

Transcript

Episode 213. How To Talk With Kids To Build Motivation, Stress Tolerance and A Happy Home with Dr. William Stixrud and Ned Johnson

Ned Johnson: [00:00:00] It's so hard It's so stressful. It's so painful to be ineffective in communicating with our kids. I mean, for the person said, I've told them a hundred times, I've told them a thousand times, well, how, how powerless that person feels. And from my, when I've fallen into the trap, what a jerk, I feel like, you know, for the umpteenth time telling my kid, you know, and like, why aren't they listening to me?

William Stixrud: And the unconditional expression of love and acceptance. I think that's the best message you can give a kid or another human being.

Diana Hill: You're listening to Ned Johnson and Dr. Williams Stixrud read on psychologists, the clock

Yael Schonbrun: 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: I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in mile high Denver, Colorado, and coauthor of act daily journal.

Diana Hill: I'm Dr. Diana Hill coauthor with Debbie on act daily journal and practicing in seaside, Santa Barbara, California.

Yael Schonbrun: From coast to coast, am doctor Yael Schonbrun. a Boston based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown university.

Jill Stoddard: And [00:01:00] from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of be mighty and the big book of act metaphors

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Jill Stoddard: so visit our offersPage@offtheclocksite.com.

Diana Hill: Here we are back to school and in many ways it's not back to normal. So we thought that we would offer you some parenting episodes to help you navigate. , what's been sort of an unprecedented, challenging time to be a parent during a pandemic. And I have you Yael here, another favorite parenting expert of mine. and we wanted to, talk a little bit about some of the concepts that were brought up in this episode.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. I think, um, this episode Diana was so terrific. It follows up another amazing episode where you had Dr. William Stixrud right on to talk about the self-driven child. And I love this episode because you got into a lot of the, on the ground strategies for relationship building with kids, uh, in the context of building more motivation and, and just, you know, helping kids. Be their best selves in even when things can [00:03:00] be challenging, complicated, uncomfortable.

Diana Hill: So some of the research is showing from the APA stress in America survey, that parents are one of the groups that are most impacted by the stress of the pandemic.

And as we move into fall, that stress is continuing right with different variants and kids that aren't vaccinated and kids going back to school and all these different transitions. And I think that. , Dr. Stixrud red and Nat Johnson talk a lot about is this foundation of the relationship, but then also giving kids some room to Be challenged . And one of the things that we talk a lot about on this show in terms of acceptance and commitment therapy is our tendency to avoid pain and the law of least effort that our brains will always take the easier path, but there's also something about the human experience, which is we really do find satisfaction in a little bit of a challenge and a little bit of a struggle. And sometimes parents [00:04:00] sweet then too quickly to take that experience away from their kids.

And that's where the growth happens. If we allow our kids to have a little bit of self-driven ness, that's where they're going to learn some of the skill sets that they'll need later on in life. And to be able to stick with it, ness that's needed to be resilient .

Yael Schonbrun: And like you're saying, it can be really helpful to remember that even though at the front end, it might look and feel pretty uncomfortable to observe and be a part of that learning process, whether it's yours or your kids, that if you can. Make space for it. That that is ultimately what is really good parenting. And it might not feel comfortable at first, but if you just are patient with the process, the good stuff comes.

Diana Hill: So I have a little anecdote to share around a recent trip that I took with my son where we've been practicing the self-driven child approach for years. So this poor kid he's been, he's been a product of the self-driven child. Yeah. One of the things that we practice is that we don't pack for our kids. [00:05:00] And so they pack for their own trips. He's been packing for his own trips probably since he was like six and it's sort of like an iterative process, but the last time he packed, he forgot his dress shirt and he wanted to go out. We went out to dinner and he, he kind of likes to get a little

dressed up and he forgot his dress shirt.

This time he passed. And we were kind of busy and I said, you know, you've got this, you know, , what do you need? And he listed off all the things and he packed his little bag and we get on our trip and here we are landing in the hotel and he remembered his dress shirt and his dress shoes, but he forgot his socks his underwear and his toothbrush. And that's me, that's the experience of parenting. right? Like you have to kind of give a little room for your kid to make the mistakes, to learn from it. And you know, it was a little funny. We were walking around amusement park with a dress shirt and no socks.

But I, I guarantee you he will remember that the next time. And that's the, um, process, of parenting where you give a little wiggle room. Where it doesn't really matter. Is this not like a life and death situation? and then we do [00:06:00] sweet soup in when it is something like substance use or self harm. You obviously, we're not going to allow , that to happen to our children, but we usually err on the side of rescuing a little too quickly.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, there's, there's this really nice theory of the zone of proximal development. I think their researcher is Vygotsky and I really like this idea because it's sort of like figuring out like where your risk tolerance is and really pushing out to it. So letting your kids fail in ways that feel safe.

