



## Jen Boggs on being a mother

**Diane:** Hey, everyone. This is Diane Atwood and you are listening to the *Catching Your Memories* podcast. Everybody has stories or memories to share if only someone would ask. That's where I come in. Today's story is about being a mother. My guest is Jen Boggs. I've known Jen for 10 years now, which I can't believe. I know it's a cliché, but time does fly. Jen and her husband Mike have a daughter named Ramona who just turned 12. With every birthday comes new joys, challenges, surprises. One of the biggest surprises for Jen has been how many lessons she has learned about being a mother.

Well, Jen, welcome to *Catching Your Memories*, and the memories we're going to catch with you today are all about becoming a mother.

**Jen:** Thank you. I'm excited to talk about it. I think about it constantly.

**Diane:** Well, you're right in the throes of being a mother. I mean, once you're a mother, you're always a mother. But, your daughter is 12 years old now?

**Jen:** Yep, and it does feel like I'm in the middle of it, but I guess that's how people always feel when they parent, is that they're always in the middle of it.

**Diane:** In one way or another, yes, I can say that's true. I have two daughters who are in their thirties and it's a different thing than



when they were 12, but it's front and center. Did you always know that you wanted to be a mother?

**Jen:** I did. I did. I don't remember exactly when that feeling or thought entered my mind, but I kind of did, I remember thinking back to high school. You know, my name is Jen and sometimes friends would call me Jenny and I had a friend that would call me Henny, and I said, why do you call me that? And he said, it's because you're like a mother hen, you kind of look out for all of us and make sure we're, we're on the straight and narrow, and, you know, you're always good with advice and some I guess I've always had that sort of bent.

**Diane:** The motherly instinct they call it, maybe.

**Jen:** Yeah, I think so.

**Diane:** But you waited until you were a bit older to start having children. How old were you?

**Jen:** I think I was 37 or 38, but you know, I lived a full life before then and my husband and I didn't get married for, I think it was maybe seven years into our courtship, I guess, that we actually got married. So, we were sort of late to the game with that too, in a way. I think I just wanted to sort of both get established financially, so we wouldn't have to worry, but also, we were just enjoying our lives, and then I became a mother.

**Diane:** And you're enjoying it in a different way.

**Jen:** It's very different. Oh boy, is it different.



**Diane:** But you got to have that footloose and fancy-free lifestyle for many, many years.

**Jen:** I did. We were living in New York City. We met in Maine and then we moved to New York City and we got to have lots of adventures there, which would have been difficult, if not impossible with a child. So, when I did get pregnant we always had this plan to move back to Maine when that happened. And I just had this idea that if, unless I had lots of money, it would be a difficult thing to raise a child in the city.

**Diane:** Okay. So, I know from my own experience that when you're in your late thirties and you're pregnant you're considered a geriatric patient.

**Jen:** It is very unflattering, yes.

**Diane:** Were you at all concerned about being pregnant in your late thirties?

**Jen:** I wasn't really, because I felt like I was healthy. You know, I had always lived kind of a healthy lifestyle, and I didn't until it became very hard to get pregnant, and then I began to wonder.

**Diane:** So, you had difficulty getting pregnant in the first place?

**Jen:** I did, yeah. And I had a couple of miscarriages, which I attributed to having a difficult pregnancy, but what I didn't realize at the time, because once I started talking about it with friends and people I really didn't know very well, I started learning that lots of people have miscarriages when they're trying to get pregnant and it's quite natural. Like it's in the natural course of things that your body's sort of getting ready to house this human



for nine months. And so that was the biggest surprise to me that I thought I was just this alien person who couldn't sustain a pregnancy, but as it turns out, that's true for many, many women.

**Diane:** Is that something that you discovered then or years later?

**Jen:** I discovered it then, because I had had a few miscarriages and I had a manager who was actually a few years older than me who had also had trouble getting and staying pregnant, and she told me to go get acupuncture. And she gave me the name of an acupuncturist in Manhattan. And I truly believe, I mean, I have all the evidence that that helped me — to get acupuncture. I can't explain it, but I've heard many other people have had the same experiences that acupuncture really helped support that pregnancy.

