

GED_S01E03_The_Good_Enough_Dad_John_Butler_231025_MID23-26_FINAL.mp3

Anonymous female voice: [00:00:02] A LiSTNR Production.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:04] This podcast was recorded on the ancient lands of the Gadigal peoples of the Eora nation in Australia. I wish to acknowledge their rich and continuing culture, and especially pay respect to the elders past, present and emerging, and to acknowledge and pay respect to any First Nations people from anywhere in the world who may come to hear this podcast. We hope that we may all come to walk with gentle feet, strong minds and compassionate hearts in this global village.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:36] No dad wants to be a lousy dad. Aiming to be a good dad is great. But you know what? Being a good enough dad is so much more important. I'm Maggie Dent, parenting educator and author and champion of boys and men. And this is The Good Enough Dad, where I chat with committed, caring, sometimes confused, and often funny dads about all the ways they've discovered to be good enough at this parenting gig. My Good Enough dad today is John Butler.

Music: [00:01:05] It's a better man. I am, since I come into contact with you.

John Butler: [00:01:16] That's me.

Maggie Dent: [00:01:18] The John Butler Trio shot to fame through the 2000s with songs like Zebra, Better Than Something's Got to Give and Better Man, the song you just heard. John was born in the US, but moved to WA with his Australian dad when his parents divorced in 1986. Since then, he's been part of the Australian fabric through both his music and his activism. John is married to Danielle Caruana, who's also known as Mama Kin and has a daughter, Banjo, 21, and a son, Charlie, who's 17. Hey, John, welcome to The Good Enough Dad.

John Butler: [00:01:54] Oh, thank you for having me. I'm. I feel very honored. You're a bit of a big deal in my neck of the woods. So. Yeah, [00:02:00] I'm trying not to be nervous.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:05] Oh, you're so good. Okay, so, you know, you toured around the world but your home base is WA. Where are you living now? And tell me about your home. Is that kind of a special place? Family space?

John Butler: [00:02:15] I mean, yeah, I think all homes are pretty special. We've lived the last nine years in Margaret River in the southwest of Western Australia, and we've kind of semi relocated up to Fremantle for my boy to finish his last year of high school.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:31] John, your parents divorced when you were 11 and you moved to Australia. Now that's a long, long way from the US.

John Butler: [00:02:37] Yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:37] What memories do you have of that transition time? Was it was it a smooth. Was it tough? What was it for you?

John Butler: [00:02:45] I don't know if we have enough time for that, but it was a lot. It was, it was huge. It was huge. It was the one of the hardest moments in my life and one of the best things that we ever did. You know, I told my dad to find a place with a river in the backyard. I'm very freshwater minded. And he found a place with a river in the backyard, kind of by accident, because it was the only place we could afford. And that place was Pinjarra, Western Australia. And that was the place that my great great grandfather was buried in an unmarked grave. So we swam back upstream like salmon to home country. And yeah, culturally it was extremely difficult. A lot of xenophobia, a lot of racism, a lot of homophobia and small country town 1986 Pinjarra. But, you know, I made good friends with that river and I made good friends with indigenous families in town and had and had some very formative experiences that shaped who I am. So there's a whole chapter I could go into. But it was yeah, it was very formative.

Maggie Dent: [00:03:46] Paint a bit of a childhood picture in terms of that river and, you know, being a bit wild and free. And you had siblings?

John Butler: [00:03:53] Yeah. I have a younger sister named Jane, and my older brother, Jimmy stayed in San Diego [00:04:00] to do college. It was amazing to, you

know, amongst all the kind of like cultural acclimatisation and what have you, and also my parents getting back and forth together over the next ten years, like really traumatic kind of, yeah, weird stuff. That river was a really good friend. We had a little dinghy with an outboard engine. We scriffed that river every summer. I went up that river and camped by myself and with friends off the boat, um, found, you know, abandoned farmhouses to make your own as a teenager and hang out in. And it was a wonderland, absolute wonderland for us. And. Yeah. And it's stayed with me. Always have to be around rivers.

