to take maternity leave, uh, just because of the way the office was set up.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** So, he would phone me every day, uh, about work stuff. And there was someone who kind of took over my position a little bit sort of temporarily, but it was not very easy for me to explain what I did, because quite a lot of what I do just goes on gut instinct.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** Uh, so -- so I was not able to just leave work where work was, and concentrate on Olivia. And -- and I also -- she came 10 days early.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** So, I was just about to go on maternity leave the day she was born in fact, was going to be my last day of work.

**P1:** Okay -- okay.

**P2:** And I had a really important meeting that day, and of course I didn't make it and the issue was never resolved. So, it was like this thing hanging over me.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And I -- I hadn't really had time to kind of mentally prepare myself -- I was going to go to the hairdresser and get my nails done, and thought, you know, like the whole thing that moms want to do, right?

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** And I just didn't have that opportunity. So, this was kind of -- the birth was very easy and it was actually like the whole process was -- like my pregnancy was crap. It was really difficult. I felt sick right -- I mean, I was vomiting until like three days before she was born. It was just a very difficult pregnancy, emotionally mostly, somewhat physically.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, the birth, by comparison, was really easy.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And, um, it went very smoothly.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** I had very little expectation about what was going to happen, which I think was good in the long run, because, um…

**P1:** Yeah, during labour.

**P2:** Yeah, like I didn't -- I didn't know what to expect. And we had a doula which was extremely useful, and she had kind of talked us through this whole process and **[00:10:00]** she was very good at kind of communicating what was going on and she talked Husband through the whole process. And she was very good at managing him during the birth.

**P1:** Right. Okay.

**P2:** So, the birth itself was very easy. Um, but, for example, the day that she was born, my dad came into the hospital and was like, "So, yay, I'm a grandpa but can I have your iPad please, because I've got a meeting and I need blabby blabby blah."

So, it was from day one. It was just not very easy to manage work, because work was always there.

**P1:** Yes -- yes.

**P2:** And I found trying to enjoy having a newborn, but still being tied to work really that for me was incredibly difficult.

**P1:** Okay -- okay. Stressful?

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And also because part of me wanted to have wrapped up work so that I could enjoy her a little bit more.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** I mean, wrap up work as much as I could, you know, given the circumstances.

**P1:** Yeah, not worry about it for the next…

**P2:** Yeah. Um, but it just -- it just didn't work out that way. And I -- I just found the resulting sort of interactions quite difficult.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And, I mean, you know, my dad was very apologetic and he -- he always kind of phoned and said, "I'm really sorry. Like, can you talk now?" And I felt very torn between dealing with my baby and dealing with work.

**P1:** Yeah, and then…

**P2:** So…

**P1:** …having…

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** …a foot in each camp basically.

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Yeah. Um, but I tried my best to kind of go with the flow. But like I said, I just I found her not being able to communicate with me very difficult.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Um, so as she got older, and she was able to kind of communicate with me given pointing and body language and sounds and whatever…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …I -- I have actually come to enjoy her much, much more.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And I find that our interactions -- um, like, um, I feel like I'm quite patient when it comes to her.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Even -- even when she's having her meltdown.

**P1:** Yes.

**P2:** Trying to just figure out like what went wrong or what's happening or -- I -- I don’t find myself exploding…

**P1:** Okay -- okay.

**P2:** …when that kind of stuff happens.

**P1:** One thing that has come up quite a bit in other interviews is this idea that it's a lot easier to manage your child when you know what the problem is. Like if they're tired that's okay, because you know that and you can fix that. Or like you know what they need, but it's much harder when you don’t know what it is and they're being miserable and you're trying all the things but you just cannot figure it out and nothing is helping. I don’t know if you…

**P2:** Yeah, so for instance, she had a bit of a meltdown day like a couple -- like last week, I think.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** She just clearly -- you know -- you know those days, where you just wake up and you're just like, "Uh, this is terrible day. Like I just -- I know this is terrible day." And all you want to do is just lie in bed and watch TV.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** Like…

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** …and I could see that happening to her the other day. So, and -- and -- and so work for me during the lockdown has been -- actually like the work has dried up. We've got no income at the moment.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, I've -- I've -- I've been at home quite a lot.

**P1:** Okay -- okay.

**P2:** Um, which has been useful for her.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, we've had our nanny during lockdown as well, which has been extremely useful.

