



**Episode #218**

**Debbie and Her Husband Derin Talk About  
Parenting a Differently-Wired Child**

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Debbie: Hello, Derin, and welcome to the Tilt Parenting Podcast.

Derin: Hi, Debbie. I've heard that message so many times. I'm really excited to do my first Tilt Parenting Podcast with you as your husband.

Debbie: I'm excited to have you on the show as your wife. Do you want to take a minute because, you know, listeners have heard me now for more than a year, slowly sharing my story. So they know who I am and you come up from time to time and podcast, but do you want to just take a minute to just so people know who you are? Tell us a little bit about yourself.

Derin: They probably don't think I'm real, like a real person. I'm a real person. Yes, my name is Derin Basden. I am Debbie's husband of 18 wonderful years. Gosh, I guess I could say what I do. I am a program manager. And I work in technology. Mostly. I manage large scale projects for big companies. Yeah, fun stuff. I make sure things get delivered on time. That's not a very good description.

Debbie: And do you have any children?

Derin: Yeah, I got this kid. His name is Asher. Yeah. Okay. He's my son. And I love him.

Debbie: Well, I thought we would talk about Asher today.

Derin: Okay, awesome.

Debbie: Well, as I said, a lot of listeners know kind of our story with Asher from my perspective, and what it felt like for me, as we were discovering just how different he was and kind of during those really challenging years, what they were like, from my perspective, and I say that as if the challenges are over. They're not but we're in a such a different place than we used to be when we were in kind of the, what I think are the kind of hardest years and from what I've observed from friends and members of the community that ages like five to nine is, I think kind of really the thick of it. But I think it would be helpful for listeners to hear from you because you experienced that differently. Yes, you were working out of the home. So you weren't around as much during the, you know, the day stuff in the schlepping back and forth to therapy and all that stuff. But also you experienced it differently because you have a different relationship with Asher than I do. Would you just talk a little bit about what that was like for you kind of during those really, those years when we really were like, Oh my gosh, this is not gonna look the way we thought it was gonna look.

Derin: Well, I have to say, I think what Asher has given to me over the years is patience. And I know I don't think I don't think of myself as a patient person. In fact, I think before we were married, I was not a patient person. And Asher tested my patience in those years to levels I'd never known possible. And I love him to death. So when he does something that tests you, you just it goes right to your

heart you have I had a very immediate reaction to what, what he was doing what he was saying, or, and I I just couldn't, I couldn't figure it out. I couldn't figure out how to respond and then it kept escalating and then I would get very frustrated. I didn't help the situation at all. So there were times when he would really push my buttons and I didn't know how to respond. I didn't know how to deal with it. And often what I would do is either I would say something that I would regret or do something like grab or take a toy away from him. Especially punishment, right? Or I would walk out of the room and say, like, you deal with it, you know, it was not the best parenting. But when I was just, uh, I just couldn't figure out how to handle him. And that's not to say we didn't have a good relationship. And that's, I'm going right to the bad time. But we had plenty of good times, we could be very silly together for long periods of time.

Debbie: Well, it seemed to me something you said, "I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to help him." When you said that. I remember that. That's something you used to say a lot to me. I, you know, I'm trying to help him. I don't understand why he doesn't realize I know what he needs to do in this situation because I was this way when I was his age, or whatever it was, and that seemed to be for you a real challenge because your intentions were so good, and he just wasn't responding the way you thought that he should.

Derin: That's exactly right. So in my mind, I have all this wisdom to share with Asher while these situations and how to handle them and how to work with people. And yeah, I have some similar challenges as Asher did when I was a kid. Like I had trouble relating to people when I was when I was younger. I also saw the world differently than most people around me. So I had to figure out how to interact with people. So I, I wanted to share, you know what I've learned how I became more social, I guess, when I was younger, but he wasn't really interested in anything I had to say, he wanted to have fun and play. And I wanted to help him. And the helping was a series of corrections or advice that he really didn't care about. And I just, I couldn't understand I'm giving him gold and he's just, he's just not interested.

Debbie: Don't you understand what I'm trying to share with you? It's good stuff! Yeah, yes, I remember those days. What was it like for you? I'm just curious. We talked a lot on the show about parenting the child you didn't expect when you're expecting. Yeah. What was that like for you? I mean, no one knows what they're gonna get, like, there's no way that any parent can have a full understanding of what it's going to feel like to be a parent and to get to know this person that you are now in charge of raising. But was there a disconnect for you in terms of what you thought it was gonna be like? And then what it ended up being like?

