



**Episode #180:**

**Susan Stiffelman on  
Parenting Without Power Struggles**

October 22, 2019

Debbie: Good morning, Susan. Welcome to the podcast.

Susan: Good morning, Debbie. I'm so glad to be here with you. Thanks for inviting me.

Debbie: Of course, of course. I, this is a long overdue conversation. You and I have known each other for years and I'm just so excited to formally introduce you to my community. So thank you for doing this.

Susan: My pleasure.

Debbie: So as a way to get started, I actually just wanted to, there's a quote on your website, on your homepage, that I love so much. It says to keep your parenting cool, end the power struggles and stay calmly and lovingly in charge. And even just reading that feels so good. And I'm just wondering if you could just take a few minutes to tell us how you got into this work and why you're so passionate about doing this particular work with parents.

Susan: So I started out as a teacher many, many, many years ago, over 40 years ago. And I loved that work. I loved working with kids. I'm an unconventional learner and teacher and it was a great fit for whether I was in a classroom or eventually doing educational therapy where I had kids coming to see me who just weren't learning in the traditional ways. And so I was able to offer them alternative ways of taking in information and working with their parents to kind of make accommodations and, and allow them to be who they were meant to be. Because I do believe that every child is a genius and a miracle and a mystery and, and it can just be so much fun to see who you get. Often not what you expected, as you know. And eventually I was doing more and more work with kids who were actually very bright, but were kind of bored in school. So there was a whole range of, of people and young people who came into my practice.

Eventually I saw that sometimes emotional challenges were affecting their academic performance and vice versa. Sometimes a child had a legitimate learning challenge that was making it harder for them to feel good in their skin or to behave in a way that didn't create agitation around them or inside of them. So I went back to school and I became a marriage and family therapist. It was a wonderful training, spent many years getting my hours, thousands of hours, and finally was a licensed psychotherapist who continued to specialize in working with parents and children. And I started doing workshops just to help parents kind of fold in some of the principles I had developed about allowing each child to be who they're meant to be and not taking our kids' behavior personally. And most importantly really understanding that, even though I believe every child and every parent are equals, that we are not better than our kids or more worthy of respect or anything like that.

I saw how important it was for children to have a grownup in the room as they were moving through life. And so the workshops began to reflect more and more

of this idea of being the calm, confident captain of the ship that I now talk about. And in the course of doing my workshops with parents, it seemed to be moving me more and more in a direction of working less with kids directly and more with their parents so that we could make progress more quickly. I found that if you could get parents to understand the importance of holding this place for their children no matter what they were going through, of being big enough and sturdy enough to be the one that they turned to and not be reactive but rather be responsive that everyone did better, the family just did better. So that's a long short answer to your question of how I got where I am.

Debbie: Well, I, I just love, you know that I, I just really resonate with your work. You and I, again, I've had many conversations and you know, I read through your amazing book *Parenting Without Power Struggles*. The subtitle is *Raising Joyful, Resilient Kids While Staying Cool, Calm, and Connected*. And it was just one yes moment after another. And I think especially for my community where, you know, I've just been reading all these emails in the past couple of days from parents and, and this idea of being in a power struggle with our child and, and often feeling like they are the ones with all the power and that we are constantly in reaction mode. That's why I think that your work is just so it's important for all parents, but especially for parents whose kids are moving through the world differently. So are there some, one or two core things that, that you've seen that cause those power struggles? Like what is at the root of power struggles between parents and their kids?

Susan: Yes, I do think there are, and I think if you go to my website, we have a report or a, there's a way to get a free report because I've sort of outlined about six or seven. But think about it this way. You can't have a power struggle with one person. So if you imagine a rope, and on the cover of my first book, there's hands pulling like a tug of rope. It only works if both people on each end of the rope are pulling in their own direction. So one of the ways that I encourage parents to step away from that dynamic is to not pick up the rope. And there's a great quote and it goes like this: He who is most attached to a particular outcome has the least amount of power.