**P1:** Yeah, absolutely.

**P2:** But it does mean like, for instance, I will -- I will try and work in the morning and I will try and take time off in the afternoon just to spend with her. So, on this day, when she had her little meltdown…

**P1:** Mm-hmm.

**P2:** …I just decided that I was not really going to get any productive work done because every time I tried to disappear she just had a total catastrophe.

**P1:** Okay, yes.

**P2:** And I just spend the day with her. And like I -- I had some stuff to do. So, like when I did that, I just put her in front of like Sesame Street. But I sat next to her and I worked like with her.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Um, because I just -- I just got the sense that it was just one of those days where…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …actually, nothing was going to work. So, I just had to be around and that was it. Like so, I was around.

**P1:** And Alex, I mean, you sound like from some of the things that you say like you are a person who is quite capable of like changing plans, going with the flow, like whatever, let's redirect and we'll make this work.

**P2:** So, hearing you describe it like that…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …I promise you most of the people who know me would be like, "Who is this person you are talking about?" I'm not normally like that, but I have really tried to be like that with her.

**P1:** Okay -- okay.

**P2:** Because I feel like being too prescriptive and being too inflexible is just not going to work when you can't really communicate with someone…

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** …about what's happening and why it's happening.

**P1:** Okay -- okay.

**P2:** So, that has been a sort of conscious effort on my part. Since she was -- well, I mean, I've got better at it since she was…

**P1:** Sure.

**P2:** …born. **[laughter]** But I -- I do kind of feel like it is definitely been one of the things that I have worked on really hard with her.

**P1:** Yeah, I mean, even the way you describe the labour, you're like, "Well, I didn't really know it was going to happen, but you know, we sort of went in…"

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** And yeah, whereas…

**P2:** Yeah, I feel like I've learned a lesson in like in my life and if I had had a baby like 10 years ago, this would have been a very different conversation.

**P1:** All right. Because that sounds really helpful. I mean, it -- it sounds like it was incredibly helpful like you could say like, "Let's scrap the day and just do whatever," and that is what she needed in the moment, and there's a part of you that knew that.

**P2:** Yeah, so I mean, I try. I don’t always get it right. And, you know, like obviously like I'm human and I make mistakes. But I do try -- for the most part to try and take my cue from her, quite a lot. Like also today, she had a total meltdown when I had to go to work. And I just sat with her for a little while, while she had her little meltdown. I mean, so for example, some people get really agitated when their kids are crying.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** It doesn't bother me in the slightest. So, I can sit there and she can cry.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Like it doesn't -- it doesn't irritate me at all.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** With him, on the other hand is -- he -- he can't even handle like 20 seconds of it and he flips.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** So -- so yeah, so I do feel like most of my agitation, has been agitation directed at him when he can't deal with her feelings because he has all these various expectations of how things should go. And when they don’t go like that he gets irritated or cross or, you know, and then I get irritated and cross because he -- I feel like his expectations are unrealistic.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** But when it comes to her directly, and her and my interactions, I don’t -- I can't even remember the last time I flipped out at her. Like I mean, every now and again, I have words with her when she's doing something, that's probably not very wise.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** Like playing with scissors.

**P1:** Sure.

**P2:** But it's like -- so in fact she was playing with scissors this morning…

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** …and I said to her, "Please can I have the scissors," and she said, "No, mine," and she pulled them away. And I said to her again, "Olivia, those are scissors and you're going to cut something. Please can I have the scissors," and she said, "No mine." So, then I -- I like I raised my voice a little bit and I said, "Olivia give me the scissors."

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Like it was -- it was much more forceful than -- than normal. Um, but I didn't kind like flip my lid or anything. Like I don’t…

**P1:** And you didn't feel…

**P2:** It wasn't disproportionate.

**P1:** Yeah, and you didn't feel overwhelmed in that moment or like…

**P2:** No.

**P1:** …give me the bloody scissors.

**P2:** No. And I haven't -- I -- I'm trying to think -- I haven't felt overwhelmed like that…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …since she was about six months old…

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** …maybe. Yeah, like 18 months, I probably haven't felt like that at all.

**P1:** Yeah, okay. I mean, it's interesting. I am thinking about six months, and it's -- it's a lovely phase. They're sitting, they're interacting, they're really starting to engage with you. So…

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** …yeah, interesting. So, for example, when she is crying and she is worked up, what -- I don’t know if you can -- this is a hard question even though it sounds very simple, but like what is going through your mind in those moments?