Diana Hill: And maybe an act terms that would be your own zone of flexibility, like stretching out that flexibility zone . and you know, one of the things that Nat Johnson talked about in this episode is something called self-determination theory and it drives a lot of their work and I thought it would be helpful to outline what self-determining. Theory is it's an old theory. It comes from the eighties, but it's basically the idea that your intrinsic motivation comes from three things. It comes from relationship, which is incredibly important it comes from autonomy. That sense of choice, [00:07:00] which is very much part of acceptance and commitment therapy as well. It's like, do I have the choice, the freedom to choose this or not. And then also from competency and skill building, and that sense of building towards mastery, which is part of that idea of a little bit of struggle is satisfying. This is why people run marathons. Because part of what's satisfying in life. Finding your edge, of where you can go.

Yael Schonbrun: One part of the research that I find really interesting too, is that we might think of autonomy as being, uh, unrelated or, or negatively correlated with competency. But actually they're highly correlated that when we connect with our kids in ways that support their agency and their skill building, it actually is quite good for our relationships.

And you can think about this even like in an adult relationship, like for example, Partner that when your partner says to you, you know, I trust you to make good decisions and Honda, it's interesting. I hadn't thought about it that way. I would do it differently, but, but I love that you're doing your weight, that you end up feeling much closer to that, [00:08:00] man. So that's something that we can carry into our parenting relationship, that by offering more space for our kids to make their own choices, it actually breeds more closeness. even though sometimes we fear that it won't. One other thing that I just wanted to suggest to listeners is that I actually just finished, um, Edward Deci. Who's one of the lead researchers in self-determination theory, his book, his classic book, which is called why we do what we do. And it's a fascinating read. I highly recommend.

Diana Hill: That talk a little bit about that relationship between autonomy in relationship with parents and how sometimes what we're asking our kids to do is sacrifice their autonomy so that they stay related to us and that they will choose that. Over their autonomy. So when we give kids the sense of

like, I believe in you, I trust in you, it actually helps them feel connected to us.

And then also encourages them to move out into the world and take risks and learn and expand their skill sets. So I love that. Well, yeah, I'll we good? Leave folks with a little bit of a [00:09:00] coping toolkit, because man, we could all use that right now. And maybe each of us can offer two coping skills to use as parents.

If you email us at info at author clock, psych.com, we'll be able to send that to you.

Yael Schonbrun: So in terms of coping skills, one of the things that Ned and bill suggest is to pause before swooping in to kind of save your child from discomfort. And one of the things that comes up in a lot for me when I'm helping parents in the therapy room is just how impulsive that choice is.

So I like to help people come up with a coping plan. So the first thing is to sort of notice what's happening in your body. So that mindful awareness of that impulse to swoop in. You know, what is it that you feel? So the question to ask yourself, is what am I feeling in my body?

What thoughts are going through my head and on the coping skills worksheet, you might write that down so that you can increase your awareness of those thoughts and those feelings. and in that way, you can sort of cue yourself to the red flag for you [00:10:00] to be swooping in too quickly.

Diana Hill: And then the next step would be to do a bit of perspective taking, which is an act process of zooming out. And sometimes when we are caught in a moment where we're kind of overwhelmed by our emotion, our attention gets really narrow. And we forget the big picture and some questions you may ask yourself. How important is it that I step in? right now, is this a place where I could just almost sit on my hands And breathe And be in my own discomfort so zooming out and asking yourself how important is it? Is it to me? Is it for me to step in? And those are the things like if this is my child is at risk for his health or her health and safety, or they may be harming someone else. Those would be the swoop end moment.

Yael Schonbrun: And related to that, I think one of the hardest things to do is to stop an impulse without an alternative behavior to step into. And so in this kind of a coping plan, you'd want to come up with some alternative behavior. So instead of sweeping in, I'm going to, and one thing that's really nice is if you can [00:11:00] pick a behavior that's value aligned.

So for example, if you're trying to model good choices for you, what might that look like for you or alternatively, if your child is struggling with anxiety and you're trying not to swoop in and save them, you're probably feeling anxious. So what would be a good behavior that you could model for them?

In terms of managing that anxiety.

Diana Hill: And then I would say the last thing is use your values as your reinforcement. So you're more likely to do a behavior again, if you reinforce it. And instead of doing sort of the negative reinforcement, which is like runaway or soup in what we're going to do here is really highlight for yourself when you do that.

On your values of parenting to remind yourself, this is the type of parent that I want to be, and really let that settle into your body and your being in linger on that. Maybe you can remember it later in the day of a moment where you made that choice point and you turn towards your. Because when you repeatedly Do that, you'll start to strengthen those neural connections in your [00:12:00] brain and in

your body to continue to do that behavior again.

So give yourself some grace. It may be a little bit funky and wonky. The first time you try this out, but as you continue to practice the skill, like any skill, like piano or guitar, you'll get better at it over time.

