



**Episode #198**

**When School Isn't a Working: A Conversation  
with Debbie Steinberg Kuntz & Debbie Reber**

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DSK: Hi everyone. It's Debbie Steinberg Kuntz, licensed marriage and family therapist and founder of Bright and Quirky. I'm so excited to interview my friend and colleague, Debbie Reber, Debbie's a parenting activist, New York Times bestselling author and the founder of Tilt Parenting, a top podcast community and educational resource for parents raising differently wired children. The Tilt Parenting podcast has grown to be a top podcast in iTunes, kids and family category with nearly 2 million downloads. She's a regular contributor to Psychology Today and Additude Magazine. And Debbie's book is called Differently Wired, A Parent's Guide to Raising an Atypical Child with Confidence and Hope. And in 2018 she gave a talk at TEDx Amsterdam called Why the Future Will Be Differently Wired. Debbie, welcome to the Bright & Quirky Summit 2020.

DR: Thank you Debbie. So happy to be here.

DSK: All right, well the people that we serve crossover quite a bit. You serve differently wired people. I also do, uh, bright and quirky people who, um, tend to have advanced abilities and brain-based challenges at the same time. And I think both of the populations we work with ask the question in many different ways how to know if school is working for my child. And um, in preparation for our interview I was just looking through all the questions that came from our parents. And I'm curious to see if you get similar questions. Like how do I know if my child's school is meeting his needs? How do I know when we should seek another school? How important is the school they go to? I'm trying to find the right school for my daughter. Are those the kinds of questions you get too?

DR: Yeah, I mean school is definitely the biggest pain point I think for the families in my community because I mean that's really our kids job, right, is to be students and when it's not working it can be so stressful. The majority of my questions tend to focus on what do I do now because this isn't working.

DSK: So true. And what are the ways in which it's not working? The things that I hear are sort of different variations of my child feels like a square peg in a round hole. Whether their bodies are too busy for the normal public school classroom or they have trouble acting out when they're frustrated or they're bored because it's not engaging enough. Do you hear things like that?

DR: Yes, I remember, and I'll just share that when my son Asher was in second grade, he was in a gifted and talented program, a full time program, but he used to sneak read his Kindle every day. And he got in trouble for doing that because he needed to pay attention. And he's like, but I already know everything. I'm just supposed to sit there and and be bored. And at least, he doesn't know everything, but he knew what was being covered in the classroom. So there is that boredom piece. And then with so many of these kids, when they're bored, they're more easily distracted or they are, you know, they can become emotionally dysregulated and then that can show up in so many ways. So in addition to the boredom, it can be that having behavior that would be considered inappropriate in a classroom or a lot of these kids often know more, right than their teachers do

and they want to share that knowledge and they may not always share it in the most appropriate way.

DR: So it could be blurting things out and then getting shamed or in trouble by the teacher, having other kids get annoyed with them because they are put off by the behavior of these kids. And then just, you know, also the unpredictability of a school environment can be so challenging for these kids. And there's so many variables. There's the other kids and there's fire drills and there's, you know, there's just so many things that could happen on any given day. And so with kids who are differently wired, any one of those things could set them off, could result in a bad day or a bad moment. And those things tend to compound on each other.

DSK: Yeah. And then I think the really soul crushing part is you get enough of these experiences and a child can go into shutdown. You see the light go out of their eyes and really they're experiencing little traumas, one after the other and can get in the shutdown state. And that's really hard.

DR: Yeah, I think so many of these kids are traumatized. I really do. You know, I've had, there's a, this guy, Zach Morris has a school in Missoula, Montana called Learn Inc, and he accepts a lot of kids who haven't thrived in a traditional environment. And he just said they all come in with PTSD and that's such an upsetting thing. But I saw it certainly in my own family, just in the fact that these kids ended up apologizing for who they are. That idea of being ostracized or kicked out of a room or pointed out by a teacher for bad behavior or you know, that, at a time when you're little, especially when these kids are really young, what they are making that mean and how they're processing that we can't even comprehend how deep that runs and how long it can take for a child to really reconcile with those feelings of inadequacy or there's something wrong with me or I'm the bad kid.