So we get into power struggles with our kids for good reasons. You know, we want them to brush their teeth, we want them to put their shoes on, we want them to do their homework. We want them to stay in bed and not keep popping out. These are all legitimate frustrations that parents go through every day. But when we're attached to whether our child does it or whether they do it within the next 10 seconds, it can make things very interesting for our kids. Meaning that depending on the quality of the connection, which I believe is an underlying element. So important to the parent child relationship, which isn't always easy, particularly in your community. I understand sometimes forging that solid, sturdy, warm connection can be a little bit more difficult. But when connection, when the child feels liked, seen and enjoyed, there's generally a bias toward being more cooperative.

It becomes less interesting to see what you'll do if you're really attached to them getting their shoes on. If number one, they feel really close to you, they feel connected to you, you've had a cuddle or you've played checkers or you've had a

good laugh, or if they don't feel that you're as desperate and needy for them to get their shoes on. So I talk about the three ways we can interact with our kids. One is as that calm captain of the ship who's in charge, who sees what needs to go on but isn't profoundly attached, doesn't make a yes or a no determine or define their success as a captain or in our case as a parent. And then there's the lawyer, and the lawyer is where we're arguing and negotiating and this is where power struggles really are born. And then there's the dictator and the dictator is feeling out of control and desperate and unappreciated and overwhelmed and disrespected. And they tend to try and overpower or intimidate the child, threaten the child, bribe the child, into doing what they want because they, they don't see any other option for moving things forward.

Debbie: Hmm. Such a great metaphor. You know, and I, as you're mentioning all three of those different ways of showing up, I know that I have played all three roles many times. And you know, I think a lot of us, I call it accidental parenting, but you know, sometimes we establish a dynamic, you know, whether it's being the dictator or it's someone who's maybe talking too much, you know, trying to always negotiate with their child like an attorney would do when really that captain of the ship is, is where we want to be. So I actually would love if you could take a few minutes just to talk more about that captain of the ship metaphor and that energy and what does that actually look like?

Susan: Well, let's, let's take it even a step further for those of you who are visual. And I always do this with my hands even though you can't see me. So imagine I'm holding my right hand in a fist and it's above my left hand in a fist. The right hand represents you as the parent and when it's above the child left hand, so holding them in front of me, I've got my right hand above my left that represents you as being the captain of the ship, calmly and confidently in charge. So the child's hand, you know, the child might say, I really want to see this movie, you know, horror on death street. Right? You know, your nine year old says this and you as the captain of the ship say, oh sweetheart, you know, it sounds fabulous, but that won't be something that you, that you can see.

Now of course because the child, for lots of reasons, but it might be that friends have seen it or friends claim that they've seen it or they want to impress their friends by saying they've seen it, the child really wants to see it. And so now the child says, why not? And if you engage, if you get reactive, if you think, gosh, why can't he just accept that no means no. Then your hand is going to drop from being above the child hand to side by side. And this is the two lawyer position. So you may say, well because it's inappropriate for someone your age and the child might say, don't be ridiculous, mom.

You always treat me like a baby. And you might say, well remember the last time we saw you know anything remotely like that you were up for days, you couldn't sleep, you crawled into our bed. And your child might say, well that was different because it had zombies and this movie doesn't have zombies. And on and on, the negotiating, the arguing, the bickering and all that goes. And we're side-by-side, nobody's in charge. And then it can get worse because now the child may move to the position above your hand. So you're now below with the child saying, I hate you. You're the worst mom in the world. I'm going to my room and I'm

never talking to you again. And you may be feeling so put out, you've just spent two hours helping with the science project. You just made a really nice lunch.

You just did this and that. Unappreciated. Nobody around here appreciates anything I do. And now you're in dictator mode down below where you're feeling out of control, unappreciated, invisible and desperate. And you may say, fine, stay in your room for all I care. Enjoy your life. Because inside you're in turmoil. Inside you feel that you don't know how to hold that place as being that grownup. And so you move into a place that's kind of desperate because as we know, dictators don't have authentic power. They rule by fear and intimidation and they wipe out bank accounts and they threaten your life or your family's life. So the captain energy is an energy of confidence. Sort of a quiet clarity. And trust me, this is easier said than it's done. I know, I mean, I have a monthly membership program. I do lots of online classes.

