



Episode #220

**Meghan Leahy on Why We Should
Stop Listening to Experts**

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Debbie: Hello Meghan, welcome to the show.

Meghan: Thank you so much for having me.

Debbie: I'm excited to talk about your brand spanking new book. Actually the book comes out today, like not the day we're recording this, but the day that you all are listening to this. So congratulations on that.

Meghan: Thank you.

Debbie: Yeah, we're gonna get all into it. But I always ask my guests to introduce themselves and I'd love if you could tell us a little bit about the work that you do and your personal why for the work that you do and maybe a little bit about your, your personal life, you know, your family makeup.

Meghan: Okay, my name is Meghan Leahy and I am a parenting coach. I live in Washington, DC, but my clients live everywhere all over the world. I've been writing for The Washington Post since 2013 or 2014. I do a weekly parenting column for them. And I have a brand new book out, which is crazy. And I have three girls, 16 and a half, 13 and 10, two dogs, one husband. And I grew up in Delaware, which is an important part of my life because northern Delaware is a very interesting place and has definitely made me who I am today. I started as a teacher for gifted boys and an all boys school. And I was not a great teacher, but I loved being with the kids. So I thought I'd be a school counselor. So I went back to school and got my degree in counseling my master's and realized that it's a lot of red tape. And while I was trying to figure all this out, I was having my own kids and I realized that it's a lot harder than I ever thought it would be. So I started going to parenting classes myself, started teaching the parenting classes, and then went out on my own after my third was born three weeks into having my third baby, I started a business. So it's been, yeah, over 10 years, and it's great. I'm a super type eight enneagram. So, I'm a business owner married to a business owner and that's, that's how we roll. Yeah, my personal Why is, I don't you know, it's funny, I, I never really think about that, because it's like, the only thing I'm good at. And I just see it as trying to kick the can down the road, in just supporting people and just kind of having this very brief time on this earth that I have leaving some amount of good. Right, while providing for my family. So, yeah, I like to make people laugh and I like to just bring a lot of humanity to this parenting work. And that's my why. Ask me again in a couple months... it might be different.

Debbie: I love that answer. And, yeah, humanity. It's such a great word. And I really, that's really the tone that I felt come through the book that we're going to be talking about today. It really felt comforting, and it did make me laugh out loud. And it was very different from so many parenting books that I read, and I read a lot of them. I'm sure you do, too. I kind of read all the parents, and I just really appreciated it. So let's start there. So you have a new book out today. It's called

Parenting Outside the Lines: Forget the Rules, Tap Into Your Wisdom, and Connect with Your Child. So, tell us maybe briefly how the book came about and what you hope it does in the world.

Meghan: So this book was funny. I submitted a proposal and the editors from Tarcher Perigee were, they came back and they were like, so this is as boring as we could ever imagine anything being. It was essentially like how to get through the day with your young child. And even while I was writing it, I'm like, boy, like snooze-o-rama, right? So they were like, We just want a book that sounds like you. So I did. I essentially wrote a book about what parents talk to me about every single day, right? So I get parenting questions from my clients, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of parents I've worked with since like 1998. All I've done is work with kids and parents. And then the Washington Post, I get tons of questions. So I just kept thinking about what people are constantly asking me about? And what is the theme that seems to run through it? So it's a book I wanted to have, like some amount of detail, but as you know, there's already so many good parenting books on how to there's a lot of detailed parenting books. And I didn't want my book to be that. There is some detail in the book like how to, I don't even not that many really but a little. I really wanted it to be more like here's your average scenario. Here are some Questions to Ask yourself about it so that you can better understand yourself and your child. Mostly yourself, because my parent coach and I had a child coach. Right. So, my hope is that the book, you know, every great book I've ever read, there's always been at least one part where I just kind of sit back and go, huh, huh? Right. It's rarely that the whole book changes my life. It's usually one or two things, right? And if that my book does that, that's, if my book provokes you, or you get mad at me. That's also great. If my book invites you to look at your, your own past and how it's living in your present. Awesome, if my book frees you to stop reading parenting junk, even better. You know, whatever you take from it, it's kind of like as you know, when you release something that's done and so however it hits people is theirs. My dream is that somebody reads it and says to their friend, I just read this book. It didn't suck. You should read. It just passes it off. I have really low expectations.

