

WE ARE FAMILY - Season 3, Episode 1: Michael Ian Black

Michael Ian Black: My name is Michael Ian Black, and family to me is the ground we walk on. That doesn't necessarily mean that the ground is always smooth. It is often rocky, it is sometimes sandy, sometimes it's difficult to trudge through. But it is the thing that supports us no matter where we are. And we cannot escape it, for better or for worse, hopefully for the better.

Julia Dennison: Hello, and welcome to *We Are Family*. I am your host, Julia Dennison, and joining me today is actor, comedian, and author Michael Ian Black. You've seen him in hilarious films like *Wet Hot American Summer*, love that movie, *This is 40*, adore that movie, and on TV programs like *Inside Amy Schumer*, *Reno 911*, and MTV's *The State*. His most recent books include *A Better Man*, *A Mostly Serious Letter To My Son*, as well as the children's book *I'm Sorry*. I wanted to have Michael on today to explore how his comedic mind shapes his parenting. So Michael, welcome to We Are Family.

Michael Ian Black: Thanks, good to be here.

Julia Dennison: Let's start with your childhood if that's okay, because usually here at We Are Family we talk about us as parents, but I feel like so much of being parents is shaped by our own childhood. I know your dad passed away when you were young, and I'm really sorry to hear that. Can you talk a little bit about your memories of your dad and describe growing up with your mom and dad and what your childhood was like generally?

Michael Ian Black: Sure. My parents divorced when I was, I think, five, because my mom, uh, started shacking up with the neighbor lady down the street. And that's gonna, you know, that's gonna cause trouble in a marriage. I don't think it was a great marriage anyway. I mean, I don't think they were destined to survive as a couple. So I grew up with my mom and her partner and my brother and sister and her son. Then I would still see my dad generally every other weekend. He remarried, so I had a stepmother as well. He was a

very nice guy, like a very sweet fellow. kind of a nerd, I don't think he would have thought of himself that way, but he was. He was like the first person I knew who had his own computer, and he liked ham radio, and he painted little like figurines from like Lord of the Rings.

Michael Ian Black: And he wasn't a great dad in the sense that he did not know how to communicate, uh, emotions. He was very reserved, he was very, like, of his time. His father was a cop in New York City, and he grew up in a household headed by a cop, you know. And, and he was so not that. He just didn't know how to talk to kids, you know? Uh, and he loved us, but he didn't, he didn't, he didn't know how to communicate it, you know? My mom, on the other hand, probably showed her emotions to a fault.

Julia Dennison: Hm.

Michael Ian Black: And often, always, told us she loved us, and that was one of the things that I felt like she did really well. Like you know, she, she really let us know, "Hey, you're loved, you're supported, I believe in you," and that was great, and I, and I took that lesson into parenting my own children. I think I fall somewhere in between the two of them. I definitely tell my kids I love them. I definitely try to have a certain amount of emotional intelligence and I'm affectionate with them. But you know, I'm also a little bit reserved. I don't let them know everything that I'm feeling, which is, I would imagine, is probably a good thing. You know, if you're a kid.

Michael Ian Black: I don't think you want to hear your parents pouring out their heart to you every second of every day, you know?

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm. So did you find comedy early? Was that something that you always felt like you were good at from a young age? Did you feel like you had to make your parents and your siblings laugh? Was that something as part of your childhood?

Michael Ian Black: No, I mean, in retrospect I think maybe there was a little bit of that going on. But I sort of stumbled into it. It was an accident. I had gone to see my brother when he went to college. I visited him one weekend. And we watched an improv group, and I'd never seen

that before and I thought, "Well, that seems like a really fun thing to do, like when I go to college. I'm gonna join the improv group." Um, and then when I got to my college there wasn't one. And uh, I helped start a sketch comedy group there, and it's that group that started my career. We had a ...

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: Show on MTV, and those people remain my good friends and collaborators, and yeah, I stumbled into a career in comedy. It wasn't my intention.

Julia Dennison: So now your kids, Elijah and Ruth, they're 19 and 21, is that right?

Michael Ian Black: That's exactly right.

Julia Dennison: And so now they are becoming adults. Do you want them to kind of get into comedy? Did you feel like you actively raised them to have a good sense of humor? Was that ever something you were conscious about?

Michael Ian Black: Oh no, I don't give a shit what they do. You know?