**Diane:** Perhaps by bringing everything into balance.

**Jen:** Maybe. It was a mystery to me, but it was very relaxing to go there every week, and I really actually thinking back now would have done it for longer because what happened with my pregnancy was everything was going swell, and then they say 10 weeks, I think eight, I had an early labor, my daughter was born quite premature.

**Diane:** So, you had two miscarriages, and did those happen in the first trimester? Really soon?

**Jen:** Very soon after, yes.

**Diane:** And was that devastating for you? At least until you got to talk to other women who had been through it, and you had a better understanding of how prevalent miscarriages really are.



**Jen:** Yeah. I mean, it was. It was very confusing because I felt like I was doing all the right things and I was, you know, a good weight and I ate well and all that stuff, and, yeah, it was. I don't know if I would say devastating, but I would definitely say very confusing and sad, really sad. Yeah.

**Diane:** Did it help you to have at least one person to talk to? Is it something that you could talk about openly?

**Jen:** Not really, which is, I think part of the reason why people don't talk about it because it is so painful for a lot of people, but it really did help me to have another person and then another person, and so since then I've talked to many friends and, oh, yeah, I had that happen, too. So, I guess that later on surprised me that it was so very common. And I think since then people are more open to talking about it and there have been some celebrities that talk about it. But I think talking about it really does help because then that woman may not feel so devastated and plus she may not give up, you know, she might keep trying cause I'm sure some women just give up.

**Diane:** I think it's critically important to be able to talk about something like that because you have that feeling of, as you said, there's something wrong with me. And you may feel like I'm the only one. So, I think it's really critical that we can talk about it openly. But when you finally did get pregnant the third time and it, for lack of a better word, stuck, were you, you must have been pretty anxious.

**Jen:** No, I wasn't, weirdly. I think because it stuck and because I had done something to help it stick, you know, I wasn't nervous, really. I was so elated to be pregnant. I loved being pregnant so much. I mean, I think there was like a week maybe when I was



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having the nausea and wanting to, you know, throw everything up, but it didn't last for long and it just was so much fun to me. I really enjoyed it. My real sadness when I had my daughter so early was that I missed that third trimester and I was looking forward to being huge as a house. And, you know, I didn't get to wear a lot of the big, old clothes I had been planning to wear. And yeah, I really was looking forward to that, to having that whole experience.

**Diane:** So, it was a very joyful, happy time to be pregnant. And it was what they call an uneventful pregnancy until it became very eventful. At what point did you start to go into labor?

**Jen:** Hard to say, because I'd not been in labor before so I didn't exactly know, but I went to work one day and it was the funniest thing, right. this idea of intuition, but I was working in an office in Manhattan and I usually tried to dress fairly professionally and fashionably or whatever. But that day I was feeling so kind of sluggish and I had rested the day before, cause I was like, I just feel tired so I'm just going to pull out the sofa bed and watch movies all day, which is exactly what I did. I went to work the next day and I was like, I'm gonna wear my maternity jeans cause I just, I don't know, I just really need to feel comfortable today. And then I had lunch. I had a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I'll never forget it, and I never finished it because I realized, oh, something is going on. And one of my managers called a cab and sent me to the hospital. And I was there for, I think about almost a week before I did have Ramona.

**Diane:** Any cause that they told you about, why you went into early labor?



**Jen:** Honestly, I don't remember. I think something just gave out. Something was just ready to, it wasn't something so specific I think that I remember exactly, like it wasn't preeclampsia and it wasn't, you know, some things I've heard about other women experiencing it. It just happened. I think, which again, if I had the acupuncture, I kind of wonder if it would have ever happened.

**Diane:** Yeah. So she was about, did you tell me eight weeks early? Eight to 10 weeks?

**Jen:** Yeah. They officially said 10 weeks early, but by all my just intuition and the tests she would pass, like, she just was passing every test, the eye test, the ear test and just simply needed to grow. And I had, of course, I'm a reader and that's how I learn a lot of the things that I know. And I was reading a lot of books about premature babies, and there's a world of difference between eight weeks and 10 weeks in terms of development. And it just seemed to me that she was on the eight weeks early side of things and not quite as early as they said.

**Diane:** How much did she weigh?

**Jen:** She was three pounds four ounces.

**Diane:** When you're pregnant, even before you get pregnant, you kind of have preconceived notions about what it might be like to be a mother. And so maybe you had this preconceived notion about being in labor, giving birth, taking home this, whatever, eight-pound baby, and just diving in and suddenly everything is totally unexpected. You seem pretty adaptable to situations as they arise. You would have had to have adapted quickly to this situation. How do you think you did?



