



Series 1. Episode 19  
Turning *Little Stones* show notes  
Listen to a conversation with Katie  
Kinsella.

Episode 19  
**Living well...with allergies!**  
with Katie Kinsella

Katie is an experienced primary teacher, specialising in supporting children with complex needs and their mental health. She is also a mum of two children. Her eldest has severe allergies and she shares her story, with all its turbulence and anxieties. Katie has also recently published a children's book, written to support children and families living with allergies.

### What is an allergy?

Understanding allergies is important. There is a significant difference between allergies, intolerances, and dietary preferences. In lay terms, Katie explains the difference between an IgE and non-IgE allergies.

The IgE allergy is when a body has a severe reaction to normally harmless foods. Anaphylaxis is a sudden and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. Typical symptoms include, wheezing, vomiting, hives, tightening of the airways, eczema, fainting, swelling of the mouth, tongue, and lips.

Non IgE allergies are also serious but not always as life threatening.

Katie advises keeping a food diary and **seeking medical advice**. She explains that anaphylactic reactions can change every time. It is therefore important to regularly test for allergens and always keep any prescribed medication to hand.

Regular testing is important. As an infant, Katie's daughter was allergic to 8 or 9 allergens. Now 9 years old, she is severely allergic to two.

Allergic reactions include contact reaction (touching surfaces), air born absorption (breathing in) and cross contamination.

Medications may be prescribed. Katie's daughter has regular steroid medication and an epipen, which gives a shot of adrenaline as urgent treatment for an anaphylaxis shock.

### Katie's experience

Katie explained that her baby daughter had her first anaphylactic reaction after eating her first spoon of yoghurt after 6 months. In fact, there had been earlier signs that she was rejecting proteins ingested by Katie who had breast fed since birth.

Katie shares how terrifying this was. Katie, the mum is hard-wired to protect her children... she talks of being in a state of constant hypervigilance. Such as, scanning the play park to check out where the child with an ice cream has been playing.

She talks about the anxiety she felt when her daughter began attending pre-school groups and later school.

(A word for settings, practitioners, and teachers. All parents place enormous trust in us, especially if they have children with severe allergies. Consider a implementing a triangulating system with a minimum of three checks to risk manage such conditions).



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### Learning to live well...

Katie is assured, competent and has learnt to manage her own and her daughter's fears. This has meant learning to "balance educating her without scaring her and not restricting her".

They have found being outside is a safe place. As a family, they are "outdoorsy... in the woods, at the beach, we can relax". She also explains how she and her daughter would skip together, repeating the phrase, "thank you... I can't have that, I've allergies!" She realised that this phrase empowered her daughter to state her needs.

### I can't have that, I've allergies!

This phrase became the title of the book she has published. She found it gave her child a voice, words to say in place of feeling fearful.

She explains that it is a lonely experience for whole families who are learning to adapt... changing their diet, multiple hospital visits, feeling anxious about who to meet and where...

She wanted to give children with allergies a voice, to feel validated, seen and included.

The book is written for children. It is written in rhyme, with the key phrase repeated for children to rehearse. It is beautifully illustrated and published by Cherish, which has a charity within its publishing company, supporting children with mental health.

It is for everyone whether they live with allergies or not.

### And finally...

Katie encourages families living with allergies to reach out and connect with those who totally get it. "It's ok to feel overwhelmed and anxious... I would never have believed that we'd get to this point..."

She has and is living proof that we can live well... with allergies!

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***I can't have that, I've allergies!* by Katie Kinsella**

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*Further information, practical guidance and advice are available through*

*Turning Little Stones*

***Delving a little Deeper***

*See website for details.*