

141. Educating Our Kids at Home with Julie Bogart

Julie Bogart: [00:00:02] if you take seriously the curiosity of the child and that all of learning is available through all of life, you are now in a collaborative adventure together, and that nourishing experience creates profound bonds between human beings.

Diana Hill: [00:00:19] You're listening to Julie Bogart on Psychologists Off the Clock.

We are four clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science-based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships, work and health.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:00:40] Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in mile high Denver, Colorado.

Diana Hill: [00:00:44] I'm Dr. Diana Hill, practicing in seaside Santa Barbara, California.

Yael Schonbrun: [00:00:48] From coast to coast, I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston-based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown University.

Jill Stoddard: [00:00:54] And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard, director of the Center for Stress and Anxiety Management.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:01:00] We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

Diana Hill: [00:01:03] Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off The Clock.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:01:06] Mental health professionals. You do not want to miss some of the online offerings by , Praxis Continuing Education. They're offering some webinars for continuing education. There's a great ACT immersion webinar with Dr. Steven Hayes, who's been on the podcast. We have an upcoming one with Dr. Robin Walzer, who's been on the podcast as well on trauma therapy.

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Diana Hill: [00:01:51] we're also affiliates with Dr. Rick Hanson's online Neurodharma program and his Foundations of Wellbeing programs, and you can find out more about them at our website offtheclockpsych.com where you'll get a \$40 discount with a coupon code

Whether you're educating at home or maybe you're zooming into school, maybe you're already a homeschooling family. We know that school has changed as we know it right now, and it's probably going to be that way for awhile. And today we don't want necessarily to enter into the debate. That's a very personal one about homeschool and whether you want to be doing that or not for your family, pretty polarizing topic. Instead what we wanted to do is flexibly enter into the reality of school right now in our houses and how his parents and.

Families. We can navigate that in a way that is continues to inspire learning and our kids, uh, maybe some strategies that could make it a little bit more fun and relaxed at home and also meet your mental health needs as a parent. That's what we brought on Julie Bogart who is an expert. On educating at home and has a lot of resources and a lifetime of experience in the area debbie i'm curious what did you think about the episode how did they hit you

Debbie Sorensen: [00:03:11] well, I'm one of the reluctant educating at home people that she talks about. I did not really want to be in this situation. Probably like some of our listeners, and I. Really don't plan to do it in the long term. So I was, I kind of was honestly a little skeptical thinking, I don't know if I really want to hear this, but it was reassuring.

I mean, I think I missed, I always loved school right myself. I love my kids' schools. I love our teachers, our communities. And so I was pretty bummed out when the school shut down and I don't know how much longer that's going to be going on. And so to me, this situation I think has, has been pretty stressful and hard in a lot of ways.

And so I think the idea of learning strategies for, for helping kids learn at home, I thought, I don't know about this, but honestly I found that she just helps you think. Of it in a different way. And it is very reassuring because I think what it made me realize, Diana, is that my kids learn a lot at home.

It's just not in this sort of classic format of school and it's different. And I think that's one of the bottom lines of what she says is it's a very different context than the school context. And so it's going to be different.

Diana Hill: [00:04:25] It's so great that you used the word context, Debbie. Cause the whole time when I was listening to the interview, of course I have it with the ACT lens on, and so much of her approach feels consistent. It feels ACT consistent in terms of, yes, we're in a different context and expecting us to behave and ACT the same way in a different context, put a lot of pressure on us. I felt that really in the beginning and it drove me. To a place of stress and overwhelm. And when I loosened up a little bit and started to get more flexible, cognitively flexible, responding to the context of our home, it helped a lot. She also talks about values and intrinsic motivation and kids, which is also a huge component of ACT how do we inspire our kids when we're all kind of. Uninspired to some degree. And that's been quite magical in our home as well. And then the third thing I think is self stories.

some of those self stories about myself in terms of , what I can handle are shifting and adjusting and changing, and I'm seeing a different side of myself that I wasn't even expecting.

So

Debbie Sorensen: [00:05:29] I think the flexibility is so key. I think at my worst moments, trying to keep my kids on task with some of the online schooling they're doing, or when I got get really perfectionistic about it and I feel like, no, you have to do this and you have to get it done right away. And I actually give them advice all the time.

I wouldn't give myself like, well, why don't you do the hardest thing first and get it done? And I'm like, do I do that? Not really, you know? But I think if you can loosen up and try to make it fun and just try to be flexible and roll with it, it's, you know, and, and there are just so many ways to learn, right?

We were just talking about how our kids love to go poke around in the backyard and freeze things and they learn in these ways that are less structured. And I think trying to capitalize on that is a really helpful strategy and just not be so hard on ourselves that we have to make sure our kids accomplish XYZ in a given day.

Diana Hill: [00:06:21] So you did this intentionally last summer when you did the summer of boredom, and Debbie just wrote this great article that came out. We'll link to it on the summer of boredom where you discovered a few things about loosening the reigns and less structure.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:06:35] Right? We just didn't, we just kind of didn't want to have a ton of activities and camps last summer. My. Partner and I both work and so it was a challenge. We had the kids home and we had minimal childcare, I would say, and our kids roamed free a lot, I'm not going to lie.