You and I have done classes. This is a process first of all of unlearning what, for many of us, we inherited from our own upbringing where parents were either lawyers or dictators most of the time. And it's also looking inside yourself to see what meaning we're making of what our child's doing or saying. So if I have the story that he should accept no the first time I deliver it or she shouldn't argue about every chore that I ask her to do, then all the little lawyers in my head will build a case. And I'll notice that my heart rate is going up, my blood pressure is rising. I'm feeling more and more agitated and upset. And that will show up with me moving into lawyer or dictator because the meaning I'm making of that child's defiance or, or refusal to cooperate is getting magnified. And it may be also getting magnified because it reminds me of other places in my life where I don't feel appreciated or respected. So the captain energy is one that requires us to really be present and mindful for what's getting stirred up inside of us so that when a child refuses to do something, we can step back and ask a different question. Why does this behavior make sense instead of why is he or she doing this to me?

Debbie: That's such an important reframe and I can just see how that would shift your energy as a parent in that situation, if we're able to take that pause and ask that question. What would that look like? So I love this example with the movie, that nightmare on death street or whatever you called it. What would, in that scenario, being the captain of the ship, how might that play out?

Susan: So I talk about two ways that we can approach our children. There's act one parenting and act two parenting. If you imagine yourself going to a play and you get there early and you take your seat and the orchestra's just warming up and the curtain rises and the next thing you see is somebody in one corner stomping on some grapes, and somebody in another area climbing a ladder and then somebody else, you know, weaving something and trying it on and all these things are going on, they make no sense because in fact it's act two of the play, right? You would think, well wait, where is act one? And so a lot of the times we approach our kids with what I call act two parenting and that means we skipped act one. We didn't create the receptivity, we didn't acknowledge what might be true for them about a situation. We jumped right in with advice that they haven't asked for, with information, with logic that meant to sort of appease them or get

their left logical, rational brain to see things our way. So when I would approach a child who's emotionally charged, let's say around this movie, if you want, we can even role play it.

Debbie: Sure.

Susan: So you can be my child. And first I want to demonstrate what happens when we do act two parenting when a child's left logical, rational brain is offline because they're over in their right emotional feeling brain. So go ahead and make the, make the request or the demand and I'm going to first show people something very familiar, which is what it sounds like when we move quickly into lawyer mode or dictator mode.

Debbie: I really want to go see this movie. All of my friends are going to see it and it's playing tonight. I've already figured it out, how to get there and everything. So can I go?

Susan: And what's it called, honey?

Debbie: It's called zombies and nightmares on death street.

Susan: Oh, well that's never going to happen. No.

Debbie: Why not, all my friends are going.

Susan: Well, first of all, I doubt if all your friends are going. And secondly, no, it's completely a terrifying movie. I even saw some review about it. It's meant for much older people who love horror movies and don't have nightmares in the night the way you would if you saw that movie.

Debbie: I promise I won't have any nightmares.

Susan: Oh right.

Debbie: I haven't had nightmares for a long time and all of my friends are going and they're going to make fun of me if I can't go. And you always treat me this way.

Susan: I'm sorry honey. It's not going to happen. I'm your parent and I have to make the decision that I think is best for you. And that movie is going to give you nightmares. That movie's gonna end up with you in our bed for the next three weeks. And I don't want that. So maybe you can find another movie, but not that one.

Debbie: Okay, so we can just imagine an explosion right now. That's, I think, the next step.

Susan: Because here's the thing, human beings, when we push against someone, they push back. So this is the dynamic and this is the mechanism built into us. And when I'm coming at you, my child, with all this information, with all these explanations that you haven't asked for, and I'm coming with force, there's nothing you can do, really. Well, there's very little that you're likely to do, but to push back. So that is act two parenting and you can see where it goes. We're all

very familiar with that. It might end with me saying you're grounded for a week, which would be more the dictator, but it doesn't go very well when we approached those issues where a child's upset from that act two parenting.

So when you're ready, we can try it as an act one. And when you hear me doing act one, I'm not going to go obviously into great depth, but you'll hear that I'm not addressing the complaint directly because once I say no one time, I'm not going to keep repeating it because it disempowers me. If I keep justifying and explaining why he can't go or she can't go, it only makes it seem like I'm unsure. So I won't keep repeating and I won't keep rubbing it in. But I also will look to get you to acknowledge, to feel acknowledged and validated. So I'll look to get some yeses from you, some nods of the head, so that you have the sense that I'm the captain, I can hear what's going on for you. It doesn't freak me out that you're worried about what your friends will think.