DSK: Yeah. It really can affect self esteem and then we really need to take action. So this conversation is not only about where to go to school for what your child is learning, but really to in many cases to preserve or sort of reignite their self esteem and their belief in themselves. Um, can you share a little bit about your own journey with Asher and finding the good fit environment for him?

DR: Yeah, and I, I was always looking for a good fit. I mean, I, in my mind that was the only option. And so, you know, when he was in preschool, he went through two preschools until he found a preschool where they really would work with us and um, support who he was. But then when we were in the kindergarten, when we started, we went to a private school that was for gifted children and we lasted a year and a half there. It was tricky. It, it, you know, the first year we, I feel like we scraped by because the teacher really appreciated a lot of who Asher is. Um, but there were certainly many challenges. And, and in the first half of first grade there was a teacher who just was like, I am not having any of this. You know, this child is not compliant. He's not listening. He's doing things his own way he's rewrite, you know, redoing assignments in a way that were more interesting to him. But he was like disruptive, right? So we, he was in another school for half a year that year and they also loved him, but they're like, we can't really meet his

academic needs. And he's taking up a lot of teacher time. So then we tried public school for second grade, which I had mentioned before where he was sneak reading his Kindle and he had an IEP and some support there. But he still wasn't what I would say thriving. And I just watched him shut down. I watched him, you know, start to really internalize a lot of this negativity about himself. He's always loved to learn. He's always been very enthusiastic and curious about everything. But I could see that was more of a struggle to engage that. And we were doing so many support, things like therapy and his social skills group and OT. And I wasn't seeing any change because he was shutting down and we ended up homeschooling him. Then for starting in third grade, we pulled him out and I homeschooled him for six years, which I still can't believe I did that, but I did. And it was really over that period of time that I learned to, uh, you know, get to know him as a, as a human, as a, as a person moving through the world and really understand his strengths and his relative weaknesses and areas of challenge and help him kind of rediscover how to really enjoy learning on his own terms. And so we did that. And, and you know this, Debbie, he's back in school now. Um, he's in a private school for ninth grade, which has got an individualized curriculum and you know, after six years I didn't know what to expect and it's actually been an incredible experience.

DSK: Oh, that's so great. Yes. Now I've interviewed a bunch of people in this summit, like Stephen Porges and Mona Delahooke, Stuart Shanker and, um, I want to just unpack a little bit about what's happening in the shutdown state. Um, and I'll just share, and I'm sure you know this, Debbie, that you know, we've got the way Mona Delahooke describes it as three states: green, red and blue. When we think of the state that our nervous system is in green as calm and ready to learn, red is in fight or flight. And when they sort of go beyond fight or flight, they go into that shutdown stage. So that would be blue. So it doesn't surprise me that you're saying no therapies were working when he was in that blue stage cause he, he was not calm and ready to learn. His nervous system was perceiving threat. So how did you go about, uh, helping him get back to green?

DR: And I will just say even before I answered that, I didn't know that was going on cause I was so wrapped up in my own issues. Right?

DSK: It's so stressful.

DR: It was so stressful. I was the recipient of a lot of the intense behavior. I was burned out. I was not tuned into really even knowing, you know, what Mona Delahooke talks about is really kind of looking at for the underlying reasons behind the behavior. And I just knew I wanted it to stop, you know. But I started to recognize once I got him out of that environment that wow, there is an incredible amount of anxiety here that I just wasn't aware of. And I started, you know, I, I found this, uh, this man Danny Raede has something called Asperger Experts. And I watched this video and he was talking about this sensory funnel. And he described that, you know, with these differently wired kids, we tend to focus on their social skills and their eye contact and, you know, all these things that we prioritize, we muggles prioritize as being important for them and we're not addressing their higher order needs, their needs to feel safe and to feel a

sense of belonging and seen and empathize with and all of those things. And so that just made so much sense to me. And I was like, well, no wonder we're not seeing any change. This kid is shut down. There's no possibility for any growth to happen. And so in our, you know, messy homeschool that we designed together, I really did a lot of work of myself to be able to show up and just be okay with what happened on any given day and to roll with the punches and be present with him and get curious about what he needed.

