



**Episode #79**

**Coach & Author Andrea Owen  
On Raising Her Differently-Wired Son**

October 17, 2017



Debbie: Hello, Andrea. Welcome to the podcast.

Andrea: Hi Debbie, thanks for having me.

Debbie: I'm so happy that you were here. You and I have known each other for many years and we've had a lot of conversations about our differently wired kiddos during some darker moments of our lives, but for our listeners, would you mind just telling us a little bit about who you are and about your kids and specifically your a differently wired kiddo?

Andrea: I'm Andrea Owen and first and foremost I'm a mom and I'm also an author and life coach and my son is my differently wired child. I also have a seven year old daughter and my son is nine. He actually shares a birthday with Asher and he'll be 10 the summer of of 2017. And his diagnosis officially came when he was five, I believe it was. It was the same year that they dropped Asperger's from the DSM. So his official diagnosis is high functioning autism with sensory processing disorder and anxiety disorder. And that happened when he was about to start kindergarten and now he's in, we're just finishing up third grade.

Debbie: Wow. Okay. And what kind of school is he going to?

Andrea: He is in a regular mainstream elementary school, public school now and we've had conversations with you about, you know, should we send them to a private schools, should we send him to there's actually a school here near where we live that is just for children with high-functioning autism. We looked into that extensively and considered it, but we have had, we have turned a corner in third grade actually of all the grades, you know, because so many parents said third grade is when it all starts to fall apart.

Debbie: Exactly.

Andrea: Like, oh my God, the second grade was really rough for us and I could talk about that. But um, we have really turned a corner this past year and things have gone really well for him. We've had a lot of interventions over the years, some which we're not even sure if they worked or not. And just last week we had an end of year IEP meeting. That was the best IIEP meeting we've ever had.

Debbie: That's fantastic!

Andrea: We're in this season of an upswing. I mean, as you know with these kids, it can be. You can go through seasons where you have a setback and then other times it can be really great and this has been our longest streak of things going really well and so I'm, 'm trying to lean into the joy of it instead of bracing myself for the step back.



Debbie: Isn't that the truth. Asher used to have these regressive periods and they sometimes it's regressions with last like three months or longer and then when one day I'd realize, oh my God, the regressions over, but I was so afraid of it returning that I never enjoyed that little break that we had.

Andrea: Yeah, it's, it's hard to, for me, in my experience, it's been hard to stay in gratitude and you know, being someone that works in personal development, I know how important this is, but you know, first and foremost, I'm a human then a mother of a differently wired child and so I still find it tricky to stay really excited about all of his progress.

Debbie: Let's take a step back. I'd love to hear when you knew something was going on and what that process was like for you and what that looked like for you, personally, as you discovered, oh, this is not really what I thought this was going to look like.

Andrea: Yeah. It's interesting because he was born in 2007 and I, I feel like that was really the height of the debate about autism and vaccination. I remember, remember when that was really huge at that kind of exploded in the media and that was where I was when it was. So I was, I was very, I was doing a lot of research about it and, and, and really into that. And I was a first time mom too. So he was born and he seemed like a totally normal child and he was always very, um, he was always much more of an observer. I, you know, I hadn't been like a, like a baby, mom and baby group, and even when the little ones his age were starting to crawl, he was, he was late to crawl and walk and he would always just kind of like sit back and watch all the other kids. He's never been, just personality wise, he's never been kind of like a quote unquote typical rowdy little boy, rough and tumble little boy. And then when he was a toddler I noticed he was always very cautious. We called him like the cautious child and very serious as well and, and, but never really. No alarm bells really were raised until he was about probably four. And what happened that year was that his sister who's two years younger than him, she was around two years old and I was noticing that her, we thought my husband and I thought that she was just like this genius child. We thought this just amazing athlete. She was two. Turns out she was normal and of course we think she's extra special, but she, she was just doing things as normal toddlers do and our son was not.