Derin: Yeah, absolutely. I, you know, it's a funny thing, because when you were pregnant, I had a moment where I said, I just said, Whatever he is, just let him be smart and funny.

Debbie: The two most important qualities....

Derin: And we got them in spades. I mean, My wish came true. But at the same time, I had no idea what was going on? I mean, when he, when he started reading when he was three, without any help from us, that was weird. And I was proud and simultaneously in awe and shock, what our child was going to be like. And then later when we realized there's some other things going on, and we took them to therapist and we finally got that diagnosis, I was in complete denial of what was going on and, and I knew you were, you're open to it, you're like, you knew something was happening, and you were you were more open to it than I was. And I was, I was very reticent about talking about it with anybody, even you, I think I had trouble talking about it with and I just said this, this can't be this, you know, he can't have a problem. You know, he's, he's, he's my child. And, and I really did think of it as a problem, as something that needs to be fixed. And then I was like, okay, we're going to fix this, that was my next, we're gonna fix it, we're gonna go to their best and we're gonna get him right, you know? And we're not gonna tell anybody about this, you know? And then I think maybe it was a couple of months after that where I was like, okay, no, I knew this all along, you know, I really was in denial. I didn't have to, we didn't have to go to a therapist to understand what was going on. We knew that he was different. And then we knew he was wired, differently wired. And we needed to be his parents and love him and support him. And that decision, I mean, that took a few months for me where I think you embraced it immediately took me a few months to really embrace it. And then the next step was for me to figure out well, okay, I want to love and support him. How do I love him? I mean, to say love and support and how do I support him in this?.

Debbie: Yeah, I would say that the denial and not wanting to tell people lasted longer than a few months. And I think I was right there with you. I mean, the way you just described it made it seem like we got this information and I was instantly like, Okay, I'm on it. But I think, you know, in general, it was this slower process of, you know, uncovering these little layers, right, because we went to that first therapist we saw, which was really for anger management, there was no assessment involved. It was really giving him tools. And that's the first time we got help when the Mad monster emerged. Yes. That was Asher's avatar, for those of you listening, who haven't heard me talk about it before, that was his avatar for his angry side. So it wasn't Asher. It was the Mad monster who was wreaking havoc in our lives, you know, and then after that, it was getting the information about having some sensory processing issues, which was probably like six months later, and then it wasn't for another year. So I mean, it took us a while to get all of them. And there were a lot of, I just remember you and I having a lot of late night conversations about, you know, well, this doesn't seem right. This doesn't sit with me, this makes sense to me. But we were always kind of trying to analyze the information we were getting to decide whether or not we thought it was valid or not.

Derin: Yeah, we were always trying to figure out what the official diagnosis was. Were we following the rules to the letter? Very interesting.

Debbie: Yeah, I want to talk about those earlier years, when, you know, I hear this from a lot of parents, it's been written about a lot. And it was our experience that, you

know, there's usually one parent that is more hands on that's doing more of the ground work, so to speak. So, in our relationship, I was the one who took Asher to therapy, probably 95% of the time, I was the one who interacted with the teachers and fielded notes and the phone calls and At the after school meetings and all of that kind of stuff. And I'm wondering what that was like for you, I know that you know, those, that's chat that's challenging for a lot of relationships when one of the and we've talked about this on the show when when the parents has kind of all the information, and one of the parents is a little bit outside the loop, and that can create some friction. And I'm wondering, during those years, when I was playing that role, and you know, I would download to you and talk to you about stuff at night. But did you feel disconnected at all? Did you feel like you were as involved as you could have been?

Derin: Absolutely disconnected? Yeah, I mean, I was connected with him. I mean, we had a different relationship. Not you and me, but me and Asher and you and Asher. So, you know, when he got home, we would hang out, we'd do things together, but it was not that he didn't have the same context. So when I get downloads from you, and I'd hear what happened, like a teacher would do something or say something and I get really angry and you saw she's been doing that for months. So I'm still angry. I felt I didn't know what was going on, like we had how many schools were we at? Four schools?

Debbie: Well, three elementary schools and two preschools.

