**Erin Flood - The Non-Pinterest Parent**

**April 2, 2020 - Facebook Live Event**

**Transcript**

Okay everybody, I apologize if you were logged on before and you were with me, I apologize that we had to do this again. I was getting a message that for some reason people couldn’t see me! So can you see me now? If you can give me a little comment that says hi or that you can see me right now, that would be great. I apologize! As I mentioned the first time I tried to start this, my husband said it wouldn’t be like me to be on time. The other thing I guess you should know right now is that it would not be like me to not have a little bit of awkwardness or something to kick this thing off so here we all are together! Again, round two! Okay good, it looks like from the comments everyone can see me this time so thank you so much for your patience today.

Ah! Deep breath everybody. What a beautiful, beautiful day. I’m so thankful for the sunshine today. I don’t know about all of you but ugh, my heart needed it so much. My head needed it. I’m a new girl after the sunshine today. As I see people coming on right now, I see that we’re getting to have a full house and I just want to start with a little bit of an introduction.

First of all, thank you so much to Theresa and the Women’s Empowerment Series for allowing me to be with you tonight. I’m honored that you’re taking time out of what I know is kind of crazy and in some ways, not as crazy as normal life can be sometimes as far as schedule is concerned, but regardless your time is so important to me so thank you for spending time with me tonight.

 Theresa asked me to speak a little bit on parenting and just as a matter of my background - I’m an educator, I taught high school English, and then was a school administrator. I was a principal and absolutely loved my time in education. And I think other people who are educators will agree, once you are a teacher and an educator you always are. So I think I just find other ways to do that in the community. Hi everybody! Oh, I love everyone joining in. Hi!

I feel called to talk about this topic not only as an educator, but just as a parent. I’m a parent of two boys, six and nine, so first grade and fourth grade. And I’m married to a very loving, supportive husband Eric, even though he did tease me a little bit about making sure I wasn’t going to be late for tonight. And I think family is really important. I was lucky enough to grow up as the middle child with two sisters who I love very much with two very supportive parents and that foundation, the experiences I had in my home, I think have really allowed me to become the adult that I hope that at the end of the day I can feel kind of proud of. So that’s why I really think it’s so important to talk about parenting and this crazy journey that we’re all on.

Let me start with this: there is nothing about parenting that is perfect. Nothing. Not one thing. And sometimes as parents we want to have all the answers and a road map from start to finish. It’s hard for us to keep in mind. So what I want to tell you today is that this parenting thing we’re going to talk about? There is no road map. There is no perfection. It’s simply showing up and doing your best. However, what we’re going to talk about tonight is taking a **FRESH** perspective. And I’m going to tell you what I mean.

A **FRESH** perspective is - and I’m going to use **FRESH** as our acronym to shape our conversation tonight. **FRESH**. The **F** in **FRESH** is to **Feel your feelings and allow room for them**. What do I mean by that? Man, there are a lot of feelings in my household right now. Do you have a lot of feelings in your house? There’s mine - about being in our home, maybe not being connected with friends, not knowing my day-to-day role anymore if you’ve been taken away from your career or your daily activities or things that you do typically to fill your cup. That’s huge! Your kids have BIG feelings, right? Your kids have feelings about not seeing their friends, about you being their teacher. You guys, as a former teacher this learning from home thing is crazy. It’s crazy! And I just want to tell you to take a little pressure off of yourself. You are meant to be the guide by the side. As a teacher, you are not meant to teach your kids the entire curriculum of everything that’s been sent home. Okay? And I know I’m not their teacher but I want to give you permission right now to just accept the fact that it’s not going to be perfect, okay? But back to feeling the feelings. I have feelings about being out of my routine. The kids have feelings about being out of their routine. And sometimes it just feels really overwhelming. And I want to just give you one really quick example as to how to demonstrate this.