DR: And in any given moment or situation, I talk about it as being coming fluent in his language. And the more that I was able to show up for him like that, he started to, his anxiety started to lessen. He started to settle and it was just a shift. It just happened. He just kind of relaxed. And when he was in that more relaxed state, he was able to connect on such a deeper level. Then we could have these conversations and he was open to kind of noticing things. He started becoming much more insightful. He started becoming more tuned into the experience of other people. You know, all of these things were because he was, he was open and receptive. And what didn't happen overnight. I mean this was a very gradual process that still continues to this day and I still have to work hard to make time and be fully present when we're together because I think that really makes a huge difference with these kids if we can give them that safe space.

DSK: Yes. Oh my gosh. You've just said so many important things. I just want to unpack it. Um, first of all, you mentioned Danny Raede's work and he really talks a lot about "defense mode." And so I think one point you're really bringing up here is where do we focus as parents? Because we want to help, we want to help with the social skills, we want to help with the learning, we want to help with the self regulation. But really none of that can happen until we help them relax from Defense Mode. And one of the most important ways to do that is through connection and co-regulating with an adult. And it sounds like that's what happened when you homeschooled. So I really want to underline this point that in this talk we're talking about education, but really we need to prioritize the mental health before the education to help them get into that green zone before we can work on the schooling. And it sounds like that's what you did intuitively, which is amazing.

DR: Yeah, I mean, I feel like I was, it was my job, right? I was in the trenches every day. And again, it didn't happen overnight, but you know, I, I had to also, you know, just talking about education, I had to really confront my own ideas about education, about future goals and my personal goals or my vision for what a good education looks like and, and what's really important for these kids to learn. Is it about reading, writing and arithmetic or is it like, are these other skills of problem solving, uh, self-advocacy, self awareness, um, critical thinking, you know, so I just had to really question all of that while I was doing this other work. And I think that's important, especially with kids moving through the world differently. This is what comes up so often when I talk to parent groups is, you know, we want to get back on our track and we haven't really let go of this idea that a successful future looks like going to this kind of four year school X, Y, Z. And so we're, we're constantly fighting against what is because we're still want that so badly. And I hear it all the time, this deep need to adhere to these typical

expectations for moving through school. And I really encourage parents to stop and question the why behind all of it. Like we're raising human beings here. We're not trying to raise ...I'm not trying to raise a straight A student. I mean, I will say I have one right now, but that's all on him. Like I'm not, I'm very uninvolved. I'm, I, I believe it's his journey and I'm his coach and guide. So, but we need to let go and really question our own needs for this to look a certain way for their schooling, to look a certain way because that's where we stay stuck in these unhealthy environments. We keep our kids or push them into school environments where they're not going to thrive because we think it's what they need to be successful.

DSK: This is so important, Debbie, because I think when we think about this conversation about what school is the right fit, we're thinking about how to help the child, but you're really pointing out how important it is to do our own work on opening ourselves to all of the possibilities that are out there and asking what is the end goal here that we're backwards engineering towards? And I love, I think it was Madeline Levine, she said, you know, the goal is to raise a well adjusted 30 year old. Yeah. You know, when you play more of the long game and take the long perspective, you know, I think about it as helping them find a good fit life. And related to that, I've talked to many people about how our schools focus on remediation and working on the challenges. And when we shift our focus like you're talking about, we start looking at how to empower their strengths and their interests and their passions and grow what's right about them and what they will engage with. It's really, it flips the script. It's really a whole different conversation. And it sounds like homeschooling allowed you guys to, to dabble there more.