Derin: Three preschools. Yeah, so I did feel disconnected. At first I would get downloads from you. We'll talk about it at night and that didn't always work. You know, we talked sometimes we didn't always have a chance to connect or, or it was a really bad, stressful day and we mostly just spent time commiserating or something along those lines. And so I didn't always know what was happening. At first I was like, okay, that's cool. You know, Debbie's more in touch with him. And I've got, I've got a, you know, I've got my important job. I'm going to make sure we have money so she can handle that. And I'll get the, I'll get the downloads and there's something important. She's really gonna pull me aside and we'll, we'll talk about it. And that was kind of how I felt. But at the same time, I'm like, but I'm not being a very good dad, I should be there. I should be in those meetings I should be. I should be helping her. This is a lot of burden for one person to handle. And then I also felt like, I'm angry, you know, you're keeping me out of the loop. And you know, all these things are going on because you were on a, it was a roller coaster, roller coaster of emotions about what he was going through, and what we were going through. And so, in the end, I don't know, I look back, and I wish I was more. I wish I'd been more present in those meetings. There were so many of them, but I wish I had been more present, had attended more of those things. And I did, I did help out with whatever that last therapy place we've been to was I forgotten but I did take him quite a few times there. But that's Yeah, I've I regret not being more involved in those discussions.

Debbie: I'm just curious to know more about your emotional state. And I'm assuming it was kind of the same as mine, but tell me differently if I'm wrong, but I was very, you know, when we were really in the throes of it and feeling like we were just it

was this constant bombardment of, there's a problem here, this isn't going to work, we need to figure this out therapy, you know, just on and on, and then just dealing with what we were dealing with at home, which was living with a child who was really dysregulated most of the time Yeah, and very anxious. And, you know, obviously because he was basically in a battlefield himself every day to just be himself and he was constantly being told that he's not okay, so it was not a good scene. And I was feeling personally very overwhelmed and starting to feel hopeless and not knowing, you know, feeling like all of our choices were almost out of choices and what are we going to do here? just ready to throw my hands up in the air, like I just don't know what to do anymore. So just that deep, deep sense of overwhelm.

Derin: I remember those days, there were a couple of bad days in there

Debbie: A couple of bad days. Yeah.

Derin: Yeah, hopeless is the right word. It was really harrowing. I just, I didn't get it. I didn't understand. I wanted him to be regulated. I wanted you to be happy. I wanted to be able to help. And that was the thing that that's the thing that I felt so it was so hard for me as I was completely powerless. All this that I felt to help either of you. In the situation. I saw my family really not doing well. And I didn't know how I just knew it wasn't working. hopeless is the right word if you try to talk to friends or neighbors or and they nobody really got it, you just felt hopeless and alone, which is really an awful feeling. Mm hmm. Yeah, I mean, I love you and Asher so much, and to be in that situation...I don't want to go back.

Debbie: No, it's a hard place to be, it is not a good place to be. And I know that that's where so many of our listeners are and I mean, that's why I wanted to create Tilt because yeah, it's a hard place to be it's it you know, before we continue on, I would just say that it doesn't stay. We don't you don't stay in that place. So people are listening. And they're like, yeah, that's where I'm at. Oh, my God, like, just know that it does get better and more gosh, yes, it gets better. But those are hard years and It seems to last forever. When you're in it, you know, talking about meetings and things. I did want to say that when we pulled Asher out of his private school that he was in halfway through first grade, that was, I mean, I would say personally, that was one of the most difficult things we have gone through as a family that time. It was incredibly painful. And that was a situation where I was very much the, you know, I was doing all the school drop off some pickups, I was like, literally in daily engagement with heads of schools and teachers and point systems and charts and check ins... it was exhausting. And I could see those things. All of a sudden were going in a really bad direction. And I remember coming to you and saying I need you to takeover, I am way too emotional about this. I am so angry, and I can't be rational. People who know me know that the ones that I'm super calm and Zan and the knives and then once I go to the other side, forget about it. So yeah, so I really I just remember because at the time you were not super engaged with what was going on, you were very involved with what was happening at work and things like that. And I just remember saying, Look, you've got to take this over and you were like, Well, I have to work. I'm like, okay, you're taking the day off of work because we need to

have a meeting with the Head of School and you see, you're like, Okay, and you did and I felt like we went in there kind of like a two person a team and I just sat back and I let you do all the talking. And it was such for me personally such a relief. Because I just felt like, now he can. He's gonna know what's going on. So it's not that I'm crazy that this is really As you know, things are not as cool as I say they are. And then also, I just felt like you're so much better in those situations than I am. And I was so just relieved to have a competent, articulate, calm, rational person steering the ship.