I'm big enough and sturdy enough to contain that and listen to that. And they'll, generally, you'll, you'll feel a relaxation in the child. There'll be a dropping of their guard if this goes well, if they start to feel understood, like, oh, you get me, even though you're not giving me the thing I want. When I've done this, you know, I speak all, I speak at events all over the world for parents, and no matter where I've been, when I bring somebody up to the front of the room to do some of these demonstrations, it can be very powerful. And sometimes parents playing the role of their child actually start crying because they just feel, oh, there's no fight here. You're just helping me feel what I feel. So let's, um, let's play that out again with an act one dynamic.

Debbie: Okay. So there's this movie that I really want to go see. All my friends are going to see it tonight and it's called zombies and nightmares on death street. Can I go?

Susan: Oh honey, it sounds like you would have loved to, to go with your friends and be there and gosh, you know, I know that you've got a fascination with stuff like that and, and no, it's not a movie that I'm going to be comfortable with you seeing, but I can absolutely see why you would want to go.

Debbie: I do really want to go. All my friends are going. Why can't I go?

Susan: Ah, well I think I kind of told you. So I won't, I won't keep repeating it, but I, gosh, it must be so hard to hear this. You, it sounds like you had your heart set.

Debbie: I did. I really want to go and I'm gonna, I'm gonna be embarrassed and humiliated if I can't be there.

Susan: So when you tell your friends that you can't go sounds like they're likely to, are they gonna like, are you afraid, at least that they're gonna kind of make some weird comment?

Debbie: Yeah, I'm going to be the only one and I already feel left out all the time.

Susan: You do, like in other situations?

Debbie: Yeah. Oh gosh, I have to stop. I'm getting emotional now. That was really powerful.

Susan: I don't need you to be okay with this right now. I don't need you to be okay quickly. I don't need to hurry up and get this over with. This is a moment when we can connect in a deeper way and when I can help you, as my child, feel things that are hard to feel, which is the anticipation of being left out or talked about or laughed at. Who better for our child to come to when they're worried about fitting in or being accepted than us. But if we need them to be popular or we need them to know that we're not the bad guy, then we can't show up for them in that way.

Debbie: That's so important, that desire to not be the bad guy. Right? Because, especially if we feel like our kids are struggling and suffering, we don't want to be the ones to feel responsible for creating more of that in our perception.

Susan: Yeah. And in your community, I know that there are parents of children who do struggle sometimes to fit in or be accepted. And so this can be a very sensitive area and it calls for tremendous amounts of compassion and empathy and understanding, which I'm sure your parents are showing up with. And sometimes it just means slowing things down and being present with our own sadness or grief or discomfort that this is yet another situation where our child may face some ostracism or some judgment or some, you know, ridicule. We can't pave the way for our kids through life in a way that prevents them from bumping up against the unkindness or cruelty of other children or of other people. But what we can do is convey to them our confidence and belief that they're capable of dealing with whatever comes their way. And so when we try and fix things and rearrange the world for our kids so that they don't have negative experiences, in one way we're conveying, I don't have faith in your capacity to cope with this.

Whereas when we say, gosh, honey, this just sounds like it, oh, I feel so bad for you. I can see where this might be yet another time, especially Joanna, she can be so awful. Ah, I feel for you with all of that. But we're not saying let's do this or let me call her mother, or why don't I get them to see a different movie. We're not saying, I don't think you're, you're able to live through this and, and that's a very important message to, sort of the mede-communication is this is, this really stinks and I, I'm here with you and we can be mad about it and cry about it and pound our fists about it. And I have every faith in your ability to get through it.

Debbie: I love that language too, just, I feel for you. Different than, and not that we can't seem so sorry, but that I feel for you. That's really hard. And I also just want to acknowledge and point out how your energy shifted when you were doing act one parenting. You know, you talked about slowing down. That's actually a theme that's come up in a couple of recent conversations on this show, how critical it is that we slow down when we're in the moment. You know when we're, those conversations, those power struggles first start. Like slow down our breathing, slow down our talking, slow down our energy.