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**Jen:** You know, Diane, I think I did pretty darn well. It's funny, I haven't thought about these memories in a long time, but I remember one of the saddest things for me was leaving without my baby because that is something you just expect to do. You go in, you have the baby and then you leave with the baby. And I actually saw women leaving with their baby when I was taking a cab with my husband and in-laws. Just us adults with no baby. And so that was very sad. That was very, very sad. But, you know, being a mom is more than just having the baby. Like there's a lot more after that, you know? So, I quickly figured out, well, let's grow this baby and I thank goodness I had great insurance. I mean, I'm sad that that's the key to this, but I had great insurance with my work and they were so lovely to let me take my leave early and all of that stuff. And they extended my maternity leave. I mean, it was so helpful because then I didn't have to worry. I could just go and take care of my baby, even in NICU. So, I would go, and I would, my favorite thing was to kangaroo her, which is skin-to-skin contact. So, you kind of like shove that little baby underneath your shirt, you know? And so she's warm and I would sing TV theme songs to her when I ran out of songs to sing and I was there all day. I had that luxury because of my work situation and my insurance situation. And thank goodness because then, then I was able to sort of figure it out, like, oh, I'm supposed to drink more. Oh, I'm supposed to take a nap. I had this memory of the other day, knowing we were going to talk about this. There's a room in the hospital that parents could go and sleep in. So, you'd go and you'd sleep in this little cot thing next to three other exhausted parents whose babies were also in NICU. But I learned that if you sleep, then you produce more milk. So, I just sort of started to navigate the situation, realizing how fortunate I was that I got to be there.





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**Diane:** And to have all the support that you had around you in that setting, too, must have been phenomenal.

**Jen:** Oh, it was. And so I went home like a pro, I felt like, because all these nurses who I'd become kind of friendly with, you know, I always brought them treats and stuff cause I was like, thank you for watching my baby all the time and making sure she can breathe. But yeah, they taught me how to change her and nurse her and burp her. I mean, I really felt like I was just getting tutored for those weeks so that when we took her home, we were great at it.

**Diane:** Three weeks was she there?

**Jen:** She was there for six weeks.

**Diane:** Oh my goodness.

**Jen:** Yeah. And they thought that she would be in a couple more weeks even more than that, which also lends more evidence to my argument that she wasn't 10 weeks, that she was a little bit further along.

**Diane:** So, when we were talking beforehand about what we were going to talk about you mentioned that you didn't even have time to do childbirth classes? Had you done your classes on ...

**Jen:** Oh, no. One of the things on my to-do list in the hospital was call the birth class and tell them we won't be coming in.

**Diane:** And did you have her room ready?



**Jen:** Her room was not ready. It was kind of getting ready. Oh, you know what, actually, this was when we were living in New York, so we had a very large bedroom, and so we had to put the crib together and, you know, she was going to be in our room for a while. So her little corner was not yet ready because we did not expect it to have to happen so quickly.

**Diane:** And baby showers usually happen in the last trimester. Did you ever get a baby shower?

**Jen:** I got three. One of them was at work and they were great. I was working at a children's publishing company in New York, and so of course, I got many, many kids' books. So, my library was shaping up pretty nicely. So I went to that baby shower and then I had a baby shower with all of my friends, my best friend flew up to New York and my daughter was still in NICU, so I had two baby showers with her in NICU, and then when I came home to Maine, I had my six-month-old baby and we had a family and friends in Maine baby shower. So, I got three. Som I guess I can't, it wasn't all bad,

**Diane:** No complaints.

**Jen:** Right.

**Diane:** Oh goodness. So when you brought her home, we talked a little bit about those preconceived notions. What did you think before she was born, what it was going to be like to be a mother?

**Jen:** I didn't really know. I had my hopes that it would be fun and it did turn out to be fun. Not all the time. Definitely not. What I mean by hopes is, so, my own mother was not the mom I wanted or needed. And I don't mean that to sound harsh because I love



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my mother so much, but her own mother could not give her the time or the space to become the kind of mom I kind of wished I had. You know, someone that was around, someone that talked to me about things, was honest with me about things. My own mom just wasn't able to do that for me. And so my preconceived notions were I want to do it differently. So, I kind of was not really starting from scratch. Often I would do things the opposite of what, and I know this isn't a new idea, but I would do things the opposite of what my mom did in hopes that, I don't know, it kind of feels like a do-over in a way that I get to be the mom I had always wished to have.

