



Differently Wired Club

Building Stress Tolerance & Motivation with Ned Johnson & Debbie Reber

Debbie Reber

All right, come on in. Welcome to our special event on building stress tolerance and motivation. With me, Debbie Reber and my dear friend and colleague, Ben Johnson. Well just give people a minute to get into the room and we will get started. And the reason I'm starting a minute late is because I could not figure out how to share my screen properly. But I'm all over it at this point. We're good. We're good to go.

Ned Johnson

So why because you're such a natural sharer. So I'm surprised.

Debbie Reber

All right, and we'll just wait for one moment, and then we'll get started. Actually, I'm gonna stop sharing, and I'm gonna see if I can get the poll going. That said, I put together a little poll. If you have a moment, just answer those questions that will help us get some just information about who's here tonight. And that will help us make sure that we can speak to what you all are dealing with.

Don't want to answer if you're just joining us? Yeah. If you're just joining us, there's a poll you can just answer. If you feel like it, just give us a little information about ages of your kids. If you're dealing with mental health challenges if you have specific diagnoses, and then we're always curious about school refusal because that's such a pretty prevalent in this community

Ned Johnson

It's been very trendy in the last couple of years.

Debbie Reber

very trendy, very trendy indeed. And if you want to take a moment the chat is open. Katherine's asking for a poll. Not sure how to.

Ned Johnson

Maybe cut down on the post quiz right by at the bottom of the screen. It popped up for me.



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Debbie Reber

I popped up. Yeah, it's still up. I haven't ended it. You guys are so helpful. So I'm gonna keep it open for just one more minute. David, I would say just parents tonight. This is really aimed at parents specifically. But good question. Thank you. So the chat is open. Hey, Cheryl, if you want to say hello, say where you're joining us from? Well, while people finish answering the polls. That would be great. It's nice to know there are people on the other end of this. I see we already have a question in the q&a. We've got Melbourne, Delaware. bucketlist. Yeah, right. Scotland, late. Wait, Australia, San Jose, Canada. So cool. Another Perth, Australia, western coast, from Perth. Awesome. So lovely to see. names and places. Okay. We have a lot to get into it. But thank you for indulging me and sharing where you're from. It's super exciting. I'm going to end the poll now. And let's just share the results really quickly. And then we're gonna get started. So if I click share, we should be able to see that. So ages of kids, it looks like the majority is between 14 and 19 over 55%. We've also got some 11 to 13 year olds 12% of young adults, and then also a number of parents with kids under 11. So I think a lot of our what we talked about tonight is it's going to be relevant and a lot of it's about us as parents and managing our anxiety as well. So that's just good to know about 30 37% are currently dealing with school refusal, and some have in the past as well. And then we've got ADHD or is in the house 80% ADHD, nearly 50% Autism 27% learning disabilities 40% of gifted 50% twice exceptional. And then 11% other and then mental health we've got anxiety seems to be the most prevalent and then also some depression and OCD. Okay, awesome. I am going to stop sharing the poll now, and I'm going to officially welcome you. So welcome to this event. It's the first live event I've posted in almost a year. But I was really inspired to have this conversation. And when I reached out to Ned, thankfully, he said, Yeah, let's do it. So we'll take a few minutes to kind of do our housekeeping and we'll introduce ourselves and then we'll, we'll get into it. So yeah, so I'll quickly introduce myself. My name is Debbie Reber. I'm the founder of tilt parenting. hosting this event tonight. If you're not familiar with tiller, it's a resource and website for parents raising what I call differently wired kids now neurodiverse kid, kids is the term I'm most commonly used. I have a podcast called till parenting, I have a robust community called the differently wired club. And my most recent book is differently wired. And this is where I kind of share our story in a kind of a manifesto in book form. So that's a little bit about me, Ned, how would you like to introduce yourself?

Ned Johnson

Have a couple of hats that I wear. My day job is I'm a tutor geek. I've been here since 1993. I've been working with kids as a tutor. So I have like 50,000 hours one on one with other people's teenagers, mostly juniors in high school. So I'm kind of in the trenches all the time, and have learned a lot from these young folks. And then my new life as a parent and author,



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co author, with Dr. William sticks, root of a couple of books. Thank you. Thank you, Vanna White self church. And our follow up book, what do you say? And like Debbie, we're interested in pulling from neuroscience and psychology and our own experience and wisdom that we've gleaned from others. And just trying to put more tools in people's toolbox. It's because raising kids has never been easy. And certainly, the last few years have probably been the high watermark. And in some of the challenges for all of us with kids. I have a 19 year old daughter who is autistic mask and was diagnosed at EGP teen, which was a wonderful gift to finally understand most of all her to understand herself better. We know the struggle, but we didn't really know when included folks who did the neuropsychological evaluation couldn't quite put their finger on what was going on. In our 22 years old with ADHD, both lovely, lovely humans. It has been ups and downs. And that's kind of part of the part of the part of the job. But I'm delighted to be part of this conversation because you love your kids just the way that Debbie and I love our kids. We would just like to help a little bit if we can.

Debbie Reber

Yeah, awesome. Yes. And I didn't mention if you don't know me, I have a 19 year old odd ADHD twice exceptional, fascinating human. So yeah, men and I can talk about our kids quite a lot. And I just so respect and value. Let's work in this space. And anyone who listens to my podcast knows that I refer to the self driven child on a very regular basis. It's been really my handbook for this phase of life. So a couple of little housekeeping items, this is being recorded. So I will be sharing the replay tomorrow, I will also grab the chat, because often they're good resources shared in the chat, I will remove names. So it's anonymous. But I'll share the chat, the replay and then we'll also we're pulling together resources, if you want to dive deeper into some of this stuff. So that will go out tomorrow, that will be available that replay will be available for a month. So if you want to go back and take notes, or that's a good way to do that, the chat you can see is open, you can set it to your writing to everyone or you can set it to you're just writing to the hosts and panelists. So if you are contributing to the conversation, then make sure it's set to everyone. If you have a question, please post it in the q&a, as opposed to the chat. That will just be a good place for us. When we pivot to the q&a, which we'll do at about eight o'clock Eastern time, then we'll start to go through those questions. Please write them as briefly and succinctly as you can contact us great, Aye. Aye usually give way too much context for anything that I'm saying as I'm doing right now. But I would just say that try to keep it as brief as possible so we can get through as many questions as possible. And then I just want to give a shout out to my oh my stat my Oh, sorry. I just saw a note from Andrea that my audio is staticky. Okay, is our other people hearing that because I'll switch. I don't want to do a touch. Really? Okay. I'm gonna pivot



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then. Because I am high tech over here. I'm actually going to take these out and see how my audio sounds. Give me one second please.

Okay,

Ned Johson

Is that any better? Great. Sounds much clearer. Thank you.

Debbie Reber

Thank you so much, Andrea, for pointing that out. Um, okay, so I just wanted to give a shout out in the chat. Um, you see this person, Darren, and that is my husband. And I just want to say thank you, Darren, for being here and being tech support for tonight. So, if you have questions or anything, you can also reach out to Darren, and, and we'll get you sorted. So, okay. Why did I want to do this talk, I wanted to do this talk, because I continue to get questions often in you know, my differently wired club, or, you know, for my podcast, about, you know, parents are just feeling really stuck when our kids are I use the word stalling out, but especially this time of year, but you just get to a point where you're like, I just don't know what I'm doing anymore. Like I'm, I'm trying the same things, we're in this bad cycle, there's conflict, I feel like I'm losing influence and the stakes feel so high. It is just a complicated time. And so again, I refer to the work that Ned and Bill six rune have put out into the world through their books. And I just really wanted to have a real and honest conversation that was specifically geared for those of us raising neurodivergent kids, because as we know, not all this stuff is aimed at parents like us. So that is why I want to make this happen. And I just want to say, for those of you who are here, who are here, just be aware that everyone's coming to this from a different place with a different lens, different, you know, experiences in the moment, we've got people kind of really in crisis mode, we have people just at different stages. So if you're sharing and participating in the chat, just be aware of that. This is such a supportive community. So I just want to kind of throw that out there. And so the plan is for us to have a moderated conversation. And then we crowdsourced questions. So we'll go through a bunch of those, and then we'll take questions. Live tonight. So anything you want to add before we kind of dive in?