Maggie Dent: [00:04:44] And what age were you when you're out there in that dinghy? Because sometimes today's parents are a little bit more worried about safety.

John Butler: [00:04:51] Yeah. I mean it's from 11,12. We were, I mean I moved here at ten, 10,11. So about 11 the minute we moved there we got a dinghy. My uncle's dinghy and taught how to to drive the thing. And then we were just self self entertaining. Yeah I mean dad was there sometimes, mum was there sometimes. But like a lot of times it's just like you got this and it was back in the day, you know, where it just seems a little less, in some ways less regulations. And you know, we never had skippers tickets or any of that. We were just flogging it up and down the river, scriffing our heads off. And and it was, as I said, a complete wonderland. Yeah, yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:05:29] Was music a part of your life then, or was there a time.. How did you step into that, where it's obviously a part of your heart and your soul, but where did it? Where did it land?

John Butler: [00:05:40] It landed, fully embedded, landed, and became a complete overall infection. When I was 20,21. I started wanting to play around 13 or 14, but broke my arm twice skateboarding. I started when I was 16 and it was just a hobby from 16 to 20. It was, [00:06:00] you know, it was a way to journal entry, the trials and tribulations of the melodrama that is teenage hood. And then 21, I discovered open tuning, I started busking, I got paid more in a half hour than I'd ever been paid in my life to that point. You know, my highest paying job before 21 was nine bucks an hour fruit picking five, five bucks an hour doing stained glass, and I made 30 bucks an hour busking. I was like, oh, there's something happening here. Yeah. And from there it was full blown addiction.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:33] Now come on.

John Butler: [00:06:34] Tunnel, tunnel focus.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:36] Creative spark landed and it couldn't go out.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:45] Your dad lost his father when he was nine. Do you think that impacted the way that he raised you or how he was as a father?

John Butler: [00:06:54] Oh, completely. Yeah. I mean. And completely. I mean, there's hours of the conversation here, and I do totally believe in intergenerational trauma and inherited trauma. And yeah, huge, massive, massive I mean, he lost his dad when he was nine and he basically raised himself, or at least he kind of found and kind of put together a patchwork of what it meant to be a man himself. I think his mother, my Yia Yia, Philippa, she lost her husband in a bushfire in 1958. The youngest child was one, the eldest was ten and she had eight of them. She's a Greek Bulgarian woman who can speak six languages in the southwest of Western Australia, 1958 if thought Pinjarra was racist and homophobic and xenophobic and 86, you can only imagine what that would have been like. So she did a great job. But. It's hard to raise boys into men, even for anyone. And single mothers are like that. [00:08:00] My hat's off to them. But yeah, I think young men need good male role models. And you know, I've spoken at length with common peers. Arne Rubenstein, you know, I know him and he's a friend of mine and other men who do rites of passage. And so, yeah, yeah, I think he missed out on a lot. And I think some of his influences, male influences were questionable, some were good, some were very questionable.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:28] What lessons about fatherhood do you think you actually got from your dad that you've taken forward? Because there's always some we can, isn't there?

John Butler: [00:08:35] Yeah. I mean, I think generally speaking, he taught me what to do and what not to do by example. And, you know, he taught me how to build things. You know, I was massively, massively into being in the armed forces from the time I was literally 18 months to about 12. And I was like, can I have this Uzi? Can I do this?

You know, you're in America too where they just constantly like plying you with toy arsenals. And he's like, no, go do this and build it. He was a carpenter by trade. I learnt a lot in the shed through him. And I still make, like I still make my own knives and I make lots of different things. And, and I've passed that down to my son and my daughter. And so yeah, I've learnt how to make things with my own two hands. But I also learnt what not to do, which is, you know, my dad suffered from PTSD from his childhood. He had learning difficulties that no one even knew about. And he was violent.

