

# Transcripts for No Guilt Mom Podcast Episode 178

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[00:00:00] **JoAnn Corhn:** Welcome to The No Guilt Mom podcast. I am your host, JoAnn Crohn, joined by my co-host Brie Tucker.

[00:00:07] **Brie Tucker:** Why? Hello? Hello, everybody. I don't, I'm not as preppy today, am I?

[00:00:14] **JoAnn Corhn:** Not as pep today. Not as pep. Well, we have, we have an important episode for you today, and it's all about creating change, uh, because we're recording this on Wednesday, March 29th.

This intro and another shooting has just happened at a school in Nashville. And what we're seeing is moms not knowing what to tell their kids anymore. Um, I'm at the point where I cannot even tell my kids in good faith that they will be safe at. , my daughter is telling me that she has to go to school and be afraid of getting shot at.

Like, she's 14 years old. And when you see kids going through this, it comes to a point where you're like, okay, like these, these, oh, that's too bad. That happened. Thoughts and prayers, it's not enough anymore. Right.

[00:01:02] **Brie Tucker:** And I feel like even it's just, it's all so over. . It's so overwhelming to see this happening over and over again and feeling like I'm not gonna, like, I'm not gonna be able to make a difference.

That's the part that's been like very sobering for me, and I know it's not a good mindset. Yeah, it's not a good mindset to be in. There are things I can do. It's.

[00:01:28] **JoAnn Corhn:** Yeah, there are. There are things that all of us can do that will make a difference, and today's episode is all about how to create that change and how to stick with it.

Especially when you're talking about the schools and specifically our guest, Lauren Sakara. She has dedicated her career to advocating on behalf of and with youth to ensure they have opportunities to learn, grow, and lead as healthy and engaged participants in their. And her work at Active Minds is to create

resources that support K through 12 youth in changing the conversation about mental health.

And while our conversation does revolve around mental health, which you know, it is part of the reason for. Sea shootings, but it is, it is only a part of it. Um, we can make change in the schools and mental health, but we could also make change, especially in our country, in terms of gun control and legislation, which I know you say that and people are like, oh, don't wanna get political.

Don't wanna get political. Like, do you get that Brie?

[00:02:30] **Brie Tucker:** Yeah, I do. And I feel like at this point, this isn't, I don't see this as politic. , I see this as our country has a lot of issues. We all can agree on that no matter what side of the political spectrum you're on, and I think almost all of us can agree that there are mental health issues.

Mm-hmm. . And I think that those mental health issues and the fact that we aren't providing the support that we, we need to in our country is only exasperating the violent, the violence problem that we have, specifically the gun problem that we. Yes.

[00:03:02] **JoAnn Corhn:** So if you, if you're hearing this and you're like, oh my gosh, they're getting political.

This is a whole country problem. Yeah. And even other people outside the country, like in our balance membership the other day, one of our members from Canada asked, how do you talk to kids about, , the gun thing, the gun crisis going on, and the other shooting that happened in the schools. And my advice to them was, uh, in my line of thinking, I wanna be the one that my kids get the information from first, because there's so much misinformation out there, especially among kids, that I wanna give them a, a really good overview.

Objective of the situation. And so I recommend talking to them and I talk to my kids about this one and I said, oh my gosh, there was another school shooting. Um, you know, I can't believe this happened. This is scary. Uh, did you guys hear about it? My 14 year old did, of course. And she had some things to say about it and some questions and just some fear that we talked through.

And my nine year old also had questions about it as well. My daughter from the conversation actually ended up joining Students Demand Action, which is, uh, very similar to the resource that we're gonna recommend for you to join if you

feel over. And if you feel you can't make a difference, go check out moms demand action.org.

It is a nonpartisan group comprised of moms who are fighting against the gun lobby to get restrictions on these weapons, and specifically against the assault rifles. , which interesting fact. Bree, I found out that we had an assault rifle ban in this country when we were in high school. Like they weren't allowed.

