



Episode #212

**Courtney Macavinta on Fostering Cultures
of Respect in Schools**

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Debbie: Hey, Adele, welcome to the podcast.

Adele: Thank you so much for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

Debbie: Welcome to the show, Courtney.

Courtney: Hi.

Debbie: There's so much to talk about today. And I also know that you and I could talk for hours about the many things we're passionate about. We share a lot of passions, but I thought it would be really interesting to share your vision and message with the Tilt Parenting community, especially with your work surrounding the issue of respect. You and I have known each other for many years, certainly before your son was in the picture, and I was trying to think if it was before Asher was in the picture as well. But would you mind for our listeners just taking a few minutes to tell us a little bit about yourself like who you are as a mom and a bit about what you do beyond what listeners got from my introduction at the head of the show?

Courtney: Sure. Well, you know, I am mom to Tru who's a seven year old boy. And you know, we're based here in California. And my work now, it started, you know, when we met, you know, I was a journalist and wrote a book called Respect for girls that was all about, you know, this idea that self respect really needed to be the engine that we lived our life by, we wanted to thrive and you know, have that have positive outcomes. And that's since evolved. That work has evolved into a nonprofit called The Respect Institute, where we create research based tools primarily for the adults working with what we call vulnerable youth. And we can describe that a little bit later. You know, how can you nurture self respect and youth, how can you create environments where respect is the status quo or the aspiration? Right? And how do adults nurture self respect in themselves? Because that is really where the rubber hits the road. So we have adults, you know, whether it's through e-training or live training, or we have an amazing toolkit, you know, we have adults take on this self respect building process first, and then we we have them bring it into schools, jails, youth organizations, that sort of thing.

Debbie: That's great. And I think when we first met, it was because we were both very involved in the girl advocacy community. And I think your book, Respect: A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect and Dealing When Your Line is Crossed had just come out. And for listeners, it's a great book, and I'll definitely include a link in the show notes so you can check it out. And I was thinking about that book, and how even more relevant it is today than when it first came out. So can you tell us a little bit more about this idea of respect, I know that you're really clear that it's different from self esteem, which seems to be kind of the buzzword of what so many people working with kids and teens are focused on. But how would you define respect? And why is that differentiation so important to make?

Courtney: Well, for our, you know, word nerds that are listening, you know, we looked back and we actually looked at the root meaning of the word respect. And the root meaning is, you know, RE like rewind, like you rewind the tape SPECT like spectacles like you know, eyeglasses and so respect at its root actually means to look again. So, it's really based in equity, compassion, you know, the old cliché, not judging a book by its cover. And then this concept of self respect what we did, we actually used to blend, like a lot of folks we blended kind of a few words and thought they all meant the same thing which they don't. We blended self esteem, self worth, self confidence and self respect, right? A lot of us have done that, probably just in our mind and also in our youth advocacy work. And all these words are very different. And we think it does matter because you want to know what asset are you building? Why are you building it? So self esteem simply put is our opinion of ourself. And that opinion, the problem with the self esteem construct is the opinion the data and research shows is formed almost entirely by outside content and outside voice. So it's your opinion of yourself, but it's actually not coming from you. So that's problematic. Also, new research from UC Davis and others had shown that bullies have high self esteem, many of them so it's not like the bullies of yesteryear. Oh, you have low self esteem. You know, you got kicked, you went out in the backyard and kicked the dog right? Yes, some bullies have low self esteem, but really now bullying is used to maintain social capital to maintain high self esteem. I think living in the United States we have a massive high profile example of that and our new president elect, what does high self esteem look like? What is high self esteem incarnate look like? Our philosophy at The Respect Institute is self esteem is a dated concept and we actually don't need it, we don't need to focus on it. We all have it. But we don't need to focus on developing it and nurturing it, maintaining it, because you don't really control it. It's coming from an outside opinion. So it's not very empowering. Self respect on the other hand, our research shows it was defined from the world of the philosophers, which I really love where self esteem is defined by psychology. And self respect means knowing you're a unique contributor to the greater whole, that's what it means. Very different thing than having a certain or high opinion of yourself. So self respect is more reliable. It's also innate. It is nurtured. You know, that's what we work on is our tools of how do you nurture that but what's great about self respect is I am someone who technically Even with you know, all I've done and this and that I technically probably on a day to day basis have kind of low self esteem. You know, I think a lot of people who come from trauma and come from a background like mine or come from populations that weren't valued, you know, you might just have be walking around with low self esteem, but it doesn't run my life at all, you know, because I'm operating from self respect I'm operating from, well, whatever, even if I have a fat butt it doesn't matter because the point is I'm here I'm unique contribute to the greater whole, I'm here to do my work my piece. And so all this self esteem stuff doesn't really matter, then. And this is very important when we're looking at kids that are differently wired and their parents because I think parents get low self esteem around that, like, you know, am I doing this right? Am I a good parent? You know, am I helping them? Did I cause this you know, that's what self esteem stuff. But if your kid gets to know, and I have a differently wired kid, as we were just discussing, you know, we just got diagnosed with dyslexia

