

[00:00:00]

[00:00:05] **John:** Hey man, drink in some of what these girls are serving because it is life. It is big. And and missing that viewpoint or silencing that viewpoint is such a mistake. It makes the world so sepia toned.

[00:00:20] **Todd:** And I will say I've been to a million sporting events. I've been to a million concerts.

[00:00:24] **Todd:** I've never experienced anything close to the Taylor Swift experience, and I'm not the first one that has said that. There's plenty of, macho men that have said that. It's just, it's indescribable. And you don't even need to know her music. You can walk there, we walk into that stadium without ever having heard a single song and be moved by the experience.

[00:00:46] **Todd:** And it's not just her, and the staging, and the dancing, it's the energy of the crowd. It's beyond anything I've ever experienced

[00:00:51] **Cathy:** by far. And the big takeaway that I hope, or that I think it's always trying to be expressed is if you go into a bookstore, a lot of times it's here's the book by black authors and here's the books by female authors.

[00:01:04] **Cathy:** And then it's and then here's the books by men, and then it's the same thing with movies. She's a. Female director, someone was just making the point talking about sexuality. I think it was Andrew Scott, who's in a good movie this year. He was saying, can we stop saying an actor is openly gay?

[00:01:19] **Cathy:** He's what does that mean? Openly gay? Does that mean like I'm willing to, he's can we just say he's an actor in this movie instead of the openly gay? And so it's the same idea is that the norm is as a man's take and the other takes are a woman's take. And then a, a person of color's take or a person who's gay.

[00:01:41] **Cathy:** It's, the norm is, that's when we talk about patriarchy, which is again, can be thrown around sometimes in a way where people don't like that word. But I'm not talking about individuals. I'm talking about the norm is a man's perspective. The water that we swim in. Correct. And that's all. It's not men are crap.

[00:01:57] **Cathy:** It's This is the water

[00:01:58] **Todd:** that we swim in. This is the norm. Yeah. Alright. [00:02:00] I need to move things along. Okay, sir. Because there's a bunch of stuff we haven't gotten to. Page 1 0 9 . If you are, you

[00:02:06] **John:** remember that page, I know it well. Todd . If

[00:02:08] **Todd:** you're a parent with a teenage boy who cannot seem to make it to school, follow my lead.

[00:02:13] **Todd:** It took me a while to learn that this was not a behavioral issue and that pressing and prodding wasn't gonna solve the problem. Instead, I strongly urge you to soften your stance. Ask your son what's stopping him from going to school, why it seems difficult. Let him know that you have total faith in him and remind him of the resources he has available.

[00:02:35] **John:** What do you think? Oh a lot of there's so many elements of our boys lives right now. I smoke weed in order to get through my day. I take Ritalin or Adderall because my behavior is not tolerable. I they feel enfeebled. They don't, boys do not feel strong and competent and resilient and capable.

[00:02:57] **John:** There isn't, they lead a lot of the times with what they, what their deficits are. I'm really depressed. I'm really anxious. I don't really know what I'm doing. I'm not very smart. I'm not very likable or not well liked. And tapping out becomes pretty easy. And school refusal since the pandemic has become like about 20 percent of kids in the past semester missed classes.

[00:03:22] **John:** 18 or more days of school. Like it's on the table in a way that it wasn't, five years ago and and that's one way that this feeling of incapacity rears its head. And if you just, if you're just. Looking at a behavior and your sole focus as a parent is on that behavior.

[00:03:42] **John:** And I'm going to eradicate that behavior from my kid's life, from my boy's life. You're going to play whack a mole, like another behavior will rear its head. And and you will make yourself and your kid crazy and create a divide between you because you're. You're not understanding what [00:04:00] drives it.

[00:04:00] **John:** And if you understand the why, it's all about the why. Everything is about, like, why is my kid doing or not doing the thing, and if you can get down to that understanding, then first of all, You get him and he knows, he's somebody's hearing me and I can say the hard thing, to my mom or my dad,

I can say the hard thing and I'm not getting rejected and they're going to help me through that.