Debbie: I love it. That's great. That's great.

Meghan: Well, you know, I just wanted some fun and I wanted my own life to be a little bit on display. Because no matter what, and I'm sure you sometimes get this too in your work, people can't believe how human we are. The number one thing I hear is, you're so relatable. Right? And I'm like, Who are you talking to? Everyone should be relatable. If you're listening to somebody who isn't relatable, they're lying to you. Or you've built a story about them in your mind, right?

Debbie: I'll just say what I liked about it, and then I want to go into some of the chapters and some of the concepts that jumped out at me, but one of the things I liked about it so much is that you covered things that I don't think I've seen in other books before, like, it wasn't a typical, you know, unfolding of the table of contents and you know, it you really went into some areas that I really appreciated, including, even just theories that parenting theories and you don't actually have one and that that's okay. You have some great chapters on sibling stuff, which I

do want to talk with you about because that's a huge issue for so many families who listen to this podcast and also just the work that we're doing on ourselves. You have a whole chapter on apologizing, like, I just it was really unexpected to me. It just felt very fresh. So I don't know if that makes sense. But it just had a really lovely structure that I did feel like I was just chatting with a friend like I was sitting down to coffee and talking with with someone about this stuff that can be really hard and confusing, and sometimes funny.

Meghan: I appreciate that. Thank you. You know, I'm you've probably found this too, is that parenting has become very theory driven or trend driven. And I feel like maybe we're moving away from it. But when I started having my kids it was very, like, Are you positive? Are you mindful? And I just think, what is that garbage? What is this? Not those actual theories that I just began to, to see a very clear through thought of when the parent decided their theory over the needs of their child. disaster. Mm hmm. And the majority of people who hire me are positive parents. So everybody asks me, like, oh, man, you must get like, people beating their kids just total racks, right? And I'm like, no, they're mostly mindful. Right? Like, what I'm actually coaching around is mostly people who are now afraid of their kids or, even worse, afraid of themselves. Right? And because a lot of us were not given what we needed. And you know, God bless all our parents, they did their best. You know, we're either going with that or we're going against it. And in the pursuit of not recreating misery, parents have swapped in positivity. Positivity is not a way to be.

Debbie: Say more about that.

Meghan: It's so like, I love I'm not actually a positive person but I'm friends with a lot of positive people. And it has its place as does sorrow, as does anger, as does frustration, as does joy. And so when we kind of whitewash parents and everything, how we're supposed to react and proactive, everything is positive, then we necessarily negate all those others, necessary feelings, and emotions, and even reactions. So, parents are kind of double down on themselves. First of all, they might be going against who they are with all this positivity. And second of all, then they kind of create a nightmare, and can't believe it. So I just didn't want the parenting book to look, here's my thing, if you're a positive parent or mindful parent or conscious parent, I don't know by the time somebody reads this will be something else. But if you do that, and it works, rock on. And by working means, you know, 70 to 75% of the time things are basically okay. Right. If it's not working, I want the book to invite everyone to look at the disconnect, to say, what am I trying to put on myself? That isn't true? What am I afraid of? Am I afraid of upset? Am I afraid of apologizing? Am I afraid of raising my voice? Right? Because now we're not allowed to raise our voice. Right? We're not allowed to stand somewhere and say stop it. Right now that's so my invitation is like, stop looking always to other people, or their theories or another blog or another BuzzFeed list. And like, look in yourself. Okay, what is happening every time we get in a fight about tooth brushing, what is actually happening instead of trying to find another fix? Yeah. So I just kind of want everyone to back away from the only thing I believe in which is kind of the theory of the book is the power connection, which doesn't always show up positively. And you have a teen

so you know what I speak. When you say no to the tech, because you're saying yes to the two of you connecting, that doesn't appear positive. That's not even received positively. The fruits of that labor are so far down the road, we may not even see it. Right. So somebody will say, well, that's not a positive connection. I don't like how that feels. To which I say I know. But that's the word. Mm hmm.

