

Transcript: EP 334 - How to Help Children Find Joy After Grief with Molly Rubesh

Molly: I understand that people may feel guilty, but there's still a whole life, and a beautiful life, out there to live. And unfortunately, grief is just part of it. And grief is an extension of our love that we had with that person on Earth, and it doesn't end when they die.

Dr. Taz Hi everyone, and welcome to Super Woman Wellness, I'm Dr. Taz. I've made it my mission throughout my career in integrative medicine to support women in restoring their health using a blend of Eastern medical wisdom with modern science. In this show, I will guide you through different practices to find your power type, and fully embody the healthiest and most passionate version of you. I'm here for you, and I can't wait to get started. This is a Soulfire production.

Welcome back, everyone. Welcome back to another episode of Super Woman Wellness, where we're determined to bring you back to your superpowered self. We cover so many different topics on this show, and I love them all, but here's one I don't think I've touched upon before. So, I'm actually pleased to welcome Molly Rubesh to the show. Molly is the author of *Is Heaven Farther Than the North Pole?* Joy and sadness can coexist is a motto that Molly wants to share with her readers. As the author of *Is Heaven Farther Than the North Pole?* She has learned from personal experience that both joy and sadness don't cancel each other out, and her message, that both emotions live beautifully in harmony in our lives, is probably one we need to hear right now. Molly, welcome to the show.

Molly: Thank you. I'm really happy to be here.

Dr. Taz: I think this book is timely, and I'm excited to learn how it came into being and all of that, but especially in the context of what we're seeing in the world right now, right? I think that there is sort of this narrative that we need to be happy, and we can't be sad, and if we're sad, something's wrong with us. And mental health, and what that is and what that isn't, is very confusing to everybody. But we are definitely seeing a lot of damage in what I call the emotional body, right? So for you to come on and say, "Hey, all these emotions can live together," is different and interesting, and not really what we're teaching and telling our kids. So, super curious to hear what you have to say. So tell us a little bit about you and how this book came to be.

Molly: I'm a mom of four kids, we're a blended family. I live in Southern Indiana. And I spent 20 years in the corporate world, so sales, med device, pharmaceuticals. In last April, my father died. And so I decided that, during his time in hospice, I needed to take a break and be with him. And then after he passed away, I decided

I needed to do something different. I needed to find my deeper calling. I have a creative streak, and I just knew that there was more of a message to send to the world.

And because of our story, like rewind three or four years earlier, my two stepsons lost their biological mother in 2018, and they were only five and nine at the time. And so we're parenting children through grief, and we're loving these children through their journey. And one night when I was putting my youngest boy to bed, he was about five years old, it was around Christmastime, and he was really just trying to understand loss, and where is Mommy? And he asked me that question, "Is heaven farther than the North Pole?" And at that time I'm like, "I don't know." We fumble over our words sometimes, we're just like, "I don't know."

And he asked me a lot of questions about how did they know she died? And so we had to talk a lot about how our bodies work, and what is alive, and air, and our heartbeat, versus what is dead. And so it wasn't until my father died that I felt grief at a different level. And when I was in nature and walking and spending time just grieving, I realized my version of heaven is all around us, and that he was still with me. So I had this idea to write this book, and I included the boys in this journey, and we dedicated the book to their mom.

Dr. Taz: Oh, wow.

Molly: And it's really just what it is.

Dr. Taz: That's amazing. What do the boys think of the book?

Molly: They like it. They were really excited in the beginning. They helped me pick out the names, and in the book it's about two kids that go on a quest to find heaven after their mom dies. And they go for ice cream, and they go to the park, and they go on this journey. And they ultimately realize that, even though they miss her terribly, spending a day doing things that they used to do with her brought them joy. And so that's the whole premise, that you can be sad, and you don't have to try to shy away from that, but you also can have joy, and enjoy your day, and live in the memory of that bond, and that love that's everlasting.

Dr. Taz: So Molly, I'm sure people who've experienced loss are nodding their head in agreement, but some people are not as evolved, or not quite there yet. What would you tell them if they are in a deep state of grief? There's been a lot of loss over the last few years in different ways. And if they're in a deep state of grief, and can't pull themselves out of it, I know I have patients like that, by the way, who have incurred multiple losses over the last year, and they seem to be stuck in this space of deep, deep grief or sadness. And there's a lot of guilt with feeling happy when

you've lost people. What's a good way for people to navigate those feelings or those emotions?

Molly: I believe that everybody's grief journey is different, and there's no right or wrong way to grieve, and you may grieve one person differently than you would've grieved another. So it's hard to say that this person should be out of it. But from my personal experience, in how I parent the boys and how I have managed my own grief, is by never having to choose. There are moments in the day where I can be really sad, and just can't believe the loss. But then there's also moments in the day where I can think, "This is actually really fun," and this is where I have joy. And a couple episodes ago you had Dr... Was it Dr. Sethi on your podcast?

