



Happy Mom, Happy Kid

Maria Luisa Montt & Zelmira Crespi
Authors

EPISODE 33

[Quote]

“The problem is that we don't acknowledge or pay attention to being lost - you go through life taking care of your kids”

[Description]

Maria and Zelmira, authors of the book *Happy Mom, Happy Kid*, say "Motherhood is a gift of unimaginable love and happiness. But in between playdates and nap-time, you can't help but miss certain things from your old life...and answering to your real name instead of "Mom.""



Motherhood's nurturing responsibilities and emotions of anxiety and guilt can provide ample room and reason to occupy all your time, focus and energy. Today, we talk to Maria and Zelmira about what they learned from studying over 600 women who are struggling to achieve a balanced life, and why guilt, shame, and unrealistic expectations are robbing you.

[Intro]

Jaison Dolvane: Moms, do you have days when you feel like your entire life is about your kids, your family and NOT about you at all?

Maria and Zelmira, authors of the book *Happy Mom, Happy Kid*, say "Motherhood is a gift of unimaginable love and happiness. But in between playdates and nap-time, you can't help but miss certain things from your old life...and answering to your real name instead of "Mom.""

Being 'you' and being a 'mom' confuses your identify, where the 'you' part gets filed into the far flung corners of your brain and starts to fade away. Motherhood's nurturing responsibilities and emotions of anxiety and guilt can provide ample room and reason to occupy all your time, focus and energy.

In their book, close friends Maria Luisa Montt, founder of Expert Secrets Academy and writer Zelmira Crespi reveal strategies and five steps on how to reclaim yourself from motherhood to more positively impact your life and your family.

Today, we talk to Maria and Zelmira about what they learned from studying over 600 women who are struggling to achieve a balanced life, and why guilt, shame, and unrealistic expectations are robbing you of joy—and skills to stop the cycle.

[Episode]

JAISON DOLVANE: Hey welcome guys.

ZELMIRA CRESPI: Hi, how are you?

JAISON DOLVANE: Good, good. It's good to have you both here.

ZELMIRA CRESPI: Thank you. Thrilled to be on your show.

JAISON DOLVANE: Thank you. So maybe Me and Maria and Zelmira, I had both of you here and actually I haven't actually done too many interviews where I've had two people, so we'll see how this whole thing kind of goes. But maybe you guys could start with just a little bit of background in terms of, you know, what you guys did before you wrote this book and how you actually got to a point where you started writing this.

ZELMIRA CRESPI: Okay. So I'm a journalist. I am a specialist in communications. I went to college and I finished, and I started to work in corporate communications for banks, for airlines. And then my first child came, and she was born with special needs. So I decided to stay home and kind of learn the ropes of how to take care of her.

And eventually I decided that it would be a good idea to have all my kids a little bit close together. I wanted a big family. So I said, this is a good opportunity to kind of turn around and start something new and see what I can do with my life, from this new situation. And eventually I started running into corners and I was like, this is not so easy to get back on the horse. I wanted to do something out of the home. I did a little bit of copywriting, a little bit of articles here and there, but I just kept on feeling that I wasn't really fulfilling my profession and I'm taking care of everything that I could do creatively.

So that's when Maria comes in that she wasn't the friend we've been friends for almost 10 years here in Miami. And I just plopped down on her floor with \$2 in my hand. And I was like, how do you do this? Cause she was already, she already had four by the time I plopped on her floor. So and she was like, yeah, it's hard. And we kind of started talking and we never stopped talking about how hard it is to really get back to doing something that you're really passionate about outside of the home.

And that's when she, well, she can tell her story. And then eventually we decided to write a book about it down the road. We were both already had four kids and we said, you know what? I think this is not about finding something to do because there are a lot of things you can do. There's something more psychological that's really draining most moms to actually take the first step. There's an experience of a certain like failure to launch really that you try, and you try, and you just keep on sliding back down and nothing seems to work. And we found out that there was something like making noise in the identity search section. Like we didn't really know, like I didn't really know exactly. I knew what I wanted to do. I kept on trying different things, but there was something there that wasn't so easy. It wasn't so, just do a course and you'll be able to do it because family does absorb a lot of your time and your energy.

