

## Episode 125: Warriors and Worriers with Joyce Benenson

- Speaker 1: Welcome to the Bill Walton Show. Featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers. Fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics, and human flourishing. Interesting People, Interesting Things.
- Bill Walton: Welcome to the Bill Walton Show. I'm Bill Walton. How different are women and men? Is it just a matter of your sex assigned at birth or is it something more fundamental? To dig into this question, for a long time, I've wanted to talk with someone who from, it's just not a matter of opinion. And I recently happily discovered that person, Dr. Joyce Benenson, who has written extensively researched book, *Warriors and Worriers*. Dr. Benenson is a retired professor of psychology at Emmanuel College in Boston and an associate member of the Human Evolutionary Biology Department at Harvard University. And she has studied children's interactions since she was 19, as an undergraduate at Duke University. Welcome Joyce, delighted you're here.
- Joyce Benenson: Thank you.
- Bill Walton: So what's the theme of the book, *Warriors, Worriers*? What's the premise?
- Joyce Benenson: Well, I mean, I started my work in preschools, and if you go into any preschool in a Western society, or if you go into a hunter gatherer group, you'll find that the boys and the girls are doing different things. And nobody's telling them to do it, they're just doing it. And what are boys doing? They're fighting, they're engaging in rough and tumble play. They're doing what many species and across all human societies I know of do. They're competing over everything, who can jump the highest? Who can throw something the farthest? They're doing something that I find fascinating, which is creating enemies. So enemies can be anything. They can be things they make up. They can be aliens. They can be sharks, tigers, whatever it is, and boys are doing this. And you watch this, it drives the preschool teachers nuts.
- Joyce Benenson: It's not fun having the boys, because there are a lot of times running over one another and the girls and the teacher. But they're concerned, they love what they're doing. They're really into it. And that's not what the girls are doing. So, at age three, beginning of preschool in a hunter gatherer society, the girls are interested, from my perspective, in survival. So they're interested in cooking, cleaning, keeping babies alive. They even go through dead babies and dead animals that they bring back to life through care and nurture. They're cleaning to make sure everything is hygienic. In real hunter gatherer societies, they're actually by age three and four taking care of younger siblings, and really into it. So what we see is boys and girls very, very early doing very different things and nobody pushing them into it.

Joyce Benenson: And it's something that you can find across species in terms of rough and tumble play, in terms of interest in infants and survival. It's something you see across cultures. So to me, this is a very basic part of being a human being and that is being a male or being a female. And to me that is got to be partially innate and absolutely affected by whether you have brothers or what kind of society you're in. And certainly there's differences within males and within females, but overall, on average to me as a developmental psychologist, it just makes total sense that there are huge differences that we come into the world with.

Bill Walton: When you open one of the chapters in your book, one from a trip to Uganda, and that's just one of dozens of countries you've studied. I mean, how many different countries and cultures have you looked at to reach this conclusion?

Joyce Benenson: So myself, I haven't gone to that many, I've lived in Canada, I've lived in the UK, I've lived in obviously United States. And I've just started looking at some work in Uganda, but I have read extensively and I particularly I'm interested in a hunter gatherer societies, and people who have lived with hunter gatherers for many years. So I've tried to make my book and my more recent work, very cross-cultural. And I have yet to find that what's in the book is not correct.

Bill Walton: I'm going to recommend this book, three or four times in the next half hour, but it's extensively researched. I lost track counting all the footnotes, they number into seven or 800, citations in the book of research that other people have done. So this is not just what you came up with, but instead it's building on the work of a lot of other serious scholars in this area. And the premise, as I understand it is, or one of the premises is that, in a fundamental way, our bodies are nothing but carriers for our DNA. And the DNA and the genes have a survival instinct and a little bit like a virus inhabits a body. I mean, our DNA in fact derives our behaviors. And you've gone back to look at this what evolutionary biology back 200,000 years, 300,000 years to a hunter gatherers. And the sort of behaviors that cause men to succeed and women to succeed evolved in very different ways. So the genes would perpetuate themselves. Is that a fair summary?