The first day of school - our “home school learning” - I mean, I was pumped, I’m a teacher, right, so I have this nailed! (I think in my head.) I bought a larger white board, I made a list of the things that we were going to accomplish for the day, I set us up… and I have to be honest with you. By noon, I was in my garage quietly hiding and crying by myself because things did not go according to plan. If you are at home trying to help your kids do this, it’s so overwhelming! And Arletta, I just see you chiming in and saying, “Yes! Overwhelming!” I had a choice in that moment. I had a choice. Am I going to continue to hide in my garage, or am I going to ask myself what the feeling is about? Truth be told, the feeling was frustrating because I just felt so out of control. I didn’t have the ability to change my kids’ feelings about having me as their teacher. I didn’t like that. I didn’t have the ability to say, “Guys, we only have to do this for one week.” Because you and I both know this is going to be longer than a week. It already has been. And we don’t know when it’s going to end which is so overwhelming! But. I also had to recognize that there were a lot of things that were in my control. The one thing that was in my control was to reassure my kids that as frustrating as this can be, they were absolutely capable of being successful and I had to reassure myself of the same thing. That’s huge. I had a choice in that moment, whether I was going to wallow in my feelings crying in the garage by myself, OR, if I was going to pick myself up. Just, “I know what the feeling is about. Erin, you cannot control everything right now. You cannot solve the problems for the kids. All of this is not in my control and that’s okay. What is in my control is my response to all of this. What is in my control is telling my kids, ‘Time out! We need to reset here. How can we do this?’ Let’s look at the tools we have to deal with these big emotions that we have and let’s start again.” So feel your feelings and allow others to do the same. I also could have made the choice to tell my kids, “You are lucky to have me as your mother! And somebody who is here to help you. Not all kids have a parent that’s able to help right now.” Because right? Some of you are working through all of this! Some of you are trying to find child care or somebody else to connect with your kids to help them. That’s a lot! All of our kids are going to have feelings about this and we’re going to have feelings about this that are beyond our control but what we control is our response to them. So to my kids I said, “Yes, I might not be your teacher. What can I do to help better meet your needs? How would you like Mom to approach this with you so maybe it’s not so frustrating?” Walk away, take a break… so many ways to reset and re-approach this. So we have: FEEL your feelings and allow others to do the same.

 The next thing in **FRESH**, taking a **FRESH** perspective, is **R - Respect**. Respect is a two-way street. Now, when we are in close quarters right now, a lot of us just cycling around the same space over and over, not only do we feel out of control but sometimes when our needs aren’t met, we forget that other people in our space are having that same feeling. So here’s a big question for you and this is something I want you to think about… have you and your family ever sat down and asked each other what respect looks like in your household? That’s a big question. Do you know what respect looks like in your household? Now that’s a moving target, right? It’s a moving target because it changes with the ages and the stages of all of this right? So for me, and for my family, here’s what respect doesn’t look like. Respect doesn’t look like being mean to your brother because you’re frustrated with your schoolwork. Respect does look like saying you’re frustrated and asking for help. Right? Respect looks like when we all need a break, we give the people in our house the room to take a break. Some of you are like, “I can’t get away from anyone to take a break.” You’re right. That’s why I shut myself in the garage the other day. I have a friend of ours, Mary, who I adore her because she’s a mom that keeps it real. And you know what? She posted a picture of herself the other day shut in her closet and she was like, “Mom needed five minutes.” Right? She needed five minutes. Respect might look like agreeing that certain parts of your day are more structured than others. There’s a variety of things, but showing up in your house and making sure that you’re being respectful not only to yourself but to others is huge, especially when we’re all together. And the only way that we’re patient enough, I think, to be respectful, is if we come into our day with the right Energy...

And that’s what the **E** in **FRESH** is! It’s **Energy**. So Arletta actually, last week, and if you have not watched week one of the Women’s Empowerment Series, you really need to go back and watch Arletta’s talk. It’s on our Women’s Empowerment Series Facebook page. Because Arletta brought up a really great point about the energy in your household and how that’s something that you have control over. She gave great suggestions about creating a playlist and setting the mood and making sure that you are contributing something positive to your environment. Well I know that there are some people out there, and I have woken up some mornings this exact same way thinking, ”Energy!? What energy? I don’t have it for myself, I don’t have it to give to you. Just when I thought I found it… You know, the other day, I’m like, “Alright, I’m going to go and take my space. Right? That’s the respect for me. I’m going to go in my area and take my space. And try to regain some energy back.” And who comes in then? Not the kids, but the dog, and the dog’s whining because he needs to be fed. So I get it. There are roadblocks, okay? And don’t get me wrong, I’m trivializing this with the dog example. But just know that I feel you that it keeps coming sometimes and it feels hard to get out from under. And all that means is that we need to take a simpler, smarter approach to finding energy.