[00:04:23] **John:** I'm not alone in this thing. So maybe with this army behind me, I can make it through and have some faith in myself. And you guys might remember. This is my story too. That, like I started having panic attacks when I was in eighth grade. They were profound. And I thought I can't, my mom effectively told me don't talk about this again.

[00:04:46] **John:** We will leave this restaurant because you're panicky, but never talk about it again. And so I didn't and just dealt with it alone. And that's part of the reason I lead with the smile and the grin because that was what I was told to do, but it was, I suffered for years. And it was brutal. And I see that in the kids I work with.

[00:05:05] **John:** And all it would take is a moment from a parent asking that question, so you're not going to school. What's the deal? Like that's I would be mad about that, but I know that you're not doing it to make me mad. So help me understand and really go for understanding. If that had happened with me, Oh my God, I would have been spared so much pain, honestly.

[00:05:27] **Todd:** Totally.

[00:05:27] **Cathy:** That's wonderful. I just think about that question, cause we, cause I agree with you you were saying in your book that it's more boys who have school refusal and, now for a lot of reasons, which you covered but when I was working with kids who had, when I was at Children's Memorial or Lurie Children's Hospital, I never read that right.

[00:05:46] **Cathy:** But all of my kids who wouldn't go to school that I had to work on with school refusal were still boys, John. And there weren't as many. And again, I was in a partial setting, partial hospitalization. So of course these were extreme cases, but they were boys. And so [00:06:00] I know you just spoke to this. I don't want to make you repeat, but what it, what do you see as those links between boys?

[00:06:05] **Cathy:** It's not. Wanting to go to school because, and let me say this just for everybody I have a daughter who didn't want to go to school for a while too, so girls have school refusal, like it's not, but why are there more boys? What are the pieces that, that people can understand a little better?

[00:06:20] **John:** I think it does come back to emotional intelligence and understanding.

[00:06:26] **John:** what you're going through. Cause if boys could understand and articulate and we're free to, so masculinity and the definition of it allowed the vulnerability of I've got this anxiety about going there or I'm lost in my chemistry class and I just don't, I can't find my way through it.

[00:06:43] **John:** You know what I mean? There's some underlying, maybe, and there might be a bully, whatever it is, that it's okay to say it. And I think for our girls, it's more often than not okay to say the thing. And for our boys they're not sure. So they often opt for, I'm not going to, I'm not going to say the thing, I'm just going to sit on it and suffer it and grit my way through it because I think that's my only option.

[00:07:09] **John:** Nobody's really, nobody's going to want to hear, they're going to think I'm making excuses, making something up. And so I'll take the lazy label or the fuck up label or whatever it is, and I'll just move on with my life right here in this house.

[00:07:23] **Todd:** And said in blessed words, asking for help is a weakness according to most men and boys, and asking for help from a girl or woman is not as much or a

[00:07:33] **Cathy:** weakness at all.

[00:07:34] **Cathy:** Actually, that makes total sense. Thank you for clarifying because I, We've already talked about this a million times, but you're right. That connection to school challenge versus the inability, the challenge to articulate it, and then the challenge from the person in your home being able to not say, man up.

[00:07:50] **Cathy:** Dad say, yeah, it's okay that you hurt. Too, about this, like we, there's all this work to be done. As you said, you're doing a lot of parent coaching now that [00:08:00] some, our kids can learn this. And I know as a therapist with team kids, they'll, you talk to them about it.

[00:08:05] **Cathy:** They get it. They're like, okay, I'm going to do this. But if they go home and the message is no, you can't do this. Then where do they go? And I'm wondering, do you see that boys have a lot of physical issues because they're pressing down their emotions? Like how do, how does it look? What do boys complain about physically?