Julia Dennison: Good.

Michael Ian Black: I really don't, you know? I, I ...

Julia Dennison: Yeah.

Michael Ian Black: I chose an unconventional career path, and I remember, you know, my mom was really dubious about it, as one would be. But she supported me, I think to the best that she knew how to. And I would be loath to tell either of my kids what they should or shouldn't do, because I chose such a dumb career. Like I shouldn't be able to sit here and talk to you today, sitting in my house paid for with showbiz money. Like that was so unexpected that, that happened for me. So I chased after something that was unlikely. I was fortunate, um, and all I care about is that my kids are doing work that they find fulfilling in some way and that they have good experiences and that they don't feel like work is

drudgery for them. Uh, yeah, I don't care, you know? I, I don't care what that shit ends up being.

Julia Dennison: That's great, I think that's the best approach. What has that been like? I'm the mother of six-year-old, so the idea of having a 19 and 21-year-old, it feels very far away, but I can imagine it just sort of flew by. What is that like, seeing them become adults and letting go a little bit? I don't know, do you still feel like you have to parent them? How do you kind of cross that bridge as a parent?

Michael Ian Black: I think you'll find that your six-year-old at 21 will be totally recognizable to you. You know, that same, that person will be the same person. There, they will undergo some changes, of course, but the core of their personality will remain the same. And that has been kind of cool to see, you know? Like the person who was a newborn is the same as the person who was a toddler, is the same as the person who is now a young adult. In my experience, I don't know that you stop parenting. I would imagine you never stop parenting.

Julia Dennison: Right.

Michael Ian Black: But parenting can mean a lot of different things. To me, my job as a parent is actually really simple. Um, it's just to be that person that loves them unconditionally. That person that, um, is always there for them no matter what. I don't have to baby proof anymore. I don't have to- I don't have to put little plastic guards on the cabinets so that, you know, they don't eat Drano, but- but my essential job remains unchanged, you know?

Michael Ian Black: And- and I like that job. I like the job of loving somebody, and, uh, that to me is- is really all that parenting is, you know? You know, you keep them- you keep them alive, you know, in the beginning, and you- you- (laughs) you know, you- you- you help them as they need help, and you set boundaries as they need boundaries, but all of it is in service of loving them.

Julia Dennison: Absolutely. I cannot agree more. So, in one of your standup albums, you talked about your kids as being very colic-y babies,

and I don't know if you kind of remember that time, or if you feel like-

Michael Ian Black: Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah.

Julia Dennison: It was all a blur, or if you have any advice for parents if you can rack your brain back to that time.

Michael Ian Black: Here's my advice. Both my kids had colic. Both of them, basically, didn't sleep for four months. It was like constant exposure to noise. There was no sleep. It was, you know, a certain amount of sensory deprivation. Like, it's awful.

It- it meets th- it meets, in my mind, the definition of torture, and my advice is this, in those moments when your baby is colic-y, and you don't know how you're gonna get through it, it is perfectly okay to hate your baby. Like, in those moments, I hated my baby. Give yourself permission to be like, this is terrible.

This little thing that won't shut up? That's an awful little thing, and, uh, just sort of- you're not a bad person for hating your life in that moment, and for regretting every decision that led you to this moment. Like, I think that's okay, you know? And then, with the knowledge that this too shall pass. I didn't have that knowledge the first time, like when my son was born and he was colic-y, like, it was just- it just felt like this is- this is never ending, but it did end, and then when my daughter had the same experience, it was, like, as awful as it was, and it was awful. Particularly, because we then had a 2-year-old to deal with, there was some solace, because we knew it would end, but in those moments, I- I hated both of them, and I hated my wife.

Julia Dennison: Yes. That is so relatable.

Michael Ian Black: And I hated myself. I hated everything.

Julia Dennison: Just life. Oh my gosh. That is so relatable. You know what? That's- I feel like as parents, that we're constantly trying to reassure parents that that's okay. You don't always have to love every of parenthood. Parenting is- is every experience that you can have, and it's an intense experience, particularly when

they're young, and it's okay for it to be a bad experience at times. You don't have to feel guilty about that.

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: You can have bad times being a parent, and- and I think especially with women, there's a lot of guilt associated with that. Like, somehow you're a bad mother if this is, like, a terrible moment for you.