Also, I noticed there were some red flags for me. I noticed when I would take them to the park I would be relieved when there was no one else there. Because it was painful for me to watch him try and interact with other children, you know, he would obsess on certain games and try to play with kids and repeat himself over and over again. Like, let's play a fireman. I am the chief, let's play firemen. I'm the chief. And follow them around. And he wasn't understanding when kids were walking away from him and, or, or even saying like, we don't want to play that. And I kind of, I mean, you know, you have that kind of feeling. But I didn't, I didn't want it to be true. But at the same time I knew something was wrong. And coincidentally his preschool teacher, we started to have some problems in preschool with the other children.

And Colton was having outbursts about, you know, things not going his way or kids playing with things that he always wanted to play with. And his preschool teacher happened to be a retired special education teacher and I'll never forget the day she called me, I was standing at the kitchen sink, peeling a potato and she said she was telling me about something that had happened that day and she said, I've been wanting to tell you this for a couple of weeks now. And I don't know how else to say it except that I think you should have him tested. And it was, you know, those moments you have like that out of body experience where everything kind of slows down and it's just like tunnel vision. And that was one of those moments. And remember, you know, there was things going on around me and I couldn't hear anything except that.

Andrea: And just thinking, not my baby, I can't, I just, I just felt just crushed. But at the same time it was a mixture of this, you know, my heart just breaking as well as a little bit of relief that you might have an answer and he might be able to get help and all the puzzle pieces kind of started to fall into place about what might be going on with him. So we went through the whole process and we got his diagnosis and yeah, it's been a wild ride emotionally for myself and for my husband and for our marriage and for my son as well.

Debbie: I totally relate to that moment and I'm sure that so many listeners do too. And I'm sure that was difficult too for your teacher. It's always kind of tricky for people to make that suggestion, especially if it hasn't been brought up before, you know, that I think there might be something going on here is not an easy call to make.

Andrea: Yeah. No. And I'm, I'm grateful for her for it. I eventually would have eventually would have happened, but I don't know if it would've happened to that quickly.

Debbie: Right, right. So for you personally, you said you were crushed and you were a little relieved. I'm just curious. For me, I remember having a serious resistance to this isn't really what's going on. At the same time while I was researching everything and buying every book I could, but I still, I kind of went into combat mode like, oh yeah, well we'll see about this, you know, um, what was that like for you? Like your own process of coming to a place of acceptance or it really surrendering like, OK, this is what's going on.

Andrea: I think, you know, from a logistical standpoint, I didn't have that much resistance. I was, I jumped in feet first to his testing. It was, it was very expensive at the time, the route that we went, it wasn't covered at all by insurance and that part I didn't have too much resistance to. I think I was, I was ready, I was ready. And I think my husband had a little bit more resistance to it. My husband had the thought that he was, it was a behavioral issue and that we needed to find a different way to discipline him. So that was the first year or two. It definitely caused a strain. I think honestly what kind of got my feathers the most ruffled was the reaction of other people around me. I was grieving and it was tricky to be in this. And I'm sure a lot of people listening can relate to like what you said about I went into productivity mode. I went, I researched all the



things I got, you know, the best doctors I was going to do this for him, but at the same time I was, I was grieving and when I would tell people how I was feeling, I was met with reactions, like he's always going to be the same kid. And I even got one girl said to me, well at least he's verbal. Like it's really not that bad.

I just felt like every worry or people were telling me about changing his diet and all these things to fix it. And, and while I appreciated that, I felt like it was so rare to find someone who would say, yeah, that sucks and I'm so sorry that you're having to go through this and that must be so crushing and, and that's why I turn to you like you're the only person I knew and we didn't even live in the same state we had met once years ago and I just, I felt like I felt really lonely, but you know, there's, I know that there's parents all over the world who are struggling with this and so I really struggled with finding support emotionally in it and really going through the grief of it and allowing myself to grieve this while at the same time going to bat for my son.