[00:08:23] **John:** Yes. Yeah. So there, there are boys absolutely have a lot of physical complaints and they're not moving, so they're very aware. of like their bodies and they're, they feel fragile and sensitive so that I hear more complaints about headaches, gastrointestinal problems, like all the time. A lot of boys complain about like sexual problems, like not being able to perform sexually, and feeling like physically there's something wrong with me and not recognizing I might be.

[00:08:51] **John:** Be desensitized because I'm watching pornography too much, or,

[00:08:53] **Todd:** and that's a wonderful segue because I was about to go there and there's two parts of the book because, we've been talking about porn forever on this podcast. You know what time it

[00:09:01] **Cathy:** is? Yeah. Okay. We're going to split this in two.

[00:09:04] **Cathy:** Yeah. Okay, good.

[00:09:05] **Todd:** I already got some ideas. All right. All right. Sorry, .

[00:09:08] **John:** I, we have been here for

[00:09:09] **Cathy:** a minute. Yeah. It's been a, it's like we're really getting into it. The two

[00:09:12] **Todd:** pieces that I thought were new to me was this page one 16 porn does not make young men feel powerful sexually or otherwise over women.

[00:09:22] **Todd:** I didn't read that well. Porn does not make young men feel powerful sexually or otherwise over women. Quite the contrary. Most young men I've worked with have reported to me that they feel women hold all the power in this regard. . This far too often leaves boys resentful of girls and men resentful of women.

[00:09:38] **Todd:** So say something about that, Doc.

[00:09:41] **John:** Yep. That, that is way too often. That is true. That there is this resentment that, girls don't want me, girls don't want me sexually. And this sometimes comes from boys who have. Never approached a girl, or asked her anything. They're just anxious about it.

[00:09:57] **John:** But that idea that girls [00:10:00] hold the power there, they decide whether something is going to happen. There's going to be some intimate connection. A lot of boys believe that. And I've worked with a lot of men. I've worked with men my age who believe that and resent women for that. I think that's part of the divide.

[00:10:18] **John:** between men and women. And one thing I've learned talking to girls and young women is that's not how girls and young women feel. Like they feel like, hey, we're all for this being like a mutual decision, but make sure we're safe. in any given situation that's a huge thing. And that's not always a given, but then we can decide together.

[00:10:43] **John:** Then we can decide how this is going to go together in a really intimate way. Boys are not yet open enough to hear that messaging and and that causes a big problem. And so all of their sexual experience. I'm overgeneralizing here, but for a lot of boys, a lot of their sexual experience comes just from watching porn.

[00:11:05] **John:** Yeah. Okay,

[00:11:06] **Todd:** so doubling down on the porn conversation page 117, quote, I am not that turned on by my girlfriend, Duffy. Do you think I might be gay? I find myself testing my physical reaction to attractive men. And I'm worried I may be homosexual or bisexual. And then you talk about H O C D, homosexual obsessive compulsive disorder.

[00:11:28] **Todd:** I never heard of this. This is brand new to me. So I'm just wondering if you can share a little bit

[00:11:32] **John:** more. Yeah. So the past seven or eight years or so, I have worked with I don't know, 15, 20 young men who have this persistent question in their minds about is there something wrong with me sexually, or am I gay?

[00:11:49] **John:** And to be clear, I can't remember one of these guys Being upset about the possibility of being gay. They just didn't know because if you [00:12:00] picture like that, the sexual response is on a meter, if you watch enough porn, that meter becomes so poorly calibrated that you just don't know.

[00:12:11] **John:** You're not, you don't know where your real turn ons in the real world are, and so porn becomes your sole source of that, and it has really diminishing returns in terms of excitement or spark or joy or anything like that

because it's one dimensional, and it's not real, and you're aware of that in real time.

[00:12:32] **John:** And yeah, and so a lot of guys Question their own sexuality, and you can imagine that has them recoiling. So they're not like, they're not looking for intimate connecting experiences. They're specifically not engaging in them. And this is more and more guys. all the time. It's a pretty significant concern.

