



Differently Wired Club

UNEXPECTED DETOURS

Theme Overview:

This month we're focusing on what to do / how to navigate things when unexpected detours related to kids and our parenting lives happen (a.k.a. when the sh*t hits the fan).

What We need to Know About Navigating Unexpected Detours

1. Unexpected Detours are Normal!: Parenting neurodivergent children often leads to unexpected detours because the world is not designed to accommodate neurodivergent needs. *They're a natural part of the journey.*
2. Detours Can Be Hard and Uncomfortable: Detours trigger uncertainty, which can activate the brain's fight-or-flight response, making it harder to stay calm or make decisions.
3. We Get to Model How to Navigate Uncertainty: Our kids observe how we handle life's challenges. Modeling resilience, emotional regulation, and decision-making during detours shows them how to cope with their own challenges.
4. Detours Often Lead to Growth: It's helpful to remember that while it may not be evident at first, unexpected detours often lead to growth, new opportunities, or beneficial outcomes.

Strategies for Navigating Unexpected Detours

- Adopt a mindset of flexibility and curiosity — use phrases like "Maybe", "Interesting", and "I wonder if..." to foster a more open-minded approach to unexpected changes



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- Regulate your own emotions first — practice self-regulation so that you can model calmness for your children.
- Focus on what you can control — ask yourself, “What is within my control right now?” to reduce feelings of overwhelm and stay grounded in manageable actions.
- Set clear boundaries — protect your energy by setting boundaries when detours happen. This could mean canceling plans or reducing your workload temporarily.
- Lean on support networks — rely on family, friends, therapists, or community groups for help during unexpected detours. It’s crucial to have a “Jedi High Council” of trusted individuals for advice and support.
- Use mindfulness and grounding practices — techniques like deep breathing, body scans, or physically grounding yourself (e.g., lying on the floor) can help manage anxiety during tough moments.
- Celebrate small wins — focus on small victories, both in your child’s progress and your own resilience. These help balance the negative emotions that detours can bring.
- Practice self-compassion — speak to yourself kindly, as you would a friend.
- Communicate with your child — be open and transparent with your child about the situation in an age-appropriate way. Normalize the detour and help them create a positive narrative around it.

IN SUM

This month is about navigatING the inevitable detours that arise when parenting our differently wired children, and perhaps even turning these challenges into opportunities for growth and resilience.



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Questions for Exploration:

How do I typically respond when unexpected detours happen in my parenting journey, and what patterns do I notice in my reactions?

When faced with uncertainty, do I tend to act out of fear and urgency, or can I pause and allow myself to sit with the discomfort before making decisions?

How do I model navigating uncertainty and unexpected change for my neurodivergent child? What could I do to better demonstrate resilience and flexibility?

Can I recall a past detour in my life that ended up leading to a positive outcome?
How might I use that experience to reframe my current challenges?



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What small steps can I take today to better regulate my emotions in moments of unexpected stress?

In what ways can I shift my mindset to see detours as opportunities for growth rather than disruptions?

How can I set clearer boundaries to preserve my energy when navigating an unexpected parenting detour?

Who are the people in my support network that I can reach out to for guidance or emotional support when I feel overwhelmed by a new detour?



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How can I incorporate mindfulness or grounding techniques to help me stay present and calm during difficult moments with my child?

What small wins or moments of progress can I celebrate in my parenting, even when I'm dealing with a challenging detour?