Dr. Taz: Mm-hmm.

Molly: And she talked a lot about-

Dr. Taz: Yeah, oh yeah.

Molly: ... joy and sadness, and that joy doesn't have to cancel everything out, and it's not a destination. So, that whole premise, where I understand that people may feel guilty, but there's still a whole life and a beautiful life out there to live. And unfortunately, grief is just part of it, and grief is an extension of our love that we had with that person on Earth, and it doesn't end when they die.

Dr. Taz: With the mental health crisis that's escalating currently, what do you think is happening there with the emotional world? I don't know if you have much thought, or if you've observed some of that. What is some of the work that you do in trying to get this message out, that joy and sadness can coexist? How do you see that conflicting or in alignment with what's happening in the mental health world?

Molly: I'm not a trained mental health professional, I've just done a lot of my own mental health work. And so I can almost speak from just a testimonial of going through a really difficult divorce, parenting children through grief, blending a family, losing my dad. Life is hard, and unfortunately, some things are crippling hard. But finding a way to balance it and working on your own mental health, I really encourage everybody to seek out therapy, to find somebody that's going to support them in that. And then also broaden that mental health link to other friends or coaches. I work on coaching individuals that go through different griefs, whether it's or loss, and that journey can help pull you out. I believe that if you work on your mental health with a trained therapist, it will arm you to be better off when crisis strikes, versus waiting until crisis strikes and then trying to backpedal,

because we can be armed with so much more awareness and tools that can help us cope.

Dr. Taz: That's an interesting point, because I think most people think about therapy when something hits, right? When there's a fault or a break or a loss or something like that, then we think about therapy. But if we think about, again, going back to the five bodies and one of those bodies are an emotional body, if we were more proactive there, then we would be... It's like a muscle, right? We'd probably be better trained. Are there some tools beyond therapy that you have seen really work well to get that emotional regulation, or that emotional body trained, but not...

So, I feel like the past mantra or motto has been positivity, like, "Positive vibes, we got to be positive, we got to be rah, rah, rah, like cheerleader, don't be negative." And I think that's been fatiguing for some people. We can't be positive all the time. There are days that we're super angry at somebody, or we don't understand why things happened and stuff like that. Are there tools that you've seen work, maybe on your clients or even personally, that work to reset the emotional body? Talking in therapy works, are there other things that you've seen really work well as people try to reframe their emotions?

Molly: I believe journaling is a big-

Dr. Taz: Love that.

Molly: ... tool, and just, with no judgment, just journal. Write anything that comes to your mind, get it out. And true authenticity, I find that with my boys, and with people that I work with, if we can just be really raw and say, "You know what? This is hard, this sucks." Or name it, say, "I'm angry. I'm hurt." Because trying to bottle it all up and think, "Oh, I should be okay, because I'm six months post-divorce." Or, "I should be okay, because it's been a year." We're putting all of these stipulations on a defined timeline. And our bodies remember that, they remember it in our heart, in our cortisol levels, and our... Just totally, we are. And so I believe journaling, meditation, being authentic, reaching out to your people, and just naming your emotions and being able to truly be honest. Nothing is off the table.

And we find that with our boys; if they're having a rough day, we say, "Well, what's really going on? I know Mother's Day's coming up, are we feeling some anxiety around Mother's Day? Are you missing your mom?" Trying to not just think everything is what it is at face value. There may be some more below the layers.

Dr. Taz: Actually having those conversations, like probing and having those conversations, I think those are uncomfortable conversations, right?

Molly: Yeah.

Dr. Taz: All right, Super Women. I know the drill, right? We all live the same lifestyle. We're running around, we're juggling. We don't have time for 20 different products, 20 different bottles, trying to find information, and put it all together. We want solutions and we want answers. That's why I developed the EastWest Way. It's my product and lifestyle line full of formulas that I personally curated to really get us the answers we need. I couldn't find anything on the market that adequately merged Eastern and Western medicine together, in formulas that work and gave us the answers that we were all so desperate for. I'm right there with you guys; losing hair, having acne, hormones all over the place. I needed something that worked, but also worked efficiently. I didn't have time to take an herb over here and a supplement over there and a medication maybe somewhere else. The EastWest Way is the answer for all of us, and I couldn't be prouder of the formulas that I've developed.

If you aren't familiar with some of the products, I want to share some of them with you. I've been super excited about them, and have taken a lot of time and energy to put them all together. Collaglow is one of the newer products, it's CollaglowC. It has collagen, amla, and goji berry. So now we're merging together Ayurvedic and Eastern medicine concepts, they are for beautiful skin and hair, getting that glow and that circulation we need, and also a massive antioxidant burst, and maybe repairing the gut a little bit along the way with the collagen. The Defender was born out of my anger around the pandemic. It's a combination of astragalus, vitamin C, and zinc. And I use that every single day, especially when I'm traveling or worried that I might be exposed to more germs.