Susan: Yes, yes. Because we get ramped up very quickly. And again, you know, I've done a lot of work with Byron Katie. I love the work dot com, which is her website and I love the resources she's made available for looking at what story we're telling, what belief we're creating around something that's going on. And I've used this so much with, with parenting because we can down more easily when we question the meaning that we're making of something our child is saying or doing.

And so it's a quick way to kind of take a couple of steps back and say, what am I believing about this? Now, if I'm believing that my daughter is going to hate me if I don't let her see this movie then the little lawyers in my head will look for evidence of that and I'll get more and more agitated and I'll go faster and faster to convince her not to see me that way, as the enemy. Whereas if I tell the story, I am sort of the the garbage can here, I am the receptacle for difficult feelings that are getting stirred up in her, it's not personal. I'm actually the best person for her to work through some of these feelings with. Then it's much more easy to slow down.

Debbie: Yeah. I think that, you know, it can be really beneficial too to think about or write down or just consider what are the more common scenarios where you tend to go into that reactivity mode because we know our kids, we live with them. We understand that there can be some recurring themes here. And so I think it's also helpful to really get familiar with those so that when you're not in the moment, if you can spend time, you know, you talk about building up evidence, if you can spend time building up evidence for other ways to make meaning, you know of that scenario so that when you're in the moment you can be like, oh yeah, this is that situation again.

Susan: Exactly. That you're a little bit more prepared. And that's why looking at the question, why does this behavior make sense, can quickly help us depersonalize it. Well, of course she's getting upset because she wants so badly to be accepted by these kids because they've embarrassed her or ridiculed her before because she, she's trying to establish more independence and this is coming across as me babying her. Of course she's behaving in this way, she's doing exactly what she should be doing, in a certain way. And it gives you more freedom to approach it differently.

Debbie: Yeah. Yeah. I love that phrasing too. Why does this behavior make sense? So I've been talking with my community a lot about this disconnect between our energy and our actions. And I'm wondering if it's possible to project this captain energy, this steadiness and calmness, even if we're not feeling that on the inside.

Susan: Fake it till you make it.

Debbie: Yeah, pretty much.

Susan: Yeah, you can. You can do that for sure. It doesn't hurt. I think it's more powerful when you actually do the work to help address these issues at their root. So this is why you won't generally find me scripting things, say this when your child

does this, because kids see right through it and they feel our energy more than they hear our words. But it certainly doesn't hurt to hold ourselves in a place where we imagine that there's a steel rod running from the heavens all the way through our body, down into the earth, and there's a sturdiness inside that we can anchor ourselves to. That can kind of convey itself or communicate itself energetically in that our kids can pick up on that and respond to that more favorably.

Debbie: Yeah. So in your book you talk a lot about attachment and you've touched upon it earlier in this conversation and especially that idea of being known. And I recently had Dr. John Duffy on the show and that's a big part of what we talked about. He wrote a new book about teens and anxiety today and how important it is that our kids feel known. Can you talk about that from your perspective and tell us a little bit about what you mean when you say that it's important that our kids are attached?

Susan: Oh my gosh. It's just the cornerstone of my work. I think in both books it's in the first or second chapter because when we try and parent as a lawyer or dictator with logic or negotiations or force, we're missing the opportunity to make it easier. Because human beings are wired to cooperate with those with whom they feel a strong attachment and to be defiant or resistant to those with whom they don't. It's just a basic principle. If you think about the people you have said yes to or the classes that you tried harder to do well in when you were in school, even if you didn't know the subject very well or even if the request that someone's making of you is something you don't really want to do, if the connection with that person is sweet and strong, you feel that they really know you and like you, then you're just much more likely to try harder to please that person.

So I talk about Gordon Neufeld's six stages of attachment, which I won't go into today, but that there are these elements that children move through as they grow, each of which has ways that we can deepen and strengthen connection and attachment. And being known is kind of the, the final stage from six on and it has to do with a child knowing that it's safe to come to us with all of who they are, that they don't have to censor themselves or hide parts of themselves to be loved and celebrated and accepted by us. And sometimes that means that we need to examine ourselves if something about them or about their behavior is triggering us so that we can show up for them or show up with them with a full embrace. You know, I want to know you, I want to listen. Tell me more. I love that you're this way. I love that you have shown me this in myself or I love the way you are with little children or animals. That the child has a sense of being seen by you, enjoyed by you. And it just shifts the whole dynamic with our children when that attachment is sweet and close.