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: No, it's like- it's a perfectly normal human experience, and it's okay, and you're not a bad mother, and you're not a bad person, and you're not a bad father. It's just like, "Yeah, this sucks," and, uh, and let it suck.

Julia Dennison: (laughs) Yep. Let it suck. I know, we had Ben Feldman on this podcast, and my favorite quote was- he was like, "You know what, man? Fuck babies," and I was like, "I know. Fuck babies." Then, I was like, "Oh, god. I'm, like, an Editor at Parents, and here I am saying fuck babies," but honestly, sometimes it's okay, like you say, to just be like, "This sucks. I hate this (laughs) right now," and know that there is an end in sight, and also parenthood can be wonderful, and it can be really, like, freaking sucky at the same time.

Michael Ian Black: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Julia Dennison: It's, like, one- it's not sort of, like, mutually exclusive (laughs) somehow.

Michael Ian Black: Yeah, not at all. It- No. No. I- in fact, the fi- like, I started writing children's book, but my first idea for a children's book that I wanted to write was I Hate My Baby. Uh, I never wrote it, but now in retrospect-

Julia Dennison: I mean, there's still time.

Michael Ian Black: I kind of feel like maybe- Uh, yeah. I sort of feel like maybe I want to revisit that. (laughs)

Julia Dennison: (laughs) So, you having two kids is interesting. I only have one, so it's always interesting, but I have a sister. It's always interesting to me the whole kind of, like, nature versus nurture, um, observation. Did you find that their personalities are very different, and how do they differ, and have they changed since they were little colic-y babies? Obviously, but you know, what ways?

Michael Ian Black: Their personalities are very different, and they have remained consistent from the moment we met them, you know? One of the things that I sort of found funny is that my wife and I were both, like, you know, good, little progressive parents, and we're gonna expose our kids to, you know, our son to dolls, and our girl to, you know, race cars, and we're gonna be sort of genderless parenting, and all of that, but what was funny to me was how both of them immediately feel into the boy/girl stereotypes. Like, my son only wanted to play with trains, and my daughter only wanted to play with, you know, little dolls, and, um, it was kind of humbling, you know? 'Cause it made me think, "You know what? There is something to the nature part of the nature/nurture argument. There is some sort of biological disposition for boys to generally be one way, and girls generally to be in the other, but those terms are very general, because they're sort of an average of behaviors that boys may fall into, and an average of behaviors that girls may fall into, but there's also plenty of room in between."

Michael Ian Black: So, one way in which my son and daughter defied the stereotypes is my son, for all of his boyish early interests, was always more sensitive. My daughter was always more aggressive and physical, you know? So, there was definitely a combination of those sort of traditionally male and female characteristics.

Julia Dennison: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I totally relate, and it's funny, 'cause- and when people are, like, talk about boy moms versus girl moms, or, like, "Oh, I have a boy." I'm like, "Okay, but my daughter is very rambunctious. So, like, (laughs) I don't know if you can say one thing or another," but I'm exactly the same. I was, like, de- like, determined to raise her gender neutral as- gender neutral as possible, but it's, like, all Barbie and LOL Dolls over here.

Michael Ian Black: Yeah.

Julia Dennison: So, I- but it's hard to, you know? It's, like, either they're- maybe there's nature, but honestly, it's probably a lot of very insidious societal norms that just, get in there early I feel like, you know? And it's not-

Michael Ian Black: Oh, no question.

Julia Dennison: In our control. (laughs)

Michael Ian Black: Yeah. I mean, they live in the culture, too, and that culture is just- it's the water we swim in, and it's- it's unavoidable, and that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Julia Dennison: Yep.

Michael Ian Black: It's necessarily a good thing. It just is what it is. you can sort of bash your head against it trying to, you know, not deal with the culture. You could go live on a kibbutz somewhere, but you know, you can only do so much.

Julia Dennison: You're a big poker enthusiast, right? So, one. Do you feel like you have a good poker face? And two, do you think that you bring that into parenting at all?

Michael Ian Black: Well, I'll give you a- a little lesson in poker.

Michael Ian Black: The poker face is highly overrated. There is no really such thing as a poker face. You'll never encounter a poker player who does this when they have a good hand, and this when they have-

Julia Dennison: Right.

Michael Ian Black: You know, I'm- I'm- it is a podcast, so I'm smiling broadly.

Julia Dennison: Okay.