Debbie: I like what you said about not recreating misery. Like I think that so many of us go into this parenting gig right with a clear idea of the kind of parent we're going to be and I and yeah, you're right, it's either in we want to do the opposite of how we were raised because we want to just do things very differently or we're embracing that. But, we tend to then spend a lot of time not trusting ourselves. And you talk a lot about that. I really appreciated the focus that you spend on the parent trusting their intuition and tuning in with themselves. I'm wondering, you know, when you work with clients, is this a thing you have to retrain parents to do to trust their instincts and tap into that intuition?

Meghan: Yes. And you know, you've been a part of this world a long time. There's always what parents are telling me and then what they're saying. And so I can pretty quickly gauge how in touch people are with themselves. And some of the parents that call me like me are full tilt neurotic, which means that you know yourself enough to know you're making mistakes and you know, you need layers and layers of self knowledge, which is like, maybe the worst thing ever, this constant reflection on yourself about yourself and for yourself, right? And then there's some parents who are really blind to it. Like oh my God, I can't believe I've been shaming my child about this thing. And it's completely correlated to how I feel about failure or success or what a good kid looks like. And so every parent that comes to me is somewhere in that soup. So we always start with, okay, you say you care about this topic. Do you care or do you think you should care? Is it a problem or do you think it is a problem? Sometimes we just don't even know what that means. Right? It's usually around for the little littles. You know, the three, the three horsemen of the apocalypse of parenting, which is you know, sleeping, eating and toileting. I mean, if we could come together and write the book that would solve those? Billionaires. And there are 100,000 books written on this subject. Maybe none of them have ever helped anyone, because I've owned them all. And, and it kind of comes down to you can't force kids to do any of those things without it being a social services issue. And this is kind of where we meet our first set of parenting expectations. You know, he's old enough to I've made this wonderful food now. You know, I bought you the beautiful bed and the alarm that makes you stay in bed in the morning. And sometimes they say I just want him to sleep in my bed with me, I say then then go ahead. Why not? Well, my mom, my sister, my pediatrician. Okay, so you've also just been through a horrific divorce and your son feeling upside down and you've moved. So is this okay for right now? Yeah, it is okay for right now. Okay? Because we also then maybe need to accept that not every decision we make is forever. The idea of changing our minds does not connect with parents anymore of saying, Okay, one day and then changing your mind on the road. We think if we say okay to our kids, like, then it's like written in stone. Right?

Debbie: Yeah, everything feels like it's the biggest decision, you know, and we have to get it right.

Meghan: Oh my God, when I let my oldest teenager get on Snapchat. Literally the next day was like, Is somebody sending you pictures of genitalia yet? And she was like, Mom, what are you talking about? But I was like, this is it. I've invited all the bad people in and right, I saw this as a decision of momentous trauma problem. mistrust, opening the floodgates. And of course, I was parenting myself as a team, because I was a disaster. Right? So my husband had to take me aside, still does every day, by the way, to say the kids aren't you. Yeah. So yeah, back to your original question. The parents and I really have to go through what our values actually are by our and there's because I don't actually have too many opinions and people's values. As long as we're not openly beating or shaming kids, and I do love science, so you know, I will say, Well, no, here's kind of what data shows works for this type of hip. But I don't know your kid. You do. Other than that, I'm just trying to hone in on what the parents want and need for their kids. And that's different for every family.

Debbie: Yeah, exactly. And as you were answering that I was thinking about one of the chapters in my book is about questioning everything you thought you knew about parenting and it really seems like such a radical concept because especially for first time parents, we just don't know what we don't know. We trust people. We don't trust ourselves. And so I love this idea of even just starting with their values and going there and like what is important to you, you know, your kid becoming fluent in who your child is like and even that answer about Should they sleep in my bed or not? That's totally your call. What are your child's needs? And it's just it seems radical and so simple to parent that way.