Debbie: Yeah. It is a lonely place to be, especially when you're just really trying to wrap your head around what's going on and just interesting reactions that you got. A lot of what I would get is what he seems fine to me. Right. You know, he seems normal and like, OK, that is the probably the least helpful thing you could say right now. But yeah, it is a very isolating place to be and hopefully the more that people, you know, talk about things that are open about it, then it will become less something that we keep to ourselves. I think a lot of people don't even talk about it. So you don't even know. Right. Who in your community is dealing with this? Because a lot of people keep it behind closed doors.

Andrea: I find even, you know, it's only been a few years later, I just met someone. I was on a, I was chaperoning a field trip for my daughter's class and was in, happened to strike up a conversation with a woman and she casually mentioned that one of her other children is on the spectrum. And this happens to me like fairly often. I don't know if it's an energy that we put out. We happen to find each other and I mean it happens to me probably like once a quarter and I, I've, I have found that the stigma is going down and that parents are more likely to talk to each other about it. I think even then they were just a few years ago.

Debbie: I agree and maybe that's just because I'm surrounded by people who talk about it, but it definitely seems like it's, or at least when I tell people what's going on in our family, I don't. I get better responses, you know, it's more just like, oh, that's interesting. You know, it doesn't really shift or change anything dramatically is just another part of who my child is.

Andrea: Absolutely.

Debbie: So, you know, my husband and I just did an episode a few weeks ago. I brought him on the show for the very first time. He was admittedly quite nervous. We have been through a lot as a couple and trying to just figure out the dynamic of how we could parent together and as the primary caregiver and the one in charge of most. Yeah.



Andrea: Everything. Yeah.

Debbie: I, you know, that was difficult for a number of years because I was slowly building up resentment that he wasn't on the same page to a point where I felt like he was undoing all the good I was doing during the day by not meeting my standard of how he should be parenting and supporting Asher. So would you mind just telling us a little bit, you said that your husband had some resistance and maybe thinking this was more behavioral issue. Have you guys come to a place where you're feeling more in alignment and that you're working together in supporting Colton?

Andrea: Absolutely. It was not easy in the beginning. And I, I read somewhere too that parents of special needs children have a higher divorce rate and I'm not surprised at all. I think that it has the ability to bring you closer or drive you apart. And I went through a period where my son became my first priority and my marriage was not and I just thought to myself, you know what? This, this again, this is a season that I'm going through and I will circle back in a minute, but I can't, you know, I run a business, I have two children and it was, it was a lot to handle right then and there. And so what has helped us tremendously is, I was diagnosed actually with severe anxiety disorder when I was 26 or 27 and was put on medication for several years. And so I know what that feels like.

In fact, before Colton's diagnosis I watched him have a panic attack at a children's museum that was very crowded, as you can probably imagine what happened and, and I'm watching it happen and I'm thinking, oh my God, like I know exactly what's happening. So I had many talks with my husband about what it feels like to be someone you know and like this isn't a choice that he's making. He, it's not a won't. It's a can't. And asking him to do research on his own instead of me lecturing him about what it is. And quite frankly, I didn't have the time and energy and compassion to do that for him. So I had to be really mindful about having reasonable and kind conversations with him because my tendency was to let it build up and get resentful and then lash out at my husband over something that either didn't have anything to do with our son or just kind of throw up everything at him about our son and be blaming and things like that, which wasn't fair.

I wasn't asking for what I needed in a kind way and you know, because nobody wants to listen to you when you're yelling at them. That's like communication 101. And so I had to realize that and have intentional with him like on date night or on a Sunday afternoon, like not when it was an emergency and, and that was hugely helpful and he always said like, I'll support you guys, you just need to tell me what you need. And I had to surrender some things because I was, I realized I had like a tight grip on everything and didn't want to, didn't want to give anything up. And so how is that fair either if I'm not, if I'm unwilling to do that? So it was a lot of compromise on, on my end and surrendering and realizing that it's better for my son to have his father be a part of his improvement rather than his mother being a control freak about everything and having his father just kind of like flailing along for the ride. I had to look at it from a different



perspective. I had to push my ego aside and I had to really look at us as a unit, which being the selfish person that I am, being the mama bear that I am, is not always easy. I do it sometimes very- I make a mess and I've learned the art of apologizing and it's been, it's been good for our marriage. It's been hard. But in the end it's been good.