So here’s a suggestion. Parents, and not to exclude any dads, but moms in particular, our mood sets the tone for the entire house. Okay? If we’re being honest, it does. So I want to make sure that I’m coming in to that day with as much energy, with as full of a cup, as I possibly can. How do I get there? For me, it’s exercise! That’s one of my non-negotiables. What are your non-negotiables? What are the things you do for you that make you feel good? That you can still do right now? Exercise is one for me. Purposely moving my body. It is not just for me, it is actually science, it would work for all of us, and we’re going to talk about that at the end. But like, the brain chemistry, what it does for your body and your energy, exercising can help us reset that. And we’re going to talk about it. We’re going to talk about why it actually gives us more energy versus taking it away at the end so I’ll come back to that. Maybe something that fills your cup or gives you energy is being with your friends. And that’s a challenge right now, right? Because I can’t be with my friends. I can’t hug people. That’s another thing! I’m a hugger. I like to snuggle and be close to people. That’s a cup filler for me. Other than the three other people that live in this home and my dog, I can’t do that with other people that I’d like to do that right now. My parents, my siblings, their spouses, my nephews. I can’t get to them. Okay? But what I can do is find a connection in a more creative way. Because that’s just what we have to do right now and it’s not ideal but it will fill my cup so I’m going to FaceTime them, and I’m going to call them, and I’m going to set up times online to have a coffee and chat with my friends.

Don’t make fun of me… but sometimes the best connection and cup-filler you can have is just with yourself! Maybe you just need to stand, try it! If you’re desperate, especially if you’re feeling really low, I dare you to stand in front of the mirror and smile at yourself for two minutes. Because if you have been feeling all down and gloomy and it is bottom of the barrel, you probably have not seen yourself smile in a while. And maybe your brain forgot that it can find the happy! So try it. It’s ridiculous, but try it, right? Sometimes you just have to be willing to go so far outside of your comfort zone and feel silly in order to find the connection and the cup filler that you need. Some of us also need time without stimulus and I do have to say, as much as for examples like this right now that I absolutely love social media and I love technology, you guys there is something about being oversaturated. And right now, more than ever, when this device, when your phone or your computer is your window to the world, we have to be so careful about what we allow in. We have to be so careful. Because this can give us energy, and man, it can take energy away. So make sure that if you’re using technology, you’re using it in a way that is energy filling and not at the expense of being so overstimulated and so overwhelmed with information that isn’t necessarily always what you’re choosing to consume. Because some of us just need quiet. Right now, part of my routine, I’ve gone back to reading a book before I go to bed. Even if it’s only like four pages that I read because that’s all I can stay awake for. Sometimes you just have to allow your brain to shut down. Remember, if you use the analogy of a cell phone and our body, our body needs time, our brain needs time, our emotions need time, to reset just like a phone does. You plug your phone in at night, you have to allow it to charge its battery and for it to be quiet and not be in use. Your body and your brain need that same thing. So really, guard your energy, especially at times like this when we don’t have the natural connection and the natural energy fillers, right now we really have to guard our energy more intensely than ever.

Okay, so we have Feel your feelings and let other people do the same, and we’re not going to wallow, we’re going to find a way to talk ourselves into seeking that emotion, to doing things that bring us to the emotion we want. We’re going to remember that Respect is a two way street. We’re going to think about our Energy, ways that we can fill our own cup. Oh! And I don’t want to forget this: How can you fill somebody else’s cup? How can you help them? Have you asked the other people in your house, “What do you need?” Like, for my kids, outside time right now is life-giving. It’s fantastic for all of us. Fresh air - life-giving. Are you helping the other people in your house do the things that fill their cups? Really important.

The **S**, now, is **Show gratitude**. For some of us, this time of being slow has allowed us to examine things about our life that we don’t always take time to stop and appreciate. For others, this time has stripped away the very things that we’re thankful for and that’s really hard. The one thing that I want to remind you of and really, that I have spent a lot of time reminding myself about this week in particular, is that what I am seeking is what I will find. So if I wake up in the morning and I make it my routine for the very first thing I do, even if it means getting up five minutes earlier, to get in a space where I can do it, I’m going to think about one thing in my life that I am thankful for. One. I don’t care if it’s that my kids didn’t steal my hairbrush and it’s mine and I found it the first time I looked for it. I don’t care if it’s that today, my goodness, I woke up with overwhelming gratitude that I saw a blue sky and sunshine. For some of you it might be that you know that today you are able to go and buy groceries. Or that you found a resource to help you feed your kids during the day. Or that I have somebody else in another room that I love and that loves me. It can be simple. It can be profound. But showing gratitude will help you find more in your life to be grateful for. And at times, when some of this feels, it feels hard, this is when we need to do that even more. And I promise you that you are training your brain to seek this in much more abundant ways in your life in general.