[00:12:52] **John:** And the reason I included it is because it's another one of those things I don't think many people have ever heard of. H O C D is not in any manual yet, but I've heard of it often enough and experienced it with guys often enough that I know it is a burgeoning syndrome that we need, we're going to have to address.

[00:13:13] **Todd:** Okay. We're going to talk about weed real quick. This is from your book. Emotional expression is in my experience, the answer to the weed problem as well as the solution to many of the other maladies. Is that how you pronounce that word? Our boys suffer. Keep in mind that difficult conversations often precede open emotional expression.

[00:13:32] **Todd:** So be prepared to have those hard talks. Hang in with them and trust that's the process, not one moment in time. That will bring good results and lasting benefits. I'm asking for some mighty parenting here, but you won't regret it. So your solution to the weed problem is giving and encouraging and giving space to boys to be emotionally expressive.

[00:13:55] **John:** Yeah it is, and I, that probably feels like it [00:14:00] doesn't make a whole lot of sense, or it's hard to draw the connection between these two things, but weed is So first of all, it's omnipresent, right? There's so many delivery methods for weed, and it's legal in a lot of places. There's no taboo around it.

[00:14:17] **John:** And and it does a pretty decent job for some guys of curbing anxiety a little bit. Not. to get out there and thrive. It's not a motivating drug but it flattens things out so you can make it through the day, and really, like most of the guys I work with who smoke a lot of weed or vape a lot of weed, they're just making it through the day.

[00:14:37] **John:** And emotionally They're flat. And that's the goal. The goal of smoking is not to feel anything. And it's one guy said it's declaring yourself dead until you have a reason to live. And I'm just going to check out. And

hopefully, a day will come where I am stimulated by something in the world, and therefore I'm willing to step away from this way of life.

[00:15:02] **John:** Because weed, for a lot of young men and teenage boys, is a way of life. It is literally what gets them, gets their time to pass. Nothing's happening. Nothing's happening. They're well aware that nothing's happening. It's not, it's joyless, and it's emotionless, and it's flat. But, it's just a way to keep the heart beating in case something good happens.

[00:15:30] **John:** If you engage with them. Then something good starts to happen pretty quickly because they start to feel something, right? And especially if you allow that, if you encourage that and allow that and you share how you're feeling, even if you share, not long ago, I witnessed a father and a son talking about the son's weed intake and the dad started bawling and talking about how much he missed him.

[00:15:53] **John:** And it was this beautiful, painful moment, but you could see something change in this kid where he [00:16:00] was like, Okay, that's all I needed. That's all I was waiting for is somebody to let me know they see me and I matter to them. And okay, I'm going to take a little, I'm going to take a toe out of this box and see how it feels out there.

[00:16:15] **John:** Weed is just it's a fear reducing drug. And that's really all it does for the vast majority of people who are smoking a lot of it. And there's a lot of young guys smoking a lot of it. Yeah.

[00:16:29] **Cathy:** Yeah. I love that you say it's omnipresent because it's. Totally true. This generation views weed through such a different lens.

[00:16:35] **Cathy:** It's everywhere. Like you said, you can buy it legally and, people have access to it so easily. And it's interesting because, a while back, 30 minutes ago in this conversation, when you were talking about Todd, you're talking about being a football gamer, you guys were talking about, cheering and like hugging is, and, John, you were saying, or Todd, you were saying it's not that vulnerable, and I'm like, until you add alcohol, and then men all of a sudden can, and women can do this too, the inhibitions go down.

[00:16:57] **Cathy:** You start to say, I love you, man. You might kiss him on the cheek. You might hold him longer. You might say, you're my best friend. So alcohol allows people non gender specific to speak and weed. Keeps us from speaking. It feels like it decreases our vulnerability in a different way.