Debbie: Yeah, I mean I think that, and that's a pain point for a lot of parents in my community who really struggle feeling connected, truly connected to their child or maybe not, you know, cause they're often the receptacle, right? For tough behavior, especially when their kids are younger, they may not share the same interests. And you know, I just, you guys have to read Susan's book and really kind of get into this, but I do think that there's so much power in that attachment. And I wanted to just ask the question because you talk also about the importance

of our kids feeling attached to other adults in their lives and teachers and a lot of our kids get the message from their teachers that you know, they, they aren't really liked or seen. And I'm just wondering what kind of harm does that do to our kids? Or is there a way that we as parents can counter that or even acknowledge that lack of attachment with, with those people in our kids' lives?

Susan:

It is so sad when our precious child is not seen and celebrated by someone that they spend time with for many, many hours a day, day in and day out. So of course everything that you can do to foster a connection, whether that means that you invite the teacher out for lunch or over for dinner, you share photos of your child growing up, you go in early, you help in the classroom before school begins, the school year, so that they can get to know each other. Anything that you can do, especially when you have a child who might be a little bit different so that the teacher starts to tune into what you see about your child, the unique, wonderful qualities that may not be as easy to discover. And if that's just not happening, then it's worthy of acknowledging for your child, you know what, sweetie, you have these amazing qualities.

And you can list them. You can tell them very specifically. In fact, if people want to go to my website, there's a love flooding video that talks about this. It's a short little video they can get. And you acknowledge the things that you, you cherish about your child, legitimately. Don't just be fluffy about it and say, oh, you're the best kid in the world, but be specific. And I can imagine it's hard to go into the classroom where Mrs. Jones or Mr. Taylor seem to only see the things that frustrate them about you. Tell me more. You know, how was it? Now you don't want to interview them day in and day out. Was it bad today too? Was he mean today? Did he yell at you? We don't want to presume the worst about our kid's day, but we also want to make it clear that if they're struggling and we have made effort to forge a connection, we've tried some creative things to make it easier for them to feel connected or seen or enjoyed by their teacher, that, that it's safe for us to tell us.

And we, we won't simply say, well, you shouldn't, you shouldn't misbehave then. Or stop talking in class and you might, they might like you more. So that there's a freedom for the child to kind of know yeah, know that we understand this isn't, this doesn't feel good. And I won't even go down the road of, you know, can you find a different teacher because I know parents in your community are constantly looking for the best situation and the best setting for their child and in many cases there isn't a very good one. So you make do with what you can and you make it the best that you can and then you augment or you supplement with some kind of activities outside of the school day where your child is really enjoyed and celebrated. So they have something that kind of mitigates some of the challenges they might face face in a traditional classroom.

Debbie:

That's really helpful. Thank you for that. So how can a parent, you know, a parent who is already feeling depleted and overwhelmed and stressed, are there ways to actually prevent these power struggles from starting? Like are there cues that our kids give us or are there things that we can do to set up a dynamic wherein we're less likely to even get engaged in this kind of conflict?

Susan: There are a lot of ingredients to that. One of them is attachment because in general, when kids feel enjoyed by us and close to us and whatever, however that looks with your particular child, for some it's very physical, for some they, some children don't want physical contact but they just want a smile or a pat on the head or they want to sit side by side with you looking at pictures of horses. Right. So when attachment, when, when there's a hefty dose of friendly connecting activities with your child that aren't about getting them to do something or stop doing something, you know, to get onto a task they'd rather not do, that can help. When we're rested and we feel supported.

That's why I love that you have your community, Debbie, because when parents feel that there's a safe place for them to go to be replenished or where they feel understood, that can make a huge difference in how nourished and supported we feel, which affects how we show up with our children. And of course when we do our own work, when we look at the story that we're telling about our parenting or our child or how they should be, and we kind of untangle some of those beliefs, it can make it easier to show up with less rigidity, with less intensity, with less desperation and neediness, which is the fuel for a power struggle.