Joyce Benenson: That's certainly the premise of the book. I mean, there's no question, I mean, we're looking at people out there who I cite are looking at contemporary hunter and gatherers. But we're also looking at chimpanzees, some of my colleagues, and bonobos, and certainly many other species. And it would be absurd in the non-human primate world to say, "Oh yeah, there's no difference between males and females. They do the same thing." I mean, that would be laughable. So to me it's very frustrating within the human world to say the same thing. I mean, the fact is a mother has babies, and if the mother did not take care of those babies, well, that mother's genes would die out, because the babies would die. And in the environment in which most humans survive, 50% of babies die. So you had to be on your toes all the time.

Joyce Benenson: That to me is such an important statistic. 50% of children did not make it to age 15. So if you have a mother who really doesn't care that much whether her children live, forget it. There's no chance her children are going to live. And males can be helpful or not, fathers are variable quantity. But it's really, really important for a human mother to have help. Because human mothers not only have infants to take care of, but then they have juveniles and they have adolescents who still need care, because they're still very vulnerable. So we're talking about a mother who has to be attentive all the time and who has to be worrying about her children all the time, and who needs help as much as possible with this. And males are just not doing the same thing.

Bill Walton: Well, the book is exceptionally well organized. You've got a part one, warriors, and a part two, worriers. And they're fun chapter titles, chapter one on warriors is, enemy fighting a man's basic instinct, and then it goes on. But in your leading chapter for girls and women is protecting herself, a woman's basic instinct. And you contrast the fact that men pursue sex, they have sex, and they can be out of there. I mean, there's no continual involvement in the birth and growth of the child and everything else that come after. Whereas, the women are extremely, they're all in. There's no going back. And also the women's physiology, the plumbing, all the sort of things that you need to worry about in order to give birth. You went on and it's very interesting. Could you explain that?

Joyce Benenson: Well, absolutely. I mean, I think it's absolutely a major part of being a female to be self-protective. Because the bottom line is if you are not healthy, your children in most environments wouldn't have survived. So we talk about modern environments and it's a little confusing, but it's still the case that a healthy mother who can invest in her children, is going to be helping her children survive and thrive. And mothers can make an enormous difference. I'm not saying fathers can't too, in our environment where there's no female kin around, oftentimes in a Western environment.

Joyce Benenson: But mothers throughout history and of course, across other primates, they determine whether the child really, really does well or not. And again, I always have to say, yes, there are some fathers who are very good at mothering, but it really is essential that a mother take care of herself, protect herself. And we know that there's all kinds of bodily functions that make a mother more afraid, more careful. Women feel pain much more than men, it's an enormous effect. It's more recent research that I've been doing. That's good, then you don't get injured. You don't find yourself touching a snake twice and getting bitten twice. I mean, that's amazing to me, that's something men do and boys do.

Bill Walton: You point out a lot of risky behaviors that men engage in. Like, didn't you ask one class, wasn't there one class where you had like a 100 people in the class and you said, "How many of you have gotten up on the roof?" And there were like 60 hands that went up. And then the next question was, "Would all the boys drop their hands?"

Joyce Benenson: Yeah.

Bill Walton: And they were like two girls, that are two women that had said they'd gotten under a roof.

Joyce Benenson: Exactly.

Bill Walton: I have gotten on a roof, so I'm guilty as charged.

Joyce Benenson: And I have. And again, I always want to say not to make anyone uncomfortable, that there are women who are more like men and there are men who are more like women. And that's true with non-human primates too. But the point is on average, there are really very, very large differences. And to me that's because that helps you pass along your genes. And it's a very different quantity than what men do, and what boys I see doing by age three.

Bill Walton: Well, when I read this, and again, it's so authoritatively and researched, and thoughtful, well-written. I went on back on Amazon and I took a look at the comment section, and I thought in this politically correct world, there'd be all sorts of trolls saying, "Well, how could you say something preposterous like this?" You've got no pushback at all in that world. And matter of fact, all of the comments are four to five stars. What about in the academic community? Are you feeling, whether people that said, "Oh, well, no, that's not right because you're missing this or that." What about the pushback?