**P2:** So, I -- I -- the first thing I do is check if she hasn't got any physical pain.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** So, the first thing I do is says -- so we've got this little thing. When she's upset with physical pain, I go through the body parts and we go, is this arm sore? Is that arm sore? Is this leg sore? Is this leg sore? Is your tummy sore? Is your head sore or whatever -- whatever --whatever.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Um, and then actually today, for the first time, I said to her, "Is your heart sore?"

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** And she **[00:20:00]** didn't quite understand the question I think, but, um, I just -- I wanted to start trying to get her to understand that actually she can have these kinds of feelings inside that are a bit sore that don't -- they're not sort of physically manifested, but they -- they are still kind of part of the process of, you know, checking the pain. And I -- I -- I was sort of 90% sure that she was really upset that I was leaving.

**P1:** Yes -- yes.

**P2:** But I wasn't sure whether or why today was such a problem as opposed to any other day.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Um, because I didn’t pick up the -- the sort of misery from the other day. Like a duvet day misery, I didn't pick that up this morning. Um, so, yeah, so I mean, going through my mind, it's just checking that she's not in physical pain. And then just trying to kind of reassure her that I'm -- I'm still around and I'm, you know, I'm -- I'm just going to go to work and then I'll come back. So, one of the things I often do with her as well, is I -- I took -- if I see her having a little meltdown because of -- and I've understood it to be because, um, she wants to do something now that we could do later on, I try and talk her through the process, right? So I say, "Okay, now you're going to play with Anna for an hour. And then you're going to -- and then Anna is going to cook you lunch. And then you're going to have a good snooze. And then when -- when you come back or when you wake up from your snooze then mommy will be back."

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, it's just trying to give her kind of an idea of the sequence as to when things will happen. She doesn’t always get it. Sometimes she does, but -- but she doesn't always get it. But -- but it just -- I think it's -- it's also good for her to understand like -- or for her to begin to understand that, you know, I'm not gone forever, and I will be back after these things happen.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah absolutely. Okay. So, for you, um, it sounds like you're saying -- I don’t know it's a very logical approach it sounds like. You're like, we need to check this, okay and it's sort of like, yeah I don’t know.

**P2:** Yeah, I try because I like -- and I know that probably applying logic to like an almost two-year old is not the most useful way forward. Yeah, it's -- I mean, she -- she seems to understand some of the stuff that I go through with her. So, um, yeah, I -- I mean it -- it sort of works for us. And I know that like it's basically do what works for you, right?

**P1:** Of course, yeah.

**P2:** But, um, I think yeah, it's -- it's the approach that I've kind of taken and it seems to be working.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** It also -- so I -- when you say logical, it's -- it's not that I'm trying to diminish the emotional approach. It's just that at the moment I'm not sure that she would understand the emotional approach. I think that's a bigger kind of thing that comes with age.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah, absolutely. Okay, so tell me about -- tell me a little bit about, um, when Husband is really struggling and then how that is for you?

**P2:** Okay. I just find it very frustrating.

**P1:** Okay. **[laughter]**

**P2:** Because I -- I see him with his various expectations about what she can do or what she can't do, in a moment. And I -- I also see like, um -- okay, like take -- take this evening for example. I was cooking dinner and I had -- I was crumbing chicken. So, I had like a bowl of eggs and I had a thing of flower, and I thing of crumbs, and I -- like I had a lot of things going on. And I knew that she would want to get involved. Because all of those of things are like, yeah these are great things to touch and like explore and like yeah. So, Husband normally looks after her while I'm cooking, and he came in and he brought her with, and he said, "Come let's look what mommy is doing."

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And he put her down in a chair opposite to where I was working.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** And I -- and he went off to do something. And I just knew that she was going to get up, onto the counter and come and play with what I was doing. And I really was not in a position to stop her at that point because I was covered in all sorts of things. And, I was sort of saying, "Olivia, Olivia, Olivia don’t do that," and to -- to -- as a prompt to him to come and get her.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** And he did and then he sort of -- he gets very kind of, um, shocked. Like you can just see when he's irritated and or doesn't know what to do. And then he sort of like starts huffing and puffing and -- and then he said, "Ah, well can't I just put her in front of programs like -- like a TV." So, and I just thought, well actually if you just picked her up and come and showed her what I was doing.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Like and talked her through what I was doing, it probably would have gone better. So, it's -- it's the sort of expectation that he had that if he put her down, she would just stay where she was. And that her getting up -- like it's -- it's like he couldn't see -- he couldn't sort of forward plan what was going to happen or the -- or see the potential and what was going to happen. And -- and this is something that is fairly general in our relationship, is that I just feel like I can see what's going to happen, and it's like watching a train coming to hit you. Like how can you not see it happening?