John Butler: [00:09:44] He was violent and he was the most generous male role model in my life. And also the most frightening and injuring male in my life. So [00:10:00] yeah, you know, he taught me a lot of good things, and he taught me the impact of violence. And that's something that I'm as somebody who's genetically very much the same way ADHD, I have PTSD from him and, and you know, and related anxiety from those things. Yeah. Regulation, mood regulation, mental health regulation is a massive thing, massive thing for me and in my family in general. And so, yeah, my family is, you know, through that moment through that moment night, January 2nd, 1958, it kind of shattered, in ways, the kind of genetic psyche of my family. And we, there's so many in my family suffer from anxiety, depression and all these other different things, and rightly so. There's no support for those young kids and that mother from 1958. So yeah, I've learned a lot from him. And. You know, I love him and I loved him and feared them. You know?

Maggie Dent: [00:11:03] I'm just wondering, in those days when you were building things with your dad, one of the things you might not have been aware of was that was being completely present for periods of time with a job to do. It's a secret gold that a lot of dads don't realise that that is what a kid wants is this 100%, you know, like even though he had those other that other side that that was that was a gold that he did give you and he taught you to do stuff that was useful.

John Butler: [00:11:32] Oh, man. Totally, totally. I mean, exactly. He was there and it helped me every step of the way. He taught me how to teach myself. And it's something, as I've said before, I've totally passed down to my children. And, you know, when they want to do something, I'm like, yeah, let's, let's, let's make it, let's make it. That's how made we made lots of the toys for the kids. You know, we made my kids' mini ramp. And every step of the way, I knew how important that was, because I think

[00:12:00] those things actually as much you might. No one's perfect and violence is violence. And I'll make no excuses for it. But to feel loved and feel like you're a priority for somebody, a real priority in time, that could do a lot to alleviate some of the mistakes and definitely take those things on, you know?

Maggie Dent: [00:12:24] When you became a dad for the first time, had you formed a sense of the kind of dad you wanted to be, or how prepared were you for becoming a dad?

John Butler: [00:12:34] Oh, in hindsight, I was completely unprepared. Really, hindsight gives you 20/20. And so there's all this talk, and I've spoken to the mother of my children and many other mothers and fathers, just like all the talk about how not to get pregnant, how to get pregnant, how to get the baby out, breathing all you know, then it's like when you're done, they're like, see ya. And you're like, just literally walk off with probably some forms of PTSD at least my wife did after 38 hours of labor and like, nothing. So yeah, I look back and yeah, I was completely unprepared and I probably was still a child, I mean, which is another conversation again. But my frontal lobe wasn't even fully developed. I was 27 years old. My wife was, but I wasn't. Yeah, I was not prepared. And it took quite a few years. And there was like, you know, I don't know the exact quote, but it goes roughly like, hey, we have two kids. I don't need a third. Can you man up? Yeah. And that's, you know, a huge, huge word. You know, a huge phrase. Man up. Especially in today's in the shadow of toxic masculinity. But there is a real moment of like, hey, I need an adult in the room. And I'm lucky that she was patient. I mean, it took a while for me to come online to be to be vulnerably, bluntly honest.

Maggie Dent: [00:13:57] Yeah. No, John, that's something I have [00:14:00] heard many a time where there's this point where you just can't go running around doing what you did before, because right now we need all hands on deck. Step up.