Debbie: I so relate to everything that you just said. I mean, I think that similarly I was very, very controlling and feeling like I'm the one who's doing this right and almost got into very protective of Asher in, in everything taking his side, intervening and, and I also feel like I related to the way he was feeling almost and maybe you did the same with Colton because of you sharing the, the anxiety piece and you being able to really put yourself in his shoes so when you feel so kind of fused or in meshed with your child and what's going on, it does become almost like an us against the world in some ways. And then when your partners outside that circle, that's not a great situation.

Andrea: Exactly.

Debbie: Yeah. Well thank you for sharing that. I think that that's something, again, I don't a lot of people just don't talk about and it is a tremendous strain on relationships and I think we need to kind of be open about that so people don't see our Facebook family saying, oh!

Andrea: Right. I know. I'm a huge fan of marriage counseling. Marriage counseling, I'm not afraid to say, has helped my marriage so much if not saved it. And when you're going around in circles around the same issue over and over again, nobody is willing to see the other side. It says if it's two polarizing political views are married to each other, which can, that can be the case too, but like you're not going to convince each other of the other side and when you're in that state of your marriage, I don't like to say you have to do things. But I will. You have to seek help outside of your marriage or whether it's someone who specializes with this or not, but it can be incredibly helpful to have that outside mediator.

Debbie: Someone who's not invested in one of you individually for sure. So I have another question. Since you are a coach and an author who's written a lot about our inner critic and it just made me think about, you know, I have a very loud and obnoxious inner critic who has a lot to say about all the ways I screw up on a daily basis about the way I'm raising my child and the choices I make and when I lose my cool. Even though I know I'm supposed to keep it together. So for you personally, as someone who that's a lot of your work is surrounding helping people learn about what's going on inside their head, how has that been for you in relationship to parenting your son?

Andrea: It's been huge because, you know, the way I teach inner critic work is I ask people to break down the different parts of their lives. So I mostly, I work with women, but it's the same with men too. And, and typically with women, our inner critic is the loudest in the area of like our appearance and in our body. That's a huge trigger for women. But I think the next one after that is parenting.

And it definitely is, for me it's my biggest trigger and I have to absolutely walk my own talk and use my own tools. And what I have found to be really helpful is. I'll give you an example, so this happened a couple of years ago, but it's still clear as day, it was during second grade when, um, he was in first grade, I can't remember which it was, but we'd had, I'd had a not so great IEP meeting. And if anyone's been to an IEP meeting where you walk out and you feel like you just got beat up, like you feel like the entire hour was spent reading a list of all the ways that your child is wrong. Let me read to you all the ways that your child isn't measuring up and I'd have and I have numbers, I have a scale and we're going to tell you how far he falls on the left not being good enough. And that is just absolutely brutal. And I think many parents would say like, I'd rather someone tell me the ways, all the ways, I'm screwing up rather than telling you how my child isn't measuring up. So I'd walked away from one of those meetings and I was in the car and I was at a red light and my mind started to get away from me. And I was saying to myself like, I can't believe I haven't looked into -I think what had happened is I found out about some non-profit organizations that are helpful for parents just in, just in advocating. And so there's so many different resources that I didn't even know about because if we had come out of a season where things were really good and then things went awry and I'm telling myself I can't believe I did not know about these organizations ahead of time. I should have been on top of this. I'm smarter than this. I haven't even done like a 5k for autism awareness. I haven't even raised any money. Like what kind of parent am I? I went down that road, haven't even donated any money and every possible way, you know, every bat I pick up about my son and the way that I'm failing him as his mother. I was thinking of it and you know, it was just, you know, how long do you sit at a red light? Not that long. And I was totally lost in thought. And then as the light turned green, I remember thinking to myself, OK, you know what? This isn't helpful at all. It doesn't help me become a better parent. It's not helping my son and I need to give myself a break. I am doing the best that I can and I can do better and here are the ways.