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** So, I -- and then I get frustrated because I'm like, "Well how can you not expect that to happen? How could you expect her to sit where she was put?" This is not a realistic expectation for an almost two-year old when there's such cool stuff on the counter. Like…

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah it's never going to happen.

**P2:** So, that and -- and it's things like that. So, I get -- I get very tired dealing with that kind of situation.

**P1:** I mean, I wanted to ask, do you think -- sorry I've got like two thoughts going. I mean, do you think that it is him or do you think that it is because-- and I think that this is also a general thing dad, so I don’t mean to generalise completely, but dads are maybe less in-tuned to kids or do you think he specifically has like higher expectations or expectations of her that are unrealistic or both?

**P2:** So, knowing Husband he has expectations of people in general that are pretty unrealistic.

**P1:** Okay -- okay.

**P2:** Um, so, that is a character trait of his. I mean, as I perceive it. Okay. Um, I -- I -- I mean, just trying to think of other dads that I know and we -- we have quite a lot of friends who have kids.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Um, I think that dads generally do struggle with this age group, but for example, I have got a friend who, um, so his name is Alan and his wife Jane, so she's the breadwinner in the family. She does -- she works and he was actually a househusband for ages and they've got two little boys.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** So, he was quite in tune with…

**P1:** Yes.

**P2:** …what they wanted and perhaps that came as a function of spending so much time with them.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And he sort of had to -- because yeah -- because -- because Husband doesn't, um -- Husband doesn't spend a huge amount of time with her generally.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, I do think it's difficult for him, um, sort of individually because that’s sort of the kind of person he is, but also because, you know, generally speaking still in South Africa, it's very common for dads not to, kind of, spend time with their -- with their young.

**P1:** Yeah, absolutely and then you -- and then your frustration is -- is yeah, as you have -- as you've been saying with him around you could have seen that that was going to happen, and now it's a problem.

**P2:** Yeah -- yeah and now it's a problem, exactly. So, like it just, to me, it seems like he doesn't anticipate stuff far enough in advance.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, for me it just plays out like a movie like I can see this happening…

**P1:** Mm-hmm.

**P2:** …and then it happens. And like there are so many points where I feel like he could step in and say and do something about it, so that it doesn't end up in a train crush that it's going to be. Um, but very often he doesn't and that frustrates me beyond belief, because so, then he gets upset…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …and Olivia gets upset and I get upset.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** So, it just -- and then it kind of spirals and it's just -- it just ends up in a very bad place.

**P1:** Um, what did I want to ask you about that? I mean, so how do you manage it, if she's upset, he's upset and now you're upset and you want to calm her down, him down or do you calm him down or, you know, how does that work out?

**P2:** So, mostly I try and calm her down, because if I can calm her down then he will calm down.

**P1:** Right, okay.

**P2:** Yeah. Um, so I often -- I -- I don’t really think about it in the -- in the moment, I have to be honest. I just -- my main goal is to like calm her down. So, I don’t even -- I don’t even think I spend time calming myself down. Which is probably not such a good thing either. Um, but yeah I just like my main goal **[00:30:00]** at that point is just to calm her down to try and deescalate the system -- the situation.

**P1:** Yeah, but it is a system actually.

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** Yeah **[laughter]**.

**P2:** So, yeah, that's -- but it often ends up in quite a bad place.

**P1:** Okay -- okay.

**P2:** Where then he needs to take time to calm himself down and then I end up like taking her out of the situation and -- and then I feel like I actually don’t have time to decompress.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, I get very kind of, um, emotionally fatigued…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …by that situation, and then I find myself being a little bit shorter with her than I normally would be because I haven't had a chance to decompress through the whole situation.

**P1:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I was just thinking while you were talking that it -- it can be like you are thinking for three people; yourself, for her and Husband.

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** And that's quite exhausting. I don’t think if you used the world exhausting earlier, but…

**P2:** Yeah -- well yeah, so -- so yeah, I think I said earlier that it actually makes me tired.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And -- and that does make sense, if I'm thinking for three people.