**Diane:** Do you talk to your mom about that?

**Jen:** We haven't because I think that would be too much. I think that would be too much. And maybe one day we will have those conversations, but I find the conversations we're having now are me kind of telling her what kind of, I don't even have to tell her. She can see, she can see me being a Girl Scout leader for Ramona's troop, and she can see me participating in the PTO and knowing all Ramona's friends' names and knowing what's going on in her life. Like, I think she can see how things have turned out differently. I never want to blame her for how she was because she was doing the best she could,

**Diane:** I have a billion questions and I'm drawing from my own experience a little bit. I often found my mother watching me when my daughters were younger and we never had a discussion about it either, but, and it's too late now, but sometimes I would think she's judging me, she's watching and judging me. But now, looking back, I think maybe she was just trying to learn from me or whatever. Maybe it was taking her back to her own early



mothering. I wish I could have had the conversation with her at some point.

**Jen:** She might've been admiring you.

**Diane:** I'd like to think that, but we never were in a space where we could have that conversation. Yeah, I never wanted to go there and now I wish I had, but anyway, it sounds like you have good conversations with your daughter. So, that's what's important now.

**Jen:** Yeah, we do. We talk about everything. And that's the way I wanted it to be always, is to just be able to give her information and wisdom, but also to just be around and available and have her trust me and her father also, but have her trust us enough to be able to ask us anything. And, you know, I was thinking about this yesterday, that I was a latchkey kid in the eighties and an only child so I watched a lot of TV, like hours of TV, which makes me feel guilty now when I tell my daughter to be like, you know, 30 minutes on the tablet and that's it. But I watched a lot of TV, and I saw a lot of examples of motherhood and some of them were pretty good, you know, so I didn't have my own mom I had sort of my own resources and I did know a couple of other friend's moms who I thought were pretty cool, but I did watch and learn from TV moms, which I hope doesn't sound too pathetic, but, you know, there was this, even thought of Leave it to Beaver and how, at the end of the episode, usually it was the dad, not the mom, but I don't care, the lesson is the same, that they would talk to the Beaver or Wally, whoever had the adventure in that episode and say, here's where you went wrong, here's another way to try it, and hopefully next episode you'll be able to do it better. You know what I mean? Like that wasn't exactly how they phrased it, but there were lessons to be learned and you really could only impart those lessons if you spoke with your kids and just talked to



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them, just talk to them. And then I think one of the surprising things about being a mom and talking with my daughter so much is the things I've learned from her. I mean, since she was two, not even right now as a prepubescent girl, but all along, she's been teaching me things because I've been having these conversations with her and listening and, she just has taught me a lot.

**Diane:** Taught you a lot about yourself?

**Jen:** Taught me a lot about myself, but also just her, she's a person, you know, she's always been a person. I think sometimes people forget that kids are people and they're fully formed in that moment if that makes sense. They'll grow and learn more, but at that moment they're one hundred percent human. And so, her perspective on things is sometimes really funny and really wacky and sometimes something I haven't considered. So, she's taught me, I can't start to list them because it's just, it's sort of an ongoing conversation we have.

**Diane:** And you probably are in a different space, too, today than you were when she first came home from the hospital, for instance. So, your perspective has probably evolved over this past decade-plus.

**Jen:** It has, yeah, and I think that's one of the biggest surprises to me too, is that I knew the kid would change. Right. I knew that they would go through these phases and stages. And I knew that but what I didn't know and what no one told me was that at each stage I was also going to change. It might sound obvious now, but it didn't occur to me that as she grew, I would also grow. Never occurred to me because I'm like the quote fully formed adult who knows everything, and then I'll just raise this little seedling into a



plant or whatever. But yeah, that's been kind of a fun surprise and sometimes a very painful surprise, too.

**Diane:** Absolutely. Because you know, between birth and age 12, there's a lot of phases in there as they are developing and they're being able to formulate their own opinions about things. And in some of those stages, they are very opinionated. Some of those ages and phases are just marvelous and some of them, you wonder, am I ever going to make it through this? Do you have any highlights from particular phases or ages?