It was hard, right? I mean, it was hard to be productive. I had to be probably less productive than I would normally want to be. There are moments when it was just hard for everyone, but I think that they, the kids. Learned something through boredom. I think they kind of have to work through the boredom and they can get into creative play and they learned to entertain themselves and they don't really need be busy all the time.

It was a great lesson to learn. ,

Diana Hill: [00:07:19] I think it's. It's interesting that choosing something versus it being chosen for you changes the context as well, because now you're about to have another summer boredom, Debbie, and it's not your choice.

Debbie Sorensen: [00:07:31] I know I had hoped for a middle ground, but I know I'm not alone. There are a lot of parents who are going to be in this situation working. No camps. The kids are going to be hanging around. I just, I always just remember in my own childhood, I spent a lot of time just playing outside and doing, I don't know what.

I don't remember really going to camps and that kind of thing as a kid and I, I, I feel like there's some value to it. I really do.

Diana Hill: [00:07:55] Oh, absolutely. I think there's tremendous value in that, and Julie talks a lot about that in this episode, so I think there's a lot of richness. We hope that it's inspiring and also just normalizing for all of our experiences out there. So good luck. Have a good summer. And I enjoy Julie Bogart.

Julie Bogart is the popular voice of common sense and compassion for home educators. Her online coaching community, The Homeschool Alliance, her, her podcast, and her YouTube channel are lifelines for tens of thousands of wary homeschoolers all over the world.

She's also the author of a book called The Brave Learner that we're going to talk

about today. Julie's the creator of the award winning animated online program called Brave Writer and the fast growing weekly habit Poetry Tea Time. She home educated her five children who are now globe trotting adults. I'm really excited to have you on Julie one of the reasons why I brought you on the show was because we were desperately looking for information about how to do this. Homeschooling thing that was put on our plates unexpectedly, like many, many others in the country, in the world.

And one of my good friends who is a homeschooler, sent me information about your book and a podcast and your and your recent podcasts that you did about homeschooling. And I've loved it. I loved everything you had to say. I got really excited and motivated at a time where I needed some motivation and just. Threw a dart at it and wanted to have you come and so grateful to have you on the show because you're such an expert in this area, which I know so little about. So it's such an honor to have you here.

Julie Bogart: [00:09:33] Well, it's thrilled to be here. Thanks for inviting me.

Diana Hill: [00:09:36] for those that are doing some homeschooling right now, not by choice, but by, uh, just it being the nature of the times. If you could just introduce to us some ideas around how is. Doing school at home different and some maybe tips and tricks that maybe helpful for us to just wrap our minds around doing this at such an unexpected time.

Julie Bogart: [00:10:02] Yeah. I think one of the intriguing, uh, features of this situation we're in is that for decades there have been homeschoolers by choice who have sort of been educating their children off stage at home. Right? I mean, you might run into a homeschooler, you might. Hear about homeschooling through a movie or a television show.

But most people who are in the mainstream haven't really thought about what goes on behind that closed door. And suddenly now everybody, millions of families who never expected to have any ounce of empathy for what that experience might be like are thrust into it dead center with the responsibility of execution.

And of course, what school children are doing at home is different than a typical homeschooler. And what homeschoolers are doing during a pandemic is different than what they typically did when they were homeschooling outside of a pandemic. So the first thing we want to acknowledge is. Everybody is in a somewhat new circumstance and we're all navigating this day at home or shelter in place, order differently from each other, whether our kids are logging on to zoom for a public school distance learning experience, or you're keeping your kids home as you always have, but now there's no soccer, no TaeKwonDo, no visiting friends, no park days.

So all of us are navigating the home space in new ways.

Imagine school at home, and I've seen a lot of articles, listen to a lot of radio interviews where the professionals who are experts in education or psychologists, but who have not. Then home educators 24 hours a day for, you know, a decade or more. Are making interesting suggestions that homeschoolers have already discarded.

So let me give you an example. One of the most common suggestions is to set a dedicated space in the home for learning that it should have a desk, that it's a

place you go to and you stay there and do your work. That you set up a schedule. I even heard one expert on television say children should get up and put on whatever clothes they would have worn to school, and you should use a little bell to signal when the class is over to give them as greatest schools similarity as possible.

Well, let me just reassure everyone listening homeschoolers have already tried that.

Diana Hill: [00:12:45] Yeah. That's not happening in our house.

Julie Bogart: [00:12:47] Right? We all begin with this idea that school is something different and we should import it into our homes. But what you discover, and I'm sure most of you have learned already in just a few weeks, is that children have an internal rebellion against turning the place they love where they relax and get to be themselves.

Into a place where they perform. It's not that they don't like school, it's that school is designed for a certain experience and home is not designed for that experience. Home is designed. To let your hair down. You know, I take my bra off, right? I put on my flip flops, I open the refrigerator and I stand there for 10 minutes trying to decide what to eat.