John Butler: [00:14:09] Yeah. Step up. And like. And I think with the biggest thing that I keep on I've heard and it took me a long time to get of course is like, you know, this idea of, like, I can't read your mind, you know, I can't read a woman's mind. And it's like, but at the same time, the society we live in mother's boys. There's so many boys in men's bodies. Like a society kind of shapes around like, almost like, what do you need? What do you need? And we have these. We have these, these boys in men's bodies. But one

thing a woman needs when they're like, literally breastfeeding, have mastitis, literally feel like their body's been in a car accident after labor. Thinking about all these things is like, do I have to, like, ask for? I mean, I know you'll do everything that I ask, but how about some common sense about what might need to be done? Like the house is upside down, there needs to be some laundry done. Who's cooking tonight? I'm obviously in bed with mastitis. Like, you know, I don't want to have to ask. And. And those are things. Yeah, like a lot of men learn late and think it's because of how we shape young boys in society. And all this talk of how to get pregnant, or... How about how to be a decent husband, decent parent, and you know that those things take a while and I feel for. I feel for a lot of men. I know that's controversial to say, but like, I do, I think the idea of patriarchy or this, this way of society is, is hindered men immensely, and made us feel quite lost in a lot of ways.

Maggie Dent: [00:15:39] You're absolutely right. And that's kind of why one of the reasons we did the podcast was because there are dads who are wanting. Right? I want to be able to know, how do I support this woman and this new baby or these children in a way that my own dad didn't, because that imprint is not there. But how do I get a new imprint? And how can I be the dad I want to be? [00:16:00] And that's why, you know, we're looking at it, and that's why dads started turning up to seminars and going, just give me a couple of things. I'll go home and nail it. Right now, I don't want to know the science. Just give me some practical things I can do tomorrow. And then they step up and often do it, which is so damn wonderful. It's a big shift.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:22] Do you reckon becoming a dad influenced you creatively as a musician and a singer?

John Butler: [00:16:27] Yeah, immensely. I mean immensely.

Maggie Dent: [00:16:29] Best material?.

John Butler: [00:16:33] No not necessarily the best material, but kind of, you know, material that definitely turned into some of my, my fan favorite songs. I wrote a song called Peaches and Cream. Uh, you know, two weeks after my first child, Banjo, was born. And it started out with me picking up my guitar when my wife and child were down the hallway, and I'm in my undies on the porch with my guitar. And I'm started off writing

the classic melodrama kind of first line, you know, oh, woe is me, the melodrama. And then somewhere along the line, I woke up. And this first verse right before the first bridge or pre-chorus. And I was like, wow, we just went through a 38 hour labor two weeks ago. First of all, they're alive.

John Butler: [00:17:21] Like when you see a 38 hour labor happen and you go from naively going, oh my goodness, we're going to have a child. And then you realise life and death, birth and death share a doorway, and what can come in can easily go out and look into histories. Often it did go sideways, and we lost a lot of women and children. And when you realise that in time, in the 38 hour labor, it's quite a sobering and humbling experience. And there was two weeks later writing this song, and I was like, I just woke up and you're like, hey, they are alive. This is a celebration moment. [00:18:00] Let's not write another song about how dark the world is right now, because your life is so much better. So yeah, Peaches and Cream is that song and it's still a favorite. So yeah, it affected my my creativity in that way for sure.

Maggie Dent: [00:18:13] Oh, I love it. Now, as a musician, you did travel with your family quite a lot. So tell me about that. How was that traveling with them and was that a choice you consciously made, you know, with Danielle to be the dad that was around and were there moments it was challenging?

John Butler: [00:18:31] Oh, there's so much, so much to talk about. Yes, it was an extreme. I mean, I mean, we toured for 8 to 10 months a year for a decade.

Maggie Dent: [00:18:39] With kids.

John Butler: [00:18:40] With we did cloth nappies with the first one on buses and we were blessed. And of course it was also a challenge. We were able to do that because I had so much success over here when people bought albums, and I used every bit of that money to make a career in Europe and in America, and I didn't want to schlep with my family. So we had buses really early on. So for ten years overseas, we didn't make money, we just used all the Aussie money over. And like, we built a career up and I did that so I could take my family. And also when we decided to have a kid and then they were like this amazing friend of ours who's passed away. Her name is Jackie Gaia and she is a real. Uh, just a cornerstone in the music industry for some of us. And she raised

kids on the road, and we asked her, do you think we could do it? And she said, I think you could. I think, yeah, our kids learnt math by doing the door, you know, and all those things. And so we remember leaving the house and we're like, we're gonna do this, and we're going to be on the road and bright eyed and bushy tailed again and naive and and then, yeah, it was real.