Yep,

[00:04:48] **Brie Tucker:** yep. Mr. Bill Clinton

[00:04:49] **JoAnn Corhn:** passed that. Yes. And then it wasn't renewed by uh, George W. Bush. Correct. And so that was surprising, but it was also. It was a bit uplifting because it showed me that, you know what? Our country's done this before. We didn't see this problem when it was an effect. We could do it again.

We have like the solution, we just need to get it pushed through. Yeah. Yeah. So we hope you enjoy our conversation for some actionable things to do for mental health in the schools. And then make sure to join us, uh, for the after talk cause we have some other things to share with you. So we hope you enjoy the show.

You want mom life to be easier that. Our goal too. Our mission is to raise more self-sufficient

and independent kids,

and we are going to have fun doing it. We're gonna help you delegate and step back. Each episode will tackle strategies for positive discipline, making our kids more responsible and making our lives better in the

process.

Welcome to The No Guilt Mom podcast.

I love all the books behind you.

[00:05:58] **Lauren Cikara:** Thank you. They're real . They're real.

[00:06:02] **JoAnn Corhn:** I know I used to have a similar thing behind me in my office when I was in my old office. I had them all, but there was a big

window and all of my books got faded cuz of the sun exposure. So I had to kind of move it around. That sucks.

Yeah. Where are you in right now? I'm in Denver, Colorado. And you work in the field of mental health and teaching. How did you get there? How did you get into that? It's a great question.

[00:06:29] **Lauren Cikara:** So I actually, my career started in higher education. I started in student affairs administration, so I worked in enrollment services in the admissions department.

And so I, I had a really cool opportunity when I started my career because I, while I worked for, um, a Big 10 institution, we had an opportunity to work with local K through 12 schools and bring students on campus. You know, whether they were selecting us to, to, you know, go to, to that school or second graders, Hey, there's a whole world outside of K through 12 education, you can go to school.

And so I've always worked in the K through 12 realm in a variety of different ways. And then when I moved to Colorado, um, I started. Teaching sexual health education. And so I sort of pivoted, um, from sort of like the a like the education academic side of things to the public health side of, um, K through 12 education.

So most recently before I joined Active Minds, I worked for the Colorado School of Public Health, administering Colorado's version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a really great data source for schools and community partners, public health entities to really get a sense of. What is happening with the health and wellness of our high school students and middle school students in particular?

It's the only survey that we are having students. Answered questions about themselves. You know, who are they, what are they navigating around their health, um, and their, uh, school culture things. So I worked with schools to participate in that survey and then utilize the results to make informed data decisions to apply for grants.

And then, you know, programmatically change the culture around. School health and wellness. And so been with active minds now focusing primarily on mental health because they saw that, um, you know, schools have been grappling with mental health, um, for a number of years. Um, everyone now is

talking about mental health and in some ways you can say hashtag thanks, COVID.

Um, because the, the school system. You're right, the school system themselves have been navigating this, um, this, this issue for many, many years. And now the rest of the world is like, actually like listening to them because they've been trying to ring the alarms. And, and we've seen a steady increase in the number of students that have reported suicide ideation, feeling depressed or sad or hopeless for two weeks or more.

And schools have been like, we need more support. We need help. , there traditionally hasn't been a lot of funding or support for those things in the schools, and now we're seeing a plethora of funding resources and schools are more open to actually having conversations and really trying to impact youth mental health in interesting ways.

[00:09:15] **JoAnn Corhn:** That's good to know that the funding is coming because I know here there is, um, a lot of discussion around mental health. We've had fair, a fairly large number, I mean four in the past year of teen suicides at the high school. Mm-hmm. and it. It's scary. It's scary being a parent of a high schooler and hearing that that goes on and not exactly knowing that there's anything in place in the schools to counteract that.

And so I, I come to it being just completely scared outta my wits for my, my daughter, always monitoring like stress levels and things like that. Um, and. wondering like how we can help and how we could get that info to our kids. So what have, what have you seen that. is really impactful to do for kids. Like one thing that you've seen for mental health.