**Jen:** I think now. Now feels the most challenging. Maybe it's like, you know how they say that you forget the pain of childbirth. Maybe you also forget the pain of all those other stages too, because as I'm trying to remember, it wasn't all good, obviously, but I can't remember because I feel like I figured out those challenges, and then we're moving on to the next challenge. So right now, the challenge is she's asserting her independence in all kinds of ways, in thought, in actions, in her relationship to me and her dad. So, that feels very challenging to me. Sometimes, you know, as I moved through these stages with her, she would move on to the next stage and I would be behind because I got so used to the other one. I was like, oh wait, we're moving on? Okay. So, she would just by nature of being a growing human take the lead and I would have to catch up like often I would have to catch up. So, I'm kind of in that place again, where now she's in sixth grade and we're entering kind of a fraught time for a young woman. That was my experience anyway, and I've seen a lot of my friends do the same. But this middle school, especially with social media and stuff like that, I feel like it's going to be a little tricky. And so, I'm catching up by having clear boundaries, but also being able to get out of her business, which I was so used to doing. And, you know, honestly, the pandemic didn't help that because you're



trying to protect your child, and she was home a lot, which I think was a real blessing in some ways. But now having to let go and, and trusting her judgment and all that stuff, like I want to do that and I'm not quite there yet. I'm slowly getting there, but yeah, I think I might need to move along cause she's already moving past me.

**Diane:** Well, it sounds like you've built a really strong foundation of trust in particular, which is important. But the thing about being 12, being in that space, I think is that it's an age in which they really become aware of themselves in a different way. They become aware of how other people may see them, and unfortunately, I think that becomes more important than it ought to be. Does that make sense?

**Jen:** It does. I'm seeing a lot of that actually.

**Diane:** I just spent time with my two granddaughters who are five and three. And it's the three-year-old that I thought of when you were describing how Ramona is right now, like asserting her independence, the three-year-old you have to be careful what you place in front of her for food because for no other reason, other than I'm stating my opinion, I don't want this. So, I think that probably along the way, kids assert themselves, but it becomes more sophisticated when you're 12 years old and older and you really have to be sharper on your feet, I think, as a parent.

**Jen:** Yeah, definitely. I imagine this like very strong but thin thread between her and I so that she can kind of explore and do her own thing, but also know I'm here, I'm here and she can find her way back with the thread and you know, if anything goes wrong or if she has questions or if something is I don't know, confusing to her that I'm here. And I think she knows that and that



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was really my goal all along was to put, what did I used to say, put money in the trust bank. So that, hopefully, during these years, and then high school, that we'll have built a strong enough relationship and we'll have plenty of deposits in the trust bank so that she knows she can confide in us and she can come to us. If she gets, if, right, if she gets into trouble.

**Diane:** That she can count on you.

**Jen:** Yeah.

**Diane:** Would you say your relationship with your husband, Mike has changed at all since you've both become parents?

**Jen:** It has. Yeah. Yeah. It's definitely gotten stronger. And I'm so grateful, not to be too crass about it, but I'm glad I picked him as a mate because he's very good at the counterpart of parenting. He and I are often on the same page with things, not always, and then we talk it out and we talk it through, but yeah, it feels like a real partnership. And I think that all kids, mine in particular, they're very observant. And so she sees us, you know, we own a business together, so she sees us working together and she sees us laughing together a lot and listening to music and watching TV and hanging out or whatever. We were talking earlier about how we didn't get married for a while. It's because we were doing our thing together and being good friends together. That's one of the things I've told her before is, when you pick your life partner, make sure your friends, that's really core.

**Diane:** I was going to ask if you had any words of wisdom. I think those are good words of wisdom. Make sure you're friends.

**Jen:** Yeah.





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**Diane:** Because we don't realize sometimes how we model behavior to our children. You know, it's one thing when we're in indirect interaction with them. But as you said, they're always observing what's going on around them.