**P1:** Yes -- yes exactly. Um, yeah, you're thinking ahead for three people as well, so it's all very, um, juggly and balancing.

**P2:** Yeah, and the problem is if I intercede in any issues…

**P1:** Yes.

**P2:** …then I'm seen as criticizing his parenting or I am seen as interfering or like it's -- it's really difficult for me in all like possible situations there because I am kind of damned if I do, damned if I don’t.

**P1:** Yeah. Um, okay, I mean it does sound exhausting. It is exhausting to constantly be -- I don’t know what the word I'm looking for is, but like -- a bit like -- walking on egg shells. A bit like, you know, don’t do that. Watch out there. Yeah, trying to prevent -- yeah I don’t know the word you're looking like overseeing everything.

**P2:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah -- yeah -- yeah.

**P1:** Um, okay.

**P2:** Yeah -- yeah, just like managing the situation. But like not coming across as managing the situation.

**P1:** [Laughter]

**P2:** Like ghost supervising.

**P1:** [laugher] That's very funny. Um, all right, and then do you guys ever speak about it afterwards? Do you have a moment where you ask what happened…

**P2:** So -- so recently, like in the last couple of weeks…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …I have really been trying to do that kind of, um, debrief on the situation.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Um, because I do feel like it's necessary to kind of say to ourselves, "Okay well, what happened there and how can we prevent it in the future?"

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** So…

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** …previously we had definitely been like more kind of reactive to each other.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And it was -- it was really difficult because then the conversation would escalate and it would just -- it would be a name-calling exercise and you criticize my parenting and you do this and you do that, and it just -- it just never kind of felt like anything productive came out of it.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, recently, um, I've -- I feel like I tried to take a step back from when situations like that happen. Um, and say to myself, "Okay, well like did he have a point? Like did he actually have something valid in what he was saying? Um, and, you know, is it something that we can discuss? Is it something that -- that we can change going forward?" Uh, and -- and then I try and engage him on how we can change it going forward, or how we can adjust it or how we can make something more productive.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Um, and I do feel like that has been going better for the last maybe three or four weeks.

**P1:** Yeah. Um, okay but it's interesting I guess, while you're talking I'm thinking are you -- this is very simplistic obviously but does it tend to be in the relationship that you are more logical, more, um, ducks in a row, and he is more emotional and expressive?

**P2:** So, I -- I would say that well funny enough, I would say, I am the more emotional and expressive one. He -- he is quite shut down actually.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** So, he is very reserved and doesn't engage easily. Um, and I -- I am definitely the more kind of emotional sometimes to the point of irrationality.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** …yeah, so I don’t -- yeah, when it comes to him -- well when it comes to his and my relationship, logic does not always play a huge part. But I do feel -- so for example, at the end of February, I took Olivia down to Cape Town because I had some work in Cape Town. My parents were down there, we were all working on the same gig.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And we were staying in the same hotel in rooms like right next door of each other. And I have to say, I felt like the week went very smoothly…

**P1:** Yes.

**P2:** …even though I was essentially single parenting.

**P1:** Oh, right.

**P2:** Um, and it -- dare I say it was much easier than dealing with him and her, and him and her.

**P1:** Yes -- yes. Okay.

**P2:** It -- it almost felt like a bit of a holiday.

**P1:** Okay. Like if -- if you are ghost managing all the time…

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** [**inaudible 00:36:01**] manage it must be there's a lot more energy to go around all of sudden.

**P2:** Yeah, so despite the fact that actually she was waking up ridiculously early at that stage, like five o'clock in the morning. Um, I actually was quite energised. Like it was -- it felt like a really good week.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Um, yeah, so there have been times during lockdown where I felt like perhaps I should go to my parents for a week, and just -- with Olivia and just him a bit of space, and give him a bit of space and stuff. But -- but yeah, so when -- when she and I are on our own, actually I think for the most part we get on pretty well.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah. And so lockdown obviously Husband is working from home, it sounds like.

**P2:** Yes, yeah.

**P1:** It's interesting, I mean, some people have said lockdown has been wonderful because they've actually for the first time had the time to like not rush around and then focusing on their kids and that's been amazing. And some people have been like, "Get me the hell out of here. I don’t have any space. I cannot cope. Um…

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** …interesting hearing from…

**P2:** So for me, I would probably fall in somewhere closer to that second category. Because it's been ghost managing the whole time.