Nobody's deciding that for me. I can go pee whenever I want without a hall pass. I can ask a question without raising my hand. So when we bring in this notion of, well, the desk is over here and you have to follow a schedule and wear a certain kind of clothing and behave like a school student. There is a part of us.

That rebels, and we see it even in the work from home experience right now. You know, there are all these joke meme saying, well, I'm wearing a blouse, but I'm not wearing pants. Right? That is a tacit admission that when you move work and school to home home wins.

Home wins. We have an internal dissonance about making home a structured place. So the beginning of wisdom for working at home or schooling at home is to actually not resist the properties of home, but to embrace them and allow them to deliver the results you're looking for in those two arenas.

Diana Hill: [00:14:36] what we've noticed in our family over the last period of time is embracing the emergent learning that's happening. Because how it started was, okay, we're supposed to follow the script that our teachers were sending us and you know, in these files.

But what would happen is that our children would naturally become interested in things that. Were happening related to their interests at the home and when one of my child's picked up woodworking and got super, super involved in carving sticks that he was finding. And then that led into other types of projects related to that.

And that seems like there's a lot more room for curiosity and one idea leading to the next and also parent involvement. That's very different than receiving the worksheets that we're supposed to follow that feel quite disconnected right now from what's happening in our family.

Julie Bogart: [00:15:26] It's amazing that you say that. So most of the interviews I've done were at the beginning of the pandemic. What's happening now is I'm hearing every day from parents saying some version of what you just shared with

me, that they are discovering that their children have worthwhile curiosities, that they have time to take risks, to grow, to pursue something without having to give it up, to get in the car and go to the dentist or go to the soccer field.

So there is a. A rediscovery that learning is an inherent experience for children, and they don't have to be marshaled all the time and told what to value in order for them to be curious and find things of value for themselves. And I know there's always been this worry that if you leave kids alone, they're just going to play video games all day.

But what's fascinating about this pandemic. Is that the video games are receiving an importance for everyone because that if that's all you do, eventually it's wallpaper, right? It just stops being interesting. And so children with some free time with parental support, with, um, the participation of a caring adult who is devoted to them because they have time to be. Children flourish. They start learning things that you didn't even realize were hungers inside of them. So that's really exciting to me.

Diana Hill: [00:16:53] I've been listening to your book *A Brave Learner*, and it's inspired me to take some risks in this arena because I think there's a fear on one end that children will play video games all day. There's another fear that I think a lot of us had, which would have, which is our kids not going to learn the curriculum or they're going to get behind in some way.

Like there's some timeline out there that we're all trying to make sure we follow so that they complete fourth grade and I, we took the risks with the video game. Idea in that when now we're watching master classes on how to design video games and it felt like, Ooh, I'm going into territory that I shouldn't be.

But it's been liberating to let my child explore what he wants to explore. How do we deal with this parents that fear around where we're going to get behind or we're not following a curriculum, uh, that we're supposed to be following.

Julie Bogart: [00:17:46] Such a great question. So the beginning is to realize that any learning your kid needs to accomplish between six and about 12, most parents who've completed high school can do that quite easily. I mean even I forgot how to find common denominators and had to relearn in my thirties and I remember thinking in seventh and sixth and fifth grade that that was a really tricky process. You know, finding common denominators, dividing fractions. I was not good at math. And I remember that being painful in my youth.

Well, at 34 it wasn't. I looked at the instructions like, Oh yeah, this isn't hard. I sat down, I showed my child. He learned it. So the point is this between sort of zero and 12 years old, I remember a friend saying, any book we'll do, because the bottom line isn't the book. The bottom line is provoking curiosity.

It's making the lesson meaningful and relevant enough that your child cares to learn it. And that, of course is where my book comes in. *The Brave Learner*. I have spent a long time distilling this insight that the homeschooling movement has to contribute back to the story of education. And what we've discovered is that it needs to be a lot more collaborative.

And taking advantage of the properties of home. So, so let me talk for a moment about some of those properties. For instance, when I wanted my kids to learn poetry. I knew that most adults I know hate poetry. They look back to, you know, 10th grade English and remember dissecting some, you know, Percy Shelby

poem that they hated and they think, I would never want my child to have to learn poetry, but I know he has to.

So good things is handling it and we just keep perpetuating the cycle of hitting poetry. Well, I was in anomaly. I actually loved poetry. Why? Because when I was in sixth grade, my grandfather bought me a poetry book on a trip to New York city and mailed it to California. So it came as a surprise package, not even on my birthday.

And I loved reading. So I started reading this poetry book and it was a read aloud poetry book. So I would read the poems to everyone in my family. Well, my mother saw me take interest in that. So she bought me a card game that was Rummy using the names of poets. So I started learning all these poets names, which made me then want to read their poetry.

There was no one telling me that I could read it or shouldn't read it or how to analyze it. I was just immersing myself in this world of gorgeous language. So by the time I was an adult, I actually have a lot of love for poetry, was not afraid of it, but I knew that my kids could be turned off. So the first thing I did is I thought, well, what do my kids love.