Ned Johnson

Well, it actually isn't something you and I talked about the other day. And it's simply this that if you have a kid who's having a hard time, it is hard as a parent not to doubt yourself, doubt your instincts, wonder what mistakes you made, what you should have done differently. You will very likely have friends, maybe not so friends, frenemies you know, spouses in Los, we're looking at you like why can't shoot Get it together? Why can't you get



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your kid to get it together? And it's and so you know, it's horrible. I mean, they never talked about this. My kid and my daughter especially had five really hard years and probably 10 that were just Marley hard. And, and at some point, I said to my writing partner, I said, you know, I was I was having a little bit hard time and and it's kind of like the thought that kind of keeps you to the stress that pops up in my head of, you know, what kind of, you know, a legend, parenting expert, and I have I got a kid who's struggling this way. And they'll just look to me and he said, Thank God, you know, the stuff that you do, you got to hit us really hard and leaders in every tool in your toolbox. And I'd say the same thing to all of you. If you're joining if you're a fan Debbie's if you're part of the tech community, it means that you're really committed to learn to doing what's right by your kid and learning. And it's a constant process and everywhere is simple formula. Watching so that helps you wouldn't be here with us. And of course, it's a damn moving target because what your kid needs to do when he was six or she when she needs when she's 16 is changing all the time because kids like to keep the parents hopping. But I just want to say that for any of you who are the little down on yourself and feeling discouraged and whatever you know, and even ashamed about this. Just I just want to really honor that it's hard to raise kids full stop. And raising a kid who is differently wired is really hard and for people who are judging you, honestly they just don't know what the hell they're talking about. So you can smile and nod I can just wish them well or wish them bad. I don't need to totally your call. But I just, you know, that's been my experience anyway.

Debbie Reber

Yeah. Yeah. Thank you so much for that. Yes. We have had that conversation and I yeah. Yes, I it keeps me very invested in my work because I need this.

Ned Johnson

I need to make sure you that too. Yeah.

Debbie Reber

Yes. So let's, so we taught and this is called Building stress tolerance and motivation. So we're gonna give you a three step process on how to get your kid to do anything.

Ned Johnson

Now. That is, again, it's no charge more for that, Debbie.

Debbie Reber

This is very new month. So I just encourage you to just say kind of open and see what kind of resonates with you. I do want to start by just talking about this idea of motivation.



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Because I get, and I bet you get questions like this all the time, like, how do I get my kid to do X? You know? And even the phrasing of that question. Yeah, yeah. So is that something you know, you wrote a book? Yeah. Build motivation? So

Ned Johnson

what the picture that I would say is, I would encourage people to pause for a moment and think about whether that's the question that they want to answer. Am I really trying to figure out how do I get my kid to do something? Or I hope? Are you really trying to figure out how are you helping your kid get to do something? How would you help your kid want to do something, you probably know, but it's worth doing through the idea of extrinsic motivation, versus intrinsic motivation. And almost always with kids, we need a ton of support, they need a ton of scaffolding for whom learning is harder, blah, blah, blah. Almost everything that they experienced in school is kind of sticker charts. And I'll take away your recess your cell phone, or whatever. And we ended up being chief compliance officers. And that's great, if that's your plan for the rest of your kid's life, but that can't credibly be anyone's plan for their kid. Because what we're really trying to do is to help them find their own reasons to do things that are in their own best interest. So that's that's one. The second thing when we think about motivation, a lot of times people think that motivation is kind of continuing like this kind of low motivation and high motivation. But we really want to, in addition to intrinsic and extrinsic, to make it really complicated. We want to remind themselves, but they're, they're both motivators, and their D motivators. So there is a higher, low reason to do a thing, there may also be a high and a little reason to not do the thing. So maybe something your kid is totally, totally, totally wants to do, and is scared out of their mind about doing it. So it's not that they don't want to do it is that the reasons to not do it, maybe overwhelming the reason to do it. So we just want to be really thoughtful, when we're having those conversations. One thing just to frame it up in terms of d motivation, arguably the thing that because I saw him on the poll, 75% of kids said 75% of you have a child and children who are anxious, or with generalized anxiety disorder. And you probably know it, but I'll just make the point again, that the major manifestation of anxiety is avoidance. So when our kid isn't doing his homework, or she's not doing the chores, or you know, talking to her friends, or going to sleep, whatever, whatever, whatever. And we as parents get anxious, and we start telling them how important it is, how important it is, how important it is, how important it is, it's a pretty perfect recipe for anxiety or even desperation, when kids are feeling kind of I have to, but I can't. And the more important we tell them is the thing that they're absolutely terrified of doing, it actually increases the stress that's on them. So paradoxically, a huge part of the work that Bill and I do is actually lowering the threat, lowering the stress that people feel. Because when we've talked motel you get near 123 These are the reasons you got to do it. We're actually on the



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we're on the wrong axis, what we're doing is increasing the D motivation, because we're making them even more anxious about the thing that is currently hard for them to do.

Debbie Reber

Yeah, and I, you know, our anxiety plays such a role in that as well especially as the stakes get higher and you know, I experienced this my kids 19 in a gap semester program right now, but the struggle was real, like, I'm homeschooling to high school too. And I just my I just watched and experienced my own anxiety just creep creep creep up. So, you know, what, how kind of infectious is our own anxiety and how much of how much of this is really us kind of doing our own work versus is, you know, the things we can specifically scaffold for our kid is there like a ratio was so

Ned Johnson

let me let me let me put this thought into people's head into you probably know a lot of this brain size but let me let me just put this into context it's a little like Jacqueline Hyde, right you know when we when we think about the prefrontal cortex with all this executive functions and with ADHD kids and is slow to develop executive functions I get it, I get it. But the prefrontal cortex is what is involved when there's all goal directed behavior, so organization planning, inner drive, but also importantly for mental health, both cognitive flexibility and emotional flexibility. And so when kids I, here's the thing I want to do, but I know there's gonna be some obstacles, how can I? How can I find help? How can I get around that? How can I you know, how can I make that happen, as opposed to the amygdala, this very primitive part of our brain that does nothing, nothing, but perceive and react to threat, and the chat and important for us to know when your kid is in a stress response, or you're in a stress response, your prefrontal cortex by design goes offline, because the person who sits there looks at a you know, a raging Tiger and imagining but wonder what his inner motivation is ends up being lunch. And so we just we respond to threat, the hard part a cash, especially for kids who have more sensitive stress responses, they react to everything. They almost overreact to everything. And so we just want to just want to frame that up. And when we think about motive motivation, we want to be mindful that and build into Debbie's point. Stress is incredibly contagious. It's incredible. I mean, think about this, have you ever walked into a room and nobody says a damn word, and you're like, what's going on here, you can feel it, you can smell it that you know, the chemicals that are in people's sweat change. And we're rapidly incredibly, incredibly sensitive to this. One thing I'll add to the ad for all of you who have kids who are somebody more sensitive. If you are anxious, or frustrated, or angry or tired or stressed, your child will perceive this and will pick up on this I just describe in the self different, childlike, delightful daughter as being highly sensitive to secondhand stress, I can be upset her teachers can be



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upset about this kid who is being a total goofball. And she thinks that she was in trouble. And here's why. If you show an 11 year old, a face of, you know, a picture of an angry face with activates as they make, if you show a 15 year old, what the picture of an angry is, what activates is the amygdala. If you showed a 21 year old face with a picture of an angry face, what activates is a little bit in the medial frontal cortex, which is trying to figure stuff out, and partly the amygdala for 25 or 28 year old, it's the medial prefrontal cortex who cause what's that he's having a bad day, what's going on here. And so again, particularly for kids who are really anxious, we just want to be super mindful of this. So short answer, if your kid is stressed, it'll stretch out because your loving parent, you're totally you're designing to respond to that. And if you're really stressed, it's going to stress your kid out, in which case, both of you are having a hard time, being flexible in your thinking, finding better solutions, putting things into context. And so it's, you know, from our advice, when you have advice as a parent, you really want to strike while the iron is cold, to don't give a kid anything that advice. It really matters when you're spun up, because they will too. And then it just there's no point there's no point even saying it. The good news, the good news is that calm is contagious to comments contagious to turns out, when we write in our second book attorney, this is a module of the Navy SEALs. So we all have the experience of sitting with a friend or grandparent or someone you know, you know, tell them something terrible, you know, Mike, my mic cable, we'll talk about this later, maybe both Nice, nice. I had cancer about 10 years ago, my son and they had basically the same version, but he had it as a brain tumor, which was much more dramatic than I went through. And the most interesting thing was talking with these incredible doctors at Children's Hospital here in DC, and they just have the sense of you know, we've seen this, we got to plan for this, you know, and we didn't really know how was going to but their energy wise, we've got to plan for this and we're gonna we're gonna figure this thing out. So it's not easy. It's much easier to do that or someone else's get I get it. But yeah, when it stress is really contagious. And so if you find yourself split up, you really want to think hard about how can you go for a walk, go for a run and tell your kid if you're really about to lose it say listen, I read this is an important conversation. I'm feeling a whole bunch of stuff. I'm not mad at you, but I need like I need like 10 minutes walking with the dog. Can we talk about this in 10 minutes when I want to have a better version myself? Because teens especially if you walk away and you're putting yourself in timeout If you don't tell them, they're oh my gosh, I made my dad mad. And then you know, so just just communicate just emotional about it. I need 10 minutes to get to get my head screwed on straight again. Yeah.