Boost is the hero, the hero product that started it all. The line started because I couldn't find a methylated formula that really answered all our needs around hormones, mood, memory, and so much more. Today, Boost continues to be the product that so many people say they can't live without. Belly Fix, again, so much around gut health, I know my patients, and even I, we were tired of having a bottle here, a bottle there, mixing things together, remembering to take four or five different things. Belly Fix is the gut kitchen sink; has collagen, spirulina, prebiotics, probiotics, and so much more. I love this formula, it has been a game changer for so many people.

Hormone Helper, again, hits close to home. I'm someone who has PCOS, as many of you know. A combination of maca, inositol, saw palmetto, and choline, supporting the liver, lowering androgens. It's our answer for really balancing

hormones. Sleep Savior, another favorite, has magnesium, melatonin, and magnolia bark, because oftentimes, falling asleep, or staying asleep, or both, so we needed something to answer all of that. That combination is a triple punch, works beautifully. Lush Locks, I take every day. Lush Locks has Ayurvedic and Chinese herbs that are known for regrowth and regeneration of hair and improving blood flow to the scalp, along with micronutrients that research tells us we should be focused on.

This month, I'm offering an exclusive discount for Super Woman Wellness listeners. Just go to theeastwestway.com, and enter SWW30 to get 30% off at checkout. Don't forget, if you rate and review any of my episodes, you'll get a free bottle of Boost. Just email me, it's hello@drtaz.com, and I'll make sure it gets to you. All right, I can't wait for you guys to try these products. Let me know which one's your favorite, and take advantage of the code SWW30 at theeastwestway.com.

What about with men? Men don't like to have those conversations. Any secrets there?

Molly: It's taken a long time for me to be able to help my husband break down his walls with vulnerability, because he lost his ex-wife, and there's a whole journey behind that. And then he's now parenting these boys who don't have their mother. So, helping him, and giving him permission and a safe place to talk in a judgment-free zone is so therapeutic. But men, I find, don't respond as openly as women. But again, just validating? That's a lot. Like, "I'm sorry you went through that." And we don't always have to fix it. As women and mothers, we want to fix everything.

Dr. Taz: Yep. Yep, yep, yep.

Molly: We don't have to. We just maybe have to hold space for people that are aching, and need somebody to listen to them.

Dr. Taz: I think that's such a great point, too. I think my own husband has said that to me. He's like, "You can't fix this." You know what I mean? Because I want to fix it, I want to make it better, I want to make it go away. But he's like, "You can't." So, just listening, and again, being present, I feel like is such a gift too for people that are hurting or going through something. And I think we can all get super busy, and forget to be present, whether it's with a spouse or a friend or children. I'm curious, too, about the children. What's their journey been like? This book obviously helped them, and I'm sure you've gotten it out to other children who've lost loved ones as well. What's the response been? What is the journey of a child going through grief, and how, as parents... Grief comes in different forms. That's a

big, big one, to lose your mom, right? How can we be aware of when a child is really struggling? What have you seen or heard?

Molly: Children grieve very differently. So much so that our nine-year-old, their mom died on a Saturday night, and I was already living here, so I was a stable parent, mother, for them. But he went to school on Monday. And he went to school for the first couple days of that week. And then we had the funeral at the end of that week. Because he needed some sense of normalcy. He wants to go to school, that's where his friends are, and that's where... So you kind of take the lead from them in understanding where they are, what's age appropriate.

But we do a lot of validating and a lot of recognizing. We speak of her, her name is April, so she lives, her memory and her energy, lives in our home. And she and I are not in competition with each other. It's not Mom versus Stepmom. And so I think there's a lot to be said about that. And then kids also knowing that this isn't taboo. This is their story, and this is part of it, and part of their journey, and it's a yucky part, but it's not something that we have to shy away from. So many people have said to me, "I just don't know what to say." And I get that. But validating, sharing a memory of her, telling them, "Oh my gosh, you have your mom's eyes!" They haven't forgotten that she died. And so again, we want to fix it, and we don't want to upset a child, but I have found that speaking of their parent and knowing that we see them and we meet them where they are in their life, helps.

Dr. Taz: So, silence and avoidance is not the answer, at all.

Molly: I wholeheartedly believe that.

Dr. Taz: Are we doing enough to teach emotional wellbeing to children? What would you like to see differently? Again, children and their social media and the... I mean, I have teenagers, so I see slightly different things, maybe, than you see? I don't know how old the boys are now. How old are they?

Molly: Right now we have a 15, 14, 13, and our 10-year-old.