They love parties, especially tea parties. I drink tea a lot. And we used to do the British high tea thing some afternoons for fun. So I thought, well what if we make a British tea party? And then I distribute poetry books and we all just take turns reading poems. So we did that on one Tuesday morning cause you know, Tuesday tea time alliteration.

And it became such a habit. We did it every week of their childhoods and all my kids in college found a way to share poetry with their friends. One of them started a poetry slam, which became the most popular extracurricular activity and the whole college, my son, who was a resident assistant in his dorm at Ohio state on a boys' floor, led poetry tea times in his dorm room.

And my two daughters. Started online magazines for poetry and writing that involved their friends, and one was recognized by the English department at university of Pittsburgh. In other words, they never saw poetry as something to overcome. It became a meaningful part of their lives. Why? Because it was a part of a natural context that felt celebratory, that invited them in rather than requiring something of them.

Diana Hill: [00:22:04] I love that. I also love that it does include some structure and routine and predictability, which I think sometimes people think of, Oh, homeschooling is just going to be all over the place if I don't create a plan, but there's a way to create. Plans and structures and routine that are creative and fun and interactive.

And I, I, I, one of the things that I appreciated in your book as well was your just discussion of taking an idea or a theme that a child is interested in and then how to spread that out across all the different disciplines. You have this metaphor of countries that you talk about. Can you describe that?

Julie Bogart: [00:22:45] Yes, absolutely. So I call this the continent of learning, and I have a principle that you can teach everything through anything and you can teach anything through everything. So what do I mean by that? For instance, let's just take an abstract subject like history. We think history is a subject, but

history is a description of what happened.

So there has to be content there. It's not, you know, uh, describing something invisible. It's describing something tangible. So could we learn the disciplines of how to do historical research by examining the history of video games we could, could we use the tools of history to examine the history of music.

We could. Could we use the tools of history to examine the history of mathematics? Yes. Because history as a subject, as a discipline is a skillset that we apply to real things. Likewise, if we think about mathematics, so often they are taught in these abstract ways, you know, symbols on a page using a pencil to write out the answers to problems.

But mathematics is a language that describes reality. So is there a way to use math that matches up with the reality that's in a child's life right now? Well, there certainly is. I mean, just for counting alone, I remember sending my kids around the house, count all the windows, count all the steps, count all the buttons.

Oh my goodness. Can you imagine how long it takes to count all the buttons in your house? But that makes the counting meaningful. It's not just randomly done on a worksheet in a classroom because 30 kids have to sit at a desk. So in my book, I describe something I call the continent of learning. And what I recommend is at the center of the page, draw a shape, you know, take out a sheet of paper, draw a random shape, sort of looks like a country, and put a child. Primary interest in the center of that shape. So in the book, I use the example of piano and I talk about how piano can be mined. For all the school subjects, whether that's history, science, philosophy, religion, foreign language arts, social studies, even physical education. So if you put piano at the center and then start drawing adjacent shapes so that you're building out what looks like a bit of an amoeba, but you know, I call it a continent.

It's like each adjacent shape is another country of learning. So for history.

Adjacent to piano, we might look at the history of the instrument itself. we can use the same tools to explore the history of piano that we use to explore the history of the civil war. We might look at literature. what about literature that highlights pianos like the play or the musical? Amadeus. Then we can move over into science and think, well, how would the piano help us teach science? Well, there's just sound itself vibration. How sound is produced, the way our ears engage with what we're hearing. But then there's also the physics of what a piano does. The levers, the pulleys, the, the, um, hammers hitting the strings. and of course mathematics and music are like a glove and a hand, right?

They are inextricably linked from key signatures to tempo, to transposing to chord structure. My point is this, if we want our kids to learn math or history or science, we can at least introduce them to those disciplines. Taking advantage.

Of a subject area that has already called out their immediate fascination.

So you might be doing the worksheet of fractions and suddenly think to yourself, let's move this lesson to the piano bench and start playing some chords and showing how chords are a fractional structure or talk about half and whole steps in quarter steps like that. The second thing I'll say though, is a lot of parents will say to me.

Well, piano is obvious. I mean, piano, we all value piano. We need to value other interests with the same level of commitment. So I remember my son was really

into Yu-Gi-Oh cards at one point, one of my kids, and he wanted to play that game with me every week. And let me just be honest right now, I never enjoyed playing the game.

Once. I enjoyed his enjoyment of playing the game, which will sustain you forever if you have to do something you don't want to do. Focus on the joy your child's getting that will keep you there. But I watched him do complex mathematical calculations to be able to beat me on a consistent basis. He grew his skills of literature and the narrative arc and an understanding of power dynamics.

Through playing this card game that I was able then to explain when we would be reading a history text, and I would talk about power dynamics and the Wars were just military might against each other. Similar to the guy with the kickflip and the other guy with the lightning strike. So

you're

building the architecture of the school subjects through what's meaningful personally to your child.