Meghan: Yeah. And it's, I have a lot of empathy for parents, because, you know, and I'm sure you find this a lot. Things aren't working. They know that. And I say, you know, listen, you didn't wake up one morning and say, I'm gonna destroy my parenting life and create misery. Here we go. I was like, you know, it's death by a million cuts. And the various sources you're reaching for to help you are making it worse because they're not rooted in anything you believe may be true, or you don't know why. And that's also not necessarily their fault. I mean, America has monetized fear. Just the way we've monetized being fat and getting skinny, being poor and getting rich. We've monetized parenting and more important fear. More importantly, and so I struggle with that I'm actually like, part of that. And, but I do want parents to always be returning to the idea of even when you don't have the answers, that is an answer. Right? Right, right. Like, every time I've stood outside my kid's room, like, I don't know what to do, like, I have a whole chapter on the unseen moments of parenting, all the things you don't do. You know, there's not a lot out there about that, because that doesn't sell. It's not sexy, right? It's not a jar. It's not a list. It's just what happens when you don't decide to do harm. Right? So it's a tough one, but I feel like people that like will take administering COVID I feel like that's changing a lot of lives. I mean, it'll be interesting to see, God willing, we'll all be around how our family lives are changed in this country, for the better and for the worse, as a result of all the things that have been stripped from us.

Debbie: Yeah, there are a lot of great quotes in your book. And one of them that I had written down that I wanted to just share with you that I loved is "Feeling unsure is not a sign of weakness. Feeling unsure is a sign that you are parenting." And that for me, I was like that you just nailed it. That feeling of uncertainty. Am I doing this wrong? That's what it means to be a parent. And I just love that.

Meghan: Yeah. And I think you know, just like you mentioned before, when we have the kids, that uncertainty is as threatening as any feeling we've ever had. Right when you are holding your new baby, or when you, you know, a lot of parents call me, because I'm the next to last step on the road to diagnosis. Right? They've called the pediatrician, the pediatrician is recommended a therapist, the therapist is recommended, right? I'm wanting a long line before it ends at a psych eval or neuro psych er, and I'm kind of holding their hand. And they're just desperate for anything else, but a diagnosis. And so I keep saying, you know, I know you don't want all this uncertainty, and I know you want answers, but this is parenting. Like that. This is not the failure. This is you one step in front of another. And so, all this doubt and uncertainty and fear is building all the resilience. You'll need you You just don't even know yet. And so I kind of see that as my job is telling them or reminding them like, No, no, no. Like, let's keep going, let's keep going like, this isn't the end, whatever you think is happening, or this isn't the failure or, and even what somebody says about your kid, that's also just a word. Right? Like we all go home and have to parent the kid, right? So, I want parents to embrace struggling, not knowing, not having answers. And instead of turning the spotlight on how to change my child, or I need another list, or I need another expert to look inside and say, What is my struggle about? What's hurting me here? Right. Is there anything I can do about it or not? Mostly Not right. But sometimes, you know, maybe just laying on the floor and breathing, right. But I'm just kind of taking stock because I live like you do. But I live in New York and I live in a city and I coach a lot of people that just are ready for the next thing, the next fix, the next solution. And that's also our, I don't know what created what. I don't know if the culture created the parents like this, or the parent keeps creating the culture, but we're caught in a cycle. So it's a tough one.

Debbie: It is, it is and you know, you have I don't remember what chapter it was in. But you talked about the fact that you write reminders to yourself to help you stay true and tapped into your intuition about the kind of parent you wanted to be and, you know, modeling what you were just talking about that this is just showing up and doing the work and it's not This is the work on ourselves. And I actually wanted to read one of them if that's okay, and then I'd love to hear about that. Because for me, especially with the parents who listen to this show, we are always wanting to know, how do I show up for this kid when I'm feeling like a failure when it feels like every day we're going into battle or you know, it's just so hard and you write reminders and so this one that I that I had pulled out from your book, a letter you wrote to yourself, you said, "Dear Meghan, please be kind and allow Sophia to choose her own clothing even if in that choosing she never gets out of her pajamas. And when she refuses to put on normal clothing, smile and say awesome time for waffles. I mean it when you say it, hug her. Love, Meghan." And I loved that so much.