DR: Yeah, absolutely. I mean I, I focused...Well, you know, I've just got to be honest, the first year I had a plan, like I had curriculum and I had my little binder and I was very organized and that was a complete failure. So, you know, I did try to do school at home because I thought that's what I needed to do and I didn't want him to fall behind. And I, you know, I had all these concerns but with every passing year I let go of that need to control what this looked like a little bit more. And I would loop him in and we would design the curriculum together. And I just really started to use, I started looking at everything that he does that he spends his personal time doing, whether it's, you know, developing his three D models in Blender, if he, he gets when he's into something, he goes there.

And so I would look at those things and be like, okay, if that's what he's doing, how can I use that to, to sneak in executive functioning coaching or how can I, you know, I just was always looking for ways to build on other skills and using his interests as the kind of the foundation for all of those things. And so that, that works really well. And yeah, I mean, like you just said, these kids are going to be hopefully there. What did you say?

DSK: Their good fit life.

DR: I love that. I mean, a good fit life means working in your area of competency. It means spending your days doing something that you feel good about doing and

that you enjoy. And so why wouldn't we focus on developing and fostering their strengths?

DSK: Yeah. So I hear of a lot of parents who are considering homeschooling and they're sort of terrified about it. So can you, and it sounds like there was plenty of trial and error, um, where does a parent start when they're thinking, okay, school isn't going well for my child. I'm seeing these signs, a fight or flight or shut down or maybe I've done everything I can do through a 504 or IEP in school. I've talked to multiple school staff. I'm just at the end of the line and I'm thinking I want to ask you first about homeschooling and then about looking for other schools, but where do you even start when you're thinking about homeschooling?

DR: Well, the first thing I would say is I would look at unschooling initially at least. And that means giving your child, you know, not, don't feel that if you're going to take this leap and this change to homeschool and that you need to start with this huge plan, I think that that can really backfire. And a lot of these kids, especially if you're pulling them out of a toxic environment or they're dealing with some self esteem issues or PTSD, they are going to need this detox period from school. And that could be a while. And so I would just say like, be prepared for that and don't worry about it. You know, if you think about when a kid's in a traditional school environment, they're there for what, seven hours a day, they're not actually getting a lot of learning done. If you think about lunch and recess and in between classes and homeroom and uh, you know, just the lack of actual learning that happens in any given class. So you can accomplish in a couple hours what would be seven hours in a school day. So I think we put pressure on ourselves, especially with bright and quirky kids because we know their potential is so great. And for me it felt that like this huge responsibility. Like, Oh my gosh, I have this kid who has so much potential, I can't fail him. That will be on me. So I would say just chill about that. If you're considering this, like give yourself a break, give yourself a lot of time, give them time to detox and unschool and then really even no matter how young your child is designed, the school with them, you know, you can have your priorities. Like you know we're going to do some sort of math or we're always going to be doing working on our reading or whatever it is, but let them have so much control over how you design that and what your day looks like and you know, what your week looks like and what are the goals for the week.

And maybe there's a field trip once a week and just try to make it fun and collaborative. The more that you can do that, the more invested the child will be in whatever you're doing. And what we want them to do is start to really love to learn again.

DSK: And I love how you say just chill because really what we're doing is prioritizing the mental health. We're giving that cool down period to get to green, to change that neural state. And then when you see your child in the green zone, you say, okay, now we're ready to learn.

DR: Yes. And they can learn so quickly. I think we also, we get really caught up on they're going to be behind or they should be doing this by now. When a child is in

the green zone and they are interested in something, especially again with these two, three amazing children, they can like master something in a week if they decide that's what they want to do and they have the time to do it. But this is a retraining of our brain to not be caught up on these arbitrary timelines. And you know, these metrics that a traditional school environment would do, they don't apply to our kids. And the more we can remember that and really trust that when they feel good about themselves and supported, when they are motivated, and this is, you know what Ned Johnson and Bill Stixrud talk about in *The Self-Driven Child*, when they are motivated to do something, there's, you won't be able to stop them from learning how to do it.