**P1:** The whole time, yeah -- yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** And then it's also managing the dynamic of our relationship. So, it's -- it's like -- there's just a lot of like connections to manage when the three of us are in the same space.

**P1:** Yeah, absolutely. Um are you -- I mean, so you're obviously very close with your parents.

**P2:** Yes.

**P1:** Okay. And I was thinking earlier, I mean, I wonder I know what you were saying at the work because it was your parents it -- it was so hard because you couldn't disconnect, um, but I wonder does it make it easier now because it's more flexible?

**P2:** Yeah, I mean that's -- that's been a huge -- huge benefit of where I've been working.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Because like you can't buy that kind of flexibility.

**P1:** No.

**P2:** And like when Olivia was tiny -- and so like I said, I only had maternity leave for two months, but I mean, I took her to work with me…

**P1:** Yes, yes.

**P2:** …for the whole of months three and four. Like so she was with me every day, for the couple of hours that I mean, I think I only went in for like two or three hours in the morning.

**P1:** Yes.

**P2:** Um, and you know, my dad was pretty pleased to see her because, you know, it's his grandchild and it's his first grandchild. So, it was -- it was actually hugely helpful. And my mom has been enormously supportive. Like and they also live very close, which is great. So, like they -- they live in the next door suburb. Um, so yeah, that part of it was great. Like I really would have -- you see, so it's like a toss-up, right? So if I've been a teacher, for example, I would have just handed over my work and gone for maternity leave for three months.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** But then when I went back, I would have had to put her in creche from three months old. Like and I would have worked, you know, when I was a teacher I used to work like -- like almost like 12-hour days. So, that was never going to work.

**P1:** Yeah, absolutely.

**P2:** But like I could ease back into work because I worked for my dad. So, I -- I worked for like mornings only and then I worked, uh -- I worked three full days and two half days. So, I took like two mornings off to spend with her.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And I mean, it's like the flexibility has just been amazing.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** And I kind of feel like maybe that has played a part in the development of my relationship with her…

**P1:** Yes.

**P2:** …as well, because it's given me the time to spend with her. Like and I -- I -- because I've been able to spend that time with her, I feel like I have a better insight into like how she's feeling and that kind of stuff.**[00:40:00]**

**P1:** I'm thinking what a big part it plays. I mean, I know -- yeah, I'm just thinking of like the rush of moms like dropping them off at school, rushing to work, coming back to fetch them and they need to get to the car, because you got to go…

**P2:** Yeah, so I've seen a lot of parents like that. Like, um, they sort of have like fights with their kids about the fact that they're taking so long to put on their seatbelt or their whatever. And Olivia does that as well. But because I'm a position, where I can just say to my dad, like, "Uh, Olivia was being a pain in the car this morning. Like she would not sit down and put on her seatbelt."

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And he'll just go, "She's so sweet." Like it's not like it will be like, "Okay, well you were 45 minutes late for work. Like what the hell is going on?"

**P1:** Yes -- yes.

**P2:** Like, having that burden, not -- not be a burden…

**P1:** Exactly.

**P2:** …has been a great for my being able to go with the flow a little bit more.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah. I was just thinking of how much that feeds into what we were saying earlier about being flexible and being able to…

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** …it's really **[inaudible 00:41:09].**

**P2:** And I think, you know, so I -- compared to a lot of my friends, I've had my baby quite late. So, I've got friends with like 10-year-old children.

**P1:** Right -- right.

**P2:** Like and then kind of the -- the whole spectrum from 10 down.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** So, um, I'm -- and I know that like being their mom is different to kind of observing stuff, but I do feel like there's some stuff that I've observed.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And I've sort of subconsciously absorbed and like one of the things is actually pick your battles. So, like I'm not picking battles I know I can't win. Like if she is not kind of going to sit down and put on her seatbelt, I just go like, "Okay, well let's think of something that will motivate her to do that." Because I have the time to do that. It's not like, I'm going, "Oh, my God, I'm a few minutes late for work already. Like this is not going to work for me." Like I have the time to go, "Okay, well, if you put on your seatbelt then we can go and see grandpa." Or, "We can go to the zoo," or whatever the case may be. Like…

**P1:** Yes -- yeah. It's yeah, it's very -- it's wonderful.

**P2:** It's been a game changer actually. Like, now that I'm talking about it out loud, it's -- it's been amazing.

**P1:** Yeah, it sounds wonderful. And um, okay, so the other thing I want to ask you about, is I mean, are you -- are you very different mother from your mom would you say?