Michael Ian Black: Or- or this when they have a bad hand, and I'm frowning, and- and close to tears. people are good at lying I find. I'm not, you know, even- I'm- I'm- For somebody who, like, makes his living

observing human behavior, I'm a terrible judge of when somebody's telling the truth, or lying. Like, I'm gullible.

Michael Ian Black: So, I rely on other skills at the poker table. Does it translate to parenting? No. I'm gonna- I'm gonna say no, not at all.

Julia Dennison: Good.

Michael Ian Black: It really doesn't. Those are two totally separate skills and happily so. Uh, yeah. The aim of poker is deception more than anything else, and if you bring that into parenting, I suspect you're not gonna be a very successful parent.

Julia Dennison: Right. Okay, which is a good segue into your series of children's books that all begin with I'm, like, I'm bored, I'm sad, I'm worried.

Julia Dennison: Newest one is I'm Sorry. Those all feel like titles that are the opposite of a poker face, and it seems like it's all about sharing your feelings. What was your kind of motivation behind this series of children's books?

Michael Ian Black: Well, the first one's called I'm Bored, and it just- came out of my daughter just constantly complaining how bored she is. How I'm bored. "I'm bored. I'm bored," so I wrote a little book about it, and there were these three characters in the book. There's the little girl, a flamingo, and a potato, and I really liked those characters, and I wanted to do something else with them, and for some reason, it took me forever to, like, just (laughs) do the obvious thing, which is just come up with another sort of emotion that they're exploring.

Michael Ian Black: Um, and so, that's what I did, and- and I wanted to pick emotions that maybe are kind of underrepresented in children's literature, and I wanted to give them a take that I felt like I wasn't seeing that much. So, for example, in I'm Sad, you know, the flamingo's bummed out, but we never find out exactly why. She's just sad, and the message is basically, like, "we're not trying to cure your sadness here. We're not trying to make you happy here. We're letting you, literally, like, sit in your sadness and we're gonna support you in it, um, and we love you if you're sad.

Michael Ian Black: We love you, you know, however you're doing. Like, your sadness is just part of who you are today, and that's cool, and- and we'll be here for you." Um, it's, you know, with a lot more jokes than that, but that's, you know, that- that's e- that's essentially the book, and that was a message I- I felt like maybe I- I need to hear sometimes, you know? That's okay.

Julia Dennison: Yeah, I feel like that's right. Like, it's good lessons for kids, but it's also good lessons for us as adults in relationships, and we talk about that a lot when you, you know, you're in a relationship or with a friend, and they're feeling sad, you know? You don't automatically need to solve it for them. Sometimes, you just need to acknowledge it, and just be there.

Michael Ian Black: No. Yeah, you can't. You can't solve it. I mean, that's one of the things that I feel like it took me forever to learn-

Julia Dennison: Right.

Michael Ian Black: Was, like, my job as a friend, or a partner, or a parent isn't to solve your problems. My job is to support you in whatever way you need support. I can help you if you're looking for solutions. Yeah, I can- I can help you try to find them, but that may not always be possible.

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I- I've talked about it before on the podcast, but Lisa Damour is a child psychologist, and she talks about, especially when parenting teens, she talks about being a potted-plant parent. So, your kids want you to be there for them, and, like, in the room, but they may not acknowledge you. They may not need you to acknowledge them, but as long as they know that you're in the room, and you're not going anywhere. (laughs) So, it's interesting.

Michael Ian Black: That's a great metaphor, and it's exactly right.

Julia Dennison: Yeah. Yeah.

Michael Ian Black: That's exactly was my ex- exactly my experience as the parent of teenagers who really didn't seem to care either of us very much. Um, but you know, one-

Julia Dennison: That's hard. That's gotta be hard personally as a parent.

Michael Ian Black: It is- it is hard at times personally, but I also felt like my- I had a much easier time dealing with it than my wife, who I think took it really personally, but I- I felt like if they are acting like they hate us, from everything that I know, and admittedly that's not very much, it means that they're exactly along the sort of developmental place that they're supposed to be.

Michael Ian Black: So, something's going right, you know? Like, teenagers famously hate their parents. So, if- if they're, like, a teenager and they're on track, and they're hating us, I'm like, "Okay, great." it seems like that's the way it's supposed to be. It still sucks, but it's like colic. Like, "this too shall end at some point." You sort of have to trust that.