with a reading disability. You know, if your kid just knows well, I'm here on this journey to define what I'm going to contribute. It doesn't really matter if they think lowly of themselves here and there, that's going to happen. You know, you're going to have a low opinion here and there yourself. But you don't have to run your life behavior, aspirations and goals based on that. And that's really what we're here to say.

Debbie: That's so interesting. It's such a great distinction. And, again, my past life before I started Tilt, and kind of put all my energy into focusing on supporting parents with differently wired kids, I was doing a lot of work around teen girls and boosting their confidence. And it was all about self esteem. And I remember when you and I first had this conversation, I had this big aha moment. And I think it's such a great distinction to make. And as you're describing self respect to it makes me think of this idea of self discovery, self knowledge, you know, this idea of empowering I don't know that we can empower other people but but kids or people becoming empowered to get to know who they are and how they fit into the bigger picture, what their strengths are, what their weaknesses and how they want to contribute.

Courtney: Yeah, and I think we can empower them. Because, you know, that comes from being conscious of these things and then making spaces for kids to explore this stuff. You know, whether it's during the school day, whether it's in your family, it's also where are you putting an emphasis, right? So like, in our family, and we're not a perfect family, we have so many weaknesses. We're working on it all the time. But you know, it's like...

Debbie: Welcome to the club.

Courtney: Yes, but you know, but we, but what we look at, right, we're not as a family trying to measure ourselves, for example, based on material wealth. That's a self esteem thing. That's packaging. You know, we're trying to measure our family on are you trying to be a helpful person and not be you know, even when you're in a bad mood, not be nasty to everybody and wreck everybody's day, right? We're trying to look at, you know what, so that's your unique contribution. You know, like Are you helping the family today? Are you helping others? Or are you being self focused and worrying about your image and your material wealth, for example. So I think that it comes into the values of the family too. You know, we live in a country, you know, your home country where you were born, you know, that is very focused on packaging and material wealth and presentation. And I think that makes your work so important, because that doesn't create a space for anything that's outside of that kind of glossy packaging, right? So on the perfect student who's sitting in the desk listening, compliant, you know, amiable, afraid of authority, if you're not doing that, you know, you're not, you're not going to fit in as a student. Right, you know, right. You're a problem.

One of the focus areas of The Respect Institute you know, as things have evolved in this equally applies to girls and boys, is, you know, ending what's now called the school to prison pipeline. So this is a significant well-documented problem that shows a causal relationship between when a student is sent to the office like,

you know, an office referral, or when a student is suspended or at worse, expelled, they're three times more likely to enter the justice system, especially if they're a student of color. Before our talk, I dug into the I know that there's a special education disproportionality here and you know, the Department of Education found this is this is so sad to me, that students that qualified for special ed are twice as likely to get suspended and 58% of all students placed in seclusion, so that could be like an in school arrest or, you know, they're their special ed students and 75% of those who are physically restrained at school, which shouldn't happen anyway. qualify or are enrolled in special ed and I definitely see that as a juvenile justice commissioner here in Santa Clara County, which is another role I play, you know, our kids that are locked up all of them. I'm not gonna say all, I'm going to say 89% in the realm of that haven't had an IEP, you know, our special ed kids. Wow. So really pushed out of school. Right? And that's where a big part of our work is done is, how do you make respect the culture of the school and true respect? And how do you have adults that are nurturing self respect and taking care of their burnout so that they're not inadvertently pushing kids into the pipeline, because they're just sick of their stuff, you know, and they push them out of class, and they don't realize you're pushing them into a different feature, the minute you send them down to the office. It's dangerous. It's dangerous to kids to send them to the office. I hate to say it. If that school is punitive and not restorative, you're tracking them. Remember, we used to get trapped into vocation or college. Now one of the tracks is prison. So it's totally proven. And it's a very dangerous cycle that's happening right now.