**P2:** So, my mom was -- well, first of all she had me and my brother very close. We were only 14 months apart.

**P1:** Wow, on purpose or accidental?

**P2:** No, accidental. [laughter] It was the whole, I'm breastfeeding so I can't be pregnant. This could be fun, right, right? Yeah -- yeah.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** So, I think my mom when we were growing up -- I mean, obviously I can't remember a huge amount from when we were that age. Like that was **[voice lowered 00:43:23]** but I -- I do remember being very -- so they talk about this kind of secure attachment thing at the moment.

**P1:** Yeah, oh you mean attachment parenting.

**P2:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah. So, like I do feel like we were pretty securely attached to her.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** Um, because from what I know about what people have told me about when we were that age…

**P1:** Mm-hmm.

**P2:** …we were like little terrorists but in a good way, if I can put it that way. Like we were very [crosstalk 00:44:00] like all over the place and we were like -- we were independent and we were sort of confident to go off and do things. I mean, my poor mother must have been going completely spare because like we were all over the place. Trying to keep track of two children like that is just a nightmare. Um, and I do remember like times where she would get completely overwhelmed.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Um, and like just have to -- like so one of my abiding memories of her not coping was her just like -- like sobbing and going out and sitting on the pool canopy because that was the only space that she had like in the house…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …to kind of claim as her own, where she could just go and decompress for a couple of minutes.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Um, and even that, you know, then I wandered out going, "Mommy what's wrong?"

**P1:** Right -- right.

**P2:** Um, I think she found it very difficult as well because my dad was away quite a lot, uh, doing concerts and things. So, she was doing quite a lot of solo parenting.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** Um…

**P1:** She wasn't working? Was she a stay-at-home mom?

**P2:** So, she was a stay-at-home mom for a little while, um, and then when we went to school then she started teaching again. So, she had kind of a similar kind of structured day to us and so she was flexible enough to kind of -- well, I mean, I say flexible enough. As a teacher that's not really a thing, but, um, she -- she was on the same sort of system as us. So, you know, it worked for her. Um, so and -- and from the things that she has said to me about how she has seen me parenting, and comparing it to how she parented, she said that she's been quite impressed with how flexible I am with Olivia and how well I cope…

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** …with going with the flow with her. Also her knowing me as a person…

**P1:** Yes.

**P2:** …like who is not super flexible and open to change. She's -- she's actually expressed quite a few times her surprise at how flexible I have been with Olivia.

**P1:** Okay. Interesting. So, it's obviously **[voice lowered 00:46:24]**.

**P2:** Yeah, so -- so I -- I'm not sure if I can really say that I'm parenting differently or not to my mom.

**P1:** Yeah. And when…

**P2:** Yeah so…

**P1:** …[Crosstalk 00:46:37] Olivia? I mean, when she…

**P2:** So, she is incredibly flexible with Olivia as well.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** She is like they'll just go and sit in the garden for hours and like if Olivia wants to hide her baby in the trees and the flowers and all sorts of things, like she'll sit with her for hours and do it. Like she's -- she's very flexible with Olivia.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** Which is great, and I think perhaps that's also, you know, hindsight to 2020 I did it one way the first time, so now I'm going to try something different.

**P1:** Yes. Plus also the space, right? Like the space of a grandparent that you can jump in…

**P2:** Yeah.

**P1:** …and you don’t have to…

**P2:** Exactly.

**P1:** …you don’t have the same…

**P2:** And you can give her back.

**P1:** Exactly, yes. Yeah. Okay.

**P2:** So, in fact, Olivia adores going there. Oh my God, she just adores going there. Like and then when I take her there, **[laughter]** she's just like, "Whatevs mum, see you later, like bye." She literally -- like the other day she literally pushed me out the door. Like literally she put her hand on my shoulders and was like, "Bye."

**P1:** [laughter]

**P2:** It was so funny.

**P1:** And Husband's parents, are they -- where are they?

**P2:** So, Husband's dad passed away when he was 16.

**P1:** Uh, okay. Okay.

**P2:** So, his mom is on her own and she lives down in Dewetsdorp which is in the Free State. Um, so that's the town where he was born. And, um, or where he grew up, not where he was born, but where he grew up.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And so, she -- she sees Olivia only very occasionally, unfortunately but we do try and phone her like, you know, as and when. But when -- when she interacts with Olivia, she's much more kind of, I want to say hands-off but I'm not sure that that's the right kind of expression. She's -- she -- well, first of all she's -- she's much older than my mom. So, my mom is 60.