[00:10:12] **Lauren Cikara:** I think just talking about mental health, you know, active Minds is all about changing the culture, the, the conversation about mental health. And so I think when we as adults shy away from having conversations about mental health and sharing about our own mental health with our students and the youth in our lives.

we're part of the problem, so, okay. Young people know that they have mental health, just like they have physical health and they want to talk about it. They, you know, we have destigmatized it from a youth perspective, but not from sort of an adult perspective just yet. We're, we're getting there. , it's

[00:10:48] **JoAnn Corhn:** really not destigmatized yet.

[00:10:49] **Lauren Cikara:** Exactly. So I think, you know, um, using everyday language and, and the tools just to have conversations. On the daily is, is a, a good step to take, whether you have an elementary school student or a high school student. Um, you know, talk about mental health. Um, one of the things that Active Minds has is something called validate Appreciate, refer, v a r and really v a r are, um, sort of like conversation tools to support people.

A conversation, an everyday conversation about how are you doing, how's your mental health?

That sounds very impactful. Like validate, appreciate, refer, I wanna like wait, like take 'em through like the whole thing. Yes. Because here, here's what the struggle I see like our, like parents Now we grew up in a generation where you said mental health wasn't talked about.

[00:11:44] **JoAnn Corhn:** Like it almost makes us feel weak when we have to say stuff like, I am struggl. . Like I know, I know Brie. Like we have kind of, we, we know each other's experiences. Oh yeah. And just the struggle. Yeah. It's so hard.

[00:11:55] **Lauren Cikara:** Yeah. I think there's this, you know, we've had this generational, pull him up by the bootstraps kind of thing.

You know, we don't talk about this cuz it's problematic. What would the mm-hmm. , we, you know, what would the neighbors think if we actually talked about suicide ideation or just, you know, , you know, just general mental health, right? Poor mental health. So yeah, being able to have, um, the tools to engage in conversations that are like these everyday conversations.

So, validate, appreciate, refer is really handy in the sense that if somebody were to come to you, no matter how old they were, what grade level, you know, and say, Hey, you know, I'm kind of navigating some things. I, I don't know where to go, but I, things aren't great in my life. Right. , you know, number one, you validate their feelings and say, sounds really difficult what you're going through.

I'm really sorry to hear that you're struggling right now. Um, so you're validating their feelings and then you really appreciate the courage that it took to come to share that with you. So, Saying Thank you for sharing. You know, I know that this seems to be a very difficult moment for you. I'm really glad that you chose to come to me to say something.

I'm going to be here to help you get through, you know, what you're navigating, and then be able to refer them to either the skills or the support that they need, um, to be able to, you know, overcome what's not, what's happening. So asking them, you know, Uh, do you know if, well, how do you feel about, like, do you need somebody to talk to?

Do you, have you talked to the school counselor? Say JoAnn, one of your, um, you know, child's peers comes to you as a trusted adult, you know, you as a trusted adult in their life can say, have you talked to your caregivers? You know, who. , would you like me to help you with that conversation or be with you when you have that conversation?

You know? So these aren't difficult things to ask somebody or to engage in with somebody. You're not coming at it from a clinical space. You're just checking in with them to kind of get a sense of what's happening and what do they think they need in order to kind of navigate through the things that are they're struggling with.

[00:14:05] **Brie Tucker:** So I'm curious, what do you do or do you guys have. Advice on this. So obviously we know, we just talked about the stigma of mental health and everything. Some kiddos are still there for whatever reason, like maybe one parent is super open to mental health and the other is very not. And you've got a kiddo that is showing signs of stress.

You can see it that they're having their mental health struggles, but every time you try to ask them to talk about it, , they say, I don't wanna talk about it. No, I don't wanna go to anybody. No, I just, just leave me alone. And you just keep seeing it culminate larger and larger as a parent. That's super scary.

And, and you feel kind of like helpless, like. , where do you even go next with something like that?

[00:14:49] **Lauren Cikara:** That's a great question, and I think it's a, it's a tough one, right? Because yeah, right. You can see what is happening and you don't wanna break confidentiality. But I think that's where you have to go and have a conversation.