Debbie: And it's so common. I mean, being sent to the office. I mean, that is happening at such young ages. I'm curious. First of all those statistics you shared are shocking to me. I mean, not surprising, but it still makes you catch your breath. Oh, my goodness, like there are so many kids who are kind of stuck. And you said that the minute that they are sent to the office, you know that they are three times more likely to eventually end up in the justice system. Does that include when they're quite young? I mean, did you find any information about at what age that starts to be a factor?

Courtney: So I want to make one distinction. I misspoke a little bit. So if you get suspended, actually suspended, as a result of that, okay, times more likely to enter the justice system, but we do have data on office referrals to one of the most shocking because he talked about younger kids, right. And obviously, this data applies to public schools. We get this data private schools don't have to share this kind of data. African American preschool students, okay, two times more likely to be suspended. Who suspends a preschool student? Right? Yeah. So our data shows that it starts at a very young age. And so that's kind of the bad news. The good news is there's also a causal relationship that's been bound between teacher behavior that provides the solution. And the solution is, and when I heard this, so we have fellows at the respect Institute who study stuff who are already experts on stuff. And we have two that are experts on the school to prison pipeline right now. And I asked them okay, really, no kidding. How can we end the school to prison pipeline, like this is well documented, what can we do? The first thing you can do is change school policy right so that you are more restorative, which

means your focus is reducing office referrals is reducing or eliminating suspensions. You know, in other words, it's keeping kids positively connected to school, which means positively connected to the adults there primarily. So part of it is policy. And also what can you teach or even send a kid to the office for you know, there's a big trend of sending kids to the office for what was called willful defiance. And of course, kids of color were targeted with this. So you know, you're tapping a pencil, you're being willfully defiant. Bye, you're out, right. So one of the pieces is policy, the other part is practice. And the practice is simple, but not easy. But it is the empathy of the adults towards the students. And so that's where our next wave of our work is amplifying in that area, which is how can we use technology to rapidly increase empathy and maintain empathy for students and so we're creating an app that'll have for example, like virtual reality experiences embedded in it, so teachers can feel what it feels like to walk through the school to prison pipeline, you know, can hear from students can just maintain that empathy. Because people don't lose empathy on purpose. It happens from burnout and stress. And by the way, many public schools are not safe, safe, nurturing spaces for the teachers, right? So that stuff starts to roll downhill. I mean, I've never met teachers—and I work with teachers that work in jails—I've never met a teacher who doesn't like kids, who hates, kids wants them to go to prison, right? That's not that's not what's going on here. But there is what's going on here is documented implicit bias, unconscious bias, and the lack of empathy. So we have to work on nurturing that, you know, we have to be like empathy, physical trainers on ourselves, when we're in these environments. And, you know, I'm sure parents can relate to this. I mean, the minute our empathy for our child goes, that's when we start to get very punitive. You know, very harsh, it's just, it's just...

Debbie: Right, it's about control. You know, at a certain point, you just want to have control of a situation. That's your default mode.

Courtney: And it's fight or flight, right. So the same thing that's happening with a child. So we also study the intersection of trauma and all this. So low income schools or high trauma, one form of trauma is toxic stress from you know, poverty. And what happens is you just start to live from your, you know, your hippocampus, your what I call when I tell the kids about it, you know, your dinosaur brain, and you get triggered into fight or flight all day long. And when you're in fight or flight all day long, what it looks like to adults is, you know, you have bad behavior and that is not what's going on. And you're not trying to be disrespectful to adults, and you know, so one of the things we work on is helping adults also identify just the same way we unpack what is respect really, is what is disrespect really, you know, is it disrespect or is it trauma? Is it someone's tired? Is it your relationship needs a tune up? You know, is it you're not being empathetic and you're seeing everything as a disrespectful front to you? Or you know, yes, maybe one out of 10 kids really is trying to be disrespectful and push buttons. The last thing I'll just say is on that empathy piece. So we talked about, you know, the getting sent to the office can kind of start the school to prison pipeline cycle, when we work with schools on is okay then what happens when they go to the office because sometimes teachers need to be able to use that tool to continue learning for everybody else. And so that's where you can really make a difference