[00:17:14] **Cathy:** Keeps us more quiet. And I know that, sometimes weed can make you say crazy things too. Where you start to go to recesses of your brain where you're like, wow, I'm seeing things totally. So I'm not saying it's always that way but It's interesting how we utilize, how we self medicate to get our needs met.

[00:17:30] **Cathy:** And in this information, alcohol and weed tells us what we want. I want to be able to say who I am. I want to be able to speak up and connect. And I also want to be accepted for all these feelings. Yeah.

[00:17:41] **John:** No. And alcohol is a great counterpoint, right? Because it's like this great disinhibitor. And sometimes this real part of us that we want to show comes out.

[00:17:51] **John:** And weed just. Just brings everything down to this flatness. And we just is. To me such a it's a [00:18:00] depressing phenomenon that it's so omnipresent. The occasional use of it cracks me up like if somebody is actually getting high, like I am a teetotaler by nature, but I can be like, if I'm with somebody who's high, I can find this like I can join them in that space.

[00:18:14] **John:** But if it's just. It's just so heartbreaking and you can see it like, it shows up on the couch and literally like it shows up physically where if I'm working with him, I can tell walking in the door. If a boy uses weed a lot because it literally it's like there's no. There's no muscle mass.

[00:18:33] **John:** There's no bone structure. He's just like on the couch, but just flopped, just like somebody dropped him there.

[00:18:39] **Cathy:** And we're probably finishing up here, but I want to give you props for something Duffy is you were one of the first people in this clinical space and in this media space to really.

[00:18:47] **Cathy:** Talk about Juuls and Juul, I think it's called, maybe I shouldn't put an S on it that, that vaping and the nicotine that kids were consuming, you were seeing from your clients was really a problem. And I feel like you were one of the first people to really be like no, it needs to be gone.

[00:19:03] **Cathy:** This is not something we need to just talk to our kids about. It needs to go away. And Juul really I don't know that Juul is gone, but I feel like, do you feel like that shifted at all, the nicotine space, or is it just as bad?

[00:19:16] **John:** It's it's way better. Is by and large gone. If you have a jewel, you are not cool.

[00:19:20] **John:** There's still like there's Zen, like there's, there's still pouches and things like that. So there's still a There's still a little bit of a gateway drug thing between weed and nicotine, but it's not it didn't go where I was afraid it was going to go.

[00:19:33] **John:** So to your point that it, I remember reading like a year or two ago, there was a story in the New York times about Juul. And I'm like, This is so late for this to be showing up now, but it was luckily it was on the back end. I think of that trend and I think we're, I hope we're through that space.

[00:19:55] **John:** I don't think we're through the space with vaping weed, but vaping [00:20:00] nicotine and the nicotine craze. I think people realize the limited utility of that.

[00:20:07] **Cathy:** And that's everybody listening here probably already knows you, but it gives you a reason why you need to buy John's book, because he's always he's cutting edge about what's going on with our boys.

[00:20:17] **Cathy:** In two years, you're going to read an article in the New York Times about, is weed a problem for our boys? And I'm like yeah, I could have told you this a long time ago. We are, he's. He's on the front lines and so this is, that's why I wanted to bring that up because I just remember you being so adamant.

[00:20:32] **Cathy:** It gave, it just gave me it gave me a better foundation to, because I wasn't seeing it as much with girls. I know girls were doing it, don't get me wrong, but yours was you're like, dude, they're all doing it.

[00:20:41] **Todd:** So the problems that we didn't get to, I just want to say them out loud. The mass shooter problem, the video game problem, the sexual assault problem, the bully problem and the sports betting problem.

[00:20:52] **Todd:** So we have to cut this somewhere. So I feel like we have to cut it here. Anything any, anything that you want to highlight amongst any of those problems, John, I know it's a big ask because, it's a good chunk of your book, but anything specific? Yeah,

[00:21:06] **John:** All of it's a piece, right? All of it is boys and how their pain shows up.