Say, look, I see that you are struggling. I see that you aren't ready to talk. I know you wanna don't wanna talk to me, but are you going to harm? and are you gonna harm somebody else? So I think you have to have that, like the bravery to ask those questions very pointedly because that's what you, you want to ensure



that they don't do right and it, and they may not be at that level of suicide ideation, but I think it is, it's, it's a worth having.

That conversation and asking them point blank, do have you thought about harming yourself? Right. And then from then, say if they, they say a lie, I don't know. Or if, if the aunt says yes, then you gonna have to say, I, I think we need to go and, and get support and, and whether be we need to tell your parents, or we need to tell your school counselor, you're gonna have to.

Have that hard conversation. Um, it's gotta bite the

[00:15:55] **Brie Tucker:** bullet and just go, that's,

[00:15:56] **JoAnn Corhn:** that's a hard leap to take because I think a lot of parents think, um, still under the assumption that if you talk about suicide, it makes it more likely to happen and that's totally not the case. And bringing it out into the open like that is, is difficult for many parents.

Yeah. Is there anything you suggest to, other than bite the bullet, but anything. parents can do as well to support or get them to that place where asking that, that question about harming yourself. Yeah.

[00:16:29] **Lauren Cikara:** I think, um, you know, . If you live in a a school community that has a parent-teacher association, or if your school has a parent accountability team or school wellness team, you know, find out what kinds of resources those entities have for parents and caregivers.

You know, maybe they will be hosting a training about mental health. Encourage other adults to attend those things. Because if we are not speaking the same language, and trust me, we are not. Right. Our youth and young adults are saying one thing. Our adults mm-hmm. are saying something completely different.

[00:17:04] **Brie Tucker:** I don't understand my teen half of the time , but period.

[00:17:08] **Lauren Cikara:** Yeah. But when it comes to mental health, right? Like in order for us to be. Allies and what they're navigating or or part of their support system, we need to be able to understand what it is they're talking about, right? Or, or navigating. So I encourage folks to, you know, connect with their school wellness teams and ensure that you understand.



Dan, what your schools are offering, parents and caregivers. If there are other youth serving agencies in your community that also do the same thing. A lot of public health entities have suicide prevention coalitions. Find out what they're doing, find out what resources they have. Um, and, and start tapping into that.

[00:17:48] **JoAnn Corhn:** It's, it's interesting because like we, I was recently involved with a coalition that tried to get more of this in the schools and it is so hard, like it is so hard in districts because some of the districts don't even want to acknowledge that this is happening. And there was a recent comment about our district in particular, how they're really concerned about home property valuation.

If they admit that there is an issue with mental health in their, which is obscene. Obscene to me. . It's so hard as a parent and someone who is trying to get that mental health looked at where we had a group, we were approaching the district, and the district is just blowing us off. Or they'll be like, here, we did something on mental health.

We sent out this one email one day with a link to click on this flyer, and every student has this email, so, we're done.

[00:18:41] **Lauren Cikara:** So I think the cool thing about active minds, we are not from top down. We are from the bottom up in the sense that we equip Stu students to poke the holes and to move the needle, because you're right, districts are inundated with so many different things, right?

Mm-hmm. and everything is based on academic testing, right? Mm-hmm. , like if you, if you aren't performing well, like. We'll put their heads in the stands. Yeah. Gotta be a level school. Exactly. So I think this is where, you know, programs. , ours really empower youth to like change that conversation to really push, push for things.

So we have a mental health advocacy academy for high school students that identify as L G B T Q and our bipo, black, indigenous, and um, students of color. Right? And so we know that those communities are, are. Highly impacted and experienced the highest health disparities and poor mental health outcomes.

So when we are able to equip those youth with the tools to actually advocate for systematic change in their schools, that's where the magic happens. So I will say we have to ensure that when you have a c. Are youth part of that coalition? Mm-hmm. , are they at the seat being decision makers alongside adults?

Because some school districts do a great job of that and some don't do a good job of that.

[00:20:04] **JoAnn Corhn:** And it's interesting you bring it up because like our co the coalition that we had had youth as the center of it, as the high school youth, mental health like health group and all of these students coming together, like hearing them speak about their experiences, um, with mental health and also their experiences, bringing their issues to.