Debbie Reber

Yeah. So if we kind of tie that back to motivation, the stress and the anxiety as being a demotivator. What are some of the other you know, I think the word lazy is popping into my



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head like that is a word that gets thrown around a lot, or you know, my kids lazy or they know how to do this. They just don't want to. So what else could be going on? When, when a child is on the surface looks like they're lazy, or they're just kind of checked out?

Ned Johnson

Yeah, such a good question. First of all, should ask for a list of things to share with folks tomorrow. Devin Bryce, who wrote unmasking autism has a beautiful article on a book as well, about the myth of laziness. I know there's, there's at least an article that read it and just just what a really terrific thinker. See, I don't believe in laziness. I don't believe in laziness. Because to me, it's a, it's a judgment call. If I don't want to do the things that I don't want to do, there's not a damn thing you can do to me to get me want to do it, right? You mean you can use I mean, okay, fine, you can use, you can threaten me, in which case I'll give in or you can offer the bribe. But in turn, people want what they want. And people don't want what they do want. So we should just make peace with that from the beginning. Because you can you can, we can drive ourselves crazy trying to get kids to want to do things that they don't want to do. And certainly, you got an ADHD kid, you see this where they couldn't get they get a spit about doing their social science, socially, that he's his homework, but they'll spend six hours building Legos, whatever. And when we just get this, you know, we get this hyper, hyper focus, you know, on one thing, and lo focused on another. And then the enlarger, saying, Well, I can't be at work, how focused is on those video games, you don't understand neuroscience. One big thing, though, to help all of us when we think about motivation, the single most significant model for intrinsic motivation is in the called self determination, picture, the Debbie's talk to you all about this, but I'll just run through it really quickly. And it simply holds that for intrinsic motor motivation for inner drive for self driving kids, there are three psychological needs that need to be met one, a sense of competency, to a sense of relatedness or connection. Three, a sense of autonomy. So when we think about kids in school, when you ask them, what's their favorite, who's your favorite teacher? Or what your favorite class will be, you know, math, and when was that the class? Was that the teacher? Us? I mean, it's it Miss Gonzalez, I mean, now the zoo is okay. She's so much fun. I, you know, our dear friend, Jess Lee says the three R's of education are relatedness, relatedness and relatedness. So really important. We spoke to Bill and I and write in the book, talk to Edward DC, who was one of the guys who put forward this model of self determination theory and said, It's our perspective, that of the three of these, it's really the autonomy that's most important. Do we have that right? And he said, hands down, unquestionably, especially for teens, who part of their job is to individuate from their parents. And we know that kindergarteners have more autonomy than do kids in high school, right, free play and all this kind of thing. When you're 17, you gotta raise your hand to ask permission to go to the bathroom. Are you kidding me? That doesn't feel that



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respectful. Here's where it's hard for kids who have challenges with learning they needed to support you do you know if learning is harder, you need more help? Both God? The challenge is we need to be careful how we we talk about as we'll get into this more detail of how we offer help. Because if we sort of forced all bond yields, it can simultaneously whack all three of those thinking, well, they've led practices more on his piano or his math, whatever, he'll get better, and then they'll be more motivated. And so the challenge is, I can be more competent. But if my parent is leaning into me to practice more, practice more, I can actually feel less competent. Because if I were competent, why would my mom be on me about this all the time? It is of course, putting parents, typically moms, and really unenviable position of not the mom, you know, support? How can I help your cheerleader? You know, let me know if you got questions, putting them in the position to be my homework police. Really not a good position for either of you. And of course, it's working against kids autonomy. So when you see kids who are not motivated again, if they don't want thing, full stop, because they just don't like whatever they like, okay, you know, explore that and take that seriously. But it's also worth thinking through that lens of do kids feel a low sense of competence, in which case, I noticed you have a hard time with these math facts, right. Would you like me to help you with Oh, would you have any quiz on any of this stuff? You know, the relatedness if they really dislike a teacher or tutor are, you know, you want to have a conversation about how you can facilitate that and coach that person to work better with your child? But also, if the kid gripes about how lousy Mr. Johnson is a geometry teacher, believe it, you know, okay. Okay, tell me making one. What's the most annoying thing about Mr. Johnson? Because if you if you're there increasing that your your relatedness to the kid, your son or daughter can feel motivated because of greater connection with you, even if Mr. Johnson remains, remains it dad. So I mean, it's this is one of the not only the most important models in motivation, but in all of psychology, there have been hundreds of studies. So it's worth you know, it's worth googling or checking on it in our book or other people's books, to figure out, Is there a way to lean into one of those if there's an unmet need to increase the motivation the case may be currently lacking? Yeah,

Debbie Reber

it's so great. And you know, in talking about self determination theory, and Cheryl, thanks for am recapping those three aspects of it, you know, I'm thinking of, of, I think it was I will die on this hill by Megan Ashburn and Jules Edwards book, wonderful book. And they were discussing how, especially with, you know, neurodivergent kids and autistic kids that we are often pursuing this goal of independence. And the reality is like, none of us are independent, we all are dependent on other people and communities. And we're all I'm dependent on all of y'all here, you know, to kind of support me in my in my journey. But what we should be working towards or what the goal should be, would be to be live a self



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determined life. So I love that you brought that in, I think when you even think about that as the goal. That just kind of shifts things. And I want to go, there's so many things like I want to talk about I want to talk about homework

Ned Johnson

for 10 seconds. Yeah, I think I think this is probably the biggest pain point that most parents have. And one thing I might correct grant is that well meaning educators do an incredible disservice really an injury to parents, especially to families generally, where they say, Debbie, it's your job to make sure your kid gets his homework done. And I think that is so wrongheaded, because it's simply not there to task you, as a parent, or me as a parent in any of us here was something that's impossible to do. Because if your kid refused to do his homework, what were you going to do? You're going to duct tape them to a chair, you know, I'm going to put the lashes. I can't you know, if you just if a kid wants to go la la, la, la, la and my flat on the ground? What what, what could you do, and sort of really don't like it. And in from a motivational perspective, if, from our perspective, the most important app, high school and adolescence is having a kid who's able to run his or her own life as much as they can. And with that, the brain that supports that, so it's tolerant to stress. And it's motivated in ways that are healthy. And this is important for particularly for new god, kids are kind of quirky, who don't necessarily want to do that thing. There's a product further, there's a great researcher named Reed Larson, one of the 90 studied how is it that adolescents become intrinsically motivated. And he found that it was not by dutifully doing their homework, it was by what he described as the passionate pursuit of pastimes. So think about your six year old, who sits there and works on Legos works on Legos work for just hours of time, it's high, it's high focus is high energy, it's high determination, it's low threat, and you're sculpting a brain that will work really hard. It's something that matters to them. And is long from our perspective, when we seek so long as kids are working hard to get better at something that matters to them. I just don't think you'd have to worry about it. Because almost everything kids get taught history in fifth grade, they get retaught in American history, they return in eighth grade, they get retarded in 10th grade in public high school, at least it used to be the kids would forget 80% of what they learned within three months now. It's 90%. So there's always nothing that kids are learning in school that fundamentally matters with possibly the exception of learning to read if you gotta get who struggles with that, and what matters most of all, is healthy brain development. So if any of you feel like all of your energy is about the homework, please, please, please please please, I strongly urge you to the second chapter in the in our in our books, the self to the child has the title of I love you too much to fight with about your home. And then kind of all the advice and we can talk about this later, but I just I just want to put a plug on that because that tends to be the biggest pain point for most parents that I talked with.



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Debbie Reber

I have said those words. That was like my favorite phrase from your book, and I've said it to my kid so many times, and I was still an anxious mess because But, but what happens if this? And what happens to the great, like, how do we, and I appreciate all the comments in the chat about the meaningless myths of homework. And so I'm just wondering, you know, I want to I want to hear this from you like, I mean, I think it's, it's all well and good to be like that, you know, what matters is my kids mental health, and that is what I will above you. And I would say that to anybody, like you have to kind of prioritize your child's mental health and your relationship and connection with your child. So if you are being that that nagger. You know, many of us fall into that role. You know, that hurts. So there, but I'm just wondering, how do you navigate or advise parents who are who really want to say, you know, I'm not prioritizing this, this doesn't matter. I'm gonna be a consultant, I'm willing to let my kid tank, I'm willing to whatever with the realities of the of the demands and expectations of whatever comes next.