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** And Husband's mom is turns 80 next year.

**P1:** Oh, wow. Okay -- okay.

**P2:** So, she's not quite as mobile. She's not quite as -- it's like she's a little bit more fragile, although she's really fit and she's very kind of, um -- but she's sort of -- so the other thing that -- that I've sort of noticed with Husband and I have noticed it with his mom as well…

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** …is that they're much less content to just let her do what she wants. So, for example, if she's playing with -- or if she's reading a book…

**P1:** Mm-hmm.

**P2:** …Husband say's, "Come and let's build blocks."

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And I don’t know if that's because -- or if she's -- if she's building blocks, he'll say to her, "Look at this. Like let's try this."

**P1:** Yes.

**P2:** So, it sort of like -- I -- I don’t know if it's what he wants to do or if it's what he thinks she should be doing with the blocks.

**P1:** Right.

**P2:** Um, so instead of just letting her kind of show him what she is doing and -- and lead the kind of play,

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** **[00:50:00]** I feel like part of the kind of tussle between them is that actually he -- he is imposing stuff on her and she's just like, "What dad just leave me alone, man." Like…

**P1:** And does he get disappointed when she doesn't engage in a way that he might want?

**P2:** Yeah, he does.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** Yeah, um, and like he keeps saying to me, "Ah, she's so into books man. Like we really need to get her to play with her blocks more."

**P1:** Okay.

**P2:** I'm just like, "Uh, how is being in love with books a problem?" Like she'll play with blocks when she wants to play with blocks. She can build a tower, no problem. Like but she loves her books, so let her read her books.

**P1:** Yeah -- yeah.

**P2:** Like this is not an issue. So, and that's the battle that he chooses to pick. And I'm just like, it's such an insignificant battle and it's so -- like it's just going to end in frustration for everybody. Like and it doesn't matter.

**P1:** Yeah. But there's something very liberating for you in being able to just accept where she is at now?

**P2:** Yeah, well it's also -- so -- so the other thing he keeps saying is, it's so exhausting being with Olivia.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** And I don’t find that so much.

**P1:** Right -- right.

**P2:** And I think it's because he -- he is in a position where he keeps saying, we should be doing this. Let's do this. You know, come and look at this. Where I'm just like, "Okay, well what you are looking at?" Like, "Let's have a look at what you're looking at and let's see if we can expand on it a little bit." And I wonder if part of that didn’t come from me being a teacher.

**P1:** Maybe, yes.

**P2:** Um, because with that kind of teaching background, at some point, you kind of have to say, "Well, where are you as a learner and -- and how can I kind of guide you to where I need you to be?"

**P1:** Mm-hmm.

**P2:** Um, so for him I think part of the exhaustion is the fact that he thinks he should be doing a whole lot of stuff, and he's trying to get her to do that stuff, and she's just like, "Well, I'm going to do that stuff, but I'm going to go my way about it." And like, you know -- he's -- he's spending all his energy trying to guide her on a path that's like -- like this. And she's just like, "Well, I want to go this way.

**P1:** swimming upstream is the phrase…

**P2:** Yeah, exactly.

**P1:** Okay. I'm trying to think if there's anything else that I want to ask you. I'm sure there is but it's not coming to my mind immediately. Is there anything you want to ask me?

**P2:** Um, not really. I mean, this has been quite an interesting conversation. It's been quite interesting trying to verbalise stuff as well, because, you know, it's all sort of been swimming around in the back of my brain, but I haven't really had a chance to kind of make it concrete.

**P1:** Yeah.

**P2:** Um, but yeah.

**P1:** Okay. And what I want to do is, so, um, I don’t know if you saw that there's a follow-up interview and I say I think in the -- I said two to three, but I don’t -- I don't know if I want to go for three, it's a lot of interview but…

**P2:** Well, I mean, you have to do all the transcriptions then.

**P1:** There's at least one follow-up interview, but, um, I really want to go back and transcribe and look through everything and then, um, come back and interview again, is that all right for you?

**P2:** Yeah, absolutely fine.

**P1:** Okay.