Meghan: Yeah, you know, and you know this very well from your work and your parenting life. The same brain that tortures itself can't always remember to help itself. We know that from our kids, whether the kids are you know, neurotypical or not, right? We know that kids have amazing intentions and can't follow through for a variety of reasons. The basic one being immaturity, right, which is normal. And by normal I mean typical, right? But the same is true for adults. We're doing so many things. So many more things than our parents were doing. Often, not always. And yet, we will shame ourselves for forgetting what to say or how to be or what to do. And so simply writing notes wherever I will see them is like a little mini frying pan to my head every time. Alright, I want that. You know, as simple as leaving like beautiful, peeled cucumber on the counter Cheetos. I'll eat either Humans are animals didn't mean so I gotta throw myself a bone and leave the cucumbers. And sometimes if I want the Cheetos put out the Cheetos. So like, my middle. I didn't know what was up with her. She was just born different. And I knew that but in being a good parent in the expert that I am I largely ignored that. And because I was too busy helping other people. And so finally, I knew she was anxious, but she's also pretty profoundly gifted. And we finally tested that. And again, I know right in my head, I know but in my heart, I don't. Right. But I know that moving her from A to B when she gets hyper focused. She looks, for instance, she's 13 she should be able to move from one thing to another without the reminders, quote, unquote, right. She "should be able to." But that's not how her brain works. So for a long time, I've had notes up, right that would say, go and touch her, which would mean, hand on the shoulder, down on my knee, and a smile in my eyes, right? Go, go touch her. Because then I would stop screaming because I'm an expert at screaming from room to room. Oh, give me a four floor house and I'm like hollering my head off. Right? So I needed that note, and I still need that note. And sometimes I still hang it up. Because, you know, she's, you know, heads and tails academically above, but then sometimes it's like a 10 year old or nine year old, right that that differential between the intellectual capacity and then her ability to transition or hone in or refocus. And so those notes are needed constantly. I have notes even for parenting a teen that I would write notes and as they get older, I wouldn't want them to find them or I would code them. So I had a note that said, have fun, which would mean to have fun with her. You know, do it to talk with her or it just get into what she's into. It just closed my brain because again, I'm not a naturally positive person. So I would need to be thrown back into positivity for some parents. I'm more I work with. Ironically, most parents call me because they don't know how to hold a boundary. So then we have to come up with words around holding boundaries or notes, or I'm a big fan of iPhone alerts. And just a pop up of what boundary looks like right? Because it saw and how you hold the boundary with each of your children even within one family looks different, right? And then you'll read something Oh, well holding a boundary within ADHD looks like this. Maybe? Maybe not. Because they're also their own people. Yeah. With their own set of hormones and, you know, temperaments. So, yeah, I find writing notes is a kindness to our parenting brains. Especially if you have been doing one thing one way for a long time. Because we'll always go back into the kabuki theater if the kid does B then we all fight about C then we go back.

Debbie: I love that. So I did want to ask you a little bit about siblings. You have at least one chapter devoted to siblings and this is a challenge for so many families. As the parent of an only child, I always feel kind of at a loss when this comes up and I'm talking to groups of parents this, I can't personally relate to this. And so I would love to know some of your strategies, I don't know if strategies is the right word. But you know, when there are imbalances maybe in the household in the way that kids are showing up and and therefore the attention that parents are focusing on different kids within a family is something that really causes a lot of stress for so many families, as well as kind of the interpersonal dynamic between the kids and one influencing the other. Like, do you have any best practices or maybe one or two best practices you can share when you work with families dealing with this?

Meghan: Um, it's just, we're not going for fairness, we're not going for equality. It just never works out like that. At any given point one child needs more than another. And in some families, one child always needs more than the rest. And so the first best practice is to just embrace the reality of your family. Right stop equalizing. If you have, you know, a kid with different diagnoses, and you have a kid with a different, you know, physical issue and you're prepared with a, you know, whatever that is what is. So, when the kids are like, This isn't fair, you're like, you're darn tootin. And that's a blessing. That's a blessing to say it's not fair. Because life isn't fair. And we don't really need to teach that if we just let life be all lifee. Right. So the best practice is don't imagine anything other than what you have in front of you at any given day. The second thing is that I have in the book, like a basic list of just, stop what you're doing. But to begin, whatever the fights are, and however you're reacting, stop that. push pause on your reaction. So the kids always come home and fight, fight, fight, fight. And you always go in and scream, scream, scream, and usually the go to for parents is ripping technology away. Stop that. And that will give you a chance to start to look at, okay, they always do this. I always do that. And then when I do that, it gets worse. Right? Or when I tell the one kid you can't treat your little sister like that, then this happened. So when I do Right, because it's not working because if it were, then they wouldn't have bought the book. They wouldn't be listening to this podcast, there'd be no problems. And then I have a list of questions like, and as you know, are they just hungry? Right? Yeah. Hunger, exhaustion. It's like 90% of our problems. I'm just not being well fed and not having enough rest. I see in my work, I'm always asking parents have we unintentionally or intentionally created competition. There's so many comparisons. And not like in that after school special way where one kid is locked in a box and the other kid is put up on a throne, but in very subtle ways that still cause a tremendous amount of fighting. Yeah. I'm also always inviting parents I'm or I'm looking to see What is your comfort level with discomfort? Because when humans live together, there's a lot of friction. So, a lot of parents I meet have this really unrealistic idea that kids are going to get along with each other all the time. And the data is like, no. So how can we make friends with friction? And I try to also really empower parents again, the vast majority of parents I speak to I do know that a lot of parents react, you know, violently in words and and physically in all kinds of ways. But the vast majority of parents eyes, the two are not meaning to be but super wishy. Just like stop. I mean, you know, don't do that. You know, they're not, there isn't a lot of