Joyce Benenson: Honestly, it's been terrible. My work academically has been shunned. There's very few people who know of my work and are interested in it, and they do get very, very angry about it. And I never, in a million years thought that that would happen. So I don't quite understand what's going on. I always bring up the idea that my work is well-intentioned to help humans. Just take COVID, I mean, COVID leads to a huge sex difference in death, and a huge sex difference in the long-term chronic fatigue syndrome, like results for some people. They're huge sex differences. There are a number of people, and I have to say there are a number of women who think I'm in some way hurting women's cause, and I don't mean to do that at all. I mean, I'm all for women being able to do a lot of things that men do, at no way do I want to constrain a woman's choices. But it's crazy to me to not emphasize sex differences. It's destructive, it's killing people, honestly. Because there's so many diseases that there's maybe almost every disease, that there's a huge sex differentiation.

Bill Walton: So, are you watching the Bill Walton Show, and I'm talking with Dr. Joyce Benenson about her very interesting book, *Warriors and Worriers*, and the reception it's received from the academic world. Joyce, you make a very interesting point, is that if we ignore the actual effects of a virus on different sexes, we're going to end up with horrible outcomes. And so denying, and again your roots are back in, just what is it about women's makeup that makes them susceptible to this or that it? What is about men's makeup that makes them not or more so? And you're not trying to make a point about which sex is better, you're just saying sexes are different.

Joyce Benenson: Exactly.

Bill Walton: So I did read with a lot of recognitions, this little boys and enemies, that's an interesting place to start talking about men as warriors, then even little boys defining enemies. And my grandchildren, I've got two little boys, and they're always walking around with this toy or that toy, and they're inventing things, and they're knocking down this fortress or that. And it's not something that we particularly taught them, they just came up with it. So, what is it? Why do boys want to find enemies and what makes them more of use?

Joyce Benenson: You can answer that at many different levels. From an evolutionary perspective, if another group attacked, you would definitely want somebody to protect you. And there's no question that if women were out there with young children or any age children trying to protect the village, then there's less chance that their genes would be passed on. But if the women stay away from the front lines and send the men, the men are, particularly young men who are really strong, they're best positioned to protect the village. So that to me makes so much sense. And of course, I come from a background where I've spent a lot of time reading the literature on chimpanzees, and that's exactly what happens. The male chimpanzees go out, they patrol their territory. They are single file, looks like the military. They're very quiet. And if they see an intruder or anyone close to their territory, they will attack.

Joyce Benenson: And they're trying to protect themselves. And as they make incursions into neighboring territory, because they get benefits from having more food and the females and their infants benefit. So there's huge benefits. And sometimes, I get a little frustrated because women might complain about their husbands or boyfriends in saying, "Oh, they're so unemotional and they're so super confident about everything. And I wish they would open up a little bit." And I laugh a little bit because I think, how would it be if there's a fire and all the women and the children have to go fight the fire. It would be much better to send somebody who's not on the front lines of taking care of the children.

Joyce Benenson: And if an enemy attacks, honestly, if there's an emergency, like for example, that horrible shooting that we have, who runs in there? It's a horrible, horrible thing what happened. But most of the people who ran in were men, and that does protect the community in a way and leaves the women as much as possible to take care of the offspring. And I'm not in any way saying fathers aren't important. I'm saying mothers are usually more important and if we can protect them, it's beneficial.

Bill Walton: Well, you mentioned that men are emotionally reserved and that is good because when you're in a stressful situation, like fighting a war or something, fighting a fire, being cool is a big advantage. And you also mentioned that men tend not to want to talk a lot about what they're doing and that they'd just rather talk about the task at hand. And that men's friendships tend to be built more around a common activity. And I laughed out loud about that one when I read it, because I play golf and I've got some guys I play golf with. And Sarah, my

wife asked me when I'd come back, "So you're out there with them for four or five hours, what do you talk about?" And I said, "We talk about golf."

Bill Walton: And so reading your book, I thought, well, that's sort of what happens. But yeah, we can. But the point is about being task-oriented, that's not the whole story, I mean, you also point out that women around the world forever have worked a lot harder than men. Longer hours you go, you've a great scene about the young boys and loitering on the street in Uganda, they're not doing anything. And while the girls are there carrying babies and helping their mothers. I mean, what's that about?