Andrea: So it's, it's really, and, and trust me when I tell you, I have been working on this for nearly a decade of learning how to speak to myself in a different matter and learning how to listen for that voice that tells me I'm terrible or not good enough or failing and I don't expect anyone listening who's never done this work before to be able to do that the next time you're at a red light beating yourself up. But it is, you know, if just give you like two pieces of advice, it's first you need to know that you're in it because some people will spin in that place for hours or days or months. So for me it's about catching myself in those moments and then just acknowledging it. So that's really the first step is just saying like, OK, I hear that voice and I'm going to choose to go in a different direction. So that's inner critic lesson 101.

Debbie: That's such an important lesson and yeah, there's so much more we will do. We could do a whole episode on that as it relates to parenting. All right, so that, that still happens to you then?



Andrea: Absolutely. Yeah. And especially, and it depends on where you are in your life. I mean maybe your career is something that is hugely triggering or your marriage or your friendships or your past and some people have stuff that happened in their past but they still drive around and beat themselves up for. And I know for a lot of people listening it's probably parenting.

Debbie: Absolutely. So I wanted to just go back to education for a minute. You said you've had a really good third grade year, second grade kind of crashed and burned. So and I'm really just intrigued that you, you are in a public school and that you're making that work. So can you tell us a little bit about maybe any bumps that you had along the way or any things that have worked especially well that parents listening could get some ideas or inspiration from?

Andrea: Yeah, I think that what has helped so much in the public school system is we started first grade and we had just moved to the state of North Carolina and my husband and I are originally from California, that's where both of our kids were born. When they were three and one we moved to the State of Utah, which is where he was diagnosed and he attended kindergarten there and then we moved to North Carolina and this is where we plan to stay and we've been here for several years. But he started first grade and we, I think we just got kind of lucky with his teacher. She was incredible and really great for him the way she structured things. And then when we went to second grade we moved communities and so we had to switch schools again and this all happened in the summer, so he was never in the middle of the year switching schools and he stayed in the same school district, but again it was a new school for second grade and the teacher was not a great match at all.

Of course the school knew about his diagnosis and tried to place him, but they didn't know him. And there was also some conflicts with some other kids in the class and it just, it just wasn't a good match and it was just really rough. Also, I should mention when we finished second grade, I mean it was bad Debbie, like every day I would pick him up from school and it was, it was anywhere from him being in a bad mood to him crying. Like those were the two options and he was very much like a half glass empty kid and sometimes he still is, but you know, one bad thing would happen and it would destroy the rest of the day even if the rest of the day was good and he would only focus on that bad thing that happened. That was second grade in a nutshell.

And then the summer between second grade and third grade. So this was last summer, it was July and I had heard a lot about changing his diet and when he was a toddler or he had some GI problems even when he was a newborn he had problems. And so I had him tested for Celiac disease and which came back negative. So that happened when he was about three, so I'd always doubted that it had anything to do with his gut. But last summer, you know, at that point he was eight and he loves science and he was old enough to understand and grasp, grasp the concept of proteins and brain science and things like that. So I sat him down and explained to him about gluten and what sometimes can happen to people and leaky gut syndrome. And he was fascinated by it and I said, why

don't we do this as an experiment and see what happens. Because I had the kid too, which I'm sure a lot of people can relate to, where he would only eat like five different things. And I didn't want to starve my child. I, I knew that it was going to be more of a battle than it was worth, so that's why I had waited for so long. But last July I explained it to him, I said, let's do it for maybe 30 or 60 days and see what happens and we'll go shopping together. And I said, ultimately it's up to you, but I think that this might help. And he said OK, and so we did it. And I hate to sound really dramatic about it, but it changed our life. And he changed dramatically. So we're, you know, rounding out to about a year now and we're not sure if it's just maturity, you know, he turned nine and he's getting a little bit more mature or if it's the diet. Like I don't care which one it is, I'll take it.