MARIA LUISA MONTT: Well, my story's a little different, sorry for my English. I am originally from Chile, South America and I arrived here to Miami 11 years ago. I am a child psychologist. And because I didn't have my degree here on the United States. I couldn't work as a child psychologist. So that's why when my journey started. So I started like most of your listeners Googling, what can I do from home? And that's when my journey started on marketing, on selling things online between babies, between naps, between long hours in the night. And for some reason because I'd studied psychology. I knew the importance of giving ourselves sometime, very important about self-care. So I never miss that part of myself.

So when I found Zelmi struggling with that, we really bond because I knew the missing pieces that maybe she was struggling with it. So yeah, we had some coffee and we decided to write a book about it.

JAISON DOLVANE: Sounds good. So what is the issue in terms of you know, the premise of happy mom, happy kid?

ZELMIRA CRESPI: The issue, what the actual book is about is that we go...

JAISON DOLVANE: The core issue of the book. In terms of, you know, you've written this thing about moms losing themselves, but, you know, what is that issue, why does it happen?

ZELMIRA CRESPI: There is an identity crisis that thank God while we were investing this book, we found out about, because I was like, thank God. I'm not crazy because I kept on finding that there was something off, and I didn't understand what it was. And I mean, I consider myself a regular normal person. I mean, I have a lot of good qualities, but I just had a lot of times, and the issues that I kept on trying to start something, and there was a lot to balance out. And there was a lot to take care of. And it was very easy for me to put myself in number two and like in the co-pilot seat.

And so we found the beautiful word matrescence, which really gave me a lot of peace because, matrescence in the 1970s was coined by an anthropologist. And basically what they say is like teenagers that you have, and you go through a crisis that affects your brain and your body and your hormones, moms go through the same exact thing. I was like, hallelujah, thank God. And happens with a teenager, they're discovering their identity.

And they're kind of all over the place. Same thing with moms, we are kind of all over the place.

So that gave me a lot of peace to understand that there was something, that there's an actual explanation for this, and it's not that I'm broken. It's not that I'm not doing things right. It's just something that I didn't really understand how to manage, because I didn't know that it was, it happened. And I wasn't looking at my identity. I was looking for something to do. I was tackling the wrong problem basically.

JAISON DOLVANE: This is the word you, you called it, I guess matrescence Right. Which is like, is there an adolescence, is this matrescence, So did you guys go up with this word?

ZELMIRA CRESPI: It was coined in the 1970s by an anthropologist. And then there's this doctor, Alexandra Sacks, she's a reproductive psychologist. And she actually wrote a book about things that you don't really expect that are going to happen to you when you get pregnant or you have a baby. And she says, and we mentioned her in the book. She kept on receiving a lot of moms that thought that maybe they were going through postpartum depression and postpartum depression is a real thing. And one out of seven moms get a postpartum depression. And obviously it has to be taken care of, but the rest of the six of the moms sometimes struggle a lot with motherhood and trying to feel okay with themselves and feel capable and good, but it's something else.

And that does have to do with that dissonance of identity that you have at the beginning. And then sometimes it can really drag on. So it's not just about your first baby. It's also, it can happen to you in your second. It can happen to you with your third, not happening to me with my fifth. Thank God, for now, we're good.

JAISON DOLVANE: This is kind of like it's sort of the evolution, right? So this is, what you mean by this term is somebody entering motherhood, right? And through that, you're describing in the book, the various changes that moms are actually going through. Can you talk about what some of those changes are and you know, why do moms end up losing themselves?

MARIA LUISA MONTT: I mean, there's a lot of changes. Zelmi was talking about, it's a reference as adolescence. You can even start feeling the

changes when you get the positive sign on the pregnancy test, like everything shifts. And until you're a mother, you really know about these changes, it can be psychologically, can be mental, can be certainly physically you see the change in you. Many times it could happen that you don't even recognize yourself. Your tastes, what you used to like before you don't like it anymore. So there's some new things that start adding up to these, we don't want to call it like a crisis, it's small like an identity transition. You know, you transition into a new self.