Joyce Benenson: Again, it's so frustrating because I feel that women are so task oriented and they work so hard. And basically, women have jobs that never end. Because basically, when you have a child, you're pretty much in for the rest of your life. So oftentimes women not only help their children and keep them alive, but they also help their grandchildren and help keep them alive. So, what does that entail? That entails cooking, cleaning, medical visits, in our society education, socialization, very complex. I've seen a number of women quit their jobs. It always surprises me, but just because they feel they aren't doing enough to help their children do well in society. Now this is of course, a certain class of Western society, but across the world women work, and there's no way around that. Because when you have little kids and even adolescents, they need help. And then once they have their own children, they need help.

Joyce Benenson: So it's really something, I think women are shortchanged. Girls have a much shorter adolescents than boys. They get married earlier. They have children earlier. People don't realize this. And so life is much more serious, and you can see that even the preschool. It might be that you see girls are playing, but what are they doing? They're working on survival skills. Even our modern Western preschool, where nobody is saying, you have to take care of your infant sibling right now. But girls are practicing, and boys, meanwhile, are having a lot more fun in terms of making up all kinds of enemies and rough and tumble play, and competing. And in many ways I think male's lives are less serious, because they're not on the front lines of taking care of someone who could die at any time. It is true when there's an emergency, there's where males really step up. And they're absolutely essential for keeping society alive.

Bill Walton: So, you explained to me that men spend more time playing sports in games, basically. And this has been true back all the decades, hundreds of thousands of years. I mentioned that to Maureen, who helps me with the show and, she's sitting right here, and she quite agrees with you.

Joyce Benenson: Oh, no excuse.

Bill Walton: She quite agrees. So what does this mean though, for all the social re-engineering that we're going through now? I mean, if we're hardwired to behave this way, men one way, women in another way, and there are survival strategies involved. That it's good for men to act in this way, because there are

enemies and we need to deal with that. And then we need to perpetuate, we need to have our children grow to adulthood and turn them successful adults. Yet now we're saying things like, "Well, your sex is what's assigned at birth." And I don't want to do politics, but I am curious about, as a scientist, how do you react when somebody says that?

Joyce Benenson: I guess, there's so many things that go through my mind, you can change society. Obviously, if you have a society where there are marauders, there's either gangs or there's a threat of other country nearby attacking. You're going to raise your children in a much more sex type way, because you need those males to be prepared to defend you. It's absolutely essential. If there are a lot of emergencies where you could die easily and quickly, then you're going to raise children differently. Yes, if you're saying we take a society, we make sure all the children are going to survive with the best medical care. And we have, it's amazing what doctors have done. They reduced infant mortality, childhood mortality. So then you don't need mothers to be as attentive all the time. And if you're going to take fathers and say, "Okay, there is no war. There's a great fire department, you don't have to be a part of it. You can do other things."

Joyce Benenson: Sure, you're going to look like you can just get rid of sex differences. But what I'm saying is when these very basic emergencies occur, then there's a reversion, I would say, always to sex roles. So I strongly think, and in hunter gatherers it's true, that women should be out there producing things, doing things, not just taking care of their children. And I strongly support that. And men also can be very attentive and caring fathers in hunter gatherer societies but, should a neighboring community attack, should there be a fight where somebody is threatening to kill somebody else, then back to sex type roles. So, [inaudible 00:22:51] I can see superficially that men and women can do many of the same things and at a deep level that that works well until there's not an emergency. There's not a crisis. And then I think it's very difficult not to revert back to original sex typed, genetically determined roles.

Bill Walton: Well, that all seems so remote to us today. I mean, living in modern America, we have conflicts, but they tend to be more political and social, cultural, not particularly kinetic warfare. Life and death things that we have to deal with. And yet there are those threats out there. I mean, China in the last 15, not 15, last few decades, 30, 40, 50 years has become much more aggressive and assertive. And their culture is very different from ours. Although the men and women are, they're really assigned duties in China, whether it's assigned or it just happens by sex. It's a male dominated society and they're acting very warlike. So how should, I know we weren't going to do geopolitics here, but how do we think about that? I mean, I think we need to worry about China. I think that we've got to be mindful that... You want to weigh in on that? Or we wandered so far off topic that I've got us all on the spot.

Joyce Benenson: I mean, the type of warfare that's going to be fought is obviously very different than wrestling or getting necessarily killed. So I feel like that's a little bit off my range of expertise.

Bill Walton: It's out of mine too.