as a school is what happens when you go to the office. And we see schools that do wonderful things like the child gets to do a mindfulness activity, you know, gets to quiet down, it's to reflect on their behavior, it gets to decide when they're ready to go back, you know, that it's just a, it's just a pause. It's not a disciplinary process that's happening. Things like that, you know, where they get to connect with another adult in the office that they have a caring connection with, like school secretaries can be an amazing part of the solution here and we've met some great ones, where they have a chat, you know, and they're encouraging them or just listening to them and then they get themselves ready and they go back into class.

Debbie: Wow, this work you're doing is so Important, I'm so happy and grateful that you're doing it. Yeah, I'm just kind of. I mean, as you talk, it feels so honestly, just overwhelming. And I'm sure you feel this way in the research that you do in the schools you interact with. I mean, I know so many teachers who do experience the burnout. I've read so many articles, you know, both in public and private schools. In fact, there was a big, quote unquote, scandal about a charter school system in New York City where kids are being suspended in preschool. And that's kind of mind blowing to me, and it seems like it is, it can be just one teacher right in that child's life that sets them down this path. And so there's so much work to be done.

Courtney: There is and a lot of it is just a big part of it is individual school, deciding, we're not going to be punitive. You know, we're not going to do this and then if you're not going to do it, you need to replace that. It was something else because you're taking a tool away from teachers, if you say, you can't send them down to the office, you know, they're dealing with a lot in their classrooms. And if you have, you know, 50% special ed in the class, then you have you know, trauma then you have you know, all these things that are getting stockpiled, that are public schools due to segregation, and poverty and other things, right. But the most empowering thing I hope that you know, parents and teachers can take away from this is that an individual adult in their own individual choices about their behavior can stop the cycle. That's why we're focusing focus individual frontline educators, you know, that's why we create trainings and apps and things just for them so that even if they're sitting inside of the most punitive, hardest school to teach them, they can decide what their approach is going to be, you know, for classroom management and for that self care piece of like, I'm gonna maintain my empathy, just like I maintain my car. Like, it's just this is something that has to happen. It's a requirement of the job right? And that no, their principal doesn't need to make it a priority or a school wide initiative. Individual frontline educators can choose to do that.

Debbie: As you're talking, I'm also thinking, you know, Asher, for example in preschool used to be sent to an office with a closed door and would sit in there by himself when he was three, which, you know, we pulled him out of that school because we could and, you know, at his, he's, he's been kicked out of every class he's ever been in. But, but his most recent school, which was in second grade, a public school system, he used to get sent to the principal's office, but he ended up developing a nice relationship with her, and he would get to look at security

cameras with her, you know, she kind of made it fun, which I'm still very grateful for her for doing that. But we're in this situation where we're able to pull him out. We're able to say this isn't going to work or advocate or trying to train teachers ourselves in terms of this is what's going on, this is why that's happening. Here are some other tools. And so the kids who are really suffering here are the at-risk kids, the kids who likely have learning and attention issues or other sort of neurological differences, but they may not have a parent that's plugged in. And so it's just getting missed and...

Courtney: Or, you know, often the parent is plugged in but the family... you know, because race is a huge part of this, right? So African American boys and girls are three times more likely to enter the school to prison pipeline over every other population yet, you know, account for such a small number of the overall US student population in comparison, right to whites. Or like in my culture, you know, I'm Mexican American, you know, Latino families have different reasons that they get isolated at school, you know, in the sense of maybe they're, you know, they have a language barrier of, you know, communicating with the school or they have fear around authority which can happen in our culture due to deportation and other issues. So one of the main things is that, you know, what you're noticing, and what you're calling out is, who has choice and who doesn't. So that's an issue, you know, and, and so that's why it's really important for individual educators to take this on. I mean, and parents, this is a huge thing that I'm grappling with, even at my own school that my child's enrolled in, is that as a culture, the school and the parents and everybody accepting responsibility for every student in the building, you know, they're all of our students, and you know, adopting a common value, that education is the biggest social justice program or movement in the United States period. Yeah, yeah. And so this is a social justice issue. So it should not be okay with you if anyone's been disproportionately suspended from your school. And so we have to get out of our own story and our own life and look at what's happening to all the kids at the school and take responsibility for all of them. Because by the way, do you want them to go to a local community college and start to prosper or do you want them to join me over on the other side of the system, where it's going to start to cost in California \$80,000 a year to lock them up? You're paying either way. So if you want to even make it a money decision, you know, spend your money over on the education side. I mean, it's very expensive to lock kids up.