The problem is that if we don't acknowledge it, or if we don't pay attention to it - you don't see it through and you go through life with this you just start taking care of your kids. Many moms won't feel a thing, but many moms will do, and they will know what it is because everything's fine. Kids are fun. We as mom are fine, but something is off.

JAISON DOLVANE: So what I'm hearing you say is that there's kind of these, a series of changes or even micro changes that are kind of happening both physically and emotionally, that are kind of leading us down a path. And we may look back and see and, not even realize that, you know, things have actually changed, right? So a lot of moms are going to relate to that of course. My question to you is, is that a bad thing?

ZELMIRA CRESPI: No, it's not actually, it's part of the process. It's part of the survival of the child. It's very important that your focus basically goes directly to what he needs, what your body needs at that moment. And everything is absolutely how it should be. The important thing that we talk about as the book is acknowledging that there is an impact to your identity, but it's not because you want to lose yourself. It's because you have so much feelings for this new being that is so important to you, that all of your focus and love falls into this little person. And you seem to fall and out of love with yourself, but it's not something negative. It's simply, it's like a focus shift.

And so then thank God comes on Dr. Winnicott, who talks about the good enough mother. And we mentioned him in the book as well. We have a lot of research on this book a lot of psychological backup and he says, the good enough mother basically says, the kid is born, and you have to basically take care of all of its needs. And then the mother should naturally start to not be able to take care of every single need of the child. And that helps the development of the child. But sometimes it happens that if you put

all of your chips in, like we mentioned in the book, we're talking about, if you're playing a poker game and you throw every single chip you had into motherhood and you want to keep them there. And a lot of people say, okay, this is my new identity. I'm a hundred percent mom. I want to stay there. I'm a vegan mom, a vegetarian mom. I'm a soccer mom. That's who I am.

And if you keep on focusing on that and you just don't take one little step back and say, okay, am I okay with this? Or do I want to have a little bit more to myself now, the kid's already a little bit more, he's bigger. He doesn't need me so much. If you have several children, maybe they can actually play with themselves now. And I can take a little while for myself and think it through, just basically think it through. We don't want to pressure moms to feel that they're doing something wrong. It's just, take a moment to think, are you really taking care of yourself? Are you okay with yourself? Are you okay with the type of mom you're actually being? And we can help you kind of take a general outlook on your life from our study that we did and see, well, maybe there are certain areas that maybe if you just pay attention to them a little bit more, it might put you in the right position to know where you want to go.

And that is the next step. Do you want to build a business? Do you want to start painting? Do you need to do more yoga? That answers everything.

JAISON DOLVANE: So as you talk about this, the kind of question that I almost hear you know, certain moms that I know of my wife asking it is kind of like what there's like so much to do, right. It fully occupies our time. And I mean, you guys have multiple kids, I've got three, right. And school and activities and all sorts of stuff, where's the time. So what would you, what's your advice to moms? You know, how do they sort of start figuring this out where they start this journey towards reclaiming themselves, as you talked about the book.

MARIA LUISA MONTT: As we talk in the book you don't need to start a huge business or start working full-time on your old job or anything like that. It's little steps that will guide you to the right way. We both have done that. I have four kids, Zelmi has five kids. So believe us that it's possible. It's doable. I did it myself, as I said before, between naps in the night, I was tired. Of course I was tired. Do I want it to do it? Part of me yes. Part of me said, no, go to sleep. What are you doing? But I knew, I knew the importance of taking care of me, of taking care of my needs, my interests,

and doing that I knew that I was going to be a better mom. I will be a happier mom at the end of the day. That's why the title of the book.

But there are simple things you can start Googling in Google and YouTube to find all the information you need. But the thing that we always talk with Zelmi, it's not that we don't know where to find information. I think that as moms, as you said before, we're so full in our day that we don't have time to even sit and think, okay, do I want to do anything else? Do I want to start something new? Or am I just okay doing what I'm doing right now? I think that is the key point to even start thinking about doing anything, to just get a moment, think, talk with your partner maybe and reflect if you need anything more out of life.

JAISON DOLVANE: Yeah. It makes sense. You guys talk about sort of five steps. Can you talk about sort of give us a little bit more information on what those are?