Derin: That was an interesting conversation. I actually was quite nervous going into the meeting, because these are people who care for your child. Right? And I'm used to talking in a business context, how do I deal with it? But what's very, very strange was that after about 30 seconds, I realized, no, no, this is the same thing, this is a business to this person. And this person puts us in a business context. And then it became quite easy, then it was like, Okay, then I know, you know, they don't have my child's best interests at heart. Right? They've got an agenda that they're trying to fill. And as soon as I knew that, then I could have a conversation with them. But it says a lot about that situation. And about that moment, because it's, you need people who care for your child. Right? This as soon as that as soon as I think I realized that's where we're where we were, I was like, wait a minute, this is not the decision was already in my made in my mind it was just a matter of executing the conversation.

Debbie: Well, I would say though, that that situation to me, and I'm curious to know if you felt the same way, but to me, I thought that whole as awful as that time period was it actually brought us together.

Derin: Absolutely. Yeah, it did. Because here's the thing. Here I am, um, as I said, I'm feeling hopeless and powerless to help. And you came to me, you came to me and you appeal to me, you need to help. And I was able to, I said, Okay, I can do this. I can, I can help, I can be helpful. So I was really excited about the opportunity and then in the situation. was helpful and I understood why you were so upset. And I was right there with you. And that moment was like, Okay, these people don't get it. These people don't get who my son is, and they don't understand how special he is. And they don't care. And that is not okay. And I became, I know you talk about mama bear. For time I became Papa Bear. And I really felt like that's, that's where, where I was supposed to be all bad. I got it crystallized for me in that moment, and that's when I think that's when we started taking the journey together. was right there. I think you're right on that money.

Debbie: Yeah, well, let's talk a little bit about our journey together. So I know that it's not going to be news to anyone listening that having a differently wired child can put a big strain on a relationship. And for me You know, as I said, I definitely, I think my struggles have been primarily around me feeling like I was shouldering more of the daily hard stuff. And I'm also, as I've said before in this podcast, and as you know very well, Daron, I am a bit of a control freak. And so I have this tendency to just kind of take over because I know how to do things. And then I start getting this sense of, well, I just know how to do everything better. And I'm just gonna do

it. Because then I know it's done the right way. And I have a feeling that that leaves you sometimes feeling a little left out. Is that true?

Derin: It depends. If we're, if we're talking about folding the towels. I am okay. You are a professional towel folder. I have never seen anybody fold the towel like that. No, but when we're talking about other things, yeah, sometimes I feel I feel left out. And sometimes I really want to participate. But I've learned to let you know that I want to learn, I want to get better. I need practice. I have a weird learning style. For me, it takes me a long time to learn something, but then it's very slow and all of a sudden becomes very quick. So it takes me longer to learn how to do whatever, folding towels...

Debbie: We're still working on how to fold towels...

Derin: But when we started trying to work on work with Asher, and how you had all these, you know, we went, we read books, and you'd come up with these things that you wanted to try. And there was a new thing like every couple of months, and you would have me read the book, or it would take me a while to read the book, and I would read it and then I try it and it just didn't do it very well. You know, I didn't get it. And you'd be trying and you tell me how you try And how this worked and how this is gonna change everything. And then I just couldn't get it. I, I didn't see how anybody could read a book, and then practice the next day, which is what you did. And you did it really well. And I would read the book and I go, what that? No, that doesn't make any sense, you know, positive discipline would be a good example of that. Mm hmm. And I just, I still couldn't get over it. I just, I couldn't figure out how to put in practice some of these principles that you were trying to share with me. And then then you would go, Okay, I'll just, you know, let me handle it. You know, we'd be talking to you and there'd be a perfect opportunity to try out one of these new techniques. And then I would just blow it I'd say something, like, actually really annoying me or something. Do something that's like the worst, you know, parenting 101 thing, don't do it. And now he would get worse. And then you come in and you say, you know, I got it. Once you go take a break, you know, and I would be like, Oh crap, That was the mom that was supposed to use me. And I and I didn't. I just, I wasn't getting it. And I could tell you were very frustrated with me. And I just, I didn't get it. I just have some reason why something was blocking me from following it, from doing it, from understanding, from absorbing it from using it and I was really fighting it. Hmm.