Andrea: And his third grade teacher, he also has an incredible special education case manager and she was just really great in getting them the best third grade teacher and she's been super and I mean he's on the honor roll now...

Debbie: Go Colton.

Andrea: ...and yeah, we, we asked him too if he wanted to try to eat some gluten just to like see what would happen because it might not be the gluten, it because it might also just be like the dyes that were also removed as a result. And so I was kind of telling them that and I'm like, you might be gluten tolerant, like let's do you want to see? And he said, no, he doesn't even want to try it. And that's, I, I kind of lost track of the question, but I, I felt like it was important to mention because, and I know that it's not the case for everyone. I know I have friends who have similar diagnosis to my son who had removed gluten and saw no changes. So I do think it depends on the child and, but for us it's been, it's been really awesome.

Debbie: That is a very interesting. I mean, I've, I've heard that in that, that is one of my inner critic's loudest things is you're not doing enough, you know, in terms of your kid's diet, but it's one of the things I've always just said. I have too many other things I'm dealing with. I can't take that on right now. But we have gotten healthier here, but that is so interesting and I know that, that, that happens. So I'm not surprised to hear that. And it's really, it's really cool. And I imagine that if or when you're not in that kind of flight or fight mode constantly, then you can actually make some great growth leaps too.

Andrea: Yeah, it's, it's opened up. It's like the whole mood in our house has changed too. So every once in a while he's not perfect. Every once in a while he has a bad day because he's human and now it jars us because I think that we remember that that was our normal. Just him always being grumpy. When he was, when he was an infant, we nicknamed him Mr. Fussy von Grumpy because he was just always pissed off, like he was just always in a bad mood and now I wonder if that was it because he was, he was gluten intolerant. I mean everything from he looks at the camera when I take his picture, he makes eye contact. Even just the other night we went out to dinner and we're sitting there waiting for our table to be called and he's sitting next to me and he put his arm on my shoulder and leaned on me like, like unsolicited affection would have never happened. Like when

you would ask them for a hug, he would just lean in and he wouldn't even put his arms around you. Like I would have to like grab his arms and put them around me and I mean it doesn't happen all the time but I get unsolicited affection. And just his focus is better and he even tells us that his focus is better at school. His teacher sent me, he would never participate in class, and his teacher sent me a couple of weeks ago, a video of him going up to the front of the class at the whiteboard and doing an entire math problem from start to finish in front of the class. I was floored like this is my child! And again, like we're not sure if he's just growing up or if the interventions from before have worked or if it's the gluten. I mean, who knows, sometimes you just kind of like throw in a bunch of variables and like see what happens.

Debbie: Yeah. Second grade was our year from hell and then I homeschooled from third grade on. So, you know, we noticed each year there's more regulation and more connection and just a completely different child now. And it's hard to know what is just a maturity, what it, you know, what's really going on here. But Julie George, who we worked with, a therapist we worked with from the U W Autism Center, I would talk to her and she'd be like, oh, it's just going to keep getting better. You haven't even gotten to the really good years yet. I'm like, really? Awesome! But that's so great to hear. I love hearing that unsolicited affection and just those moments I know are so important, especially when you have a child who when they were younger you didn't know if that was ever going to happen. So that's really awesome.