ZELMIRA CRESPI: Okay. So we didn't, we really were very careful to not do like a to-do book, a how to book. Because we're really thinking about that mom that is sitting right now in her den, on the floor, playing with her toddlers or her baby, like breastfeeding or something. And we do not want to overwhelm anybody. What we did want, we did it as everything as simple as we could. And we just talk about the five areas that have been very backed up by study to be very important for satisfaction, fulfillment, happiness, and to be focused basically.

So we talk about social life. We talk about work, social life would be friends. And so work would be, it doesn't have to be paid, would be, we put into the category of something that makes you use your head outside of your home in any way.

Then we talk about mental wellness, which is very important, physical health and family, family, obviously it's kids and partner. And we talk about in the book, what we tell moms to understand the importance of each category, what the impact of each category does to yourself, and then see if you have the time, or do you usually have the time to take care of these areas? Are you, for example, if you have little time to be with your children, because you have to be at the office every day, when you're with your kids do you find the capacity to be with them in a focused way, or are you

running through to-do lists and writing up new information that you have to do for later?

The important thing is that today we have a lot of information about how to be moms, how to do parenting, how to have good kids are sporty kids or strong kids. We're overflowed with information and we don't have time to tackle everything. So it's very important for us to be very grounded and know exactly what we need, and our kids need. And so that's the importance of this book.

JAISON DOLVANE: Got it. No, that's excellent. I mean, almost seems like it's more, it's kind of like think of the whole you, you know, the entire you, and there's different facets to it. So that sounds like some really good advice. So obviously, you know, you mentioned this earlier Zelmira where you said, when you were going through some of these feelings yourself, you thought that maybe you were alone, and it didn't sort of quite apply to lots of other women out there. Now you got to interview 600 different people and talk to them. Can you tell us a little bit about, like, what did you find?

ZELMIRA CRESPI: I felt that what was great about what we found was that we gave each person these five areas to look at and to say, just tick off just a small tick. I don't care if you spent five minutes on each category, but just give it a tick. If you were able to take care of this area during this week. And the good news is for everybody who's listening that doesn't want to freak out right now and run out and try to find themselves is that you can actually just do one of each in the week and that will put you in the right head space to be where you want to be, to be able to see where you want to go or what you want to do, or what do you want to change or if you're okay.

I mean we could always talk about the possibility that you're fine. But if you're not, this is a good way to kind of screen to see if you're kind of, where you're really at.

MARIA LUISA MONTT: And also, I want to add that maybe people that are listening right now are doing all these things on the weekly basis, they're doing some work, they're doing some exercise, they're taking care of the kids, whatever. But the focus here on our book is being conscious about it when you're conscious about it. And there's a study, it's a huge study that they made on mates. You can read it in the book. It's super interesting, but when you're cautious about what you're doing, something tricks on your

brain and that gives you endorphins and that makes you feel good and whatever.

So maybe you're doing all those things. You don't even have to worry about it, but just being conscious and tick, okay, today I did this area, tomorrow I'm going to focus on that area that makes a whole different experiences.

JAISON DOLVANE: Yeah. It sounds like what you're really talking about is something that seems manageable, at least sounds manageable at this point. So that's excellent. So guys, as you've kind of written this book what challenges are kind of like, you know, hardships that you actually just focus on or face as you kind of went through this?

ZELMIRA CRESPI: The obstacles to write the book was that we decided to write this book in January 2020, and then a certain pandemic hit. So that really threw us off course. But it was actually amazing to feel the effects of knowing that from 8:00 AM in the morning to 8:00 PM at night, I had to be on a hundred percent mom because there was no way out of that situation. But the book was still there, and it had to get written and we put a schedule. We didn't want this book to be written in five years. We wanted this to be written now.

And it wasn't just about writing it. It was about investigating. We wanted answers and we wanted help our friends, and we wanted to help our cousins and everybody it's a conversation that we started to have with a lot of women.