Julia Dennison: Right. It's just, like, another milestone that you track. It's just the teenage milestone.

Michael Ian Black: Yeah, but at the time-

Michael Ian Black: You find yourself sometimes hating them back. You're like, "This fucking kid," you know what I mean?

Julia Dennison: Aha. It's, like, back to the colic-y baby thing.

Michael Ian Black: Yeah, but you're also, as a parent, on that same developmental line. Like, you're also supposed to, in turn, hate them at times, because at a certain point, they're gonna wanna leave, and you don't want to be that person who is so in love with their kid that it's gonna kill you when they walk out that door.

Julia Dennison: Right.

Michael Ian Black: Like, you want to be able to say, "Good, go."

Julia Dennison: So, maybe that's why it happens, right? Like, it's like it's human.

Michael Ian Black: I actually think- I actually think it does. I actually think we're sort of set up that way.

Julia Dennison: Like, "Get the frick out. Get out." Uh, that's so (laughs) funny. Um, so moving along to your- to your latest book, um, *A Better Man*, A

Mostly Serious Letter to My Son, can you talk us through a little bit about your motivation there, but also the title, and the premise of the book? Were you really writing it for your son, or is it also for, like, all the parents who are going through similar things?

Michael Ian Black: The book grew out of, an anger and a frustration, and outrage, really, that I had with the state of gun control in this country, um, and it was directly motivated by the Parkland shooting, in Parkland, Florida, a few years ago, um, high school shooting, and you know, when those things happen, I tend to get on my Twitter soapbox and start screaming into the void about it.

Michael Ian Black: This time when it happened, I started asking what I thought was an obvious question, which is, "Why is it always boys pulling the triggers? What is it about boys?" And then, out of the blue, the New York Times contacted me. They're like, "Hey, do you want to write an op ed about this?" And I was like, "Not really. I don't think I can. I don't think I'm, you know, qualified or smart enough." They're like, "But, but, but we're the New York Times," and I was like, "Oh, okay. Well, then yeah. I guess I will."

Michael Ian Black: So my ego, like, wouldn't allow me not to do it. I was like, "Oh, yeah."

Julia Dennison: Like, "Okay, fine, *New York Times*. I guess."

Michael Ian Black: Yeah, I want to be in the *New York Times* type thing. Yeah, basically, and then, when that came out, a publisher came to me and said, "Do you want to expand it into a book," and I said the same thing. I was like, "Not really. Like, I don't think I can," and they were like, "But we'll pay you not very much money," and I was like, "Keep talking. Keep talking."

Michael Ian Black: So, I went into it reluctantly, because I didn't feel qualified, I didn't want to come across as a know it all. I didn't want to come across as an activist. The last thing the world needs is more actors that are activists. But I did feel like I had something to say, because-

Julia Dennison: You had a platform, and an audience, and people who would sit up and listen to you, so you know, the more people are saying these things the better probably.

Michael Ian Black: That was the argument that the publisher was like. They're like, "Yeah, you're- we know you're not, like, an academic, but you have a platform, and you have a voice, and maybe, you know, you could be helpful," and I was like, "Fine, I'll write a book," you know? And it was their idea that I write it to my son, and I was a little bit resistant at first, because I think maybe it scared me a little bit, and maybe it made me feel like it was, uh, too close to home, but I'm so glad I did, because it really gave me a focus. It really gave me the ability to speak to one person, um, very specifically, and to open up my heart to him, and to have the conversation with him that I wish my own dad had had with me, and so it is mostly serious, you know?

Michael Ian Black: There are jokes in it, but it's a mostly serious letter about what I think it means to be a guy.

Julia Dennison: What do you hope people take away from- from it? Because it feels like there's a real universal appeal, not just for parents to learn a lot from the book, but just us as a society on how we view manhood and being a boy today.

Michael Ian Black: My central premise I think is pretty basic, which is that men get a bad rap in the culture. Um, a lot of it was deserved. We do a lot of shitty things, but there's nothing inherently toxic about being a guy.

Michael Ian Black: And in the conversation and the criticism of men in the culture, I feel like I keep hearing the phrase, "we need to redefine masculinity", and I just disagree. I don't think we do. I think there's a lot that's really good about traditional masculinity and the attributes we traditionally associate with men.

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: My premise isn't that we need to redefine it, only that we need to expand it. Only that we need to open up-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm..