Andrea: Yeah, and I think, you know, it was just telling my husband the other day we were, we were at our community pool and, and I was standing in the snack bar line by myself and there was this group of teenage boys and was maybe four of them. They looked like they were like 14 or 15 years old and I'm watching them interact with each other and then I start to get nervous and I started thinking like, how is my son going to be. Like, I can't imagine my son interacting with other boys like that. Like it just is so, it just doesn't seem like my son. And I went back and was talking to my husband and I was telling him what I was saying and I'm like, I'm just worried about him. You know, and, and my husband just listens and then I think I said out loud, I said, I think I worry about him more than he will ever need to be worried about, like I think you'll be just fine. So my husband just smiles and nods, but I don't know if that ever goes away, you know, even if you have a neurotypical child,

Debbie: I was just gonna say we don't get the license on this. I know every parent has that concern or you know, just all those rites of passage and it's so hard to, to just imagine what it's gonna look like as they get older. But that brings me to another question I'm really interested in helping people recognize their own personal triggers. Like what, what you just mentioned is one of my personal triggers when I see groups of teenagers his age engaging in things and then I see my child not engaging in any of them, it, you know, I know it's tapping into my own baggage, my leftover teen baggage, but it's a big trigger for me. Do you have any, any triggers like that that are guaranteed to get you?



Andrea: I have the same one and I think too, because I have a neurotypical child too and so I see her interacting as a quote unquote normal child and she has a lot of friends and she gets invited to all the birthday parties and she has sleep overs and Colton just is not interested in that. And he's had a couple of play dates, which I've been the planner, and they've been fine. But I think that's too, why I get triggered because I, you know, and watching those teenage boys the other day, I can totally imagine my daughter being a normal teenage girl and doing all the things that teenage girls do. Like there's no doubt in my mind that she's going to be just fine. But thinking about my son doing that, I get hugely triggered. Like you were saying, brings back all of my, you know, for me it was middle school was awful and I'm like, oh my God, how is seventh grade? He's going to be in braces. He's got this cowlick. Is it going to be bad? And I don't know if this is everyone's experience, but I have found that I care about his social status and so like all of that way more than he does, like, like we were talking about his birthday, cause it's tricky because he's an August birthday and so he's not in school when it's his birthday. And I said, do you want us to maybe like give invitations out at the very end of the school year for your friends so we can plan your birthday way ahead of time. And he thought about it and he was like, no, not really, but what if we just do something fun with us, just our family and, and you know, that's me getting triggered and thinking that he has to have these friends and I'm, I'm the hovering mom in that way with his social stuff because that still is a little bit harder for him.

Andrea: But again, what it comes down to is that he doesn't come home and cry about it or say like, nobody likes me, everybody hates me. And he did that in second grade. But it just and I don't even think that that was true, that everybody hated him. I just think he was just struggling more. But it's, it's, it's my stuff and I just have to remember in my husband gently reminds me too sometimes he, he lets me talk it out that this is their life to be lived and that you know, whether he's differently wired or not, he's a human being who was born resilient and we all are. We are, we are born for struggle, to survive struggle. And I try to remember to be grateful that he has a mother that can't protect him from the pain. But I am definitely a soft place for him to land when he has pain. Both of my children know they can come to me when anything happens and I cannot fix it for them, but I can be there to again like just be there for them and, and be a witness to their pain. As excruciating as that is. I've had to work tremendously on my own stuff in order to get to a place where I can what we call in this business "hold space" for someone else and that's been a hard lesson to learn, but one that I've, I've wanted from day one for them.

Debbie: Yeah, it's one thing to hold space for clients and it's another thing to hold space for your children. Well that was so well said though. I love that and it is such a reminder that, that our kids are resilient and they will be fine, you know. We can get out of our own way. Just love them and support them. That's awesome. So I have one more question for you and that is, I'm asking this of a lot of parents and I'm very curious about it, but also because of the business that you're in, can you talk a little bit about self care and you know, I'm a huge advocate of self care and I take it when need it. So how do, how do you take care of yourself?