Debbie: That's such a good point. One of my goals in creating Tile is to shift what I call the parenting paradigm around how difference is perceived and experienced both by kids who are differently wired in their families and by parents of typical kids who don't understand what's what's going on. And I just love the way that you call that out how important it is for every parent to care about these issues. Even if their kids are neurologically typical. Their kids aren't the ones getting sent to the office. It is, as you say, a social justice issue and it's I see so many parents kind of, you know, empathetic Like, oh yeah, that's hard. But then they kind of go on with their, you know that everyone's self-involved.

Courtney: Yeah. And you know that's another byproduct of this self esteem mess. Because it's like parents focusing on if their family looks good if their kids are doing well,

if they think they're doing it right they're above others. That is the wrong mindset to walk into a school with schools are communities, they're not an individual place for you the customer to go get your needs met, you know, pay for your services and walk out. That's not going to help our overall society and I do want to call people out on that. You know, you cannot be self centered in a school community. You know, and I want parents to know if your child is being sent to the office you feel disproportionately or you didn't notice like you why my kid got kicked out of every class they're in. There is bias going on. That is not just your kid having a problem not fitting in. There's bias going on. There's injustice going on. And that's just my belief and the data bears it out. So you know, to have a little bit more, you know, behind you, you know that you're not wrong, and your child's not wrong. This system is set up to remove contaminants, you know, and see children as contaminants. And, you know, the ultimate removal is when then I get to go visit them in juvenile hall on Christmas Eve, as I do, and they're locked up. So, you know, I really encourage parents to know if you're feeling you know, this is very serious, that your child just seems to be disproportionately removed from the learning environment and put into isolation in some way or another. You're right, that is wrong. And, you know, you're not alone. I mean, this is happening 7 million kids a year get pushed into just the school to prison pipeline, you know, and that's not you know, even looking at what is the number of just being sent into isolation at school, which is what you were talking about happened to Asher.

Debbie: Wow. Again, shocking statistics. So I want to ask some questions like practical questions on what parents can do. One thing I'd like to know is, you know, just kind of picking up where you left off just now, if you're seeing that happen in your school, if you're seeing your child being kind of disproportionately sent out of the classroom, or you're noticing it's happening in other schools, I mean, when I went to our schools, I had other parents reach out to me and say, I heard what's been happening to Asher in the classroom, things I didn't even know about. And so I really appreciated that they were letting me know and we're not okay with it. So what can parents do if they notice that happening in their schools?

Courtney: Well, two things one is and I know this can seem a little boring but it's really important is to get to know the policies at your school. So for example, you don't really know when you go into the school, ask them what is the disciplinary process here. Are they using systems like PBIS which is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports? That's not that's not a cure all. But you know, do they have a process for keeping kids in their learning seat, which is what I call it, you know, what is their rate of suspensions? You know, get to know your school, how punitive is the school? Also look at Title Nine. So I think a lot of us learning, especially those of us who focus on girls and women's issues, we learned about Title Nine kind of in the context of, you know, women and girls being able to equally participate in sports right at public schools. It's so way beyond that Title Nine also applies to sexual harassment school and we haven't even really talked about the girl subculture that goes on here. So girls of color, especially are being hugely disproportionately pushed out of schools, and, and a lot of it is around sexual harassment. So for example, a girl being sent home from school for a dress code, quote, unquote violation, because a boy was harassing her so there's like a