Debbie: That's great. Yeah, I think, you know, you really spoke to it in the very beginning and I think that that attachment to the outcome is really so much a part of this. And I, I spoke with a community of parents last week and that's really where the most pain is. This, this rigid idea of what things are supposed to look like and really being attached to that. So I think it's so critical that that's where we start and start answering that question you ask, what am I making this, this mean?

Susan: Yeah. You know, I have this ongoing, we, I get together twice a month with the people in my membership community and some of them who have been around for a while when we have a session and they want to do some coaching, they just love knowing that we're gonna get to the root of that. And it's almost like taking an explosive device and what's it called, dismantling it. Because if you don't have a strong belief, if you kind of neutralize this intensity of the story that they should behave a certain way or that when they do this, it means this, then you're so much more relaxed and so much better able to show up as a responsive captain rather than a desperate dictator or a, you know, an agitated lawyer.

Debbie: Yeah. I, when I was training for coaching, we talked a lot about that grasping energy. And it's so evident too, especially our kids who are highly attuned when we're operating from that space.

Susan: Yes.

Debbie: So, okay. Um, gosh, there's so much that we could talk about. I'm going to just recommend to all of my listeners that you check out Susan's book. It's a wonderful read. It has lots of stories that you will relate to and it goes into these concepts more deeply. Susan also wrote a book called *Parenting With Presence* and has a ton of resources on her website. Susan does regular webinars. And you want to just take a few minutes to tell us about, yeah, maybe some of your

webinars, your membership community and just other ways that people listening can interact with you.

Susan: Sure, yeah, so at [susanstiffelman.com](http://susanstiffelman.com) you'll see lots of resources. We do have a monthly *Parenting Without Power Struggles* membership program and we'd love for people to join us. And I have a podcast. The podcast is also called *Parenting Without Power Struggles* and right now we're actually doing a promotion from the podcast side that maybe your community would like to take advantage of, which is that if they do podcast one nine, podcast 19, they can try out the membership program for a dollar. So there's that. And then we, I also cohost a co-parenting with a narcissist membership program with Wendy Buhary who wrote *Disarming the Narcissist: Surviving and Thriving with the Self-Absorbed*, which we hope your listeners don't need to take advantage of but if they do that is a very powerful resource for them with a lot of support once a month. And then there are a lot of classes like the one that you and I did, Debbie, raising differently wired children and there's chores and there's homework with William Stixrud and Ned Johnson who wrote *The Self-Driven Child* and there's *Mindful Parenting* with Susan Kaiser Greenland and *Raising Highly Sensitive Children* or *Highly Sensitive Children and Parents* with Dr. Elaine Aron. So there are a lot of resources on there. Something with Thomas Armstrong on reigniting a child's passion for learning. So all of that is available on the website. Thanks for asking.

Debbie: Yeah, of course. Well, I'm sure listeners, as you can tell, Susan is totally part of the tribe like she is, we're in complete alignment on how we approach working with parents and supporting parents and where the work really needs to happen. So I will include links to everything that Susan just mentioned on the show notes page. If you want to check all of that out. And Susan, I just want to thank you so much for sharing with us today for especially for the work that you do. I just really appreciate you and I'm just so happy that we've gotten to connect and that I can share you with my community.

Susan: And likewise, you know, you're a blessing to so many and I'm so happy that we're, we're teaming up along with so many wonderful people who are looking to make lives for our, our parents and our children sweeter. So thanks, Debbie.

**RESOURCES MENTIONED:**

- Susan Stiffelman's website
- *Parenting Without Power Struggles: Raising Joyful, Resilient Kids While Staying Cool, Calm, and Connected* by Susan Stiffelman
- *Parenting With Presence: Practices for Raising Conscious, Confident, Caring Kids* by Susan Stiffelman
- Gordon Neufeld's 6 Stages of Attachment
- *The Work* (Byron Katie)
- Love Flooding Video (on Susan's website)
- Parenting Without Power Struggles Podcast
- Co-Parenting with a Narcissist
- Parenting Without Power Struggles Membership Program (enter code PODCAST19 to try for one month)
- *Disarming the Narcissist: Surviving and Thriving with the Self-Absorbed* by Wendy Bahari