strong leadership. So, my best practice is for family meetings and the family meeting is really, really rough. Because if you've never done a family meeting, and then you start one and you're like, Hey, you guys treat each other like crap, we can't do it anymore. Let's be nice to each other. It's gonna be like, deuces, I'm out. Right? So simply starting a family meeting where everyone just has a laugh, and you finish it with Oreos, and you go to bed. cultivating connection and good Mojo, is your first step toward helping siblings and also connecting with each sibling one on one. And I also always invite parents to let the one child complain about the other. Always. Mm hmm. So my youngest is always just so I walk in and be like, Man, you know, little sister sucks. She's like, it's the worst. My sisters are the worst. And I'm like, yeah, I see it. Allowing your child to vent about their real emotions and how you don't have to go down the hole with them like, yeah, your sisters are awful people, I don't know what's happened, but just being a safe container for all that frustration. Your child doesn't feel the need to fight it out as much. And they feel like they have your ear. They matter. Especially if there's a child at home who takes up a lot of attention because of different issues. It's really, really, really frustrating. It's frustrating in our family that my middle gifted child seems to get treated differently. Because she does. And you know, I have to walk and talk that out with the kids a lot.

Debbie: It's really always coming back to the things that we can do right as parents in it and always starting with, with what we thought this was going to look like or what the picture we have in our head versus what's actually happening. And so I really appreciate those, those strategies that you shared, thank you for that. So I really just wanted to touch upon you have a chapter it's called, is it too late now to say sorry, and I am a huge fan of repairing, I think, you know, I'm well versed at repairing. I apologize a lot. I have learned to do that. And I and I think it's also where some of the most beautiful moments that I've had with my son have happened in the aftermath of a situation where I've apologized and we've kind of connected on a deeper level. I would love to hear why You wanted to include, you know, that chapter why you think it's so important for parents to be able to apologize to say sorry.

Meghan: Oh, it's so vulnerable. It's so vulnerable. And the simplicity of an apology. It's just its deepest simplicity that makes it the hardest thing to do for so many parents. And I have a lot of empathy because a lot of us just were not brought up being apologized to. We were not brought up being apologized to by any adults in our lives. teachers, coaches, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, that was just not the norm, the parenting way. Why would you apologize to a child? Right, you would just say something like, Well, you know, I didn't mean it or I'm sorry if you took that wrong, right, which is the blame apology. The politicians apology. But the beauty is, and sometimes when I read parenting books and when I listen to things, I see a lot of strategies and scripts and things to say, in place of a heartfelt apology. And the humility of the apology forces the parent to take that book out and also, maybe we don't have to make everything into a teaching opportunity. Like I just feel like sometimes all we are told to do as parents is well you know, what am I teaching my child and what do I expect them to learn here and how do I expect them to be and how about we just own our stuff? Say I'm sorry and move it along. Not everything has to be a thing, right? And the hard thing about apology