rape culture thing going on in a lot of schools. You know, were like, sent home for wearing short shorts. So she's getting disconnected from her education versus focusing on why is there sexual harassment happening at the school. And under Title Nine, you have to. So that's one area where the law is on our side, you have to prevent sexual harassment, you have to deal with the effects of it when it happens, and you have to take steps to prevent it from happening in the future. So I think parents kind of knowing their rights around what are the policies of the school and is this school in alignment with federal policy to protect the rights of students? Right. So I think that's number one. Number two, you know, becoming a bit of an activist at your school this kind of issue, you know, speaks to your heart. Start, like we're starting at my kids school, start an inclusion Committee for the school, look at the policies, look at your own data. I mean, school suspension data is public data at a public school. It's connected to funding to and school climate. funding in many districts so you know, look at, Do we have a problem with this? And what can we as parents do, then you can, you know, using us as a resource, definitely The Respect Institute has a free, like a training on all that stuff we talked about, you know, redefining respect. And, you know, you can bring in our toolkit into your school to start spreading respect as a practice as a self respect practice as a mutual respect practice, and also using restorative practices which are integrated into our work, which help restore kids back into school and keep them connected to the community versus being punitive and pushing them out of school. So those are a couple practical things, but I would definitely say, you know, what I would love to see, especially in our current climate, I know your audience is international, and I'm kind of US centric in this talk today. But you know, one of the things that's happened since the election is the Southern Poverty Law Center is documenting hate incidents across the country. They've skyrocketed and the number one site for those incidences is school. So now we're dealing also with bigotry and hate increase at many schools, public and private. And so parents can really take a role in, you know, whether you're the PTA or an individual activist in saying, we're not going to do that at this school. And when we when that does happen, let's look at this. So let's say someone painted a swastika on a school. Should we have zero tolerance and push that child out of school? Or should we educate, take this as an opportunity to educate everybody and restore that child to the community as a productive member of that community? Because anyone who gets pushed out there's a cost to that? Yes, you know, so I think that's, you know, these are all things that parents can attempt and then of course, the individual workaround. How are we nurturing our own self respecting our child's self respect versus putting all our eggs in the self esteem basket, which isn't giving us a good return on our investment?

Debbie: I want to go to that idea of fostering our own self respect as parents and how we can help our kids with that. But one thing is you were just talking it made me think about the zero tolerance policy that so many schools say they have. It's I mean, based on what you just said, it makes sense that that's not the best policy.

Courtney: It's not at all. It's convenient, right? So there's short games and there's long games when you're raising children or educating children as a short game. I get it right a school feels like we're getting rid of the contaminants it never works and

other quote unquote contaminant pops up. Also, zero tolerance is totally connected to the school to prison pipeline. So there's a lot of you know, other amazing scholarly work that's gone on and reports published about the zero tolerance was a total drastic overkill. And we need to remove those policies because they're, they're disconnecting kids from education. So then what do you put in this place is a longer game, you know what you're putting in its place. One of the things we didn't talk about that helps parents and teachers and everybody is nurturing what's called protective factors. And protective factors are things that help children overcome trauma, you know, overcome adversity, stay connected to school, not just school in general. But protective factors are totally based on adult child relationships so that the adult is showing interest, respect in the child that there's trust there that the adult is safe. You know, it sounds really simple, but it's very important work. So zero tolerance unravels all of that, because it makes the child not in relationship with the adults at school. Everything comes from relationship when we want to solve these problems and help children stay connected in education. And it's totally rooted in the adult child relationship, which should then be backed up by policy. Like we're not going to be a punitive school, we are going to prevent and heal sexual harassment, those kinds of things.

Debbie: So all right. I would love to know, at the beginning of the conversation, you talked about a lot of your work being about helping adults, caregivers, parents, and teachers work on their own self respect and develop that so they can kind of trickle down. So for parents who are listening, what do they want to be doing? Or maybe what does self respect look like in their children? And especially if you can speak to differently wired children, why is it particularly important for them?