Dr. Taz: Okay. So yeah, you're kind of in it with me. Yeah, this teenage component. They can hide behind their phones and they can hide in their rooms. And I just don't know if we're teaching emotional wellbeing. We're talking a lot about suicide prevention, and mental health awareness, and all this other stuff, but are we really talking about what it means to be emotionally well? And I love this idea of two emotions coexisting. How do we teach that to kids? It's one thing for us to get it, how do we teach it to children?

Molly: Just continuing to have this platform and reach the broader audience. I think schools intend to do more. They just are spread entirely too thin. And so finding

ways that we can, in our community, have outreach, have different resources, and it all starts with us. So the more that we parent our teenager on how to be socially appropriate or regulated, then it can trickle over. But it is a beast. My teenagers go through that same journey, not related to grief, it's just they're trying to learn who they are, and what's an appropriate way to react, and how to build these relationships.

Dr. Taz: Does grief show up in them now that a few years have gone by? Does it show up in unexpected ways? Will you catch things that they're doing, or saying, or stuff that are tied back to grief?

Molly: I don't necessarily do that or see too much, but unfortunately, because I'm so entrenched in it, and I read so much about childhood trauma, I try to decipher, "Is this a childhood trauma response, or is this a teenager response?" Which is which?

Dr. Taz: I get it.

Molly: It's entirely impossible-

Dr. Taz: I know, I know.

Molly: ... to figure it out.

Dr. Taz: That's a tough boat to be in. Well, every book, I feel like, is another child. So *Is Heaven Farther Than the North Pole?* When that book came out, or it came out in December, tell us what it's done, what do you hope for it next? Tell us what's happening with the book.

Molly: I've gotten so many positive feedback, and the ones that mean the most are from mothers or fathers or therapists that are reading it bedside to children that are grieving. And so those comments and that message is what fuels me. And knowing that somebody is finding some little piece of comfort... This book can't fix their grief, but this book may help open the lines of communication that we, as adults, have a hard time finding the words for.

In this book, it is the mommy that dies. It's not a grandma or a dog. Again, because we're trying to not make things so uncomfortable, on the first page, they talk about their mom dying. And then in the back, there's journaling pages, and they're blank pages on purpose to write how the kid is feeling, or maybe write what their memories are, or what their ideal day would be to remember their loved one. So I wanted to encourage both of those things. There's also a seek and find, so they can go through and find the butterfly or the cardinal throughout the story, to open the child's mind and heart to things that symbolize or remind them

of their special person. I'm trying to incorporate a lot of different mental health strategy along the way. And my goal for it is to continue to promote it, get it in the hands of every grieving child.

And then I also have other books that I'd like to publish about what is the journey of grief? Or grief around divorce. So just continuing to expand, based on our own personal journeys, and hopefully allow parents and caregivers to have more tools available to love their child, and their child through this difficult journey.

Dr. Taz: So it sounds like holding space, communication, allowing memory and conversation are some of the tools that we can all use as parents for dealing with a child or an adult going through a difficult time. I think divorce is like a death as well for many people. I'd be curious to see that book. We'll have to bring you back on when that one's out, because that seems to be a common, unfortunately common theme, and really rough from a medical standpoint, I think, on women and children. I think there's a lot happening there, so there's a lot to unpack there as well.

But I love what we've been able to take away, and I love the motto; joy and sadness can coexist. I do think we need to do a better job teaching emotional wellbeing. I'm trying to think of my own time with my children, if I've necessarily done that, I'm not sure I have, consciously at least. But I do think there needs to be a little bit more concerted effort there. And instead of helicopter parenting, which I think a lot of us do, just saying, "Hey, stuff's hard. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, that's a part of the journey of life, things aren't always going to be perfect." And I think a lot of parenting in the last 20, 30 years has been about trying to make everything perfect, trying to win at all costs. And that's just simply not realistic.

But I love the book. So *Is Heaven Farther Than the North Pole?* Where can people find the book and learn more about your work?

Molly: It's broadly on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, any of the big box bookstores online. And then it's some local indie retailers, but the best places are probably online.

Dr. Taz: Awesome. Wonderful. Thank you for taking time out today to share your story and to share this book with us. If you guys would like to connect with Molly, you are on Instagram, right? It's @mollyrubesh, it's R-U B-E-S-H, .author, correct? And that's the Instagram handle? Is that a good place to connect with you?

Molly: That's great. Or www.mollyrubesh.com. And that will take you to all the other social links as well.

Dr. Taz: Perfect. Thank you so much-

Molly: All right!

Dr. Taz: ... and thank you everyone else for joining and watching this episode of Super Woman Wellness. Don't forget to rate and review it and share it with your friends, and if we see your review, we will send you a free bottle of Boost. Just email me, it's hello@drtaz.com. I'll see you guys next time.