DSK: Yeah. That's so cool. That's so cool. So together you're sort of collaborating on what we're going to learn, what the topics are and then it sounds like kind of like sneaking the spinach in the brownies or something. You totally sort of think about the life skills are the core competencies and how to weave those in. Is that right?

DR: Yeah, and I used to, you know, for example, if he was interested in doing, you know, working on a project like designing a font or which he he was into for a while or making a mod for Minecraft or something, then I would be like, okay, let's plan it out. And I'd get the whiteboard and we'd make a project plan for it. And I used to make, like I had a project planning worksheet where we would work on how, what are the steps, how long do you think these steps will take? And we'd check in every day. So I build in kind of planning and organizing time management, all of those pieces, uh, celebrating when something's done, noticing what's hard about getting started. So that task initiation. So I was just always looking for ways to explore those executive functioning skills through anything that we were doing.

DSK: And do you have favorite resources for learning about homeschooling?

DR: Yeah, the Gifted Homeschoolers Forum, which has gone through a little bit of a uh, shift over the past two years. But I, we did a lot of classes through them and there's another place that we have used if Athena's Academy, it's an online Academy for advanced learners is quite good. And then Asher's most recent online classes, he did our with a place called Next Level Homeschool. And the quality of those classes were excellent. So I've kind of always piece-mealed together. Of course we used Khan Academy for some math and some history and you know, there's so much available and I also relied on some Facebook groups for homeschoolers and homeschooling 2e kids.

DSK: Okay, great. Now I really also want to talk about parents who can't homeschool but yet feel like their current school environment for their child is not a good fit. They're looking for other schools. You have done an incredible thing, made an amazing resource. Can you tell us about the school directory?

DR: Yes. This is something I worked on for more than a year. I really wanted to crowdsource a directory of schools that can work for differently wired kids. And so I put it out to my community and asked for testimonials and



recommendations. And so I just recently launched Tilt Education as a separate section of my website, which has resources for parents and for teachers. But kind of the big piece of it is this comprehensive school listing, which when I launched, I think I had 170 hundred schools on it. And I've, there's a button at the top that says submit a school and I've got another 60 already to add to that. So it's broken down by country. I mean there are schools in China and South Africa is kind of crazy. Of course a ton in the United States and those are broken down by state. And I wanted parents to let us know like, you know, is this a full inclusion school or is it, is a gen ed with special support or is it specifically for a certain population? And I asked them to share ways in which those schools do support their atypical learners, whether it's through, you know, that the teachers are specifically trained for them or they use technology really well. Um, so there are a bunch of criteria there. And then I, when I could, I included a personal testimonial from a parent who has experience at the school. So again, homeschooling isn't an option for everyone. And I hear from parents all the time too, or like, I will move anywhere, you know, I know that that isn't a possibility for many people, but some people are willing to just pick up and go for the right school. But it's hard to find these schools because it tends to be word of mouth or sometimes it's a little public school that actually has this little program or they just are really, really good with these kids. So that is the goal is to really help parents have an easier time in tapping into these schools. Because I, when I started this work till parenting four years ago, I, the only listing I found online was about 20 schools, you know, and they were scattered all over the U S most of them were private and they weren't nowhere that I was going to be living, you know, like I was like, I'm not going to move to whatever, you know, um,

DSK: Reno.

DR: Yeah. That's not happening. Right, exactly. So, so yeah, it's exciting and I, and I hope it just continues to grow and even just bring awareness to the fact that our kids are everywhere and they deserve to have a great school experience.

DSK: Absolutely. Oh, I just love that. Can you give us the link, because I'm sure there's a lot of parents listening either who want to use the directory or want to tell everyone about a school that's working really well for them.

DR: Yeah, it's, it's [tiltparenting.com/education](http://tiltparenting.com/education).

DSK: Oh, fabulous. That's so cool. That's exciting. Nice. So let's say you do get a handful of schools you're interested in. I think you just went through this process with Asher. How do you go about vetting schools? And deciding which one might be the best fit?