[00:21:12] **John:** The one that probably jumps out at me that I'd like to comment on is the school shooter, the mass shooter problem, right? Because this is something now on average in a school, on any given school day in the U. S., there is a mass shooting. And I think that's three or more people being shot, right?

[00:21:30] **John:** With a gun. This is the craziest thing to be able to say. And I think there's one recorded case of a female mass shooter. Other than that, it's been. All boys and young men. And and it what I wanna say about that is the vast majority of the time the angst that these guys that we're talking about, that these guys feel is turned inward with that kind of.

[00:21:54] **John:** Self loathing, but on occasion it's turned outward, right? And that's where a headline is [00:22:00] made. And and not kids are terrified of school shooters, but what I want to say is I want us to think upstream a little bit, and if we can imagine that. We instill some degree of emotional intelligence and understanding and a soft place to land and some gentleness in the lives of these boys, right?

[00:22:22] **John:** And I know asking for empathy for somebody who commits something, who does something so frigging wretched and awful is an absurdity. But going forward, if we want to stem the tide of this, we have to recognize yes, it's the guns. I friggin hate the guns, and I shouldn't be elected to office because I would say, Okay, your Second Amendment?

[00:22:43] **John:** Repealed. We're coming for your guns. That said, I think our profession, my profession, is too adamant in saying it's not about emotional pain. There is emotional pain there, like there is, and I think we're missing something if we don't recognize that. And, if we need any other reason to look at these boys and say, Oh let's intervene and ease their pain and give them voice and teach them to express themselves in good, positive, appropriate ways.

[00:23:20] **John:** Emotionally. I think we stem the tide. I think that we don't see school shootings every day. It might not happen next year or the year after that, but at some point, I think we can beat this thing, but I think it's more an effort from more than one angle,

[00:23:34] **Cathy:** for sure. Oh, that's very, I appreciate that optimism.

[00:23:38] **Cathy:** I do, and I'm with you. I think it's, to your point, I think we're just way too binary in this country as far as, it's not that, it's this. And it's all combined. I'm totally with you about, actually at our conference next weekend,

one of our, sponsors is Mom's Demand. That's a huge part of Todd and my life, right?

[00:23:55] **Cathy:** Love them, yes. I love them. And at the same time, the other part of the [00:24:00] conference is emotional intelligence for all genders. So we don't just do one. We do it all. And everybody wants the same outcome. That's where we're all on the same page. We don't disagree on this. I don't care political affiliation.

[00:24:13] **Cathy:** Everybody wants the same outcome, which is not. to have this violence occur.

[00:24:18] **Todd:** Part five, the solutions. I'm just going to read them and you comment.

[00:24:23] **Cathy:** He said he's got all afternoon. I know, but we're,

[00:24:26] **Todd:** okay, go ahead. The value of work, the value of movement, physical touch, friendships, the usefulness of therapy and calling on all dads. Which of those Would you like to make any comments on?

[00:24:38] **John:** I'm going to, I'm going to combine a couple. Let me see if I can do a hat trick here. I'm going to the message to all dads physical touch and some emotional intelligence built in.

[00:24:48] **John:** A lot of boys tell me that they never. Touch anybody and nobody ever touches them. And I always find that so striking because I always think about those studies done with infant, like babies, newborns, right? Where, it's okay, touch is literally like necessary for life, it's also like the way we thrive and so much is delivered in that way.

[00:25:10] **John:** There's a story that I will probably tell on a stage in front of you guys next week. My dad. Was he was a flawed parent in a lot of ways. He didn't have any patience. He he was not emotionally available. He was out at AA meetings or away at work most of the time, but every day, every single day that I can remember until the day he died, he kissed me on my forehead a single day and that, that was enough, like that's all I needed to know Okay, somehow I don't really know this man very well, but I know he loves me, and I know we're good.