John Butler: [00:19:50] And I think it's.. I got to see their first steps. Their first words, potty training, bicycle, walking. My wife really in [00:20:00] many ways was responsible for that because she was willing to come on the road and do that. And yes, it was hard to be a dad who was playing three hours a night and then come straight off stage and boom, as it was hard for my partner at the time, she wasn't performing music like she is now. To be on the road and only be the mum while everybody else is working in a workspace. There's no way you ever want to travel and be in the music industry and be a touring musician and not be part of the job. Like if you're like, it's not necessarily fun, it's not traveling. But those three hours give you purpose every night on stage. And and to be outside of that bubble and then just be managing the kids with a whole bunch of people whose it was very tricky on my partner and, and so me as well. And yeah, we made some scar tissue for sure. And we were still bouncing back through that.

Maggie Dent: [00:20:56] What was some of that scar tissue time? What was the most challenging couple of experiences that you remember while you're on the road? Because surely when they get sick, that's tricky.

John Butler: [00:21:04] Yeah. I mean, there's so much that we, that we got from being together and so much support. So I can never underestimate. Just what we did together and what we took on and how massive it was and how much really, at the end of the day, statistically we were successful at it. But the challenging parts. Yeah. Kids getting sick also just depression. Just postnatal depression. My wife having just to be that mother on the outside of this working bubble. Very difficult, very difficult, very isolating. Trying to find food in America. Good food for children. You know, when you're parked in a parking lot and you're in a different capital city every 23 hours, as much as there's a luxury to that, it's also a challenge to keep normality in that. Um, so yeah, there's there's quite a few things, you know, just mean there's so many things, actually [00:22:00] lots of challenges. I think the biggest thing maybe was, you know, and this maybe not parental as much as more marital. It's just dealing with somebody like myself who might

you know. So I've got a bit of attention issues. You know, the ADHD which is late in life to realise. But I look back, I'm like, oh yeah, that always was.

John Butler: [00:22:21] And one is I get hyper focused. The superpower is like, yeah. And when I want to do something, I will do it. But the whole world may fall away in the process. And I think that was very hard for my wife, dealing with somebody whose frontal lobe was still coming on with undiagnosed ADHD, hyper focus. And, you know, to give myself a bit of a break from both of us, a bit of a break. We were having a 1 in 1,000,000,000 moment in the music industry of that kind of success, people buying that many albums to build a career. And because of what we did in that focus and that naivety, I have a great career around the planet that supports my family, and it makes other things possible in our family.

John Butler: [00:23:02] But yeah, that hyper focus, I think, would have been very isolating for a mother who was already on the outside of a working bubble, and I'm thankful for my hyper focus. But I also regret some of its downsides. You know, there's a superpower and a Kryptonite to everything, and that would have been hard to live with.

Maggie Dent: [00:23:28] We all muck up as parents because there's no perfect and it's incredibly human. So can you just find kind of one of your parenting fails that was exclusively you as a dad fail just one, John. Not the lot, just one.

John Butler: [00:23:41] Oh, no, it's just so many. There are all these like, oh, me, me, me, me. I'm a good story. Oh, God. You know, I think one would just be not understanding. Like at the even at the time, I didn't really understand my own attention issues and having a [00:24:00] son who had attention issues and just coming down a little too hard, like coming down too hard on somebody like, no, no, you just need to sit and you need to concentrate and stop fucking around here. And then realising my boy was internalising that, you know. And I look back now with so much more education and go. Uh, man, that kid is doing the best he could and I was only making it harder for him. And I was the safest person in his life, you know? So there's there's those regrets that I got a batch full.

Maggie Dent: [00:24:35] So can we.