Diana Hill: [00:28:15] And when you look through that lens of what, what is the spark for my child? As you described this beautiful metaphor of what, with the spark, what, what throws a wet bucket of water on top of that spark, and then what it, what it, what sort of breathing some air on it and allows it to grow I just noticed when I use that lens for my children.

What ends up happening is that they get so engaged in the topic that I ended up having more free time because I, I'm a working mom, a working parent, and I think for a lot of people hearing this that are trying to work and do some of this at the same time, it's like, no way am I going to be able to dive that far into creating math assignments from Pokemon cards, but I actually find that when I'm using content that my child is interested in.

I have so much more time available because my child will go into it for hours on end and explore it and have freedom and excitement and wants to wake up and get started again right away on the project they're working on, which is way different than me having to sit there and kind of force them to keep at it with the worksheets.

It's just, it's been free in a lot

Julie Bogart: [00:29:28] Yeah. Beautiful, beautiful assessment. I think the biggest fear of parents is that they will have what I call the wandering nomad syndrome. You know, a disinterested, bored, not engaged child wandering through the house complaining that there's nothing to do. And of course, I talk a lot in my book about ways to keep all the toys from becoming wallpaper and so familiar that nobody wants to play with them anymore.

The the main route which you have so astutely identified. finding that he's of an interest. That a child wants to deep dive into. I remember, for instance, and it doesn't have to be super elaborate, we're not necessarily talking about building a small village in the backyard, you know, using only natural, uh, tools and ingredients.

We're talking about something that hooks their imagination. And I remember my son Jacob, my third child, he got really fascinated at one point in his life with Domino's and houses of cards. He was just curious about how to knock over the

dominoes in a million different ways and how to build card houses that would not fall.

And I think that's such a worthwhile thing to point out. My, my nephew right now is five years old and he and a little buddy are digging trenches in the backyard. They consider this the most important work on the planet right now. Uh, these two families are sort of quarantining together so the boys can continue to play. And they, every day they put on their overalls, they tie a bandana around their heads. They go out with their little shell shovels, and they've gotten down now to nine feet deep. These are five-year-olds, and my sister was saying, it's amazing to me how we would see that. There's no value in that, and yet in their minds it's this hard work discipline and persistence.

What's it teaching them? Sometimes what it's teaching is so internal. You can't even quite observe it, but when you see that level of, okay, I'm going to set up all the Dominos again, even though they just fell down to try and get them to all stand for a longer stretch, there is a hard work, a persistence, a willingness to beat the odds that is going into the character building of that child for future challenges.

And that's part of the education at home. So I love that. can you share a little more about how your child got interested in woodworking? Cause I think it's such a good example.

Diana Hill: [00:32:02] Oh, there's so many examples that are starting to be outgrowths in our home. I mean, yes. One is, uh, one of my children got his old knife out and started exploring just starting with cards. And then we got out woodworking tools and now he's out there with his glasses on and woodworking and carving away at things during the day.

And part of that can also include math into it in terms of looking at measurement and size and how he wants to put things to put things together. my other child , he's a real comic book fan. And so we asked him, the question that you posed in, um, in your book is if you had all the money and all the time in the world, what would you want to be doing?

And he said he wanted to be writing. Comic books. And so I just gone with it last night. We were looking at a big name comic book together, and we were noticing how the faces have these incredible expressions and how much the illustrator, uh, it's able to describe the emotion. That's it. That the little figure is feeling just on the expression of the face.

And then it turns into this whole psychology conversation about how do we communicate emotions to each other by body language and facial expressions. So we started leafing through the book, and without reading anything, I point to a character and say, what do you think he's feeling and what do you think she's feeling?

And it was, and, and how do you know that. Right? So here we are doing a psychology lesson at eight o'clock at night in bed, and he's super into it because it's his passion. So it's just this like got this ball rolling for me. Uh, thinking about school differently, and I love how you say it never ends. It's not like something that happens between nine and noon in the morning and then then we can just go have fun.

We're finding that. The school experience with this learning experiences all day

long, and now that I have that lens on as a parent and I'm playing a more active role, it's also been rewarding for me and connecting in a way, again, with my ten-year-old, and it's just gotten stronger because of this approach.

Julie Bogart: [00:34:05] One of the things that I want to highlight of what you said that I just thought was so beautiful is that you weren't coming to him with a prepared lesson. You were inspired by his curiosity. And allowed yourself to take those next logical steps of pursuit. I think too often adults feel like it's their responsibility to already know and then to present pre-packaged containers of information to be digested by the child.

But if you take seriously the curiosity of the child and that all of learning is available through all of life, you are now in a collaborative adventure together, and that nourishing experience creates profound bonds between human beings. My five kids are so close with each other because they have spent thousands of hours together.