Joyce Benenson: I mean, I can respond in another way. And that is, even in our modern society where we've taken away a lot of the emergencies, if you go into a preschool or you look at young kids at home, the boys and the girls have different interests, and that never goes away. Girls grow up to be women who really are more interested than men in helping those who are vulnerable. And the examples, everyone knows this, there's a huge, huge sex differences. Who wants to take care of other people who are disabled? People who have mental difficulties, emotional difficulties, physical difficulties, whatever, any kind of vulnerability. And you're going to find a huge difference in who wants to be in that field. And I'm talking about one-on-one, regular contact, helping an individual. And then if you look at things like mechanical interests or things that have nothing to do with people, that's a huge sex difference that remains organizing our society. So what you see at three does not go away, even outside of an emergency in terms of interests.

Bill Walton: You're watching the Bill Walton Show. I'm talking with Dr. Joyce Benenson, author of *Warriors and Worriers*. And we're talking about how sex differences occur at a very early age. Joyce, you've got a wonderful passage in your book about British boys, a list of things they enjoy doing, and it goes on for hundreds of items. But they enjoy fighting enemies and Play Stations, drawing pictures of bow and arrow battles, watching other kids fight each other on television, playing Pokemon cards to battle one another, the Hawk smashing others, blah, blah, bad guys destroying dinosaurs. I mean, you've been looking in on my grandsons, basically. And then you talk about the girls, and what they're doing is they're blowing bubbles, they're playing marbles, they're playing with Play-Doh, they're performing magic tricks, they're drawing figures from Lord of the rings, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So, this is not just your opinion, but you're observing these kids do this. What do they like to do?

Joyce Benenson: Exactly. So, if we're talking about interests, if we're talking about activities, that's still the case in modern society. There's very sex differentiated interests. And so, that hasn't gone away by any means. And then I always bring it back to diseases, because that seems so critical to me. The way the female immune system works is different than the male immune system. And females are much more likely to go to the doctor if they have any kind of symptom. And that makes sense, even now, it's an enormous difference. Go to a therapist if they're worried about things. So there are huge sex differences that remain, despite the fact that women are more likely to go out of the house and join men at their work. Not to say that women weren't always likely in hunter gatherers to go out and procure food. They always have been.

Joyce Benenson: But for awhile, people had this idea of women stay in the home, which is not true. It's just not true. Women work so hard and they also produce much of what the family eats and so forth. But there are many things that are not going away that are in our DNA, that have to do with, from interest in activities at age three, to how the biological immune system works, or the pain system works or



sleep disturbances, they keep a woman up more likely than a man. And that's helpful in case your children or grandchildren are around. So there are many sex differences that are still there, even though they're just much more mixing and intermingling of the sexes in modern society.

Bill Walton: So you're talking about success strategies, for men it's being physically dominant or being able to win games, throw the ball the furthest. Men can throw better than women, that's a difference. But women have incredible success strategies, and just your title chapters, protecting herself, a woman's basic instinct. I love this one, female friends, smile, then eliminate the competition. And chapter seven, organizing her family, the vulnerable and the assistants. So there's a whole set of strategies. What is smile and eliminate the competition mean?

Joyce Benenson: Well, I think a lot of times people want to say males are competitive, because they're constantly in contests. And you see it from age three and forever males love games or sports or whatever. And they want to be the best at whatever it is, which seems ridiculous to me. But what people don't realize is women benefit from competing with other women too. And they do it in a different way. They do it more subtly. They do it using maybe social exclusion, so it can't be pin directly on them. They don't get into direct competition. But it's ridiculous to think women don't benefit by doing better for themselves. And one of the ways women do better for themselves is marrying a really helpful mate, and that makes such a difference to a woman's life in all over the world.

Joyce Benenson: So it would be crazy to stand by while another woman is interested in the same man you're interested in. Or if you're married, you just let other women come into your house and not think about it. So, what I'm trying to say is women are just as agentic as men, that they shouldn't be proud of it, that that's a way in which one furthers one's own interests and one's children's interests. And so men and at work trying to do better than other women, just like a man would do, this makes total sense. It's just, people either they want to, or they don't see it. They somehow come away thinking, oh, women are not competitive. We just let other people run over us. And that's absurd and it's not useful, it's not helpful and it's not true.