Courtney: Well, the first part, I mean, I think parents, you know, we have a set of universal practices that are embedded and amplified in all of our tools and work called the respect basics, and their research based in their set of eight practices such as, you know, getting help setting boundaries, being compassionate, that help you nurture your self respect on a daily basis. And they're practices. So you might focus on one one day and one the next you know, you're not, they're not linear. And so really working on you know, you can look at them on our website. We have A handbook you can download for free, that's kind of like a little mini journal, we do have an amazing new journal that you can get through the website to, you know, to work on nurturing that in yourself and your understanding of that. And then everything, all the exercises in there are the same things you can do with your kids. The second piece around differently wired and I've been thinking about this a lot, when it comes to my son true is again, if you are already noticing you're different, right in the school environment or in the community, because you have a different way of learning or you have you know, different style, all that stuff, you have different, you know, variant neurology, whatever is going on, introduce these concepts to that, you know, talk about the difference between self esteem and self respect and that, you know, we're gonna focus as a family on self respect, because we know also that people with self respect, are more neutrally respectful to others, not next good citizens, right. So kind of bringing in that concept and also what I love about what I'd make up about

differently wired kids, at least the ones I meet now is that if you have ever been part of a marginalized group, you could potentially have a higher capacity for some natural empathy, right? Because you're like, Hey, I know what it's like to be left out or treated differently. And I don't want that to happen to other people. So I would say definitely, you know, celebrating empathetic acts, when you see your children doing that, you know, celebrating when you see them being self respectful, being a unique contributor to a greater whole, you know, thanking them for doing their chores, which helps the family versus You're so great. You're the best that's self esteem stuff, huh? It's hard. I mean, I think my kid is the best and I you know, I love the most I mean, come on, he's my kid. He's very cute. Yeah, but you know, but I and he already has like, a kind of crazy amount of self esteem that scares me a little bit, you know, walking around, just thinking he's the best with no effort. You know? So you know, I think also languaging you What are we praising them for, what are celebrating them for and also looking out which you had a marvelous podcast about this the intersection of everything I'm talking about and positive discipline. So you know positive discipline is a part of any restorative framework. So bring positive discipline advocates for positive discipline at your school. That is a huge part of the equation of creating effective schools that honors everybody and helps everybody stay connected to their learning. And you know, practice using in your home. It's super hard I get it. I am like a D minus student at it right now myself, but I think having that aspiration that that is going to be the framework you're using, and that will make you feel better as a parent. positive discipline, right is about connecting before you. And so your sense of your mastery as a parent, you know, hey, I'm doing okay here is gonna be better if you're using these kinds of tools. Because you're, you know, you're going in the right direction, you're staying connected to your kid, you're not blowing up, you're not being punitive and doing, you know, like dumb things like I do sometimes, you know, like, I'm going to take away your iPad for a week, which isn't accomplishing anything in the equation, right? It's, it's an immediate, I'm trying to get an immediate quick fix, but it doesn't. So I think those are some things you can do. And again, on our website, there's a section called Tools, and we have a lot of stuff like this that you can download and use.

Debbie: Thank you. I would love if you could tell us where people can reach you, you know, not only to get resources from The Respect Institute, but How can parents support the work that you're doing?

Courtney: Yeah, so a big thing you can do, you know, just go to therespectinstitute.org, which I'm sure you'll connect to this episode. Go to our tools and training part in our menu and you can download things. You know, bring us into your schools. If you need help with any of the things I just described. You know, we provide consulting for school training events, you know, we figure out what works. And our tools are being used internationally. So they're not just US centric. So I think that's kind of the first way to kind of connect in.

Debbie: Perfect. Yes. And for listeners, I will include links to The Respect Institute to definitely check it out. There are a lot of tools on the site, as Courtney said, and I'll also include a link to Courtney's book, which as I said, is just as relevant today, if not more so than it was when it came out. Courtney, I just want to thank you

from the bottom of my heart for coming on the show and having what I think is such an important conversation, it's it's a different kind of an episode for us because it's not necessarily solving for you know, this one specific problem, but I'm trying to bring on guests to have these, what I think are very rich and meaningful conversations about all the issues that we need to be exploring if we're going to really shift things and shake things up. So I'm just grateful for you as a person in the world. For the work that you're doing, and I'm inspired as always when I get to spend time with you, so thank you for being on the show today.

Courtney: Thank you.

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- The Respect Institute
- *Respect: A Girl's Guide to Getting Respect & Dealing When Your Line is Crossed* by Courtney Macavinta
- *Where Charter School Suspensions are Concentrated* (The Atlantic article)
- Respect e-course through The Respect Institute (free)
- #irespectmyself Personal Kit (proceeds benefit The Respect Institute)