**Jen:** Yeah. It was advice that I read or something on a mommy blog or something very early on. And it was during those days where I was like, oh my God, if I have to get up and breastfeed one more time. Like it was during just those kind of lonely days when the baby is just relying on you for food and sleeping most of the time and not being fun. But during that time, I had read a piece of advice and I've heard it a lot since which is, every parent needs to make sacrifices for their kids, of course, but to not stop being who you are. And I've tried to do that throughout her life. She sees me working and she sees me reading books and joining book clubs, and she sees me having friends and making time for my friends. And so she sort of sees me being a person apart from being a mom. And I hope that will influence her in a positive way, too.

**Diane:** I was going to ask you to describe yourself as a mother. You've kind of done that, but encapsulate what you've said into a sentence. How are you as a mother?

**Jen:** As a mother, I am curious about the whole endeavor. I mean, that was why I think I enjoyed being pregnant so much because I was so curious what my body would do and could do. And then once I had her, I was curious about how I would grow her and how I would care for her. And then going through all those stages, like that curiosity really helped me get through some, some of that defiance and some of that annoyance when you're annoyed with your kid. And I try to be, and again, this was what I learned because of the absence of what I had as a child. I try to be present.



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And sometimes I'm not good at it. Sometimes I just would rather go read a book and sometimes I do, but I try to be present and I try to be there and listen to her when she's talking about something and she loves to talk, so sometimes that can get really hard to stick it out and just, you know, you don't have to talk while you're brushing your teeth. You can continue this if you just finish brushing your teeth and you can continue on your monologue after that. The curiosity thing I think is just part of my makeup, but presence and being present, that's something I need to work on, but that's where all the good stuff is I found cause you kind of get surprised by the feelings that you have when you're present and really paying attention.

**Diane:** And that you're willing to look at yourself and how you are reacting to different things. And you're willing, it sounds like, to change if you feel like it's necessary.

**Jen:** Yeah, I am, and it's, I mean, I don't mean to sound like a saint here cause I'm really bad at it. It takes time for me. I can't change on a dime. I have to like to think about it and practice and all this stuff. It's not always so easy for me to move on to the next phase.

**Diane:** But you do have to make some course corrections along the way, you've had to and expect you will still have to.

**Jen:** Yeah. Well, and then one more surprise about being a mom is it's been fun to be a mom with other people doing the same. So, these are friends of kids that I have now known for a long time. And it's fun to compare notes with them because then I'm like, oh, I'm not such a bad mom after all. Or like, oh, you, you yell at your kids too. You know, it's kind of reassuring to know that we have some common denominators and that's been really



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fun too, is to be friends with other moms. I never thought that would be a rewarding kind of thing. It never occurred to me, but it turns out it has been.

**Diane:** I wish there were mommy blogs available back when I was a mom of young children. I think that would have been helpful. It can be pretty isolating sometimes if you don't have that support network like you said. So, are you looking forward to teenage years? Do you think you're really ready?

**Jen:** Diane, whether I'm ready or not, it's happening. So yeah, I think my answer to that question is yes and no. One thing I didn't realize as a parent is that you have to say goodbye to these people that you love because it feels like I've known like 10 different people now, you know. I knew this infant named Ramona, and then I knew this toddler named Ramona, and then I knew this three-year-old named Ramona. And she keeps changing and so, that's been kind of unusual. I didn't really expect that. And so now I have a sixth-grader named Ramona and next year I'm going to have a seventh-grader, and she'll be different, you know, she'll be different. I'm eager to see who that person will be, but I'm also like, oh, I'm going to miss this one who mostly does what I say. I think seventh grade, maybe not so much.

**Diane:** How would you describe Ramona? You say she'll change. She's different people but at her core she's Ramona. Who is that person at her core?

**Jen:** What I have observed is that at her core, Ramona is really funny. She's got such a terrific sense of humor and she makes me laugh all the time. She loves to read, which is a passion that we share. And she really likes her friends and that's been kind of fun to see about sixth grade Ramona, is that she's really, you know



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we'll sit at the dinner table and she'll tell us about her close group of friends that she's known for many years now. But then she'll tell us about these other friends that she's made. And it's just these little stories about Anthony cut his hair, but he won't let us see it. Just these little stories like this. I don't know. She's pretty wonderful. She's pretty wonderful. She's really annoying sometimes. Let's be honest, people who you live with all the time can get on your nerves, but at her core, she's quite wonderful, actually. And she's conscientious is a word I'd use to describe her.

**Diane:** And what do you wish? The obvious question is what do you wish for your daughter? But I also want to ask, what do you wish for your relationship with her? Especially moving forward after she's off on her own.