Ned Johnson

So really good question and a whole bunch of stuff in there. The first thing is, please, please, please, please, please keep telling yourself, keep telling yourself, keep telling yourself that your kid wants his life to work out. Okay? Children have brains in their head, and they want to be successful. Kids don't want to go to school, and have everyone look like that. And what do you what are you doing, but most of what we see, we see as kids avoiding school, either, you know, schoolwork or school is anxiety. And the more we lean onto the into it, the more anxious becomes the more avoidant there. There's a great story about Bill talking with a kid, really, he was a K through eight school down in our neck of the woods, your eighth grade grades matter a lot, because there was the ones that get you Okay, and when you transition into it, apply to another high school, and everybody was on this kid. So you got to get your grades at the head of the school, we actually like lot twice was trying to do too, you know, you've really got to step it up, and you're not going to make good choices. And they're trying to motivate a kid. And Bill said, Look, I'm sure I don't think it's lost on this kid. That he worked hard, and he got better grades, you know that parents would be off his back, the teachers would be off his back, you know, but it's also probably not lost in that Mr. Johnson can still kind of stuck still hasn't gotten better, doesn't like that guy, he'd rather be with his friends either either playing Xbox, and here's the important thing, that he may have worked hard in the past, and didn't see that what he was doing made any difference. And that he could really put himself out there and move those sucky grades to grades that are sucky plus. And then where would he be? He would know the actual limit of his intellectual or academic abilities. And that is a damn scary thing mode. I mean, how many of us have ever



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done 100% of our max? I don't think any I haven't. I haven't. And so when we lean into we get make kids so fearful. And it just it's so important to and again with a homework if we're on it on a, I'll ask you this, then when you leave about the homework, you got to get this didn't help.

Debbie Reber
No, no.

Ned Johnson

It's impossible to do. So two quick stories. One, I was just at a big conference for self directed learning. And there's a public high school out in Winchester, Virginia, which is very far out there. It's very country it's very conservative. It's, I mean, so it's an it's not a loosey goosey again, a Montessori, whatever, whatever I'm giving my kids what a Montessori school. I'm not trying to, but I'm just painting a picture. And so Jerry pot who is the principal of the school, who was an unbelievable educator, he had retired and they dragged him back into Teton heading to school. And he said, I'll come back and do this, do this, so long as I will not to anything that injures children. I won't do it. I will not do it. And so they don't have homework in the school. This is I guess, fricatives middle school or high school, I think is middle. They don't have homework. And I said you banished homework. I said no, I didn't manage homework. I simply told teachers, they weren't allowed to use it to grade kids. They could give it to him if they thought it contributed learning, but they couldn't do it, the graded and the teachers like well, what's the point of giving homework that he said? Isn't that a good question? And that was the end of it. Right? And so and so. Now the hard part that of course we all fall in is you know, you're going to get anxious and get anxious, but shouldn't you But shouldn't you be chinch and there is an in between ground of just walking away and washing your hands. It would be lazy fair, because your kids they want to go to school and they want to be successful, whatever that means to them. But they're in this they're again, they've got this ambivalent they want to do it they don't. So here's a fun story. So I got this email from a dad, two older kids super academic went off to fancy dance school, whatever whatever. boy wants to go the same pants at his school but he's got like spaced learning disability. He's got ADHD. He's anxious. It's spread. It's complicated, complicated. So you get to see, Texas. Do you have time to talk? I've decided to remove all support to my child. I'd be thrilled to talk May we get? What kind of support Have you been giving him? By the iWriter news? I remind him to do his homework. Uh huh. How's that working out? Not very well. Good curiosity. How many times a day do reminded? Oh, not that many. I mean, maybe three or four. It's really my wife who's on them all the time. So she's what? twice that? Oh, at least. Okay. So between the two of you, that's six to 12 times, sorry, nine to 12 times a day, and he's home from hockey at seven and you go to bed at 11?



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How's that working out again? And he said, Here's my advice. And I said, I said when he comes home and asked him Hey, kiddo, do you have a plan for the stuff you need to get done? Oh, I do I do. I make a jump. Like, please don't make him do it. Just ask him. He's 17. Trust him. If he says I've got a plan. So fantastic. If he doesn't say, can I help with that step to ask, is there anything on that plan that I can be helpful to you with the wind driving crazy? And then can you do if he says yes, do your best to stand up at standard arm's length? If he says no, trust him. He said, That's it. So I know you, you can't stop there. So the third thing is ask, Hey, is it okay? If I circle back in an hour and a half, and this is using these words, to see whether there's anything that I can help you with? So that you're giving this, this constant drumbeat of I want to offer help, I want to offer support, it's yours to take or not, because you instead of relatedness I can I care about you, and I want to help. But I'm also treating, like you're competent to know whether you need help or not. And I'm respecting your autonomy. So again, an email like 1030 that night. So I tried what you suggested, it might have been your advice, or maybe it was just a different day. But I just had the conversation really good, actually the best conversation I've had with him in three years about school. Wow, this kid wants to be successful. He desperately wants to be successful, but he was waiting to his loving parents went to bed and stop nagging him. And then he did his homework between one and four ahead, which in case you don't know, is a sub sub optimal time to try to do homework. And so much of what we're trying to do is, is changed the energy because you all as parents have all sorts of ideas, all sorts of suggestions drawn from what you've learned from Debbie and other folks, which you know, from your own lived experience. But oftentimes, if it's not working, it's not the what it's not your advice is wrong. It's just the how. So. So I think that it's just you offer help you offer advice, you let kids make their own decisions as much as they can, and you let them solve the problems for themselves and the making decisions. You know, listening, particularly for a kid who's really intense and you know, with a PDA especially, is totally your call is totally your call. But can we talk through this because I just I'd love to, I'd love to programs, but it's your call. And this is what I do with my daughter all the time, because I don't know about you. Mike is about 20 IQ points on the and all the rigidity that comes along with I didn't know it at the time with her the type of the her take on autism. And so one, I was never going to win an argument because I'm just not smart enough. And too, even if I hadn't been playing, she was never going to give in. So I assume but when she was seven, I'd have to say it's your call. And that's the only thing that would that would calm down her stress response with the amygdala, because the most stressful thing that your child can experience for you, as a parent get experienced is a low sense of control. That's where we get in such a hard place because you're anxious and you try and seek more control of your child in doing that then makes them more anxious and they resist you more when we go the wrong direction. So when we can offer offer and say things like it's your call, we can talk through this, it'll



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be your call, because they anticipate that you're saying I'm not like Rosberg, Greenwood said, I'm simply not going to use the force of my blood to try to to try to get you to do this. It lowers their stress response and then opens them up to thinking part of the brain to the great thoughts that you want to share. Yeah.

Debbie Reber

Okay, so I just scribbled notes all over my paper here. Couple of things, I just want to point out for that reminder that kids want their lives to work out. I mean, that's what we're doing here. Of course they do. And, you know, I had a similar aha moment when, you know, when Ash was struggling with like, emotional regulation, and would have the end like when I realized, Oh, isn't want to feel this way. Like, it just changed everything. So of course, our kids want their lives to work out. I will share that one of the game changing things for me, and it's funny that Darren is in the chat, because I often talk about him when he's not here. But sorry, hon. But I will just say like, this is something we've had to really negotiating Get on the same page. Because when you have a child who you know, is capable or again, those stakes feel so high. It's like, but all you have to do is if you would just do it, you know, and making excuses about screen time where, you know what, whatever. But the question that I asked that really changed everything when we kind of reached that point, like, what are we doing here? I would sit down with ash. And I'd say, so I just want to ask you, do you care? Like, do you care? Does it matter to you?

Speaker 1

What a great clarifying question, right? Yeah,

Debbie Reber

it's very clarifying. It was like hitting a big reset button. Do you care what your GPA is? Do you care? If you get? Do you care if you don't go to college? Like, we need to know these things? Because if, if you don't care, then this what a complete waste of energy and time all of this is. And then, you know, you know, I didn't know what the answer was gonna be. In my case, my child did care. I'm like, Okay, well, now we can have a conversation. So I'm here to support you. And you know, some was just like a big reset for us.