Reading books, sharing poetry, watching television, playing board games, playing video games, playing outdoor games, going on hikes, watching birds, listening to music, talking with their parents at length because we were available so much. There is a culture. Of shared learning as a style of our family life. It's who our family identity is. And I think that's the thing that is sometimes missed in this big discussion about education when school is happening, when you send a child to school. I mean, it can't be helped. They associate learning with that building. They have been told, this is where the learning happens.

So when they come home, they're ready to relax. Sort of like when we leave work, we just want to relax. We don't want to have to think about that anymore. And then parents. Are actually robbed of the opportunity to participate in that learning experience that went on in that building. And so it becomes more of a logistical relationship with a lot of affection, of course.

But there isn't that sort of collaborative adventure feel to what they're learning. I mean, it happens sometimes, but I'm just saying in general, so when the kids are home, I think what parents are discovering is. Oh wow. It's really fun to see the lights go on. This is like back when my baby first rolled over, or my toddler first walked away from me.

I'm seeing the lights go on about psychology, about reading, about calculation, and that is just such a shared bonding experience. It's a treasure.

Diana Hill: [00:36:41] Yes. also what I've noticed as my children get older is that all these things that are happening at the school. And then as a parent, I kind of think, Oh well the school's taking care of that. As opposed to, no, I can, I can participate in that. That's, that can be, that learning can be happening in the home and at school and whether or not people decide to continue to homeschool after this pandemic or who knows what the schools are gonna look like in the fall in terms of how much it's going to be at home or classes, my kids may be at home more because they're staggering classrooms.

I think that one thing that may come out of this for parents is. The experience of learning with their child and this involvement that they could carry forward, whether or not the child returns to a brick and mortar school. And I think there's a real, there's a real value in that.

Julie Bogart: [00:37:31] A

hundred percent. And in fact, one of the cool things about, um, the feedback I've gotten on the Brave Learners. So the first time, uh, the, at the beginning a year ago when the book came out, the primary audience is already homeschoolers. Homeschoolers who do it by choice. But as the year went on, we started to see parents with kids in traditional school environments.

Coming to me and saying, this is a parenting book. This isn't just about homeschooling. And I think that would be the takeaway I hope parents do have from the book. Because what I'm asking for and what can be accomplished is choosing. To make those opportunities happen with your family. I remember there was a friend of mine whose boys went to public school and she was a big time quilter and she decided, this is long before I wrote the book.

This is back one of the formative conversation I've conversations I've had actually that led to some of the thinking that I grew over time. She said she realized she was sad. She never had girls. Because she was a quilter. And then one day she woke up and thought, wait a minute, why can't my boys? So, so on a weekend, she taught them how to use a sewing machine and they got so into it that they started waking up an hour before school every day.

She bought a sewing machine for each boy, and they each sewed their own quilts for their own beds before school every day. For an hour and she said it was the most pleasurable part of her day with her sons. Now, back when I heard that I was already a homeschooler, but all I could think was, Oh, that's what this is.

That's what learning actually is. That's passing on the family. You know, every family has a particular genius. So she's passing on the family culture, the family genius. She's passing it onto the children. She has not the fantasy children she didn't have, and she found a way to incorporate it into their lives, even though there was a school, uh, experience happening simultaneously.

I just thought that was so beautiful.

Diana Hill: [00:39:40] So for, for those of us that may be interested in transitioning to homeschool after this experience, what ideas do you have around that? How to make that transition.

Julie Bogart: [00:39:52] Well, I love that you're asking the question because what we've noticed in Brave Writer, that company that I own, that teaches writing and language arts to kids. Mmm. We've noticed a huge uptick in new customers and they're new kinds of customers. They are not like our usual, and they are mostly in the category you're describing parents whose kids have come home. They have had a chance to experience this different kind of learning with their kids. They're seeing that it's possible to work from home and they're suddenly wondering, well, can we just keep this three ring circus going? So, uh huh. Are you great? Well, I will start by telling everyone who's listening. I have always worked while I homeschooled, so just so you know, I homeschooled for 17 years. I worked as a magazine editor, a ghost writer, a freelance writer, and then an entrepreneur. Yeah. Right. And five kids. And I through grad school in there at one point too. Um, but so the point is, it is possible. You know, I want you to really know that it is possible to work from home to even work, uh, enough to support your whole family, which eventually I did.

Um, and homeschool your children. That said. A lot of people who are choosing it now have not done the slow ramp up that most homeschoolers do, which is

you've been hanging out with friends who homeschool, or you go to church with homeschoolers, or you've read a slew of books and now you're convinced. No, you're sort of like in the middle of doing it and suddenly saying, so like, how do people know that curriculum exists?

How do people find out where the homeschoolers are? How do they figure out the state. Laws about homeschooling in my state. So I am actually putting together a six week on-ramp to homeschooling, and I will be explaining how to get a hold of that. It will be something that we distribute through our company, uh, in probably, um, June, July in the summer, and we are preparing parents for that experience.

But here's the shorthand for that transition. Go to Facebook. And Google a homeschool support group in your area. Almost every city in the country is going to have a Facebook group for that homeschooling community. Now, these might not be your people.