**Jen:** I was picturing that Ramona. She was very tall. No, I, what I want for her is for her to be a self-sufficient, kind, and not sure of the word exactly. I want her to know that she can do things. That if she wants to live in a particular place or wants to learn something in school so that she can do a particular job, I want her to know she can do those things, that she can create stuff or that she has agency, that she's capable and competent. That's really what I want for her. And then what I want for us is to be best friends forever. I don't even know if she would call me her best friend, honestly. What I want for us is to just have an open and honest relationship. I want her to want to talk to me. Not all the time. I mean, I don't want to be one of those moms who you have to text 24/7, but I want her to want to spend time with me, to want to go see a movie once in a while. And my far future dream is if she chooses to have children of her own, is that she asks me about my own experience. I don't know, maybe she will, maybe she won't.



**Diane:** And could we throw in there she decides she wants to be a mother just like her mother instead of just the opposite.

**Jen:** I would settle for half. She wants to be half the mom that she had and she'll invent the other 50 percent. I mean, it's really fun and maybe seventh grade Ramona will be different, but right now it's so cool to hear her say, like, I want to write and I want to be an activist. And it's like all these things that her mom and dad are. I told her when I was putting myself through college that I was a waitress. So now, you know what she wants to be. She wants to be a waitress. I think she must've heard me talking about how good the tips were. I said, oh, honey, this pandemic has really changed that industry. But I think she likes us and I would like that to continue. I think that's my dream.

**Diane:** I think that's a worthy, worthy goal. Are there any questions that I haven't asked you that I should have, or any final words of wisdom about being a mother or being a daughter?

**Jen:** I think one thing I understand about my own mom now, after having been a mom for a while, is that she, she did what she could do, what she was emotionally capable of doing. And that's okay. I love her and she did the best she could. And so I'm doing the best that I can, and I'm doing it very differently because I'm a different person from my mom. And so my task now is to understand that my daughter is different from me and that's a lot easier said than done cause you know, we just have been together for so long, and spent so many hours together that it's going to be hard, I think, for me to let her go all the way, but I guess that's what these years are for like a little bit more each year. Maybe at the end it'll, no, it'll be as heartbreaking, I think as I expect, but that's all right. We'll have done our job.



## Catching Your Memories

**Diane:** And when you say heartbreaking, you mean that day, perhaps that she decides to go to college and you have to help her move in and wave goodbye and go home to an empty house.

**Jen:** Yeah. All that stuff that I heard about, but ignored because it didn't apply to me that I can see now just over the hill. Seeing, oh, it's going to apply to me soon, but trying to keep an open mind about it too, because who knows, who knows what she'll decide to do. And I just have to support her and let her do it.

**Diane:** Yeah. As I said before, it sounds like you've built a good foundation. You're continuing to build that and she'll always come home. When we say goodbye, it doesn't have to be goodbye, the end. It's just as you said, motherhood has evolved and it will just continue to evolve and you'll always be her mother and she'll always be your daughter.

**Jen:** Yeah. Yeah. I know. And I'll play this for her if she ever makes me mad. So she'll see how hard we're trying.

**Diane:** Well, from what you've said, I think you're doing a great job. I think Ramona's really lucky. and I think you and Mike are really lucky, too.

**Jen:** Thank you. Thanks for helping me remember all these things.

**Diane:** Well, thank you for doing this with us, and Happy Mother's Day

**Jen:** Thanks, Diane. Happy Mother's Day.



**Diane:** That brings us to the end of this episode of the *Catching Your Memories* podcast. Many thanks to Jen Boggs for sharing her personal reflections on being a mother. What I admire most about her is the degree of thoughtfulness that she puts into being a parent — not only in her relationship with Ramona but also in how she views herself and that she and her husband Mike are what I'd call parenting partners. I hope Jen's story gave you something to think about, as well.

Be sure to come back next week for another episode of *Catching Your Memories*. And if you have stories or memories you would rather not share in a podcast but would like to preserve for your family, I also record personal interviews. You can learn more about that, including pricing, at [CatchingYourMemories.com](http://CatchingYourMemories.com).

This podcast was created, produced, recorded, and edited by me ... Diane Atwood. *Catching Your Memories* — The interview of a lifetime.