John Butler: [00:24:35] Yeah, there's a lot.

Maggie Dent: [00:24:37] Can we go and share the video for a bit that you yelled at your son for not putting the tools away? Because really, there's a little bit of swearing here for anyone who hasn't heard this, but can we have a listen to that first? Because I want to catch up on this one.

John Butler: [00:24:49] All these things I'm trying to tell this kid, you know, you need to learn how to regulate this energy, man. You know, you need to learn how to regulate being controlled. You don't let your emotions and your triggers take over. And what did I do?

John Butler: [00:25:00] All I modeled. Was fucking exactly the opposite. And. I mean, it's just fucking real. That's all I have to say, and sometimes all you can really do is go to them and drop off a sorry letter and say, hey, everything I expected out of you. I failed that today myself.

Maggie Dent: [00:25:20] And one of the things when I saw that, and it did go pretty much viral because I think it was raw and it was real, and I was watching that thinking not what a crap dad, I'm going, what a damn good enough dad, because you lost it in the heat of the moment and you explained that, heck, I know more, I know better, but you went from rupture John to repair. Tell us a bit about that letter. Because really, to me, that was the absolute gold that you gave the world in that, in that video.

John Butler: [00:25:50] Yeah. I mean, just listening to that I go, go all in the feels. Um. Yeah mean think [00:26:00] we are going to make mistakes and we are going to have challenges. And you know that that cliché or that phrase that the only thing you can control is your response to something. And it's huge. You know, coming from a dad who couldn't regulate himself very much at all to the point of absolutely living hell on the planet, and then having my own issues with that, and then seeing that in my my son and then realising that I hadn't. You know, I guess the biggest thing is like, okay, you screw up, how do you make amends? How do you think a really big thing, you know, in lots of rites of passage work and manhood? Work is this idea of congruity. You know, to be congruent with your your morals and your emotions and your words. And the one thing

my wife always said to my daughter, my kids like, what's integrity? It's like doing what you say you will do when you say you will do it. You are your word in action. And so you can't be perfect, but you can take responsibility for your mistakes in real time. And so that's what I did in that letter. I just try to take responsibility. When my dad he'd say sorry very flippantly, and then that would be about it. Or he wouldn't remember the nightmare that was the night before.

John Butler: [00:27:19] I mean, like, it was almost bipolar in its extreme, and that was shocking to go through so many moments in our life of violence and not really have any sorry and not see any change. Sorries are one thing, but if there's no change, sorries become useless as well. So. I just try to model some presence, model that I'm actually going to say sorry, I'm going to put it in writing because both you and I.

Maggie Dent: [00:27:49] Yeah, we know.

John Butler: [00:27:50] Because we're very because we're very focused. Yeah. Oh, whoa whoa whoa. Um, so may that be a precedent in the timeline that am as [00:28:00] a dad. But I will say it's when your questions are prompts about what are the challenges, you know, or failures slash both. It's like modeling and regulation. Like I can say sorry a thousand times until my sorries mean nothing. But yeah, regulation. Maybe that's another. Another answer to another question, but that's huge.

Maggie Dent: [00:28:20] And how did how did your son take the letter? Because, you know, did he need to comment on it or because it's in words? And this is one of the things I keep saying. Boys tend to forget words that are verbal and there's too many of them. But when you write it down, they often go back and reread it and keep it. So what was your son's reaction to the letter?

John Butler: [00:28:39] And I think he appreciated it. You know, at the same time, you know, he has his own world, his own focus, his own priorities. And aside from that, and maybe not necessarily highest on that priority, especially if you don't really like reading your dad's writing or just reading in general. It modelled some kind of regulation, and that needs to be done over and over again. And as I said, it was one timecode on in our life together that you can go, okay, that was a precedent. We can go back to that.

Maggie Dent: [00:29:13] Step up with accountability. I'm accountable for that choice and that that is what we're modeling. You'll model that for your son now because your dad always wasn't in that space.