Debbie: During that time. I mean, when we were going through that and learning about positive discipline. I mean, I think that's, that was for us kind of the most pivotal period in our journey with Asher and our relationship because a couple things were going on. One is that we had by that point moved to the Netherlands, so we'd already kind of made this dramatic change as a family and not just living abroad, but then becoming a homeschooling family with you know, me being the homeschooler the homeschooling family And you being out in the world, but I spent so much time and I still do with Asher. I mean, we spend every moment most of every day together. And in those first few years of doing that I was on just this tremendous growth spurt because I had to do it in like, survive. I was in survival mode, I either had to figure this out, or we were going to crash and burn

her rapidly. And so I was having to read things and implement right away. I was talking with parent coaches, I was, you know, just constantly trying to get things back on track. And I started seeing these tremendous results with Asher. And I would notice how one little tweak would, oh my god that's just shifted everything. This is a superpower and so I would want to share that with you. And then I would share it and you didn't either Get it right away or you didn't seem...

Derin: ...very interested.

Debbie: Yeah, you didn't really seem very interested in it. So during that time, that for me was kind of the most frustrating thing because I was seeing all these great results. And then sometimes I felt like you, you would come home and with your kind of work energy, and in a totally different space, obviously, because you haven't been home reading the guardians of cool in bed, you know, doing what we've been doing all day going for a walk in the park or whatever. And so it was this shift, and then you were still parenting and what I considered to be the old style, and I was like, Oh, my gosh, he's gonna undo all the good I've done all day. And so for me, that was a huge source of tension. What was that? Like from your perspective?

Derin: Yeah, that was the toughest point in, in our relationship. Everybody's relationship. I think what's weird is thinking about this. So your Asher's growing and you're growing And I actually was happy about that. But at the same time, I was feeling really left out of the equation. And on top of that, I was really failing at all of this stuff. Like I just couldn't get it. Anything was getting, it felt like it was getting worse. I just wasn't, it just wasn't connecting, and actually get, you know, you were not nice to me during this time. And I was also having a lot of difficulties with Asher. So actually I was not happy with either of you. I mean, I was happy it was working, but it was really not in a good place mentally. So, you know, I would say something. I would say something to ask you. That was exactly the opposite of what I should have said in that moment. And then you would say something to me. The way I was talking to Asher, and we had created this vicious sort of broken circle. My ego was terrible. It was in bad shape. I feel like a terrible parent. I felt like I was disappointing you. I felt like my really stupid Asher was not going well. And I couldn't figure out why. And, and I was, I was blind to the problem, too. I could talk about it now, in retrospect. But in my mind, I was trying really hard. Mm hmm. And the fact was I wasn't, I was fighting myself and fighting my family. And that was really hard to come to that realization. The moment that crystallized it was, we were on a call with Alison, who is helping us with positive discipline. And she said to me, that doesn't seem like you're really trying hard enough. If you don't do something about this, you're going to ruin your relationship with Asher, you won't be able to handle him during the teen years, and you're very well gonna lose your relationship with Debbie...

Debbie: Wow. I don't remember that conversation in that way.

Derin: Yeah, I got so mad. But it was that moment where I actually said, Wait a minute, you know, I was like, I don't get my, my stuff together. Um, she's right. I'm not doing well enough. I'm not really trying. And I had to really examine, examine the

situation and think about what is it I'm doing Why am I Why am I not doing this? Why I can do a lot of things. This has been months, you know, I've been trying to do this and I had to really focus and be purposeful about everything I was doing. And that's when I realized that I was angry. And I was, I was stopping myself from being a good parent from that moment. And I was, I said, so I'm gonna. I'm gonna show Allison how much I love my child...

Debbie: Well you said you were angry. You said that's when you realized that you were angry. What were you angry about?