Michael Ian Black: The possibilities of what it means to be a man in the exact same way that we did with women-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: Over the last half century. We have redefined womanhood in a way that has been so amazing, for women, and for the larger culture, and it's time we have that same conversation about men.

Julia Dennison: And what was your son's reaction to it?

Michael Ian Black: Oh, he didn't read it.

Michael Ian Black: I said, "I wrote you a book."

Michael Ian Black: He said, "Yeah, I'll, I'll read it. I'll read it when you're dead," basically, is what he said.

Julia Dennison: Oh, God.

Michael Ian Black: I will say that there's nothing in that book that would surprise him. There's nothing that I had said to him in that book that I hope I haven't said to him in some way, shape or form, in person. You know, over the course of his life.

Julia Dennison: Yeah.

Michael Ian Black: I just, I just put it all down on paper. But he doesn't read. What, are you kidding?

Julia Dennison: Yeah.

Michael Ian Black: He's 21 years old.

Julia Dennison: Right. Um, and what about as a dad to a daughter? What kind of like thoughts have you had in terms of like advice to other parents, dads of daughters out there? And anything you've tried. Anything you feel like you should have done differently? Or anything you were conscious to make sure that you did do as a dad of a daughter?

Michael Ian Black: I-I don't know that I made any real distinction between parenting my son or my daughter. Um-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: The way I think of it is, I'm not parenting a gender. I'm parenting a person, and-

Julia Dennison: Yeah.

Michael Ian Black: They need certain things, depending on who they are. Some of that might have something to do with them being a girl or a boy. But-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: Mostly it's just what they need as individuals and as people in any given moment.

Michael Ian Black: You know, my daughter has had struggles. My son has had struggles. My wife and I have both had struggles. And that's-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: Just what life is, and you just, you deal with each of those things as they come along. But I don't know that I did anything differently with her than I did with him. Maybe I should have. I don't know.

Julia Dennison: Yeah.

Michael Ian Black: I mean, I just-

Julia Dennison: No.

Michael Ian Black: Never know.

Julia Dennison: That's fair. And what do you think being a father has taught you about yourself? Do you think you've, you've changed? Obviously, everybody changes when they become a parent. But, are you the father that you thought you might be before you were a father? I was unsure what the role of father was. You know, my own dad, because he died so young and because he was kind of, um, unavailable in a lot of ways. You know, he didn't provide the best example. So I didn't really know how I would approach it, and it scared me. The way I think, you know, parenting scares everybody. Um-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: But I tried to trust that a lot of people even dumber than myself have gone through this experience and have somehow been okay. And-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: When my kids were born and they were annoying and horrible, I was wise enough to trust that I would eventually fall in love with them.

Michael Ian Black: And I trusted that I would figure it out well enough as I went along. And I think that's been the case. I mean, I-I certainly would never say I'm anything other than an average dad, um, but parenting, ultimately, does give you back as much as you put into it, or more. It really, for me-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: Has connected me, not only to my kids, but I feel like it connects you to generations, to time itself.

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: Like, you just, you, you really feel, I really feel like I'm linked in some way to the much, grander experience of humanity for having parented. I don't think you have to be a parent in this world. I certainly, you know, I, I don't-

Julia Dennison: Mm-hmm.

Michael Ian Black: I think that's a choice everybody should be able to make. For me, it's been really enriching and, and great. Um, but I also would like to have a lot more disposable income. So you weigh the two.

Julia Dennison: Ha ha.

Julia Dennison: Yup. Yep, yep, yep. It costs money. So the last question we ask everybody, it's obviously been a traumatic couple of years, I think especially for parents and especially for kids. Good gracious. Um,

what hopes do you have for the future of your own family as we go into the next year or two?

Michael Ian Black: Well, both of my kids are in college. I hope that they find themselves pointed in a direction that they're excited about, that gives them purpose, and ignites something in them that will take them through the next part of their lives. I hope they just open themselves up to as many experiences as possible. You know, one of the great things about being that age, is that you're just out there for the first time, and the world is a vast place, and I hope that, that they, you know, dive into that vastness. It's the best time of your life to do that, and to just, you know, drink as much of it as you can.

Julia Dennison: Michael, this has been great chatting. Thank you so much for coming on *We are Family*. It's been wonderful to talk to you.

Michael Ian Black: Oh, my pleasure, Julia. Thanks for having me.

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