Andrea: I take care of myself by a few different things. For awhile I was really sort of hell bent on being in a, an in-person support group for other parents of differently wired kids. And then I kind of felt like, you know what, I don't want to talk about this all the time. Like I, I, and I do still participate somewhat, but I really make it a point to get together with my friends and I'm just do mom things, you know, like go shopping and do things that don't have anything to do with my children and also working on my marriage. I, again, whether your kids are, are on the spectrum or not, I think that it, when they are of a certain age, it is so difficult to survive marriage if you're not actively working on it. And I have found that my children are happier when my husband and I are in a good place. They feel safer. They know when we are tense with each other or not, or not connecting and I want them to feel safe and I want to give them that gift of their parents having a good marriage. And so that's another way that I take care of myself is maintaining a strong relationship with my husband. And, and you know, just the usual stuff that you hear about all the time, like making sure that I work out and those types of things and I'm a writer and making sure that I get some writing time in that's not for work, for pleasure and reading and those types of things that we hear about all the time. Super important.

Debbie: Thank you for answering that. And sharing. And I also love your response about working on your relationship or just kind of being in partnership with your husband as part of your self care. That's such a good reminder and something I'm just realizing I'm so busy right now because I'm on this deadline and I have so little time for myself, my saving grace is just grabbing a podcast and going for a quick walk. But I've been like, do you want to come with me to my husband? And just like walking a few blocks hand in hand is that is definitely some self care right there in that same way.

Andrea: Yeah. I just think it so quickly can run away from us, you know, like I, I was on a writing deadline as well and there were a few weeks where I was working during the day and then as soon as my husband would come home, you know, we were like, we would high five in the hallway and I would head out to the coffee shop to continue to work and I was working on Saturdays and Sundays and there were weeks that would go by where I feel like I barely saw him and that can, that can go downhill really fast. I've noticed that, that feeling of disconnection and then it just kind of breeds kind of like when you don't work out and then you feel really unmotivated and you know, taking my marriage, I'm like, well, he hasn't really done anything. He hasn't expressed any gratitude to me. He hasn't reached out and texted me during the day. Why should I, you know those kinds of thoughts? Why should I be the one to try so hard? And again, my ego gets in the way and I have to just really remember that, that we are a family unit and there's more to this family than just me and it's OK that I'm, that I'm actually making an effort and it's all for, it's all for good. And so, yeah.

Debbie: That's great. This conversation has been just so interesting to me personally. I mean we've talked about these issues before, but I always consider things in a different way after we chat and I know that our listeners are going to be

inspired to think differently and have picked up some good nuggets. I also have a feeling they're going to want to check out your podcast and your website to hear more about the way that you think about things and your work regarding your inner critic and all those things. So would you mind telling us how people can track you down?

Andrea: The inner critic work they can download a free e-book and audio that's at [yourkickasslife.com](http://yourkickasslife.com). And then the podcast, if you just go to itunes or wherever you get your podcasts in the search for Your Kick-Ass Life podcasts, you can find it there.

Debbie: And listeners, I will leave links to Andrea's website, her podcasts and her book as well on the show notes page so you can check out all of the goodness that is Andrea Owen. And Andrea, thank you so much for just sharing your story. I really appreciate all of the time that you took to walk us through your personal story. Again, it's inspiring and it helps other parents feel like they're not crazy and that they're not alone and that there's a lot of us going through this and it and it can actually. It can actually be something that improves marriages and lives and builds and builds from there. So thank you so much.

Andrea: You're welcome. It's my pleasure. This hour has flown by and I always love talking to you and just so grateful for the work that you're doing out in the world.

Debbie: Thank you. Thank you so much.

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## RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- [Andrea Owen's website](#)
- Andrea Owen's [Your Kick-Ass Life Podcast](#)
- [52 Ways to Live a Kickass Life: BS-Free Wisdom to Ignite Your Inner Badass and Live the Life You Deserve](#) by Andrea Owen
- [How to Stop Feeling Like Sh\\*t: 14 Habits That Are Holding You Back From Happiness](#) by Andrea Owen
- [Debbie and Her Husband Talk Openly About Their Journey of Parenting a Differently-Wired Son](#)(podcast)