Maggie Dent: [00:29:24] What's one of your biggest wins that you reckon you've nailed, either with your daughter or your son? What? Come on, give us a big win.

John Butler: [00:29:31] One quickly is. My daughter wanted to do gymnastics at the PCYC in Hamilton Hill, just down the road. And we got there and then she didn't want to do it. And she was freaking to the point of crying and was like, whoa, okay. And come on, babe, you can do this. Come on, baby, you can do this. And then I called Dan. I'm like, dude, this kid's freaking out. I feel like I need to push her through this uncomfortable moment. But I've also pushed kids into uncomfortable [00:30:00] moments, and it hasn't ... it created a bad memory. But this moment in time, it was gnarly. Anyways, after 45 minutes, we get this child in and she's begged, please, dad, please. I'm like, God, I feel like I don't know either. Let her walk away and she may walk away from so many moments like this in her life. Or maybe this is the moment. She went in and she smashed it, sweating, in her body. And then she went for weeks afterwards, until the teachers, like she should be on a team and not on that, never ended up happening. But that was an edgy moment. But it was all right. We got through. And then I guess most recently is we went on a camp together and just like last week, we had my my daughter is 21 and my son's 17. My wife and I both work remotely and at home and we tag team and where ships in the night we had this one, one 24 hour moment when it was meant to be three days got whittled down to 24hrs. We found a nice waterhole in the southwest, one I found on from a satellite and like we're going there, no one will be there and took the ute out there. And we dropped in as a family in a remarkable amount of time. And we were such good friends to each other, such good allies to each other. And that's because of the amount of times we've camped before. There's a beautiful father in my life named Alan Gray, a great family in Broome. And he's like all this talk of quality time. I'm, you know, I'm calling bullshit. He's like, it's quantity time. Like how much time things add up. Math is math for a reason. You get that's what happens with quantity. Not just like we're going to get together once a year. Like.

John Butler: [00:31:43] And the quantity that we have spent with each other with camping and time on country and time together around that fire and letting things unravel over hours, not just over a coffee, but over hours away from the devices, out of range. [00:32:00] We've done that a lot. And so when we camped last week we dropped in so well as a family was like, we've made this, we've been fertilising this soil. We've been taking care of this space for a long time. And the proof was in the pudding. It was what we all needed. And so I'm very proud of the hours that we've spent together. Camping, getting away from the distractions. Sitting in silence, playing Scrabble, playing bananagrams, backgammon, charades. You know, all those things. They are so wholesome. But like, they they are fertiliser. They are fertiliser for trust in in intimacy and safe space. Yeah.

Maggie Dent: [00:32:48] That is just pure magic what you've just said. Okay, so, John, if I ask you your biggest, it is I know it really gave me all these big feels. What's your biggest fear? You know, when it comes to raising your kids and your kids are almost adults. So what's your biggest fear is they launch out into that world that we've created for them.

John Butler: [00:33:11] So here's say quote, you know, like when somebody goes, you know, Jung once said, like, okay, so I haven't heard it from Jung, I've heard somebody say they've heard it from Jung, but there's this Jung quote. It's like the biggest challenge for us won't be environmental, political, health, longevity. It's going to be not going insane in this society that we live in, and that really rings true. The more and more I see the online world, the social media world, just watching what's happening during this referendum and it's getting wacky and being able with AI and I'm not I'm not anti anything. I use a lot of tech. I'm here right now interfacing with AI and media, post-truth. It's like what is real? Is getting blurrier [00:34:00] and blurrier. Know thyself will become utmost important. And then this black mirror. What it's doing to our attention span. There's so many people who actually have attention deficit symptoms through just our attention span has gone from two minutes to less than 30s. That's the data. So, long story short, I worry about my kids mental health. I worry about my health, my wife's, my family, my community in this bombardment of data. And a lot of it's misleading.