Bill Walton: Well, my experience is women are quite effective in bringing about what they want to bring about. They just do it differently. And I think that's the point you're making. You make a point here, one of the things boys like to do is escape with your peers. And the ideal orphan life is... Orphan boys live the ideal life, no parents, just other boys, a distant caregiver and one or more unmistakably evil enemies. Tom Sawyer in Huckleberry Finn.

Joyce Benenson: Well, I mean, in my research, reading other people's work and my own observations and my own interviews, what I find is, when boys reach the end of early childhood about five or so, they really spend less time close to mothers and close to fathers. They want to escape parents, and then they want to, about six, escape female peers, other girls. And this is much more true than girls. Girls

are willing to play with boys. Girls are willing to play with tomboys. But boys, they want to escape anyone who's not male. Now of course, there's exceptions to this. And I don't mean in any way to pick on an individual, but on average boys want to be with other boys. And they escape parents. They escape peers, like teachers, they escape girls and they go off in groups of boys and they have a great time.

Joyce Benenson: And it's amazing to me how comfortable they are doing that, because it's not what I see. And these are in modern schools with girls. Girls sometimes would really rather stay with the teacher. And they would like to be in an intergenerational hierarchy, and that's really comfortable. And it's so funny too, because people say boys and men are more hierarchical than girls and women. No, to me it's the opposite. Girls and women are embedded within a generational hierarchy. So the grandmother, the daughter, the younger sibling, and that's the way it is. So you don't fight over that because there's nothing you can do about it. But boys in contrasts are off with relatively equals, which is male peers. So they're fighting all the time over who's best. And they have to say, "Yeah, you're better at jumping high in the air, and you're better at running fast." And they have to acknowledge that, but they're constantly at it. And it's a lot of fun. You're better at tennis, if we're in a modern society. But it's relatively equal relative to girls.

Bill Walton: You're talking to a boys mind in a man's body, I guess. Because I remember back to the teams that we were on, you'd organize teams and this person would be good at that or that good at that and you'd find all these specializations. And you also make the point that you can get into a tremendous fight with another boy. And then when it's time to get together and start competing as a team, you make up and you get on and you do that. I had a lot of recognition when I read that. But I still want to keep probing. How universal is this? Is this true in Japan? Is it true in India? Is it true in Uganda? I mean, is this something that you could say, okay, I can well go walk into a great school in Tokyo and I'd see this.

Joyce Benenson: So there hasn't been as much research done as there could be. But when I started out, I read anthropological reports, and they were showing that between five and seven years of age across the most diverse societies, boys were forming groups. Now, there's a caveat in hunter gatherer societies, who sometimes just aren't enough children of the same age. In which case boys, they're interested in equals. So they cannot do it. But once you get enough children of the same age and the same sex, boys seem to organize themselves in groups. I mean, I remember one of the first studies I did is, I put six children of the same sex together. I said, "Do whatever you want, and you can have just fun." And I gave them two balls, foam balls, and a few puppets that were like tigers or something.

Joyce Benenson: And the boys divided themselves into two teams. This is before there were team sports played at their school. I did that on purpose. And they fought each other the whole time. Every group of boys did that. Every single one. Now, you can say this is Western society, and we've been taught to fight wars. And boys are told

there, they're going to fight the wars. But this was a very, one of the most upper-class schools I've ever worked at, and it was shocking to me. I sometimes had to stop them, because I was afraid I'd get in trouble for them hurting each other. Girls never did that.

Bill Walton: I want to defend Western society, I mean, there's a lot samurai movies in Japan where that's part of their culture. And you find in graves and from tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands years back, up to 25%, 30% of the bodies in the graves are wounds from wars or death, fatal wounds from wars. And so this is across time and across all cultures. One of the things you don't... There's another phrase in your book called battle of the sexes. I'm sitting here listening to you, that's not really what you're talking about. I mean, there's a coexistence here and it's almost the more we recognize differences, the better off we're likely to be.