[00:25:47] **John:** Somehow, I fundamentally, inherently know that. And and to have a boy tell me yeah, I don't remember the last time I touched anybody. And

so there's this Intimacy gap, but also like [00:26:00] the meaning behind touch, right? Like it's it's such a vital part of our lives and that that our guys are missing that and they're not getting that from their dad specifically, right?

[00:26:11] **John:** Like in the idea of physical affection between a father and son, like the moms and daughters I saw dancing together in the streets, right? Like all I'm asking for from dads is just give your kid a hug. Just give them a surprise them with a hug or a kiss on the forehead or just a moment, right?

[00:26:27] **John:** Just rub their hair, and surprise them. I sometimes believe maybe that's all we need. If nothing else is available to us, if our well of our own emotional intelligence is tapped out or we're just wiped out and exhausted from our own lives, just show a little affection, get a little back and your kid will know okay, something's okay here in this world.

[00:26:53] **John:** There's something okay. And I've got somebody I can rely on when it's all down. Nobody said it. And maybe nobody has to, cause I just know it. I just like fundamentally, like with me and my dad, I know if it hit the fan. We're good. He'd be there for me. Yeah.

[00:27:08] **Cathy:** Wow. That's so beautiful. Something my girls pointed out to me years ago was the man hug.

[00:27:13] **Cathy:** How when men come in and then they grab hands and then they hug and they keep a hand between them and the guy like it's, they're covering their hearts. I'm sorry to get, into the physicality of it, but there's I'm going to hug you. But I'm going to keep my heart separate and it's not the intention.

[00:27:31] **Cathy:** I appreciate now

[00:27:32] **Todd:** if that's, it is the intention. We got to protect

[00:27:34] **Cathy:** maybe it's unconscious intention is what I mean. They're not like, I'm going to protect, but if that's, if you're doing that's good. I'm not saying stop doing that, but maybe move your hands. And hug in a way where it feels vulnerable and sappy because again, getting, sometimes we're so like, ooh, the sappiness, as all kids say, as Duffy, awkward, they're like, oh my God, it's so awkward.

[00:27:54] **Cathy:** Awkward is sometimes we're getting to the core of we're touching a place that's [00:28:00] like new and uncomfortable and it's not always bad. Even if you're, it's, that's sometimes what we remember, and again, I just, I'm

just pointing that out because sometimes when boys and men do hug, there's still such protection.

[00:28:13] **Cathy:** So it's a man hug.

[00:28:14] **John:** I I think I have a way to wrap this up in a beautiful way. Good. So I I was talking to my son last night, George Sappai and and he's what are you doing? And I said, Oh, I'm getting ready for the Zen parenting conference. That's next week. He goes, man, I remember when I came to that.

[00:28:32] **John:** And I and I asked him like, what do you remember? And I thought, you remember dad's talk, like how crazy your dad was. He said, I remember meeting Todd because. I went to shake his hand and he just hugged me and I was just like hugging him and we hugged for I felt like I'd known that guy for a long time.

[00:28:52] **John:** And I remember that moment too, because I was like choked up. I was, it was this beautiful. moment where these two men that I love, are finally meeting and they're like close, like right away. And it was just beautiful. And we just need so much more of that. And I don't remember. I'm grateful to you for hugging him, Todd.

[00:29:15] **John:** That

[00:29:16] **Todd:** meant a lot. I don't know how to say this without sounding Like a jerk or boastful, but I don't remember that, but it makes sense. I would, George is somebody that I would hug because I know that you love this man, and if you love him, then he's on my team. But the difference is what I realize mostly between guys is.

[00:29:36] **Todd:** We all want the same thing. We want the physical touch, but we're too scared to initiate. And I got sick of being scared about a decade ago. So now I initiate and about one out of 10 times somebody's dude, why are you doing this? But the other nine times it is embraced like, oh, we can do this.