So that's when, we started working from 4:00 AM to 7:30 AM in the morning. And then we started working from 8:00 PM to 12:00 PM and we got the thing through. We actually kept on, we didn't get the, find the actual word on matrescence until later on. So we kept on finding all of this information that was kind of guiding us towards the discovery of the word matrescence, but we hadn't discovered it. And it was kind of, the book was almost halfway written. And then this word pops out. We find an article by Alexandra Sacks for the New York times talking about this whole identity crisis and how you have to take care of moms, and be patient with them and understand that they're going through something really heavy which doesn't make it horrible, but you just have to respect that it's a very strong process and it impacts you in a lot of ways.

And I think, I cheered that day that we found that article because it was kind of, we were kind of [21:56 inaudible], but it was kind of quiet of walking in the dark and we kept on finding like interesting rocks. And then that shows up and it was like, thank God, somebody answered our prayers.

JAISON DOLVANE: It is kind of like a validation of what you guys have been thinking [22:09 inaudible] better. So guys, how has this experience changed you guys?

MARIA LUISA MONTT: Ooh good question. I don't know, I think that I'm more open now talking about this. Yesterday I have a group hang out with my dearest friends. We talked about this, maybe I've been living here for 11 years. In nowhere we talk about this. So now that the book is out, they start asking questions and wow! What an incredible thing to talk these with your friends. And most of them are going through these and never talk about it openly. So that for me was something special.

ZELMIRA CRESPI: And for me we were kind of insecure about writing a book. I mean, who are we to write a book, we're not like the biggest psychologists, we don't have a huge following, but we are experts by experience. I mean, I have five, she has four. We've tried everything basically. And we've talked about everything on the matter. And we read up everything that we put on the matter. And basically, we did our homework, and we were like, you know what, maybe we're not the most famous writers. But this is something that is going to help people. And it's going to help us understand us a little bit better. And like she says, it's great because we released the book and people started reading it, or we would just talk about, we're writing this book about this. And the response is so immediate. Like, oh my God, that happened to me. And we were like, why doesn't anybody talk about this.

And why don't they, what we think is that a lot of people feel ashamed because they want to say, I'm having the best time as a mother. My kids are the best. We are the best mothers in the world. And yeah, we all, we would love that, but sometimes there are really rough days and it's not just about the fact that the kids spilled the food on the floor. If there's something more inside, something on a deeper level, it's more psychological kind of thing that happens. And if you don't take care of it or you don't pay attention to it in the long run, our worst nightmare is that you come out of motherhood in 10, 15 years and say, what happened to me, what happened to my life? The

kids are now off to college, who am I? And that does happen. And it happens a lot.

JAISON DOLVANE: Yeah, fair enough. So that's wonderful, you know, good for you guys, first of all, for taking that step and actually writing the book. What I hear is, you've managed to kind of open a conversation and you know, in that process, you also develop more confidence around you know, the things that you actually know and the fact that you can actually write these things. So that's wonderful. Guys I ask this question to a lot of my guests and the question is, you know, as a parent is there one feeling that you have that you would rather not feel?

MARIA LUISA MONTT: You are on with your questions. I'm going to ask them now. For me, at least is the well-known, balanced life, for me, that whole concept drives me crazy. Because I'm constantly checking myself. Am I balanced enough? Am I doing the right thing? Am I giving enough time to this or that, or that, that is something for me that I have to work on, but also keeps me on track and in check that maybe something's missing and I can quickly fix it if it needs to be fixed.

ZELMIRA CRESPI: And I don't want to ever have to blame my kids for not being able to do what I need to do. So sometimes when I'm trying to write the book or read or do something, and it's like, ah, don't have time because I'm taking care of the kids. And I don't want to have that feeling. And since every time I've tried to do something, even though I haven't succeeded a hundred percent, this is my first like officially, okay, you did it, you wrote a book. But since I'm a mom, I would always try to do something, but I would feel so good about even trying that, I mean, I would just enjoy my kids even more, but it's something that I always try to check myself. I mean, if you don't have time for doing your stuff, it's not the kid's fault. They didn't ask to be here. You brought them. So let's see what you can do with your time in your brains to work around this.