Where adults would brush them off or they would go to a school counselor and the school counselor's like, well, you're with your dad this week, so we need to call your dad. And dad's the one who wasn't all for mental health. Yeah. Um, and just this lack of understanding about how to, to help the kids who, who are advocating and who are so, who are doing so, so tirelessly.

So bring. Like youth and the students into the picture is phenomenal. I love that you are all doing that. Um, I th like, is there any way to like get through to the actual adults running the district because when youth come to them and they're brushed off, it's hard to keep going.

[00:21:08] **Lauren Cikara:** Absolutely. And, and you bring up a really valid point.

Um, It is. It is hard, I think when you are able to find a champion within a school district that really cares and really is advocating for the health and wellbeing of their students. , you know, they should be your best friend. So whether that be a school counselor, a coach, a an educator, the person who is at the front desk of the school, I mean, it does not matter, right?

Like bus drivers, I mean, every, any adult that was is within the school system. I think the, that's an in, um, I like to call those folks sort of like side doors, um, in the sense that they're, some of them are decision makers, but others are influences of decision makers. . You know, we, we get stuck in the, we wanna fix things right now, but this kinds of stuff takes some time.

It doesn't just automatically happen, you know, at just the snap of a finger. So, you know, coalition building takes a lot of work. I think you just have to keep going, you know? Yeah. The more people get involved, the louder the noise gets, and school boards and adminis. Won't be able to ignore, um, students and parents anymore.

[00:22:19] **JoAnn Corhn:** So I like what you said about it takes some time. It takes some time, and the more noise that you create, the better. Because I think a lot of people, when they go into making this change, they get incredibly frustrated when others don't wanna join with them. When like they post something, like there is, there's a meeting to discuss it, and it's total crickets and nobody shows up.

So just knowing that the, it's normal. It's normal for it to take time and the the frustration. I would think is normal as well. Uh, as well as finding a back door because it's hard. It's hard to make change.

[00:22:59] **Lauren Cikara:** It is. Um, and I think we have to stick with it. And I think the other thing is with, with our youth, right?

We often just close the door on them and their ideas, especially like in education, like you may have heard the same idea five years ago from a different student. You're like, well, that's not gonna work. Well, our gen, our students are different. You know what they're navigating today was very different than 10 years ago.

Right. Our technology is changed. So I think the, that's the other reminder to our, um, caregivers and our educators is that it's, it's not, , it was when we were in school, you know, so we have to be open-minded about the ideas and things that the youth are wanting to, you know, work on and actually bring to their schools and their communities.

And sometimes I think that willingness just to, mm-hmm. let them try things is not there either. And we need to do a better job of.

[00:23:55] **JoAnn Corhn:** I a hundred percent agree with

[00:23:57] **Brie Tucker:** that. The willingness to try new things is scary. It really, really is. And I can see how that's hard in, in a district, having worked in a couple of different school districts like it in the.

And that level, like there's so much data and everything, so everything is so slow moving for change. Yeah. Because they need those answers before they even happen.

[00:24:16] **Lauren Cikara:** Exactly. But you know, like I said earlier, you know, I think in some ways the Global Pandemic has put a spotlight on mental

health, so I , I think everyone in 2020 was very hypervigilant and focused on, on youth mental health.

And unfortunately we've heard from some of our youth that like, yeah, there was a bunch of air, right? That like, now it's 2022 and it's, are they really thinking about it? Some are doing a great job and have continued, you know, uh, to the earlier point about funding, you know, we have a shortage of school counselors and school psychologists and social workers in schools.

Yeah, the school. Counseling Association, um, really recommends that there is, you know, one counselor to every 250 students. That is not happening in school. So how do Oh yeah. Not even close. Not even close, right. So how do we even get resources in the support just on the day-to-day in the school setting when we don't even have people in the building to support that?

[00:25:14] **Brie Tucker:** Okay. So real quick, in your experience, what is the average number of students to school counselor? , anybody with mental health background

[00:25:21] **Lauren Cikara:** in the school? I mean, I've heard numbers of like one, one counselor to 800 students.