Derin: I was angry myself, but I was also angry at you because I needed you to talk to me like the way you're talking to Asher, I was having problems as a parent. You know, if I'm sitting there and I'm doing dumb things, and you talk to me the way I'm talking to Asher, which is not very respectful, if I'm being honest, I was not being respectful to Asher, and you are not being respectful to me. And that didn't help. You know, that didn't make me want to be more helpful. At a certain point, I was just like, you know, hey, you know, maybe they don't need me at all. Maybe I'm just a pain in the ass. You know, and I'm, I'm not never gonna get this. I'm just not gonna figure it out as a parent, how to be a supportive dad or you know, maybe I'm just a I'm just emotionally immature to the point where I can't I just can't do this. So I was, yeah, really down on myself and really mad at you and mad at Asher because If Asher had been, you know, just not had any of these things, then I could have a normal life or something. some crazy thought.

Debbie: That's like my classic line. If I had a typical son, I would be a great mom. Well, you know, and just to go back with what you were saying, in terms of your anger and the way you were speaking to Asher, and the way I was speaking to you, I know that for me at the time, I was very much feeling like, I already have to figure like, I'm already having to figure out how to communicate with Asher and it takes all of my effort to be a conscious positive discipline parent with this person, I don't have the energy to make sure that you're okay to like, don't have to be responsible for yourself. So that was my thinking at the time. And I'm not saying that that was right. But I know that was the way I was like, I have to take care of myself emotionally. I don't have time to take care of Derin emotionally while I'm also trying to get Asher back on track. However, you know, part of my work in you know, as we kind of started getting back on track, and really working better as a couple and as a family was that I realized how much I was not giving you an opportunity to kind of step up. So I know that the way that I was taking over was sending the message that you can't do this, you know, and so that that's, and that's not very helpful. I know that doesn't feel good when you're being told that you're doing it wrong all the time. And so a lot of my work has been figuring out either how to step back and not intervene and let you kind of deal with situations on your own. And so you have to kind of dig in and go there and tap into all those skills. And then also just noticing and trying to be more aware of how I talk to you about things that I find frustrating.

Derin: Yeah, we've definitely gotten a lot better, both of those things. But as you saw, I needed a lot more practice and gave me a lot more opportunities to practice. And I really appreciate it, it actually felt great to finally get it like when I started

finally getting some of the interaction and don't get me wrong, I'm not I still get many of them wrong. But when I finally got some, some of them working in my relationship with Asher improved, and my relationship with you improved. It was such a big difference. I felt like I was part of a family. Again, it sounds really weird, but it's true. Yeah, I'm grateful for that. And you are you, you change your tone when we're talking about things about anything to do with Asher and something we could have done better.

Debbie: So tell us about those then because I imagine there's going to be parents listening into this and maybe fathers listening to this who are going to really relate to the way you felt or your anger, you're feeling stuck or just having trouble kind of getting caught up? And knowing how to better relate to their child. What did that kind of transition look like for you once you started? Like how has your relationship with Asher changed since we went through that time?

Derin: Well, we were able to have conversations about other things, I think is the difference. So we now talk about things at dinner or when I get home from work, or in the morning, we talk about things that are on his mind, or subjects that are just a normal conversation, as whereas before, it was more like, it could have been a series of corrections or leftover frustrations or, you know, we didn't talk about those things. Now. It seems like it's a lot easier to talk about it. thing, which is fantastic I mean, nothing makes me happier than just having a normal family type moment at dinner where we're having a conversation about current events that I didn't think was possible five years ago, but it is possible. Now it feels like it feels like this is the way it should be that the relationship is now more one of mutual respect, which is totally different than the way I was before. I think he could feel I was judging him and he was judging himself. Now it's, it's different. Now I am helping him. But I'm not helping him by telling him what to do. I'm helping them by just being there for him.

Debbie: So you said you're not correcting him as much... what else? Maybe in your mindset, or you know, how, how have you changed how you've parented him?

Derin: I think well, first of all, he's amazing. So this is the thing that's like, just embracing his unique amazingness as much as you can. So I try to listen to him more, much more. And when he's frustrated I do that. I asked him why he's frustrated. I, I try to sympathize with them in new ways. And I can challenge him in creative ways. Now, to think about things. I tried to use sarcasm less...

Debbie: as a parenting tool?

Derin: Yeah, that wasn't working too well, sarcasm.

Debbie: No, but we do have a very sarcastic child now, which I guess we can both take credit for...