John Butler: [00:34:40] A lot of it's has ulterior motives to get us to shop or otherwise devote to in ways, and it takes us away from the moment and where we are, our

senses. And I know it's a challenge for me, who's only had these kind of devices in my life for like the last 20, 30 years, because I was lucky enough to grow up with a world where we didn't have a phone everywhere but these kids born into it. Without trying to be like some old guy who's like, well, back when I was like a kid would do homework on the shovel. There's a lot of blessed things to technology. But like I said before, the superpowers and this Kryptonite is this good and this bad, and I really hope I can help them, but also that they just find good allies and good information to build scaffolding that has never before been needed. We are designed to interface with 150 to 200 people and know their business. And now we know everybody's business. And that's I think that's a little... We're not designed for that. The hardware. So. Helping them build software for that. That's what I'm you know, that's probably my biggest worry.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:51] I think also that we are social species. And when we're healthiest, we're deeply connected. And you already use the word intimacy. At some point, I worry that [00:36:00] they're going to be capable of genuine, respectful, joyful intimacy because we've got all the other stuff going down. Yeah, we're connected digitally, but it's never the same, and we are still wired for connection. So you're doing a really good job in that space.

Maggie Dent: [00:36:20] I'm going to ask you another tough question, John. You ready? Okay. You're only allowed to choose one thing. One thing you want your kids to your kids to learn from you because you are their dad.

John Butler: [00:36:32] Well, one thing I want them to learn from me. Let's see. I'm flawed and I'm always going to be flawed. So like, what I want them to learn from me is probably like the best of me. That is not 100% always on line. I think I'd want them to learn. Or that they thought I had enough integrity that my words, you know, were in my actions, that I wasn't a hypocrite. You know, we're all hypocritical. We're all going to contradict ourselves. I am. But that there was enough integrity there that what I was trying to teach them, the best parts of me were believable.

Maggie Dent: [00:37:15] It's beautiful. All right, so the last little bit. Not as hard as that one. That was a curly one. Okay, so if you could go back in time before your beautiful daughter arrived and could give some advice to yourself just before you become a dad, what would that advice be?

John Butler: [00:37:30] Oh, man. Oh, buddy. Um, come over here. Sit down. Um. It's going to be so much harder for your partner than it is going to be on you because of the physical demands and hormonal upheaval. Please, please be really [00:38:00] sensitive and go over and beyond on the thoughtfulness, because you'll probably just be enough, so go way beyond what you think is, you know, just try not to be asked and be present if you can work on your attention. As far as be really with your job when you're at your job, but when you're at home. Like leave the job behind. Stop thinking about the band, the recording, the tour. Just the guitar. The songs rattling around in your head. All the things you do. All the million and one creative things like that's beautiful and that's fine. But like when you're home, they need you to be that tunnel vision. They deserve your tunnel vision that you are, you are their masterpiece as well now, not just the songs, but I wish I could have really gotten that through to that young man. And it took, you know, it almost took a decade for that to actually really sink in.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:09] Oh, John, what a chat. Thank you so much.

John Butler: [00:39:13] Oh no worries, thank you. Thank you for the great questions. And thank you for all the great work you do.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:21] Musician John Butler. John had some deep ideas on how to be a Good Enough Dad, so we're going to add them to our Good Enough Dad Checklist. The first one is nurture the traditional family time. Doesn't matter what you do, whether it's movie nights or Sunday fry ups or you love camping, you've got to fertilise those times and do them over and over again because later it's it's really powerful because they just play out beautifully. Secondly. [00:40:00] Own your own behaviour and be accountable if it's not how you would like to be a dad, and then just make amends genuinely. And thirdly, I love it when he said, when you come home, be home. In other words, no matter what was in your head during the day, leave the job. Leave the things, leave your footy tipping out of your head. Let's come home and be home in that place fully present. I'm Maggie Dent and this is The Good Enough Dad. Follow us on the LiSTNR app or wherever you get your podcasts.