[00:25:27] **JoAnn Corhn:** That's insane. It's like four times the amount. Yeah, that, that sounds about

[00:25:31] **Brie Tucker:** what I've heard from my friends that work

[00:25:33] **Lauren Cikara:** in, yeah, and so like it's not sustainable.

Like the counselor probably hasn't even met all 800 students. They don't even have a clue as to who they are. So they, they're struggling, you know, and with some of the um, COVID Cares dollars, you know, schools were hiring more school counselors. But now on the flip side, we don't have enough people going into the field and we don't have enough people going into the field that fully represent the population.

in our schools. So we don't have enough Bipo C school counselors. We don't have enough L G B T school counselors. And so when our students don't see themselves represented in the school administration and the resources and adults who are supporting them, they're not gonna come to them for support.

They're, that's a lot

[00:26:18] **JoAnn Corhn:** of stuff that we need to work on. Yeah. Yeah. Well, what's like the one bit of hope in the situation? Like any bit of change that you've seen in the past few years, Lauren, that gives you hope to, that there is change happening,

[00:26:32] **Lauren Cikara:** that these students have cool ideas and they are moving the needle, you know, so,

Mm-hmm. , a lot of students are very interested in advocating for excused mental health absences. Only about nine states have, um, state policies to support that. So our students are engaged in that advocating for new school counselors. So that's the thing that gives me hope. They care. You know, years ago some administrators were like, youth don't care about their health.

Well, you are wrong. They actually do. We've just never given them a space to talk about it. We have physical health education classes. We don't have a lot of mental health education classes, right? It's one week in the grand scheme of their health education curriculum. So when we actually spend a little bit more time and actually listen to them and hear what they're saying,

Um, they have cool solutions. They know what they're talking about. They have their own lived experiences. They're telling their stories and it's very, very empowering to like, watch them do awesome things and grow as mental health champions. They do.

[00:27:34] **Brie Tucker:** They have quite a spunky little spirit way more than I did when I was in high school.

I, I

[00:27:38] **JoAnn Corhn:** love to see it. Well, it has been wonderful talking with you, Lauren, and I love to hope that we should place our trust in our. because they do know what's going on and they know what they need and we just need to support them. So thank you so much for joining us and being on.

[00:27:53] **Lauren Cikara:** Yeah. Thanks for having me.

So

[00:27:56] **Brie Tucker:** what I really, really want our listeners to take away from this episode with Lauren, um, is that first of all, mental health is so important to our youth. Mm-hmm. a and especially in those really difficult and

formative years of junior high and high school. And that we can do better for our kids and the school system by providing more support for them.

Mental health. It, and that can come from listening to our kids. Yeah. Organizing, right. Organizing, getting together like I wanna. Our school district and have them start a chapter of active minds and get that going there. But another thing I, I really want people to take away from it was at the very end, Lauren's like, it's not a quick change.

It takes time. Yeah. And I think that's something that I need to keep hearing. , like, it's, it's not gonna happen immediately. We've gotta, we've gotta stick with it. And

[00:28:46] **JoAnn Corhn:** as a, and as a source of brightness and light. In the interview I did mention how the district wasn't listening to students. Mm-hmm. Um, mm-hmm.

the district is now has an event coming up where they are listening strictly to the students. So that change happened in a relative short amount of time. I think it was five, five months, four. So change is possible. You just have to stick with it. Um, so if you're feeling overwhelmed in the world, just think of like one little thing that you can do and encourage some other people around you to do that little thing as well.

And pretty soon we're creating this massive change. And make sure to go check out moms demand action.org because you can lend your talents to a larger organization where you don't have to think of all the little things you have to do. They'll tell you what's most impactful, and you just have to go and lend your voice and support to it and do it.

We hope you enjoyed this episode of the No Get Mom podcast. Remember the best, mom is a happy mom. Take care of you. We'll talk to you later. Thanks

[00:29:46] **Brie Tucker:** for stopping

[00:29:46] **Lauren Cikara:** by.