Derin: Smart and funny.

- Debbie: So I did want to ask you a question about the two of you. I see a lot of similarities between you guys. Especially surrounding some of your intensities or your rigid thinking, which I think is for some of the sometimes what I need to intervene, it's because you both are kind of stuck on something. I'm just wondering if you'd see that too. And if you think that helps or creates challenges in your relationship with Asher.
- Derin: It does both. So, I mean, it's the most rigid, you will see us as when we're working on a game or a mod for Minecraft, and we're up against a design challenge. And then it could be like, no, it needs to be, you know, higher resolution versus a lower resolution for this particular moment of the experience for the player. Something that doesn't mean anything anyway we both be we get very rigid. So on the one hand, it helps because he has this tremendous eye for detail as you know, I mean, incredible eye for detail, to the point I mean, he can look at an image See what, what is going on in that image, what the resolution is with it, you know, whatever. And he cares about it so much, so much. It's part of his, his soul when he's making some, he's creating something. And so you want it to be the best. And I have that, that same thing. It applies to different areas. But for us, we get it, I get it when he wants something. He said he has a vision and he wants to execute. And I'm gonna support that 100% you know, his vision. Unless of course, it conflicts with my vision. But I think it helps because I understand why he gets obsessed about wanting to make something really, really good. On the other hand, it can be troublesome if we can't figure out how to come to compromise, and we talk it out a lot more now. We didn't talk it out as much before. Now we talk it out. We'll go back and forth and back and forth. And the thing about Asher Is that he is so amazing, he can usually find a really good reason why this should be this way. I can listen. But it will take, it'll take 15-20 minutes of conversation. And that's a conversation we couldn't have five years ago. Now we know we can have a conversation. And we'll get down to details and then and sometimes they'll say, Oh, you know what, you're right, dad, that's a better way to do it. Or, like yesterday, when he had an idea that I hadn't thought that was much better. So yeah, from some perfectionist craftsmen in a family and I think that mutual respect, really makes a big difference. This is something you helped us with, you seen you have conversations with respect, and now we can do that. Be respectful to each other.
- Debbie: That's awesome. Do you have any kind of go to strategies with Asher, like if you're having a moment or a conflict? I mean, I have my strategies that I use. I'm just wondering what are kind of your go to things if you're having a...
- Derin: I've got two strategies I use. This is a thing like, we both get rusty right and he's doing really well like he is now. It's hard sometimes if he goes to a dark place but there are two that I have in my bag that I pull out. One is if he's in a really bad place, and this is a thing, like he could have said the meanest things done, the worst thing thrown, break, broken, something, whatever. And he's really frustrated. And this is the one I learned from you, which is, it's not about you. It's not about you personally. He's going through something and what he needs most right now is your love and your just your support. And you have to swallow your pride. You have to swallow your anger and just give them a hug. And it makes I

mean, that melts everything and he stops being angry, he's able to calm down and then you can have a conversation and he'll be sorry for the things he said and you'll be sorry for the things he said and then you can move on and your bond is stronger. That one took me a long time because I was so mad. I didn't want to forgive him. I wanted to know how mad I was, which is not not a good idea. And then the other one is his humor. So sometimes when you start to he starts to go to a place that's bad. It's not quite all the way but it doesn't work if he's angry. It only works when you start to see him slip off the precipice, which is just inject some ridiculous off the wall humor could be a voice, it could be something really silly that you do. And again, you might be starting to get angry, but you have to not be angry. You have to, you have to make that joke and you have to commit to it. You just have to commit to it. If you're going to put your pants on your head, you gotta put your past in your head and ask him what is wrong with this situation? You really go out there and that will cut it that usually cuts it before it goes any further.

Debbie: Yes, two great standbys, and it's amazing you know, just talking about going in. In giving him a hug, he's usually the first to apologize. Like the moment you empathize and soften. It is magic.

Derin: I think he just wants to know that you love him. I really think that's it. He might be feeling bad about himself.