Ned Johnson

I love it. I love it. And there's a wonderful researcher named Daniel Wooten again, good. I think in German, whatever it is, we talked about her book, and she talks about whoop, W O, P, and w is what he wished for. Oh, is what's this is kind of just a way to guide the conversation. Do you care about these grades? Okay, and you do care about grades, your grades? Oh, what's the specific outcome? Is there a particular GPA? One, it's a particular



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college would be the right interest for you or whatever? Oh, what is the opposite? Was there anything that stands in the way because I know you want this and it can be you know, life can be hard. And then then the P will you then you work collaborative, as we talked about in the book, the deviant apparent consultant, where you help them think through the obstacles and the various plans and you stress let's just for the sake department, let's pretend that we do this and you stress test this process, and you stress test that process, and you work through them. But when you say Outland killer, this has to be your call, because it's because it's your life. But I love that as a clarifying question, does it matter? Does this matter to you? And I'll say, my I'm on the other side of this in many ways, I'm now an empty nester, but my daughter, one thing about going back to that, that even a non anxious presence is to do everything you can to take the long view again, knowing that there is absolutely no no like the percentage of matter of any given assignment is the net present value that is basically zero. So my daughter was full school refusal for three months, the last three months of eighth grade, I'm a guy who helps people get into college, what's going through my head, right. And then more or less with mental health issues and medical issues, and boy, more or less avoided high school for four years, and she'd go into theater, it was it was a function that loved his place in the world to attend school. And I just had to keep telling myself, you know, take the long view, take the long view, take the long view because I knew I knew the kind of brain that she had her wonderful therapist she worked for. While she said it will be fascinating to see what Katie Johnson does, when she decides what she wants to do with that remarkable brain of hers. I am happy to report She's now in her first year of college, she had actually second surge in first year college, we talked about this details if you're interested. And she got the highest possible grades that she could get. And she her whatever tuition will offer such and such she said, Would you guys be willing to pay for me to take another class because I also want to take this and I'm just like, I made it what? It just just stunning. And so our fears as parents are almost always about the future, not the present. Your your your the your best, your your kids best friend breaks up with anything. Oh my god, that was your only friend, she's never going to have friends again. But the more anxious we are about the future, the harder the kids don't tend to get stuck. Unless unless we get stuck there. When you say if you if I could tell you, every parent who is here that this is just part of your kids path. And it's hard and it's bumpy, it's hard for them, it's hard for you, but build up this wonderful Christmas card a couple years ago from this, this family and these and he said these three girls you've worked with so they're all a hot mess technical term. You know, they had learning problems and motion problems and mental health homes, all of it, all of it, all of it. And they're like 26 and the beautiful young women with a beautiful dogs and spouses or partners, whatever it was. And inside the man had said, you know, dear Bill, you were right. They all turned out great. And when we can hold to that, you know that this is my my daughter when she was in



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eighth grade, we were out for this walk. And she was she was she was too everything was hard. Everything's hard. And she was just having a time with my wife and we're having everyone's having on top of it. And I looked at I said listen to kiddo. I said You are so kind And so creative, you're smart as attack, you're absolutely vicious at board games at once into seven. I said, you're going to do such cool things in this world, you're going to have great friends, you're going to have a really good life. And she said, so I can't tell the story that Brian. And I said, I know it doesn't. Because everything that matters to you right now, it's hard. And I get, and I don't like to play it. I'm older than you car, but I'm going to do it just just as much, because I've been around the person a few more times to you. And so you remember this, that, you know, my, my dad was an alcoholic, and he drank himself to death. And my mom was in and out of institutions, a lot of mental health disorders, challenges, then I spent three months in seventh grade in a pediatric psychiatric hospital. But my parents did the best they could I did this again, and it came back. And I probably don't present the guy who spent three months in a psychiatric hospital. But you know, what, still had a brain in my head, still one of my life to work out. And it's so if you just hold to that idea, because you do have wonderful children, and they want their lives to work out and they have parents who are there to support them every step along the way. Will tomorrow be hard? Probably will next week be easier? I can't guarantee that. But if you hold the long view, almost never do kids get stuck because they don't want to be stuck where they are.

Debbie Reber

Yeah, thank you for sharing that then. Yeah, I mean, I think as you're sharing that, two things, one, I had written down long game, right, when you said to get to take the long view, in here are some comments in the chat, I'm noticing about, you know, like the pressure that we as parents feel. And I'm we're going to talk about younger kids too, and just real, a lot of older kids, but there is this like expectation that there's a specific timeline. And as much as possible. You know, I encourage all of you if you're feeling that pressure, to really pay attention to it, and the fear that it's bringing up in you. Because and this is what I did, you know, we could call my therapist, and she would say, this is what we've been working on for the past. We're on a very unconventional path, my kids 19 in a gap semester this year, looking at university, and that's the plan. But I don't know, it may not happen in the fall, I have no idea I'm staying very curious and open and trusting that my child is on the perfect timeline for him. And so but it requires so much work. For me to be that non anxious presence to like be questioning, what am I making this mean? What do I what do I make it mean? What others perceive is happening in our family. So it's hard. So if you're if you're in that place, and you're experiencing that, I just really encourage you to talk to people like this, like talk to these people. And I get it because we can intellectually know



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that our kid is on a unique timeline. And that's great. But there's a whole other piece that it there can be sadness around it, and frustration and fear and all of these big things. And we're always getting reinforced by society and social media and all these things that, that we're not where we should be our kid isn't where they shouldn't. And we need to, we need to be like compassionate to that part of us and do our work so that our kids don't feel our anxiety about this. So we can really show up and say, You know what, this is your life, like I'm here to support you, and to help you create the life that you want. But it's really, ultimately, this is about you, you know, this is your journey. And that is a big shift.

Ned Johnson

And let me I love that and love that. And I want to I want to add, because we're trying to talk about how, you know, developing stress tolerance. And so let me just go back to sort of brain science for just a moment. When we think about emotional resilience. The it's really the the single best neurological, the single most significant neurological marker of mental health. And when we think about resilience, what that literally is, is just stress talk to help the nervous system, you react intensely to something that's really scary. But then in a perfect world. The prefrontal cortex jumps on line says we have a way to cope with this, and it dampens down the stress response and you figure out a plan. So all day long things I hear upset, I can't believe what's going on in the news and I have a reaction and then I can talk myself down and kids who are dysregulated they get inflamed and they strike it takes them a long time for them to come back. So everything so brains are constantly under development that that emotional flexibility, bouncing back and back to back. So we want everything we can had to deepen those connections between the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. Here's why the in a non anxious presence is so important. So this is a guy named Michael meany. They did they do a lot of research with rats and maybe one Why talk about rats, because their brains, they're very smart animals brains very similar to people what we can do really terrible things to rats that we can't ethically do to people. Okay, so they take these rats, rat pups, they whisk them away from the day that they're born and taken away from mom to handle them with latex gloves, pretty darn stressful cortisol blowing up and pet it, they give them back to their mom, who is a high licking and grooming rat, which is the radicals. And if they're there, they're destroyed. The cortisol stress hormones just flow right out of the box and brains. And then they do this day after day after day after day until the rats reach maturity. Okay, and so it's Oh, my goodness, oh, thank goodness, by the time these rat pups reach maturity, they are almost impervious to stress, to the point that meaning in his lab and his graduate students gave him the nickname of California laid back rats, because they had this you know, something intense would happen. And the brain would go, Oh, we can handle this. Because that had always been their experience. Note that the man didn't go in there and rescue them, or do their homework or do anything



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other than just be what we described as making home feel like to say this. And if you think about when your kids were literally with the playground, and they run away, and then they come back to, you know, or they skin their knee, and they look at you and if you gave like, well, that's kind of rough, right? But if you show them like, Oh my God, you're bleeding, they were going to pick up on that as well. And you know, to your point, Debbie, it's really hard. Because if you feel that the world is judging you and your kid it's hard not to be anxious and worried and they maybe they're right, maybe I instrument maybe my kid is blah, blah, blah. I would also throw this out that particularly for kids who are working from home life is hard, particularly for your for those of you who have children with autism, who have autistic children's, my daughter keep correcting me on that. But it is artistic is that they are doing to children are so often doing their very best to hold things together at school out in the world. And they save their worst for us. Why? Because it's safe to have their worst for us. If they come home, and they're a disaster, and then we criticize them, you can't talk to me that way, then what will happen is they will save their motion reserves to keep their shields up with us at home. And then they won't be able to push themselves as far socially, academically, athletically, whatever. And so then you'll see kids well, why aren't they working very hard at school? Why are they so lazy? Because they have to save your energy because they don't get to fully recover at home, either. So this isn't to give anyone a hard time. It's just that we so often wonder what can we do? That's helpful. But if we know that kids brains are constantly being developed, that one of the things that we can do is just love our kids exactly the way they are, even when it's a hot mess. And by training. When she was in eighth grade, all they wanted for her to do was to go to school because her friends and the few that she had had right and the more dean at home and isolate yourself is not ideal, you know for for any kid but for particularly for a teenage daughter, but she she hated this main teacher, she hated it. She hated all the school, I learned that she liked art and science and stuff. He hated his history. But she's she's totally rule follower. And so she felt like she couldn't get an A, it was going to be a disaster. She was like gonna get a fail this test. I looked at this thing. I'll help you study. I looked like there's no way I couldn't memorize this stuff. So I but I really wanted to go to school. And she said that they're going to fail the test accelerated. Sure. Yes, I said not like 80 to like a 70 C's. Oh, and I said, Listen, kiddo. I could give a rat thing about that. But that was on the test or anything that's on it. I have no idea what this does. I don't care. And I don't think you should either. Honest to God, I don't think you should care at all. But what you care about is you being with your friends in school, because I think I think that's a better place for you to be than at home. Because this test isn't going to go away. But if you go and fail, and we're done. So here's my deal with you. If if we if you can go to school, and we go to Starbucks first, whatever, if you can go to school, and fail that test and failing good, no harm, I will immediately check you out of school. We will go out to lunch at 1123 on a Tuesday and we'll have a hot fudge sundaes for



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the rest of the day and not go back to school. Because that's how much I cared about that homework. And so you know, and so what I was just trying to do is to make her feel that it was saved, even when everything else was a mess. That Mom and Dad No. No bad. What changed her side on things. Yeah.