, cause a lot of homeschool groups break out according to religious faith. But those people are still going to be your best resource for information like. Are there, let's say you're a Christian and you just found the secular group.

Are there Christian groups or let's say you are a person who wants your kid to be a part of a TaeKwonDo group in the middle of the day, homeschoolers are going to know if those exist and where to find them. They will also be your best support for the legal ramifications.

And then I would recommend reading some homeschooling books over the summer to give you a better sense. Of course, I recommend mine, that's why I wrote it, but there is another book that I think is really helpful if you're coming out of traditional school, it's by my colleague, Susan Wise Bauer, and it is called rethinking school. Rethinking school. She addresses sort of the shortfall in the school environment and talks about solutions. Even if you take your kids back into school, how do apply some of these homeschooling insights to that experience or how to bring them all the way home? So my book, the Brave Learner and Rethinking School by Susan Wise Bauer, those would be two really good places to start.

one other resource for brand new homeschoolers is our homeschool coaching community in Brave Writer, and it is called the Homeschool Alliance. And you can find out more about that by visiting the BraveWriter.com website.

The goal of that community is to provide. Actual hands on troubleshooting support to parents right in the middle of their struggles. And we do a monthly webinar and we give out free lesson plans to help families kind of get their feet under them. So that would be another really valuable resource going forward.

Diana Hill: [00:44:06] what I'm finding is that you actually don't have to dig that far to hit gold in terms of resources. There's a tremendous amount out there.

And then I think it really is, this is finding that people that you maybe you trust, like a friend that's already doing it, but then also the resources that you trust. And I really have, um. Really, really, really valued the resources that you put out. I'm excited to dig deeper into some of those and so grateful that you're creating more right now currently for those of us that are in this unique circumstance, because some people may be homeschooling happier and then going back after official

distancing ends because they may choose not to have their kids in a socially distance school.

So all sorts of different new creative ways of responding on the fly right now. So as we were talking, actually my husband just passed me a paper and he said, what about, um, math? so people are really afraid of, of, of math in their kids getting behind that area.

Julie Bogart: [00:45:05] Oh my goodness. And me chief among them. I, uh, am notoriously. Sad about my math education. I had a traumatic experience in third grade where, um, a teacher humiliated me for failing a test in front of the class and it left such a longterm scar that I really believed I could never learn math. And I wound up with.

Tutors my whole life and um, struggled really to do well in math at all. So here I was homeschooling, and of course that was my number one worry early on in our math journey. Then I did research looking for programs that would reteach me math. I remember someone saying at a homeschool conference that I attended, they said, anything that you didn't learn as a child, it can be relearned in your thirties.

And that was liberating to me. I would thought, Oh, so maybe I'll get it on the second pass. You know, now that I'm a mature grownup with a bachelor's degree, so the first program we used had these things called Cuisenaire rods. They're long rods, units of measure as the length. Um, and you use those to visualize.

All of these sort of symbolic, adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. And I'll never forget realizing that the word multiplication actually meant multiples and not grasping that. That's what multiplication had been until my thirties despite being a word person. So I'm sharing that as background because math is.

Learnable, and you start to have a much broader understanding of your own sort of story, whether it's in writing or math. Those seem to be the two big ones. And you can heal your traumatic relationship to any school subject as an adult while you teach your children. So that's the first principle. The second principle is this. Math taught in school tends to be very abstract and symbolic before children are ready for the abstract. And the symbolic Montessori schools understand this probably better than any other institutional style of school. And they introduced manipulatives and countables and get children working with their hands long before they make them.

Record, all of that using symbols. So to me, early on in math, the best things you can do are play board games. Count a lot of things. So do woodworking, bake in the kitchen, get your kids handling money, get your kids in the habit of using math already, even without representing it symbolically. And then when you go to the symbols, the correspondence will be there in a much deeper way.

As you move up the pay grade, right? So writing gets harder by high school.

Math gets harder by high school. Science gets harder by high school. Some homeschool parents lose confidence. But here's the good news. There are over 2 million families that homeschool. Now you can find another parent who has the area of expertise you lack.

So I used to swap writing instruction with my math friend. She had a PhD level math background. So she taught advanced math, high school math to my kids

tutorial style, and I taught her kids academic writing to prepare for college. And it was this beautiful exchange. Didn't cost either of us any money, gave our kids a chance to have an experience with a different teacher, and it allowed me, she is my area of expertise with kids that weren't my kids.

Uh, we also had a co op with a hundred families in it, and the science classes were all taught by RNs. People who had actually been a part of surgeries were guiding my students, my kids in dissections. It was beautiful. So you don't have to be the only person who teaches. You can involve other people, other experts, other families.

You can use a variety of resources based on your skillset and your children's and math today has so many amazing programs to look up. Um, there, I mean, I could give you some ideas, uh, if you want them for your resource list, but it's one of the ones that's exploding in the homeschool space.