DR: Well, I will say that I think it's really important that parents are honest with the school. And this is a question I get all the time. How much do I tell a school? Or a lot of these kids don't have a formal diagnosis and so they just want to kind of slip under the radar. And I think it's important to be not to lead with the child's deficits. Like my kid has all these hard things, but when you're looking at a school you really want to, you want to know that your child is going to feel respected

and supported at that school. And so it is important to have conversations and ask questions. How, how are these kinds of situations handled? Ask the school, what is your policy around discipline? How do you handle behavioral challenges and get really honest information. Talk to other parents who have kids at that school. Um, I think again, you know, there's so many, I have a Tilt Together online community of thousands of parents and I, that's so many questions. Like, who knows about this school. So ask around within other communities of atypical families to see what their experience has been. And I think, you know, it's important to kind of design that alliance right off the bat and be curious and open to seeing how this is gonna play out. And I'm just gonna throw this in there, as much as it would be amazing for us to be able to find a school and be like, okay, I'm done for the next six years. That's often not the case with our kids. And I think that's important to just know that with these kids we do need to be willing to continually reevaluate and reassess and see is this working and be willing to pivot if we need to as well. So there are a lot of factors that go into it, but I think it can take some of the pressure off if we also feel like we're not looking for our forever home for the next 12 years. We're looking for this stage of where my child is. What would give him or her the kind of supportive environment that they need right now.

DSK: Yeah. You said so many important things there. First of all, I think, um, so many of us worry about the next five years instead of the next one year. And I think we have to be really careful about borrowing worries from the future and solving the problems that we see today. Also you talked about being upfront about how your child is, because I really look at it as can this school environment provide the supports my child needs both on their strength and interest side, AND on their challenge side. If we're not totally up front, it's not doing anybody a service. Just to say it's not a fit in terms of supports. Right?

DR: Especially our kids. I mean think about going into a workplace where you feel uninspired or, or you're asked to do menial tasks that are well below your pay grade. You know, and that's where you have to go every day. A child who goes into a school where they feel like they can't authentically be themselves or that if they are, they are running the risk of getting in trouble or getting suspended or or whatever. I mean, imagine the pressure that places on a child who already knows that they are experiencing the world differently probably already feels like a little bit like an alien in many groups as a lot of our kids do. That is just really not what we want to be doing to these kids. We want them to go in feeling like, of course there can be challenges, but that they are safe. They need to feel emotionally safe in whatever school environment they're in.

DSK: Yeah. Either that the environment isn't going to kick them into the red zone or when they do get kicked into the red zone, what happens next is their shame and blame is there, Oh, I see her in the red zone. You know, let's make a plan in advance for what happens to help you cool down.

DR: Yeah, exactly. And that's why I love the work of Dr. Mona Delahooke so much and she's really trying to change the way that schools are perceiving behavior, bad behavior. And that's where the real work has to happen. And I think it's really

important that we find out the way that school is really, what do they really believe about bad behavior? You know, what does that, what does that look like? And you know, as a child asked to leave a classroom as a child, you know, what's going on? Are they missing recess? You know, we, you know, we need to know these things and we need to know what happens if our kid doesn't turn in homework because a lot of our kids do the homework and forget to turn the homework in or whatever. You know, are they going to get punished for that or can they be supported for that? Just one other thing to add to this schools what we're looking for. I think there's also that piece, especially with these kids who might demonstrate their strengths in so many different ways, like finding out how much flexibility is there within any given curriculum or classroom for how a child could demonstrate their knowledge and you know, is a very rigid, like everyone does this assignment this way or is there room for doing a PowerPoint instead of a paper or you know, just kind of doing things in a different way. Some schools are really open to that and some are completely not. So that's good to know.

DSK: And I think for our kids, a flexible environment is usually gonna be the best.

DR: Yes, indeed. Yeah.

DSK: You also mentioned the word alliance and I think that is so important when we're trying to troubleshoot in the, maybe the not working environment to recognize that just like our kids have these neural zones. So does the teacher. And I think if we approach the teacher with, you know, you did X, Y, Z to my child and I'm very angry, um, and we might need to pull out mama bear or Papa bear. But when we're problem solving in the beginning to sort of co-regulate with the teacher and help her being or him being green zone is so important to think about establishing an alliance.