Debbie Reber

What a powerful thing to know your parents have your back. That's great. I want to touch upon a couple of things. And then you know, we have been kind of going through some of the questions and we're gonna pivot to the q&a in a in a few minutes. But I want to just reiterate because I know there are a lot of folks here whose kids you know, have A PDA profile of autism who who may be in autistic burnout, and I just, I know, it's really hard if you have a child who and I saw there was a question in the chat earlier about a child who doesn't, doesn't want to go to school isn't that interested in things, he has a strong aversion to things? Do we just follow his nervous system and interests. And I would say if your child is activated, their nervous system if they are kind of operating at this very high threshold of a, you know, chronic stress response, and they are the window of tolerance is like, you know, they're about to spill over at any moment. Or perhaps they are in autistic burnout, which I did a really good episode on autistic burnout for the podcast, I can share it in the resources tomorrow. But it's, it's so important to remember that there is no meaningful growth that is available to our kids, if they are in a stress response. And if they are burned out, or their nervous systems are, you know, they're completely escalated and activated. So. So this is, again, why we're zooming out, we're playing the long game, here we are, we want to continue to be yes, that calm, respectful, collaborative presence, we want to help our kids spend more and more time in a calmer state, feeling safe, feeling secure, and that depending on what's happened in a lot of our kids have had negative school experiences, they might have PTSD from school, it can take a while for them to really, you know, start to come down and feel safe. So, you know, in terms of like, motivation, I think focusing on their interests and strengths, like because if they have something they're really into no matter what you're into, but you know, there's, if there's something that your child is gravitating towards, where there's an opportunity to, like, become an expert in it, to teach somebody else about it, to research it to find a community and it like all of those things, that's actually motivating, right? So look for those opportunities centered around strengths or talents. Things that make our kids feel kind of intrinsically engaged in and use those that

Ned Johnson

well, that's 100%. Because again, that would increase their sense of competency that will increase their sense of autonomy, right? You know, when you look at what helps kids, the single most valuable thing to children, is a close connection with a parent or another



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caregiver to feel loved unconditionally. By the way, people say, Well, I tell my kid, I don't care how they do, I don't care as long as they do the best that to is conditional approval. So long as I see you struggle and sweat enough, then you're okay, in my book, for kids, especially if they're depressed, just getting out of bed in the morning can be a monumental achievement. So the most helpful thing for kids developing if you look at self esteem, and then that got complicated, but the single most important thing is that they feel loved unconditionally. And the second most important thing is that they feel they feel that they're competent, that they've got some real skill, and it can be I know all the dinosaur it can be, it can be anything, right. And to your point, Debbie, when they feel that and that expertise of the mastering something, even video games, which, you know, there's some real caveats to that I know. The the thing that they look forward to doing and will perhaps more importantly, that they look forward to doing well, just the thought of that increases the dopamine in their head, and makes them have more available juice to get through the thing that they think is just dreary. I mean, I had I can't tell you the classes I didn't like in school, I was a straight A student, I didn't like a lot of them. But I was in theater again. So I have magicals this period, I have cores that period. And so I would Whoo, I'm almost only to my parents to go until and until I go to chorus, right? And just the thought of of singing and frankly, goofing around, my friends would give me enough juice. And so for kids in school I want kids to have for every kid who goes to school to have something or someone that they look forward to that day, you know, it's misure it's the science teacher, it's robotics after school, they have to have something they look forward to other though, otherwise, there's almost no hope that they can feel motivation to engage in the process of learning.

Debbie Reber

Yeah, yeah, it's great. Interesting. You were in a student I'm like thinking about I won't share my GPA.

Ned Johnson

You're surprised that I was a nerd. You were very

Debbie Reber

surprised when they found that uh, find out my GPA. I was also a theater kid. But for some reason that wasn't enough of a motivator for me but I you know, we got a lot of questions about kind of like more middle school kids with ADHD. Kids who are get easily frustrated and are not feeling bought into stuff. So can you talk a little bit your thoughts on scaffolding for finding that balance for a younger kid, 1112 year old kid who does you know, has some major executive functioning In deficits, or you know, relative weaknesses that we want to support. Yeah,



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Ned Johnson
yeah.

Debbie Reber
It's that balance. Yeah. I

Ned Johnson

mean, it's a little like that story is Tony about that ADHD boy. I mean, there's I was talking with a kid who was a cancer in eighth grade. And her parents were deeply concerned, she'd been in a student who then was an A minor thing to be pleasant was going down and down and down and down. And she was really having a hard time and they're terrified about high school. And I asked her, I said, then pick this up from Bill. I said, Listen, if something if you don't hand something in or it doesn't go, Well, I said, Who's most upset? She told my mom, and then we'll use this therapeutic techniques. Okay, after your mom, if you don't, something doesn't go well, who's most upset? Probably my dad. Okay, after your mom, and after dad, who's my teacher after mom, your dad, your teacher? Okay, my tutor, you know, but my therapist said, Well, where are you on this list? I'm not any route this list. And so the challenge is when we as adults spend an eternity of energy trying to get a kid to work hard that it'll spend 20. When we get more anxious, we do it in 90, the kid will spend 10, there's a story in the book or Bill was talking about that, you'll get all kinds of learning challenges in middle school student. And he met with a learning specialist and learning specialist. And it takes two learning specialists or as learning specialists, both parents and two tutors to get this kid to do any work. And Bill's bet is that you say, easy stop immediately. Stop immediately, because you're giving this kid the message that someone other than Him is responsible for his own success in school. And we see this all the time with kids who really learning Islam, they do need more support, but they fight tooth and nail the hard work. And they just do doing to get it done. And so what we talked about in that same chapter of I love each and much of the budget homework is for parents to take the approach of thinking themselves as consultants. And so you just need to say, Listen, I see you got that thing done. Would you like me to help you? You know, Would it help if I sat within which, you know, I can keep office hours? Did you want do you want me to help you brainstorm to get started on this is in Germany, check back in a half an hour and see how it just you are with these things. But you try to do it every possible way where you're giving the sense that I'm thinking about you all the time. And I get ideas and but but they're yours to use or not. And it's just it's so hard because we think my God, thank goodness, we got the homework done. And it's just, it's a fool's errand, because when are you going to start? And you know, first of all that math a bit harder in high school not to be very humbling for



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you. But we really want to ask ourselves, you know, when your kid comes home with a problem, including homework, or school, or friends, or anything, whose problem is whose responsibilities and of course he's proud, of course, it's my job. Well, honestly, is it your problem? Could you could you solve it without your kid, you really couldn't, because ultimately what we want to be thinking, whose life is this, and particularly for kids who are anxious, I just see people, kids studiously avoid, or and this is actually kind of interesting. When you look at the brain state of intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation. The biggest notable differences when kids are extrinsically motivated, they, they don't pay attention to mistakes, when they're intrinsically motivated, they really do. So you can think about playing piano was a great example, Debbie. And you know, we're paying for these panels, and you gotta practice half an hour a day on the way you know, that's what we expect of you. When when you sit there in front of the piano, what are you doing, on the 20 minutes more to go? On the 2030 minutes more to go? Right? Where if you were playing that for the, you know, school talent show, and there's some person you think that you're trying to play for Derek because he's such a cutie, right and Rougemont and Bresson, right? You play a screw, but you go back and you practice it over and over and over until you play to the best of your ability, because it matters to you. And again, I think that kids in school, it does matter to them. Many kids even when it isn't going well. And when they do need more help. But we really want to make that which is we're offering help, we're not forcing it because we force it, that amygdala goes haywire, that goes goes into overdrive, and then the prefrontal cortex goes offline. And then and particularly, there's a full on stress response as you described, Debbie, there won't be any learning. There won't be any learning you simply cannot learn when you don't feel safe. And we need home to feel like to save baseball stop.

Debbie Reber

Yeah, yeah, that's great. Thank you for that. I'm going through the q&a over here. So we're gonna do we're gonna try and do these a little short, so we can get through. I'm not speaking directly at you, Ned. I'm just saying

Ned Johnson

I'm strange. I could do tic tac anyway.

Debbie Reber

I thought this was a good question regarding calm was contagious. My audio HD sensory processing disorder OCD kiddo gets infuriated with when I'm calm if she's angry. Which I can totally get that so how can I handle this? So if your child I'm reading this that your child is is elevated, escalated and you're staying calm, and I Um, that is upsetting to your child?