Diana Hill: [00:49:35] Yeah. And what you're alluding to there is also the ideas about communities and friendships and social connection, which I think is another fear that people have. And, , what I'm finding as I talk to friends that are homeschooling and even our experience right now, is that there's so many opportunities for social connection

Julie Bogart: [00:49:54] one of my favorite parts of homeschooling happened when I lived in California, had five children. My oldest was in like third, fourth, fifth grade, and I hooked up with five other families and once a month the moms would meet for brunch and we would plan who was going to host the homeschool party for the next month, and we called it a party because.

We can, but it was like an educational field trip in somebody's house. So we did a medieval feast we did electricity where we built our own stoplights from scratch, and then we had like, um, jumping bag races, flipping the switches, and using the stoplights, and we had all these electricity experiments.

Uh, another one that we did was featuring birds. So we dissected a whole chicken and looked at, you know, the skin and the feather follicles and how the muscles moved and the bone structure. Uh, we pretended to be birds and did all these different ways of picking up different kinds of foods. Uh, we, we used our binoculars and looked at the birds that came to the feet, or like, these are the experiences you can create.

And we did them socially. We did them with five other families. So that's what, 25 30 kids. And they became very close friends and it became a source of really meaningful connection to my children. And then let alone, you know, soccer and little league and TaeKwonDo and piano recitals and dance classes. I mean, there's just so many ways for children to see other kids.

You know, that school is not the only place.

Diana Hill: [00:51:30] Yes. And for parents as well, creating that connection between the parents that are working together towards something that they all care about, which is just great.

Julie Bogart: [00:51:39] no, it's exactly right. And you know, when you create like a co op setting, one of my favorite things about it was that there was always an hour or two a day where I would just get to sit with the other moms and chat. You know, I didn't have to schedule a coffee date. I didn't have to, but my kids somewhere so I could see a friend.

It was this, you know, weekly gathering I could count on. And so yes schoolers have solved these things as my point. They've been doing it for 50 years. They know how. And so if you have any questions, finding a homeschool buddy is going to be your best bet. You can follow me on social media like Instagram and meet people there.

There are a lot of commenters on my account.

Diana Hill: [00:52:19] Well, I have, one last question for you what about when we're just too exhausted to do any of that? Because I get really super creative and it sounds fun and exciting.

And then there's some days where I've just got nothing. And whether you're working from home and trying to do this at the same time, or you've chosen to homeschool, I think that's an experience that many parents have. So any, any tips around that.

Julie Bogart: [00:52:46] Yeah. Exhaustion is real. I mean, it's real. Even when you aren't homeschooling, parenting is exhausting. Working is exhausting. Managing your own life is exhausting. We want to pace ourselves. And one of the ways we do that is we take care of our own mental health. You know, I know it's just the most trite example ever, but we put on our oxygen mask first, just like on a plane.

And the way to do that is to actually be interested in something for yourself. A lot of times we think self care is, you know, the bubble bath and the bar of chocolate and you know, some, uh, moment of meditation on a beautiful sunny deck somewhere. Those are helpful. Absolutely. But what I've noticed recharges parents, adults, especially adult women the most, is pursuing an interest they have.

Whether that's learning to draw realistically or taking up distance running or becoming a knitter, or you know, everyone's making sourdough bread right now. Why? Because there is something very nourishing. About giving the gift of a new experience to yourself, something that you own that's yours.

Homeschooling can be depleting if it's only ever focused on what your children want to do. And what I've noticed is if you take charge of your own interests and give yourself permission in the middle of the day in front of your kids to pursue those interests, they actually feed the homeschool. You are modeling for your children how to pursue something.

You are externalizing the joy of discovery and learning, and you are giving your kids a chance to be your biggest fan and they want to be, and they want to admire you. They want to cheer you on, they want to comfort you when it's hard, and that reciprocity goes a long way.

Diana Hill: [00:54:41] So taking care of yourself, getting inspired yourself for yourself and having that feed you and also the experience, it mirrors the experience that your children are having.

Julie Bogart: [00:54:53] Yeah, and I know that can sound like I'm just adding one more thing to your plate. So if you're in such a catatonic state that that sounds depressing and not enlivening, then yeah, you need a break. You know, you might need to say, we're not doing these zoom calls. We're taking a month off. We're going to just live and nurture our home and play board games.

There is no, um, no rule. Around how to take care of yourself. What we want to do is take care of ourselves. So if you're at that depleted state, it's okay to admit it and to ask for help, whether it's from your family itself or having a therapist or you know, I always have a therapist that I'm a Californian, right?

So that's part of the pedigree of coming from LA. Um, that's how I stay. Well.

Diana Hill: [00:55:42] Well, thank you so much, Julie. This has been such a treat to have you on and learn from you, and you've been a bit of a lifeboat for me over the past few weeks. . So I really encourage people to check out the Brave Learner. and also look into some of your other resources. And we'll link the ball here.

Julie Bogart: [00:56:01] Oh, thank you, Diana. I loved hearing your story and I'm very much looking forward to seeing how this pandemic transforms how we all see children in education. I think there's going to be some really rich fruit from it. Thank you for having me. Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off The Clock.

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