DR: Yeah, I think there is this sense and probably because of past experiences that often that is an adversarial relationship between the parent and the teacher. I know that I had that with one teacher very much so in the past. Um, I think as much as we can go into this relationship with the new teacher, assuming the best, assuming that that teacher is there because they really want these kids to succeed, all kids to succeed. I really do believe that's the goal of most teachers. That's why they do the work that they do because it's not easy work. So what I have always done and what I encourage parents to do is to make yourself available, you know, to offer information to a, I would always say, Hey, I have some information you might find useful. Let me know if I can share it with you or, um, let me know if you have time to, to talk about this. I'm, I'm happy to come in after school or jump on the phone sometime if you'd like to talk some of this through. I'm happy to keep you up to date on what, what I'm learning through this therapy program or, or whatever it is. And what we found is really working at home. I'm, you know, so just kind of making yourself available in a car and being kind. And I think that that's really hard and it requires us to do a lot of work on ourselves. But I've been talking a lot about compassionately educating people because I think that that's what one of the things that we as parents raising these kids can do. There's so much education that has to happen in

society about who our kids are and when we could do it from a place of compassion, really trying to see the other person's perspective and empathize with how tough it can be to be a teacher with a lot of kids with different needs and things going on in their classroom and then try to educate from that point of view.

DSK: Yes. So very important. And I, I think this idea of assuming positive intent, uh, first of all with our kids, that they're not being naughty or doing anything on purpose, that they are, uh, neurologically under threat in most cases that the teacher is doing the best that she can and that she does care that the parent is doing the best that they can. Just having that mindset and looking through that lens of assuming positive intent is really powerful because it really can change the dynamic all the way around.

DR: It can and it's all, you know, it's not easy. You know, it's not easy because if we do have a kid who is more intense or, or acting up or being disruptive in class, there's probably a lot of judgment going on, not just from the teacher but from other parents. And it's hard to stay positive and try to be that compassionate educator. So we're not always going to do it perfectly. But as much as we can kind of do our work on ourselves and set our intention and remember what our personal intention is in this, which is to support our child in reaching his or her full potential and doing that from a place of love. As much as we can ground ourselves in that, that will help us when we're in these more challenging situations with teachers or other parents.

DSK: So true. So true. Well Debbie, you are always such a fountain of wisdom. Your work is so important. I always love talking with you as we close this out from your heart, what is the message you would like to share with parents struggling with this school question?

DR: Oh, I just feel for you, um, because I have been there for many years and I guess I would just say that, I mean it seems trite to say it's going to be okay, but it really is going to be okay. You know, school is something we have to get through, but it is not the destination for our kids. They have so much more important things to do then get through this class with so-and-so where they're not really being appreciated. So just hang in there and trust in your instincts as a parent and do the best you can to to support your child's self esteem and staying in that place of calm and just trust that they are going to get there because they will.

DSK: Oh, well said. Well said. Well, thanks Debbie. It's always so lovely to talk with you and I really appreciate you making the time for us.

DR: It's always a pleasure. Thanks, Debbie.

**RESOURCES MENTIONED:**

- Bright & Quirky website
- Bright & Quirky 2020 Summit
- Tilt Parenting School Listing
- *The Self-Driven Child: The Science and Sense of Giving Your Kids More Control Over Their Lives* by Ned Johnson & William Stixrud
- The Self-Driven Child with William Stixrud and Ned Johnson Tilt Podcast episode
- *Beyond Behaviors: Using Science and Compassion to Understand and Solve Children's Behavioral Challenges* by Mona Delahooke
- Mona Delahooke Looks Beyond Challenging Behaviors Tilt Podcast episode
- Educator Zach Morris on World View Transformation Tilt Podcast episode
- Learn Inc School
- Aspergers Experts
- The Gifted Homeschooler's Forum
- Next Level Homeschool
- Khan Academy