to is beyond its vulnerability is that you won't always see the fruits of this labor in ways that you think, maybe for a couple of years, so if you start it when the child's very young, you know, you might be thinking I'm just sitting here like a chump apologize in this kid, you know, they're the jerk and but it's coming. Right? It really, really manifests if you give it some time. And it also manifests if you look for the small details. So when you apologize and it's from your heart, you will often not always the child will meet your eyes and you will see a flicker of Oh, my mom or my dad is being real here. Like they're not trying to get one more thing out of me. Right? They're not trying to get me to say something or be a different person or dead like they're showing up just to say sorry. And if you can get that flicker of recognition than a child, and again, it comes through in different ways, some kids aren't big eye contact makers. So it might just be silence might be a feeling in their body, that they may get closer to you. Right? If you can cultivate that what you're cultivating, like you just said, is deep connection and deep trust. And more importantly, you are raising a human that can give that to other humans, which then it does all these other needs for all these other strategies. And grips and perfectionism. Right? All the perfectionism we put on ourselves as parents, all the things that we, you know, it's kind of you know, like it's like bad diets, you know, you can eat a doughnut so all you do is think about donuts, right? All the parents I can't yell like, what are you a freakin robot? Like, you're gonna yell. Let's have a practice of apologizing. And yeah, we'll work on the yelling but it just there's so much humanity in it. And there's so much vulnerability in it that it can be highly threatening to a lot of parents' nervous system. So sometimes we have to go slow. Sometimes we have to go gentle. I love Dr. Neufeld's work. He always says that he wishes humans came with the lights on their heads red, yellow, green, right for when to proceed. So if I hurt your feelings, and then I come in hot with anybody. But you're not ready to receive it, you'd show up as red or yellow. And so I think if we get in the practice of apologizing, then we even learn when? When is our child able to receive it? Just because we want to give it doesn't mean they're ready to receive it. Yeah, just so that's so hard. Because if I'm ready to give you something, then you better be ready to receive it. So it's just one of the most powerful things you can do for another human is to offer as much of a real apology as you can. And I said in the chapter, sometimes I really just don't feel all that sorry. I really think that my kid deserves what I gave them, but I know that I'm the adult. It's always my responsibility to be better.

Debbie: In the chapter, you said that it's never our kids responsibility to come to us first. And, and I think it's important to state that because sometimes when we are feeling hurt or that our, if that's our pattern right to to hold a grudge or to ground into that, but it's like, no, we're the adults here. And it's always our job to show up to do that.

Meghan: Yeah, and you know, and I'm sure that in your work and then all everything that you do, parents do believe they're showing up. I mean, they do. Right. Um, and they are, it's just like you said, Sometimes we're really not aware of our different biases and expectations. And if we could just consciously drop that. Just, you know, as soon as it well he needs to come and talk. You know, he doesn't write

and she needs to know. Boy is that mature work. Yep, that's, that's all I mean, I yeah, I wrote a book about it.

Debbie: But the work continues. I always say we get lots of opportunities to practice.

Meghan: The struggle is real.

Debbie: It is indeed. Yeah. So good. So good. So before we go again, listeners, Meghan's brand new book as of today out in the world is Parenting Outside the Lines, and where can people connect with you? Where's the best place to follow your work and your social media, all that good stuff.

Meghan: Yeah, and mlparentcoach everywhere -- that's Twitter, which is a garbage fire but I'm on their Instagram, Facebook, and mlparentcoach.com is my website that has all my services. I'm doing a monthly q&a, which is to pay what you can in the time of COVID, so you know, \$5 a month. You know, as little as that, so there's something for everybody there. And that's also where you can order my book. Awesome.

Debbie: Well, listeners, as always, I will have links to all of that in the show notes page. And I definitely recommend that you check out Meghan's book, as you can hear, she keeps it real and is very, yeah, it just feels like you're sitting down with a friend and you feel very seen through the pages of this book. And you'll get in a few laughs as well. So I just want to say congratulations again on the book. And thank you for coming by and sharing all of this with us today and taking so much time to talk on the show today.

Meghan: Thank you. And I'd like to personally thank you for all of the good work you do for all of the people you find to talk to, you've helped so many people and you probably know that but thank you very much for everything you do.

Debbie: Thank you so much.

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- Ann Douglas' website
- *Parenting Through the Storm: Find Help, Hope, and Strength When Your Child Has Psychological Problems* by Ann Douglas
- David Flink's website
- Eye to Eye national mentoring organization
- *Thinking Differently: An Inspiring Guide for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities* by David Flink