And on the time management issue we do mention the book. Once you have one kid, your day can be completely absorbed by one child, and then you have another kid and you still take care of the two kids in 24 hours. And then the third comes along and you still use the same exact time of hours to take care of three kids. So it's about time management, being smart with yourself, maybe doing certain activities with the kids. You don't have to let go of the kids or be alone in a dark room by yourself, finding

yourself. Don't worry. You can actually try to do a family workout together or trying to do healthy meals together, cook together.

You could really tick off the categories in very creative ways and find those moments to be, to move forward basically in your introspect.

JAISON DOLVANE: Yeah. You know, back to this feeling, when I heard you say over there, which is actually a really important point that you just made, and I'm not sure I've heard anyone say that before, but it's actually a really true, which is, you know, we sometimes inadvertently blame our kids for certain things that might not be going right now. Obviously, you know, as parents, we know that's not the case, it's our own anxiety gets in the place. So that's a really interesting one that, you know, we blame one thing, but obviously we'd love not to, [28:13 inaudible].

ZELMIRA CRESPI: Yes, we are a new generations of moms and we have a lot in our plate, but at the same time, we have a lot more education than other generations before us. We have a lot more information going for us. But a small personal story about why I think this is that I always heard people around my mother say she would have made a great lawyer. And I was like, why wasn't she a lawyer? I don't get it. Like I kept on and on for instance, I was very little, I kept on hearing. Your mother is so smart, she could have been a great lawyer. And that kind of killed me because I was like, well, maybe she would have been happy being a lawyer and a mom. And she had four kids as well, like me.

And she never blamed us at all. It's not about that. It's more about, you know what? If you want to do something with your life, you have to be responsible for your emotions. You have to be responsible for your desires. And that's why happy mom, happy kid. You have to be responsible for what you're going through. You have to take care of yourself. If you need help, ask for help. You can have a friend that knows a little bit about online marketing or online courses, plop down on our floor with your kids on top and ask your questions and kind of do your homework and don't let maternity kind of swallow you up, because it doesn't have to be that way.

JAISON DOLVANE: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think you guys made the point earlier, right? Which was, you did a really good job around categorizing the five areas that any moms need to sort of pay attention to and, you know, to the extent that they can kind of do things within those areas, that's going to give them a

certain type of fulfillment that they may not even realize that they're missing right now. That's pretty cool. All right, what is your hope for all these moms that are going to read your book?

ZELMIRA CRESPI: I think that the first thing that I want them to feel is that they're okay, that they're not broken, that they're not doing anything wrong, that this is absolutely natural. It's a natural process. It's a universal feeling and effect that it has on every single mother, matrescence happens to every single mom. You do have different levels of it, obviously. You do walk into motherhood with different levels of your personal identity already developed.

It's very different for a very young mom to walk into maternity and a person that's already with a fully developed career. I mean, it hits them in different ways and in different levels. We have different tastes. We have different desires. We have different capacities. I think I just want them to know that they are not alone, and this actually happens to everyone. And it's important to see if you feel that something is off and if something is off, don't be scared. This is probably not something very serious. But if you take care of everything that you have to take care of, like we mentioned in the book, you'll probably feel much more satisfaction about every single thing you do in every single day.

Because every single day as a mom is a new chapter, it is a whole different ballgame.

JAISON DOLVANE: Great. So Maria you got something to add to that?

MARIA LUISA MONTT: She read my mind. I couldn't add a dot to that.

JAISON DOLVANE: Sounds good guys. So I think that's all the time we have, but before we sort of leave, you want to just tell the audience where they can get ahold of you guys or where they can buy your book.

ZELMIRA CRESPI: Yes. They can go online to www.happymom.com. And we, no? Why not?

MARIA LUISA MONTT: www.Happymomhappykid.com. Come on baby brain.

ZELMIRA CRESPI: I have a two month old bear with me. They can find us online at www.happymomhappykid.com and we're also on Amazon and we have our Instagram page, happy mom book.

JAISON DOLVANE: Great. Excellent. Well, thank you so much, guys. It's been a pleasure and thanks for being here.

ZELMIRA CRESPI: Thank you so much.

MARIA LUISA MONTT: Thank you.

[Outro]

Thank you for listening.

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