



**Special Episode**

**Debbie's Thoughts on Parenting  
Differently Wired Kids Through a Pandemic**

March 23, 2020

Hey there, it's Debbie from Tilt Parenting. This is another kind of impromptu podcast episode. It's Monday, March 23. I'll still be releasing my regular Tuesday episode tomorrow. In fact, I have a fantastic conversation about anxiety and panic disorder with Amanda Stern. So that will be out tomorrow. But I just wanted to share a short podcast that's kind of again outside the norm of my usual format, but in case you're wanting a little more connection, I've been offering Facebook Lives a couple times a week and I thought I would also just do this extra podcast this week, and share some of my thoughts about what's going on in what I'm thinking about here in my home with my family, and in relation to our role as parents of differently wired kids in the midst of what is a really unusual time.

One of the things I shared on the Facebook Live I did last week was that I'm noticing a lot of stress and anxiety among our community, in terms of how this transition from school from regular routine is looking at home with our kids. And I just wanted to kind of reiterate and remind you that this is really going to be a messy time. I know that you may be feeling that and experiencing that. But knowing that that is actually exactly what is to be expected now might be helpful.

I know that there are a lot of people sharing on social media pictures of their kids happily working away doing virtual school or that homeschooling is going really well. And I realized that probably isn't the case for many parents in this community. And the reality is that for our kids, this transition is going to be harder than it is for neurotypical kids. Our kids tend to be slower to adjust, transitions can be really disruptive. We may be seeing some ramped up dysregulation right now, we're likely seeing some increased resistance. Many of these kids really struggle with demands being placed on them or just unpredictability. And so the reaction to that is often to just push back. And I know that many of us are experiencing that. We might also be experiencing regressions with our kids, because this is such a disruption to what has been the norm their status quo, that it is a time that many kids may shut down or may revert back to things that will make them feel safer.

So I just wanted to kind of share that in case it's what you're experiencing. It is normal, within the context of who our kids are, for them to be experiencing it this way. And the best thing that we can do as their parents right now is to slow everything down. I really encourage you guys to not be overly concerned about grades and homework assignments and falling behind. I know that that feels really important, especially for those with kids in middle school and high school, what's happening in school feels like it has really big consequences. But right now we are going through something that our generation has never experienced.

There are no rules for what this should look like. And the priority right now has to be our family's emotional, mental and physical well being. That is so much more important than getting homework turned in on time. And because of who these kids are, because of how dysregulated they likely are, because of how intensely they may be experiencing this, just feeling this on a level that they may not be able to even explain or give a voice to in ways other than their behavior, our primary job has to be to help our kids feel secure and safe. And that means dropping demands, lowering expectations, giving lots of love and comfort and room and space for our kids to just be and feel emotionally grounded. I just wanted to share that again, I know that it can be very stressful, our routines are off too. Our work life may be disrupted. I know that many people have lost jobs or been laid off or temporarily not able to go into the office and for many people, that means not getting a paycheck. These are really difficult times. And so focusing on taking care of ourselves as best as we can emotionally, mentally, and physically has really got to be our priority right now.

I also wanted to share something I've been thinking a lot about, you know, there's that, quote, this isn't happening to you, it's happening for you. So I'm not going to go so far as to say, yes, this is happening for us, although many of you may believe it is that this is the Earth's way of kind of recalibrating. So I think that that's too big a stretch for me to suggest that this is happening for us. But I do challenge you to think about that idea. That if it were to be happening for you, what would that reason be? What would the result of this be if for some reason this was actually happening for you? It's kind of a strange question, but I encourage you to play with it a little bit. Again, not saying you have to believe it's happening for you. But just ask yourself, if it were, I wonder what the takeaway would be? I wonder what the gift would be? I wonder what the reason would be for me personally to be going through this? Just think about that. Kind of related to that is an experiment that I shared with my Differently Wired Club this past month. And that is saying, if you want to connect with your future self or think about your future self, think about the you five years from now. Maybe have a little conversation with him or her and ask that future version of yourself, What advice do you have for me to get through this? What words of comfort do you have for me to get through this time? It's so interesting to think about that, you know, we are going to be on the other side of this eventually. What we're experiencing at this time is temporary, what life looks like on the other side of this may be different than what it looked like before. But what we're going through right now is going to change. And so thinking about a time in the future, when we're free to move about and we can travel and our kids are back in school and things have found a new normal, what would we tell the present version of ourselves that would help us get through this? What advice would we have? What words of comfort? Again, just something to think about. I find doing this

kind of thinking, whether it's journaling or just thinking about it when I'm laying in bed in the morning, comforting and loosens kind of my grip on present day anxieties or fears that I might be struggling with. So I'll be curious to hear if that's helpful for you. And then I just wanted to share what I've been thinking about in terms of what I'm noticing.