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Because I mean, my hunch is your child is looking for a reaction. Yeah. From you, what thoughts do you have on that? Well,

Ned Johnson

I mean, the question I think really comes down to is how is your child receiving your car. And my guess is where you're trying to stay calm, because you're trying to be clear headed and help and not inflame the situation, your kid may be reading the comments, you don't think this is a big deal. You don't think this actually that you don't think that should be as as upset as I am. And, you know, everybody in the world talks about empathy and validation. But that's the first that's the first chapter, we lead in with it with a book where they say, and so you know, balancing, you know, simply Wow, you are really, this, you're really pissed off about this, you're really upset, they really made you mad at the teacher, your friend, when it really made bad, you know, and I get it, I get that you're pissed, I'd be pissed, too, you know, if such and such happened, or, you know, I'm really sorry that it made you mad about this. And you can you can, you can validate, and empathize without jumping into the deep end of the pool with it with your care. So that's, um, that's the first thing that comes to mind for me, or you can also say, Listen, I am I'm really, I'm really upset about this, too. You know, but but you don't have to, you don't have to meet their, their volume level, in that. You know, I'm really this is super upsetting me, too. I'm trying to do my best to sort of to not overreact. And this I want to be very thoughtful, in what I say to you. Because chances are, you're already having the thoughts in your head, you probably don't need mine. And when kind of whatever's going through your head that feels honest. You know, just verbalize that. Again, I don't know how you're how you're going about being a nice person. But those are the first two things that jumped to mind for me.

Debbie Reber

Yeah, that's great. Thank you. I wanted to talk briefly about homeschooling. And I got a lot of questions from homeschoolers, like how does this apply if you're homeschooling how to balance the need for autonomy and structure? You know, and I will I homeschool for six years. Not initially by choice, but there. But I think it really depends on the way your school is set up. You know, I looked at homeschooling as a collaboration and you know, with each year became more and more collaborative, and we would decide on the goals of our school together. You know, what, how do we want to spend our day is how to what do we want our schedule to look like? And we would touch base on that. First, you know, every morning, we'd have you know, and then like, once a week, we'd kind of look at the end is still working, and there was a lot of just like, negotiating back and forth. Not even negotiating, but just talking about, is this still working? What matters to you? What, you know, what are you most interested in right now? How can we adapt what we're doing so that it feels more



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engaging for you? What are the goals of those things? So I think, you know, as a homeschooling parent, it, the onus is on you a little bit more, I think to identify or look for opportunities to connect, you know, if your child's unschooling, for example, how can you kind of be cool with that, and also look for little opportunities to scaffold the skill here or an executive function there or kind of work on those skill developments. So I'm a fan of kind of a more collaborative, loose loosey goosey approach to homeschooling, that

Ned Johnson

was exactly what the what that what I was going to say is even got a wind throughout that whole chapter I love you too much is simply is simply collaborative problem solving. You know, in a perfect world, this is this is what we do with our, with our partners with our spouse, we you know, with our with our adult children with our friends, right, you know, and and if you as a parent who's helping who is taking the lead out homeschooling and there are objectives that you know, need to get done, and your budget, but your kid may be on a different page with you. You have to say listen, get are these are the things that according to whatever substance such we're supposed to get these things done. Do you feel like there's a way to go to go, we can go about this is the way that we can we can check these boxes without making it crazy. A big part of what we talked about, and what he's saying is just using language that's really, that's really tentative, right? You know, a kid wants to do A, B and C and say, Well, you know, for what it's worth, I love all of that. I just need to let you know, I'm feeling like Anxi angsty about these two or three things can I can I can I tell you where my head is on this? And you know when you when you anticipate that anyone isn't going to love your version of you just use this language and you slide into in ways that are really intended basically but I just couldn't make it do you do this? That I have concerns about this and and then you just that you do use clavate pumps out and negotiate. And there's a beautiful story in second boat but Bill had a client who was out I was I was observing Jewish and the boy didn't want to have the didn't wanna have his bar mitzvah. And and this was like a thing, right? If you're observing this is a really big deal. And but the kid was was atheist. He didn't think it you know, he didn't think he you know, he felt like he felt like it'd be fraud. And so mom asked Bill, what should you do as you said, I can anticipate what you're going to tell me. They'll say, Listen, I love the fact that you're so principled about this, right? And you don't want to be phony, you don't want to be a fraud. But I just want to share it, you know, in our faith, it's a really big deal. Because we want and we want your grandparents and your aunts and uncles, they want to welcome you into the Jewish community. And so if there's a way that you could do this, they could work for you. I'd be really grateful if you think about it. And so they thought about it for a week. And he came back and he said, he said, Fine, I'll do it. I'll do it. But and then the negotiating, said, I don't want to do it in front of the whole Senate. Right? You know, I just want to you know, I



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only want to do you know, these pieces and they made it really, they did it in a way that he was that he was down with. And forgive me for and from my it's my my sense is for anyone who's got a kid who's whose home whose home schooling, they're probably not to down with command and control, you know, chief compliance officers at school, so you kind of have no choice. But to do it in a collaborative way, because otherwise, it will be absolutely doomed to fail and incredibly exhausting for us as parents, and the most the single most, the single most important role that we play with our, with our children is is that close connection. So you sure don't want to squander that for you know, some worksheet, you never did a worksheet. So

Debbie Reber

there's a question, what do you do when a kid's level of anxiety makes them avoidant? But then when they get to the last minute, and wish they've done what they should have done earlier, they panic, then we're stuck with a completely panicked kid. I mean, my my brief answer to that would be at some point, you know, I, I would, at a completely different time, when we're not in that situation. And we might predict that this is going to happen again, because it sounds like this is happening again. At that point, hey, I'm having a conversation. I've noticed that when that this has happened a couple of times when and then kind of replay, like what's going on? Because, you know, if we go back to Dr. Ross screens work, there's obviously some lagging skills there. And so part, you know, I am a huge fan of his collaborative and proactive solutions model. And, you know, I would get curious about trying to identify in collaboration with your child, you know, what, what is the lagging skill or skills and hone in on the core one, and then together, collaboratively, come up with some ideas to experiment and see, do to, to address this? And, I mean, eventually, my hope too, would be that that panic, you know, that's gonna feel bad enough that it's ultimately gonna become a motivator to solve that problem. Right?

Ned Johnson

I love all that. I especially love the idea of experiment, because good, we all tend to default to our processes, even if they're not effective. And to say something after you've done this, well, two things. The first thing when we're in that moment of panic when the deadline is approaching, and it's a disaster, it is really likely that your kid will somehow blamed you for why don't you made me do that? That's likely to happen? And you're likely to if you're anxious to be like, Well, why didn't you do that I told you in the unit. And that's not going to work well, knowing that we're trying to move that we're not going to fix this in the right now. But we want to have a better outcome. The next 212 times we do this, then in that moment, when it's a hot mess, emotionally, take their side on it, even if it was even if they ignored all of your darn advice. Just to get back to me about I am so I can, I'm so sorry. I



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know, this is not what your plan is. It's it's it's so frustrated that you're here when we really intended to not to get on top of this. And now it's just and I am so I can I'm so sorry, that this is just a mess for you. Even though in your budget. If you want, don't do that, because emotionally they need to feel that again and say base but also, if you're not emotionally on the side, you will not have any purchase no buy in when you circle back three days later and say, Hey, can we sit down and talk about that? Because I know that wasn't your plan. But that was that was a thing. And it was super hard for you. And if I'm honest, it's hard for me. we brainstorm like what we might try differently next time. And then to your point about experiment. I know you may not love this. We did just try this experiment. And if it works a little if it's a little better than that. Maybe we add to that and if it's no better off than We don't, again, it's the same idea of it's your call to get a little to get a little more buy in there. The other thing I find is, you know, for me, I have an imperfect world your kid is getting it is getting it, they're diagnosed anxiety, good opportunity that they need. I'm a huge fan that people have not read it yet. Le Leibowitz is breaking free of anxiety and OCD, understanding that the real caveats particularly with with, with with autistic people, but the simple basic point in there, of validating i Under you know, and offering and offering competence, you know, particularly for a kid who is at the last possible moment, it's a disaster. I know how upset you are about this. I mean, this is not where we wanted to be, and you cared so much about doing this. And you know, you're obviously not going to get an answer, because you just don't have enough time to finish it. And so yeah, you're probably going to get a crummy grade on this. I'm also and also that I some I honestly think I think you're strong enough to handle this, you know, and we'll see, I like some of the language in there. I think it's pretty effective. Because in the moment, we tend to, we don't tend to do both of those. And we want to both validate and express competence.