Debbie: Yeah, he also doesn't—and I know none of these kids do—they don't feel good about themselves when they're out of control. It's not a pleasant feeling to lose your cool and scream about something that you know is you're making a bigger deal out of it, but you can't help it. And so, yeah, I think the moment you empathize or just come in with love, they can let go of that feeling that guilt or the shame that they're feeling. Now, you know, we've kind of walked listeners through our whole story. There's a lot of things we did not include, but there's some of the highlights. And of course not everything is happily ever after and peachy perfect all the time. So there you go. No I'd say this is still very much a work in progress. And, you know, I acknowledge, you know, just the changes that you have made over the last few years have been just tremendous in terms of you being more engaged. And also, you really have such a willingness now to try things. And even when I have to have the tough conversations about a moment or a suggestion, the next time this happens, here's another way to do it. You used to get really defensive about that. And now you're like, Okay, yeah, I see that. Okay. Thanks. I mean, it's, I know it's that easy to hear. Sometimes. And sometimes you call me on my stuff because this is a two way street. But I'm wondering, you know, just before we go any thoughts for parents who are listening to this, who are kind of not where they want to be in terms of how they're connecting with their partner, in relation to the way they parent their child, do you have any advice or thoughts to share?

Derin: Well, I think I think what really helped us was being honest with each other at that moment. And really, we had to get to that point where we were just just talking about these things in an open way and what we needed. What do we need? We both have a mutual goal, which is to raise a happy child and have a

good relationship. What do we need from each other to get that done? Those conversations were critical. It was a critical point that we were at, if we hadn't gotten through them, I don't know, would have been. I mean, we would have been just, well, we had to go, go there. If we didn't go there, you know, and I think you hurt me, you, you, you hurt me and I heard you and that was huge. We were not listening to each other.

Debbie: No, no, we were both kind of in our own little worlds of pain and unhappiness. And happiness. I mean, it wasn't all bad, but we definitely were experiencing our, our own baggage and stuff around what was being triggered in us individually by what was happening with Asher. And I will just say that, for my part, I think the thing that I learned the most through that and that I was really not doing a good job of was just talking about, you know, you said, honesty, I wasn't being I wasn't talking about a lot of stuff because I either was like, it's not worth it. He's not gonna get it. I'll just, I'll just keep doing more. But inside I was building up resentment because I felt like I was doing more. But I wasn't giving you the opportunity to do more. And I wasn't talking with you about this stuff. That was hard because I didn't want to ruffle feathers or whatever it was.

Derin: Well, I wasn't really open..

Debbie: Yes, you weren't really open to listening. It's true.

Derin: The thing I have to say is, you know, once you realize that you that you were and it did take you a couple days after our heartfelt conversation, you recognized that and you, you were you were patient with me, even when I was messing up, you were patient, like, I need to give him some rope. So he can learn how to do these things that I could tell I could feel you. Like, it was like when I was learning to drive and my mom was telling me not to run into a car. Just kind of a moment. That's funny. You had to show tremendous patience. And it was amazing. You trusted me. And that made a huge difference. Thank you for that.

Debbie: Yeah, you're welcome. I mean, I had to learn to do that. And I didn't know I wasn't doing that. So that's my piece of advice I would have for listeners if you are feeling like your relationship with your partner isn't where you want it to be, or you're not feeling supported in that it is so effective. And for what's going on with your child. And I encourage people to get help, we reached out and got help. And that was really...

Derin: That was huge.

Debbie: It was a huge thing for us because it gave us a way to finally talk about things that neither of us were really talking about. So. So Derin, I want to thank you for doing this. I know that you were nervous about coming on the show. Especially after I teased it a few weeks ago and said, We are going to go there. But thank you for really opening up and sharing I really hope and I believe that this is going to be really helpful to many listeners and it's important and I you know, we are as a family, all of us, all three of us such firm believers that there's no shame here. What we're going through is wonderful and difficult and challenging, and as are

all of Asher's differences. They're amazing and we want to be open about what it's like so that other people in our situation don't feel alone and they feel supported and connected and they can embrace what's wonderful about their journeys, too. So thanks for sharing everything you shared with us today.

Derin: Thank you for being my wife. I think this podcast is amazing. And when you first told me this idea, I thought that was the most amazing idea, though I'm a big supporter of Tilt Parenting behind the curtain. Absolutely. I'm super proud of what you're doing.

Debbie: Thank you, sweetie.

## RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- *Positive Discipline* by Jane Nelson
- *How to Practice Conscious Co-Parenting, with Jenna Flowers* (podcast)
- *Debbie and Derin on Their Parenting Journey, Part 2* (podcast)