[00:29:53] **Todd:** Everybody's oh, we could do this. And my invitation for any men out there. Is initiate, put yourself out [00:30:00] there and strike up a vulnerable conversation. Talk about how life isn't that great right now. Talk about how you're struggling right now as a parent or as a partner. Give somebody a long extended hug.

[00:30:10] **Todd:** There's some men in my life that give these like long 12 second hugs. And in the beginning, I know them well enough to know that this is the type of hug I'm going to get from this guy. Whereas mine are usually just a few seconds, then I break. But there's men that just are really good at hugging. And I tell them, I'm like, you're such a good hugger.

[00:30:26] **Todd:** And I think that I'm probably an exception. There's probably most guys out there that are 51 years old, don't have all these other random friends who are really good at hugging. Like it's totally I think you're right.

[00:30:37] **John:** I think that's an anomaly. I remember my brother's funeral. My brother, Tom died, 20 some years ago.

[00:30:44] **John:** And my friend, Mark, mark is a a great big black man, and and my family is walking out of this chapel, and it is the saddest time of my life, and and a couple people say things and it's nice to hear have a moment with some people, and Mark. Just, he was standing there with his arms open and he just pulled me in and he did not let me go until I fell apart.

[00:31:10] **John:** Until, and I did. It was and so we're both like literally bouncing, crying. And and it was, I needed it so bad. You know what I mean? I needed that. I needed that release. I hadn't had it for the whole week since he had died. And yeah there's something amazing in that. That's

[00:31:27] **Todd:** beautiful.

[00:31:28] **Todd:** All right. The name of John's book is Rescuing Our Sons, Eight Solutions to Our Crisis of Disaffected Teen Boys came out a month or two ago. He's going to be speaking on stage on Saturday at the Zen Parenting Conference. Hopefully you bought your tickets if you haven't buy them because we do still have some tickets left.

[00:31:46] **Todd:** Are you going to be there on Friday too, John? Hell yes. Nice. That's what I was hoping you'd say.

[00:31:51] **John:** He got

[00:31:51] **Cathy:** in for the whole

[00:31:52] **John:** thing. He's our team. Oh yeah. I'm not missing the moment of it. Yes. Sweet. Anybody listening, you gotta come. You've got to come. I want to pitch the conference for a [00:32:00] second because it is the greatest thing.

[00:32:02] **John:** If you haven't been to this weekend, you have got to protect time to come because I don't know how Todd and Kathy talk about this week to week. But it is the, it's a great way to sharpen your parenting toolbox. It is a great way to re energize yourself as a parent. It also is a joyful emotionally connecting, beautiful event where you will meet friends that you will have for the rest of your life.

[00:32:32] **John:** It's an important thing to attend. Please come and meet us next weekend.

[00:32:39] **Cathy:** Awesome. Thank you, John. And that's, and we've used the word joylessness in this conversation a lot because that's part of what boys feel, is what do I have to look forward to? And that's the goal, of your work, John, of the podcast, of the conference, like there is so much.

[00:32:57] **Cathy:** Joy. Like we, it's there. It's a rough time. We just have to see it. That's the thing is sometimes with boys, we don't need to give them something to be joyful about. They've already got it inside of them. We just have to point to it and say, it's okay. And it's the same with parents. Sometimes people leave the weekend and they're like, Oh yeah, like it's not like you have to deconstruct yourself and become a new person.

[00:33:18] **Cathy:** You just have to remember you're funny already and you need to know what your kid needs and you don't have to be in this role of parent. You get to be you and your kid will respond to that. And so I thank you for saying all those nice things.

[00:33:33] **Todd:** See you on Friday and then we'll catch everybody else on Zen Parenting next week.

[00:33:38] **Todd:** We love you, John. Conference wrap up. Love you guys. Keep trucking. Bye.

[00:33:43] **Cathy:** All right. John, that was so long. Thank you so much.

[00:33:46] **John:** Oh, I.

[00:33:47] [00:34:00]