And my last one - **H**. **Hands and hearts make the best combination**. Now what do I mean, “Hands and hearts make the best combination”? Very often, our heart sets a really good intention, right? But if we don’t put that into action, if we don’t practice what that intention is, if we don’t figure out how to make that intention a reality then all it is is a good intention. We have the opportunity right now to really think about our intentions and putting our intentions into action. Here’s what I mean. If I start out in the morning and my goal is to have good energy and I know a non-negotiable for good energy for me is moving my body physically, working out, exercising, and I just wake up with that good intention and I snooze six times and go back to bed, then that was a really good intention from my heart but my hands, my body, they did not follow through and do the work. They didn’t. So it was all just a good intention. So how badly do I really want the good energy? How badly do I really want to show up as my best self, not only for myself but for everyone else in my life? Maybe not that bad. And I’m not saying every single day. But I do know that the more I follow through on whatever intention I set, the more credibility I not only earn with myself, and the more respect I have for myself, but the more willing I am to help other people put their intentions into action too. We’ve talked so much in our short time together tonight about feelings and respect and dynamics in our household and in finding gratitude. And all of that is really important and great, but will have no movement if our hearts and our hands are not on the same page. And that takes a certain element of bravery. It takes a certain element of commitment. It takes a certain willingness to show up for yourself even when you feel out of energy, even when you feel like maybe the odds are against you to be successful in a way, or to show up in the way that you want to. I promise you - not trying will get you nowhere. And one of my very favorite motivational speakers, Ed Mylett, if you’re looking for somebody look him up. Love Ed! He talks about the fact that real integrity is following through on the promises that you make for yourself. I don’t know about you, but at the end of the day I want to be an adult that I’m proud of and the only way I can be the adult I’m proud of is if I follow through on the promises I’ve made to myself. So good intentions are wonderful, it’s where it all starts, in our heart, with a good intention… but it will be nothing more than a good intention if we don’t have the discipline and the grit! Sometimes you just have to get gritty and follow through. Because it’s your hands, it’s your body, that makes all the stuff that’s in your heart come to life. Not only for you, but for others. Now is when we get to show up.

And do you know what’s so cool? If you’re willing to show up when it’s hard and you’re willing to help your kids show up when it’s hard, when circumstances aren’t ideal. Do you know what you’re doing for them long term? Do you know the gift you’re giving them to set them up for life? For the situation when they’re in when they think, “These are not the circumstances I wish I could show up in. But I’m still going to do it. I’m still going to show up. I’m still going to be here. I’m still going to grind it out and get through this.” This is a gift right now, is to show our kids how you show up when things are hard. I want to show up when things are hard. I want to be an adult I’m proud of. I want to feel my feelings. I want to leave room for other people to do the same. I don’t want my feelings to be so big that they take over the entire house and don’t let anybody else be who they are or who they need to be to get through just being a day in our family. I think that right now there is so much focus on how life will be after we’re all set free, back into the wild again, and I don’t mean to make light of it, okay? But for me, this is how I deal. Is in reality, but trying to find the goodness in it, right? And there’s part of me that prays that we will never be the same after this. We will never go back to normal. Because if we do, it will mean that all of this didn’t mean anything. It will mean we missed our opportunity to learn something from this. It will mean that we missed our opportunity to raise ourselves through something that really no one, not many of the people we know or love have ever been through before. I don’t want to be the same at the end of this as I was at the beginning. I do not want my family to be the same at the end of this as we were at the beginning. I don’t want my kids to be the same at the end of this as we were at the beginning. I want us to have grown and I want us to be better. Because you know what? At the end of this, if we try, we will know ourselves and the people that we love and live with more deeply. We will. We will. And do you know what that deeper understanding will bring? More room for love, more room for support, more room for connection, more room for all of the things that we value so much. And you know why I know this? Because that’s what makes this so hard. That’s why this whole separation thing, this social distancing, that’s why it’s so hard. But you know what? I don’t think I’ve ever done anything that was easy that really mattered. I think most things that are easy probably didn’t matter to me that much. And this? You and connection and growing through this? All of that stuff matters. And so if it’s hard, that’s okay. Because we were born to do this and we’ve got it and we’re going to get the job done and we’re going to do it with the **FRESH** perspective.