I think one of the gifts is, at least for our family, and I think for many people is this idea of slowing down. I was just talking with Derin about this the other night. One of the things I found most kind of jarring when we returned to the US after having lived in Europe for several years was just the pace of life in the United States, especially in New York City. It's an intense place to live in. I know it's like that in many, many cities and many places around the world. Our lives are so busy. We always feel like we're behind constantly, playing catch up, we don't have the room to breathe, we don't have the room to sit down and read that book on a Sunday afternoon or work on a puzzle or have game night or just be disconnected for a little bit. And so while we are in very close quarters with just the three of us right now, which can feel a little isolating, and a little confining, especially on rainy days like it is today and I can't even get outside. But I noticed that I am not feeling that same level of busy, busy work stress that I really have been feeling for the past year since coming back here and that used to be my norm. And that actually feels really good.

It doesn't mean that I don't wake up with anxiety, it doesn't mean that I don't go down the rabbit hole and looking at too many news channels and reading too many articles and freak myself out because I do that, although I am trying to cut back. But within everything that feels chaotic and uncertain right now, I am also noticing that I have some breathing room. Our whole family does. And there's something calming about that. I just want to acknowledge that I know this isn't the case for everyone. I know that we have listeners who are on the frontlines of this, who are in the medical field, who are first responders, who are government employees, and who are very much out there working overtime to keep people safe, and doing really incredible, brave work. So I want to acknowledge that. And thank you for doing that work. And I know that for many of us, we're now just at home, we might be working from home, maybe our work has slowed down, maybe we do have a lot more time on our hands. And I just want to throw this out there if that is the situation for you. It is the reality, right? So we have a choice in how we want to feel about that reality. And so I wonder if there is some room to think about, how can I lean into what is? How can I lean into the gifts of this extra breathing room and what it might bring for me and for my family and how I might restore some of my sense of self and actually bring some calm. So I don't know if that's going to resonate with you at all, but it's definitely what I've been feeling. And it feels confusing, frankly, to be feeling less stressed and more

calm at a time when the world just looks very different than anything I've ever seen. But that is what's happening in many people's lives. Our lives have quieted down, and I know that there are going to be many gifts in that. So I encourage you to look for those gifts and to notice them.

That's all I wanted to share today. I just thought, I'm feeling a strong urge to stay very connected with this community. I really feel for parents who are struggling right now with this disruption in our lives. I know so many of us really rely on our kids being at school so that we can have a break, so that we can have some time where we're not stressed about what's going on, so that we don't have to be that full time parent to a child that can be intense or especially demanding or difficult. So my heart is with all of you. And if there are ways that Tilt can support you, please let me know. Again, I'm jumping on the tilt together page on Facebook about twice a week to do Facebook Lives where I'm just kind of chatting, answering questions, just a place for people to connect and see people from this community and remember that we're not alone. And there are other people out there supporting you and who get what you're going through. So please join me on those. If there are other things I can do to help during this time, let me know. I'll continue to release my podcasts every Tuesday. And I'll continue to think about other things that other ways that Tilt can lift up our community right now. So until then, I hope that you're able to just take it day by day, that you're finding time to connect with loved ones and friends and people who feed you and can comfort you, that you're collaborating with your kids in designing your home life and your unexpected homeschool, and just supporting each other as a family. I hope that you're able to be flexible, and remember that you can pivot and change course when you need to and make decisions that are right for your family right now. Especially when it comes to schoolwork and what your child will or won't be doing and making sure that you're prioritizing their needs. And then I hope you're able to find some bright spots. And more than that, I challenge you to look for the bright spots...to try to find a bright spot every day. That's one of my favorite exercises to do and it really helps.

So that's all I have for today. No music outro. Just sending lots of love from my family to yours and I hope you and your families stay well and healthy and safe. Take care.