Debbie Reber

Yeah, it's great. I want to point out in the chat, Jay, Hey, I like that Jay. Said, the thing is that the emotions have to be authentic, or the feeling kids now and then start to doubt you in the future. And I would say, kids can slip out in authenticity, like a mile away. So that is, that's, that's again, why I always bring it back to in my you know, it tilt, we're all about the parent, like doing our own work so that we can show up authentically, confidently and calmly and clearly as our best selves for our kids to question and hear every night we struggle with getting our 15 year old son to brush his teeth. Is it better to have strict consequences if he doesn't brush? Or should we instead tell him what will happen if he doesn't brush such as cavities, gum disease, etc. And so I of course, I want to first say, you know, they're often neurodivergent kids their sensory issues like we will just say we have a toothpaste that we still like buy in the Netherlands, so why don't you go, because it's like the only toothpaste that my kid will use. So there can be some strong sensory aversions



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with a lot of hygiene things in brushing teeth in particular, I am not a fan, like I, we've struggled with a lot of this stuff, and I don't like the you know, escalating it to like a threat or consequence or things like that. It's similarly it's like collaborative problem solving. It's creating routines, how can we routine eyes this and make sure, again, that we're not contributing because I think the thought of our kids losing their teeth like and not having good hygiene can be very stressful. And so it's really important that we look at the long game. And also know a couple nights of not brushing your teeth is not you know, some of us can get so precious that it has to happen every night. And that's when we can get into conflict. And so if we can look for smaller wins and build on those as well. Then I want to hear your thoughts, because

Ned Johnson

I think that's I think that's all exactly right. I mean, first of all, fear as a motivator is a terrible idea. In amazingly effective short term long term disaster, you go back to non anxious presence that that can actually really don't want to use it. I do think you know, there, there are two thoughts on that one, it makes sense to try to sit down explain to kids in you know, in an age appropriate way. So here's the deal. This actually, we have the sense that there's a book on a chapter book called What about expectations, and I think we actually have this very same story. Where, you know, saying, listen, when you eat food and when you eat food, right, there's all this food and there's bacteria they little bugs so they come around and they basically eat up the whatever's left in your in your saliva at night. The only problem is they kind of poop inside your mouth at night. Oh, that's not good. And so what we do when we brush our teeth is we just we get rid of that extra food and we kill them kill the bacteria. Is it to your point, Debbie, is it a problem if we you know, we one nine we get kind of you know, bacteria breath? Well, not the end of the world but but long term we want to take care of our teeth because those bacteria can do things to it and take what do whatever language makes sense for you in that way. In terms of consequences, you know, first of all, I take it away cell phone is the natural consequence for every case. It's not an actual consequence. It makes me crazy. I do think it could make sense if you take Jay Nelson that you know that it needs to be related. So you can say something like hey listen, if you're if you don't brush your teeth so we didn't brush your teeth and that is and that's fine. We do this in advance but if you brush it if you don't brush your teeth, you know Tuesday night, then on Wednesday at there any sweets or any desserts, you just don't you won't get those right we will obviously you're going to still have breakfast, lunch and dinner and everything because We're not gonna, it's not gonna starve you. But we know that sugar is a big part of this. And so if you don't want to brush your teeth, when that you just want to have, you just want to have dessert the next time we have it, and that's okay. That's okay and make the energy really low on it. That, to me is the only kind of logical consequence that you could tie to it



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check, fill them all out and signed a Dr. William are structured and gave it to her. So because kiddo, this is your education, you will get out of this which you put into it. And I mean, it's my job. It is not my job to make sure you do your homework. It is my job to support you if you need help to him. He never did. Other sizes. I kid it just talking with very complicated. He's He's not not a lot of intellectual gifts. I mean, so schools harder. And he's also he's the sweetest kid in the world. Not just not, you know, below average IQ, very ADHD, and schools hard for him. And he's this kind of command and control, Catholic, you know, High School, where he where he is. And he's doing his darndest, right. But then he got sick for two weeks, I had all these assignments and regular schools and not for him, but then trying to catch up on all of this work. He just couldn't do it. And he failed a class and he's in I think, sixth grade or seventh grade. And, and I said, and then the school was on monitor again. And we made up the stuff and I'm like, Well, what happens if he doesn't do this stuff? Like, I don't really know, I said, what I said What classes it said. She said religion. I looked at her I couldn't help myself. I said, so what happens? I mean, if you fail religion, and he doesn't make that stuff up, does he go to hell? And I'm like, you just I mean, I can't. I can't. I mean, I wasn't just I was just at a group with a bunch of educators. And there's a girl who is she's court ordered to go to school. She's court ordered to go to school. And then when she doesn't end, but she she bites every single thing that anchor to do tooth and nail, she's like, you know, like they haven't jail. And then when she doesn't do the homework and do what they want him to do. They suspend her. I mean, it's like, is there anybody actually talking and thinking, is this working? Is this working? So, you know, my, my gentle ask of parents and educators is that we just have the courage to say this isn't working for my kids. So and again, we then we then do collaborative problem solving with with the school, you know, and then they say, Well, he's going to fail the class and say, Okay, well, you know, that's your choice to fail. My kid. You know, we're working on this stuff. And my kid is like, my kid is learning. He may not be doing your homework, but I I'm kind of with Alfie Kohn on this with the homework. I mean, we offer it and say if you do this, here's what you can get out of it. But if you if a teacher can't credibly say to a young person, what what that person is going to get out of homework and make a good case for it? Then you can kind of question it. So I know that that's not an imperfect answer. And it puts a lot of you in a hard place. But I really think we wanted to have courageous, be encouraging and do what we know is right. For our kids.

Debbie Reber

Yeah. Yeah. It you know, I'm 100% with you. And I also just want to acknowledge that that's a hard answer here. And it isn't, isn't an answer that it's like, okay, do this, this and this, and like, we're really, we're pioneers here. You know, we are we are doing the work of trying to shift paradigms and educational systems that were not designed for our kids, and weren't



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designed for most any kid if we're being honest. And so if we do, those of us who are here have the energy and the wherewithal to be part of that paradigm shift by because I believe every conversation we have with the school administrator, or teacher that's talking about this stuff is, is helping the change happen. But it's, I just want to acknowledge that it's a it's, it's really tricky to be kind of stuck, because we still are raising kids in a society where we're feeling those demands and expectations

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with absolute ease. And we have we have a new book that's coming out next year where we're, you know, I was given a lecture in Atlanta, and a bunch of educators there, and there's one woman stands up and she says, You know, I understand all this about homework, you know, but but the parents insist that I give homework. And I said, What, What grade do you teach? And she said, kindergarten. And so, you know, parents feel like the kids feel under the pressure from the teachers and that terrible teachers claimed that they were under pressure from from the parents. And I said to sad that she was a lovely educator, I said, Here's what I would gently ask of you. I said, I want you to do everything you can, I want you to have the courage to tell these parents the truth, that homework doesn't contribute to learning at all in elementary school. And I know that's hard for you to do, because they're paying you this private school tuition. But here's the deal, you know, things that they don't know. And I want you to have the courage to help them feel safe as much as you can to let their kids have unstructured play, right to sleep more, to not have you natural, anything that gets in the way, but your relationship with your kid. I mean, this is this is your 100%. Right, Debbie, this is hard work. And I think it's really likely that all the kids who are differently wired and their parents are really going to be the leaders on this because a little like canaries in the coal mine were just more sensitive to context, generally, and certainly sensitive to the kind of crazy stuff that goes off and goes on too much in too many schools. But so I encourage all of you to the best that you can be courageous in, in helping teachers and your kid feel that it's safe for them not to do things that have in many ways have no educational value at all. Again, finally, knowing that you can't make your kid do his homework, if she didn't watch, if he didn't want to be they lay flat on the ground, even if you're going to duct tape them to the chair. They can't, they can't they can't be done. So we need to we need to find a different approach. And that for me, I'm just interested in what's effective. And like, I've been educated for 30 years, and I want kids to be as educated as they darn well can because it's good for them. It's good for families, it's good for your schools, for your communities and good for the whole damn country, for people to be as educated and whatever that's useful to them as much of the journal can but command and control structure. I mean, the science is so darn clear. And so if it's not if it's not going to work, what else do we what else we're going to try? Yeah.



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Debbie Reber

We're gonna end it on that note. That was Thank you, Ned. I knew this was going to be such a good conversation. I feel like we have so much more to share. So I apologize that we couldn't get to all the questions tonight, I saved them all. And I'm gonna figure out a way to respond to some of them. There will be tomorrow I will send them an email with the replay. And I'm we're putting together a resource page. So all the things that came up books, podcasts episodes, it'll all be on that page for you. I just also want to say this is kind of what we do inside my differently wired clubs. So if that's of interest to you, I will include a way to try that out in the email as well. That has been a guest of my club, but I am really lucky that I get to hang out with you quite a lot. So

Ned Johnson

anytime, anytime. The only thing that's more fun I get to do my work one on one, the only there's more fun than helping you is helping people who are helping kids and you are such a gift to such a valuable and thriving community. So anything that I can do put me in touch.

Debbie Reber

Thank you. Thank you. All right, everyone had a wonderful night. You guys are the most brave, wonderful people raising incredible children. You're exactly the parent that your kid needs and I'm so grateful that you spend this time with us and have a great rest of your night everybody bye everyone

Ned Johnson

Bye Thanks