Thank you all so much for being with me tonight. I really am trying to stick to my time limit, even though I see your comments and questions. And just know that if you have… hang on, just let me get my notes. If you would share this, comment, like it… you are going to be entered, this is very exciting, you are going to be entered in a giveaway to Benessere Salon & Spa. Stacey Mertens and her crew have generously donated a $100 Salon & Spa gift certificate. So Stacey, thank you so much! I also want to give a little shout out to Stacey and Benessere Salon as they so generously donated tonight. They are offering products - you guys support local right now, it’s so important to our local businesses, support local! - call Benessere Salon & Spa. Text if you want to. We’ll put the information on our website after this. They have products, they are offering deals on gift cards, like $45 for a $50 gift card. Let’s keep the people that we love and value (and keep our roots - thank goodness for the lighting, you can see my flyaways but not my greys right now), let’s keep those people in business and supported. So Stacey, to know her is to love her. Stacey, thank you so much for your generosity and to all of the great people at Benessere Salon & Spa, we’re so grateful for you. We will announce the winner of that gift card tomorrow.

If you have comments, if you have questions, if you need resources - Women’s Empowerment Series is here to help you. If you email info@womensempowermentseries.org - it’s also on our Facebook page - we would be happy to talk about any follow up if you have other questions, if you want some resources, I’m happy to share or support in any way that I can.

Next week we have Amber from United Way Fond du Lac. And I have to tell you, I cannot wait to hear her because she has a real pulse on what’s happening in our community right now. And the generous work that the United Way does is really incredible. Thank you to organizations like the United Way. Thank you to our doctors and nurses and police officers and firemen and firewomen and all of you that are out, grocery clerks and shippers and I’m giving my FedEx guy an air-high five. Just gratitude, gratitude, gratitude. Give gratitude to all those people too, right? Show gratitude, yes? But Amber will be on next week and she’s going to be talking about the real state of our city, resources that are available to people right now and will be available long term. Please, please, please next Thursday tune in to watch Amber. We will have another giveaway next week, I don’t know what it is right now. I apologize but I’m sure it will be great.

Thank you for being with us tonight. This has been such a gift for me. I have to tell you, showering and putting on a little makeup and straightening my hair and talking to all of you tonight and seeing the number of people that are commenting and have joined us tonight...you have given me such a gift by allowing me to be with you and to show up as I am, a little better version (I won’t lie) than what’s going on here on a daily basis. But this has been such a gift. Don’t forget to show up for the people that are in your life.

And my final thing. The fitness challenge! Now, I’m going to keep it simple this week and if Theresa allows me to - Theresa, if you allow me to - I’m going to do a little snippet every week until we’re out of captivity mainly, just encouraging fitness. All I want you to do this week is I want you to be outside and intentionally active for twenty minutes a day. Outside. If you think, “I work all day!” Then is there a way that you could, on a break or before or after you go to work, take a couple laps around the block? Twenty minutes! If you’re a parent and you’re at home this is like, playing soccer, playing catch, cleaning up the yard. You name it! Let’s do it. Twenty minutes, that’s it. Twenty minutes. And if you can do it, fresh air! Now, if it’s a rainy day I’m not expecting everybody to be outside. But if you can manage it, outside for twenty minutes. If it’s raining, find a way to make it happen inside. You guys, Google “Free Fitness” or go to our local Fond du Lac YMCA website, as an instructor I can’t believe I haven’t talked about them so far but, go to our local YMCA site! They have amazing resources right now for our community posted. Please check them out. Twenty minutes a day, if you need to, be inside, but please, please, please get some fresh air and move your body.

When you come in from that I want you, on a piece of paper (and I stole this from my sister, my older sister Mandy who we’ll say she always knows best), I want you to write down one thing you are grateful for and I want you to put it in a jar. Because at the end of this, we will come out of this better if we can remember what we were thankful for on days when it was hard. Twenty minutes of exercise, you’re coming inside, you’re writing on a slip of paper, one thing that you are grateful for and you’re going to put it in a jar, in a Tupperware container, in wherever. One thing - encourage your family members to do it with you because there’s nothing better, right? Gratitude breeds gratitude. So there’s nothing better than making sure that not only are you doing it but you’re making that same feeling contagious in your household, okay?

I’m so happy to be with you all tonight. If there are things that you posted in the comments, please know that we will follow up. I, unfortunately, I’m not able to read all of these while we were doing this tonight, but know that there’s been a moderator on here that has been reading them and we will follow up with things on our Facebook page if there’s specific resources or specific questions that you want answered.

Thank you again to Benessere Salon & Spa. Women’s Empowerment Series - we are here for you. We want to help you get through this. Theresa and her group are doing the most amazing things for this community. If you have not gone back and watched Arletta’s week one, do it now. Tune in next week Thursday at 7 o’clock for Amber from Fond du Lac United Way. This has been such a gift. Giving my love to all of you. Thank you so much! Stay positive. We got this.

Tune in next week live on Thursday, April 9th at 7pm as Amber Kilawee speaks about the relevant resources.