Joyce Benenson: Well, I don't look at prospects interaction at all. And the reason is, I started my work with, sometimes even infants, but by three years of age, you see sex segregation beginning. It occurs in non-humans. It occurs everywhere in the world. And it ends in the sexual division of labor, which occurs in every single society they've ever looked at. So, how does this happen? And there are various theories out there, but the most obvious one, is women have children, that is constraining, and women want to take care of the children. They have this desire to take care of vulnerable others. And it's very, very strong. And men are faster. They have greater upper body strength. They can throw things faster or harder. And so they can do other things and they enjoy doing those things.

Joyce Benenson: So it's not just like, "Oh yeah, I can do it but I don't really want to." They love doing those things. So you get men and women who are constructed differently, they're constructed for different purposes. And you can override some of that, but some of it is emotional, what you enjoy doing, and it's there so early in life. And that's what you socialize yourself, I mean, to me, the biggest socialization agents are not television or parents telling kids what to do. It's other kids of the same sex. And it's like, "Oh, that one likes to do what I do," and particularly I see this with males, "he likes rough and tumble and she doesn't. Well, I don't want to play with her, because that's my favorite thing to do. I want to jump on top of his head and beat him up and then laugh at him and he'll come back and do the same thing to me."

Joyce Benenson: And boys learn how to titrate that. So they don't hurt each other. And if they do hurt each other, then they're not going to be liked. So they figure it out. They figure out all these skills and they socialize each other. And so what you're talking about is by age 18, boys have been socialized a lot, by who? By the other people they spend their time with. And that's to me, mostly other boys. And girls have also been socialized, and the girls have been socialized to be dead even, to not brag, to not overtly compete, to hide their own achievement, motivations and so forth. Because girls don't put up with that. And that's pretty universal as far as I know. Certainly in terms of language, women are much more polite, much more egalitarian. They're expected to be that way. And who's

expecting it? Other girls and women. So, there's a lot of socialization, but that's partly because that's what you're comfortable with.

Bill Walton: What are you researching right now? What's your current-

Joyce Benenson: Well, there's a project I just finished that has been provisionally accepted, in scientific reports. And basically it looks at a situation where two children have to bring a basket of blocks. They each have to carry their blocks to the other side of the room to build a tower and they'll get a sticker when they're done. But one of the children's basket blocks breaks halfway through. We have an electronic device, it breaks, and we're looking at, I just finished it, but sex differences in response. And there is some overlap, but the differences are unbelievable. Girls, the bystander girl whose basket did not break is shocked. She stops, she doesn't continue on. She looks like an emergency has occurred, and this is a random other female classmates from her classroom. And she waits until the other girl picks up all her blocks, which are now scattered all over the whole room and then they both finished together. Boys don't even notice that something happened. They'll look over, sometimes they laugh, they keep going, they finish their thing and they're like, "Where's my sticker?"

Joyce Benenson: We try to make it as realistic as possible, the adults are outside the room. So their kids are on their own. They're five and six year old kids. And it's just amazing, I mean, the reason I trusted is because it's not an interview, it's not a self-report, it's the behavior. And it's so vast the differences in terms of what I would call, what should be the definition of empathy, which is just concern for somebody who's vulnerable. And it's such a minor thing that happened to me, warn them beforehand, sometimes the basket breaks. So we're sorry if either of your basket breaks. So there's no shock. And yet girls act as if this is a major emergency.

Bill Walton: Well, on top of everything else, I'm part of the oblivious sex. Well, this has been so entertaining, enjoyable, and I'm looking forward to talking with you again. You're digging into something, it's fundamental and important, and I hope everybody reads your book. Dr. Joyce Benenson, author of Warriors and Worriers. That's on Amazon, both the book and in Kendall. And I think you've got an audio book, don't you?

Joyce Benenson: Yes.

Bill Walton: Get an audio book as well, highly recommended. Especially for people who are skeptical, I would take the time to dig into this. It's not a long book, but it's extensively researched. And I think you'll come away with some insights you may not have had before. So Joyce, thank you. And thank you for listening and watching, and we'll see you again next time. I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Want more? Click the subscribe button or head over to [thebillwaltonshow.com](http://thebillwaltonshow.com), to choose from over a 100 episodes. You can also learn more about our guests on our Interesting People page. And send us your comments. We read everyone and your thoughts help us guide the show. If it's

easier for you to listen, check out our podcast page and subscribe there. In return, we'll keep you informed about what's true, what's right and what's next. Thanks for joining.