

MAY 2021 / VOL. 2 NO. 4

PODCASTMAGAZINE.COM

# PODCAST<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

BEYOND THE MICROPHONE

**HEATHER MONAHAN**  
HELPING WOMEN  
FIRE THEIR VILLAINS

**ILDIKO FERENCZI  
& DAN CALDWELL**

NAVIGATING LIFE &  
**TALKING SUCCESS,  
LOVE & KIDS**

**DOMINIQUE YOUNG**  
GREAT MOMS  
**AREN'T PERFECT**

“

*We are hungry...  
always competing  
with ourselves to do  
better and go big.”*

**JEN FASSINO**  
CELEBRATING  
BEING **JEN AF**

**RHEA WONG**  
THE TRUTH ABOUT  
**HUGGING PANDAS**

**AMY**  
PODCAST MAGAZINE'S  
#1 MOM IN PODCASTING  
**PORTERFIELD**

MAKING BEING A MOM (AND ONLINE MARKETING!) LOOK EASY





# Be Calm On Ahway Island

## A Place Of Love & Safety

Wouldn't you love to fall asleep to the sound of a calming voice?

You can, if you listen to Susie Perkowitz, Creator and Executive Producer of the *Be Calm on Ahway Island* podcast.

This former radio producer is used to being the on-air talent for shows, but nothing prepared her for the impact she would have through her brainchild.

Susie recalled, *"I wanted to offer a gift to kids, so I looked to see what was already out there. At the time, in 2017, there were*

*little to no podcasts with bedtime stories, but I was aware that both kids and adults have trouble falling asleep. I wanted to solve that problem. I wondered, 'How can we contribute to a healthy bedtime routine for kids?'"*

And so, the peaceful proprietary space, Ahway Island, was born. Word spread quickly and totally organically. The show started getting noticed by moms' groups, and its popularity blossomed. Over 3.8 million downloads have been generated, mainly as a result of word-of-mouth and tons of positive reviews. Now, with over

450 episodes, the show is among the top 15 or 20 podcasts for kids in the US, Canada, and the UK.

While she works on audio projects through her production business, it is clear that this show holds a special place in Susie's heart—and what a big heart it is. She has poured oodles of time, money, and passion into this podcast, and it shows.

The mission is crystal clear:

*“Some of the animals on Ahway Island are differently-abled, like the three-legged racoon, yet everybody learns how to get along. The stories are based on a message of inclusivity for all kinds of kids,”* Susie explained. *“We celebrate our differences and want all children to feel like they have a place on Ahway Island.”*

Each story and character is original to Ahway Island, and the central character is a dragon. *“If you see pictures of Dragon, you'll see a little heart on the end of the tail. Dragon is our most inclusive figure, because Dragon simply goes by ‘Dragon.’ We refrain from Dragon pronouns or even a name that may have a connotation. Whatever parts of Dragon a child identifies with, we want them to feel safe doing so.”*

In the stories, children on Ahway Island may be a little scared when they first encounter a fire-breathing dragon. But Dragon is a kid, too, and has to deal with challenges from a child's perspective, just like listeners.

*“Dragon is learning about the world*

*and how to interact with different kids and animals,”* Susie adds. *“In this way, children learn how to work through the difficulties they might face.”*

Many of the stories are created to help kids figure out how to solve problems common to their age, like how to share, for example. Susie offered this scenario:

*“What if you have a little sibling who*

**“We celebrate our differences and want all children to feel like they have a place on Ahway Island.”**





**“Dragon is our most inclusive figure, because Dragon simply goes by ‘Dragon.’ We refrain from Dragon pronouns or even a name that may have a connotation.”**

wants to play with you and breaks your toy? How do you react to that if you are a big brother or sister? We are trying to help kids as they navigate the world and the range of experiences they have. When a character learns a valuable lesson, we want it to turn into a moment that kids can have in real life.”

This bedtime podcast not only offers teaching moments, but it also starts with a guided relaxation.

“I have done yoga for a number of years, and I’ve valued meditation for a long time,” Susie shared. “I suffered a sports injury years ago, and when I went to physical therapy, a Buddhist taught me meditation practices. It was all about being still, breathing, releasing stress, and clearing the mind. It’s such a simple technique that I knew kids could learn it, too. It was just a matter of figuring out how to translate a breathing technique into a practice that is easy for children to understand. That’s how we came up with the fun-yet-soothing concept of our deep dragon breaths.

“Lots of parents tell us that, whenever their kids get stressed, they say, ‘Let’s do our dragon breaths.’ I think that’s awesome! It breaks the cycle of stress, and everybody gets a chance to breathe and relax.”

Scenes of cozy relaxation are depicted in the adorable fan art on the Ahway Island website. Susie explained the inspiration for the drawings:

“Often during our guided relaxation, kids will have a listening buddy, like a favorite stuffed animal or blanket. They draw pictures of themselves listening to the show with this buddy, and parents submit the art.”

She added, “We get comments from parents that reveal the show is an integral part of their bedtime routine as a family. In some cases, it’s become the most special moment of the day that parents have with their children. Some adults also say that they love the podcast even though they don’t have kids. We even got feedback from someone who said the show helps their new puppy to relax.”





From the custom-written music to the deliberate absence of commercials, every detail of the show is designed to help kids fall asleep easier, faster, and calmer and have lovely dreams rather than nightmares.

*“Much of my inspiration comes from the questions and experiences of my over 20 nieces and nephews of varying ages,” Susie said. “The team brainstorms ideas, and then the stories are written by a licensed educator who has worked in the special education sector and with small kids for over 20 years.”*

With tenderness in her voice, Susie asked, *“What can we leave children with at the end of their day? What are the last things your kids hear at night? At the end of every story, the central character goes to sleep on Ahway Island with feelings of safety, gratitude, and love. We think that’s a great way to fall asleep.”*



488. GLOOMY DAY FUN: A RELAXING STORY AND MEDITATION FOR KIDS



176. IT'S TOO DARK: A KID'S MINDFUL STORY AND GUIDED RELAXATION



487. SINGING CLASS: A MINDFUL STORY AND MEDITATION FOR KIDS



174. PAL RIDES AGAIN: A GUIDED RELAXATION AND CALMING STORY



175. BUMPER BOATS: A CALMING MEDITATION AND KID'S STORY



485. THE COLORFUL OCEAN: A GUIDED MEDITATION AND STORY FOR KIDS



*Ahway Island* aims to celebrate our differences and wants all children to feel like they have a place

I couldn't agree more. Take a listen. The messages of kindness and encouragement promote restful sleep for you and your kids. 🎧



### Kids & Family Category Director

Christine Franklyn

kidsandfamily@podcastmagazine.com

**Got a Kids & Family Podcast suggestion?**

**Let us know! ›**