So our four coping strategies were pause and make space for whatever is showing up in this moment, zoom out and take perspective, ask yourself, is this a, this is something that I need to swoop in, or is this a moment that I can do something else? And so break that repetitive pattern. And then the third aspect is, choose another behavior and have a plan for what your alternative behavior is going to be. And then finally, Reinforce that new behavior reminding yourself of what your values are and how this lines up with the type of person you want to be and the type of parent you want to be And what you want to model to your kids.

Yael Schonbrun: Please do email us for a copy of that worksheet. We'd love to share it with you. And we'd love to hear how well it's working out for you.

Diana Hill: So today I have the real privilege of talking with two of my [00:13:00] favorite experts on child psychology and parenting. Dr.

William Stixrud is a clinical neuropsychologist and faculty member at children's national medical center in George Washington university medical center. And Ned Johnson is the founder of. Prep matters. And the co-author of conquering the sat, how parents can help teens overcome the pressure, and succeed.

And they are the authors of one of , my favorite books on parenting, which is the self-driven child and have a new book out that just came out called, what do you say? How to talk with kids to build motivation, stress tolerance, and a happy home. It's such a delight to have you back on.

William Stixrud: Wonderful to be here.

Diana Hill: the first time you came on, it was, it was William Stixrud right? He was on episode 78 and, as a podcast of four psychologist, moms, we've done a lot of podcasts on parenting and it really was one of my favorite ones that we've done. And I really. [00:14:00] Use a lot of the ideas that you talk about things like, I love you too much to fight about blah, blah, blah, or it's your call.

And today , we have to start with the cover of your book because on the cover. You have these sentences with a red pen through them and, , it's is everything okay, honey crossed out. You need to study harder, crossed out. I know what is best for you crossed out because I said so crossed out. So tell me about that. Why are those things? What not to say.

And , what should we say to kids?

William Stixrud: I taught a lot of parents who are frustrated because they can't, they can't get their kid to see, you know, I've told them a million times or, you know, I just I've taken away. Everything. Nothing seems to work. I can't seem to motivate him. Yeah. You know, we just said that we're pretty familiar with things that don't work very well.

And also between the two of us, we, and in addition to having our own children, [00:15:00] I have, I have kids 30 something children that has a kind of older teenage. Professionally between the two of us, we probably spent pretty close to 65 or 70 years talking with kids one-on-one. And so we figured we got some pretty useful stuff to offer in terms of what doesn't work very well and what tends to

work.

And, certainly I know better than you do I mean, th th that that's not a very good line in part B, because we want kids, we, you use the line. You're, uh, you're the expert on you. I mean, we were little kids. We want to let them know. Nobody really knows you better than, you know yourself. And and there's things I know a lot more about something than you do, but I don't always know what's right for You and , our goal is for kids to, to basically develop a life that they want to create, create a self that they're happy with, are, our job is not to make them turn out a certain way or make them believe a certain thing, just to help them figure out who they want [00:16:00] to be and how to create the life that. they want.

Diana Hill: In this book, you focus a lot on the foundation of , empathy, closeness connection, And you, Right. That. A strong connection with a parent is the closest thing to a silver bullet for preventing mental health problems in kids. Can you talk a little bit about why you started the book there with empathy And closeness in terms of raising our kids?

William Stixrud: So because our first book is stuff we have in child. We, we, we focus so strongly on a sense of control. This is my life, you know, who, whose life is it, whose responsibility, whose problems if the kids. And when we decided to write a book about communicating with kids, we thought really the ultimate purpose of communication is building connections, building relationship. So we decided that we decided to start. We did this focus group with several focus groups with, uh, middle school and high school. kids. And one of the questions we asked them was who do you feel closest to in

This world? [00:17:00] and invariably, they said it was somebody who listens to you. Listen to me without judging me and somebody who doesn't tell me what to do. And this made sense because of all the research that. that's done on the power of empathy for building connection And the validation. Up kids' feelings. So we decided that this this, that this start there to start and Yeah. As, as you, you know, I mean these active listening, reflective listening, uh, techniques have been around, at least since Carl Rogers in 1960,

I think he is the guy who started really using that, that client-based therapy where you start out, you try to say, I'm really trying to understand you. So here's what, here's what I think you're saying. And there there've been a lot of books that have tried to teach parents how to do that. It's hard to do it, but we thought let's give this another shot. So, you know, we'd start with that express, that active, reflective listening. Uh, in the book that we refer to through this Israeli, uh, uh, psychologist who, who use the acronym wiggling, which is what [00:18:00] I got from what you said is, is, is that, and so, and then the, the validation that, you know, I, I probably feel like that too, but letting kids know that, that not trying to talk them out of their feelings, but not try to solve, jump in and solve the problem, or you could do this or that but listening respectfully and without judgment.

And w with resisting the urge to, to try to fix it for them, this is what kids told us. This is, this is who I feel closest to. Yeah, let's do it.

Diana Hill: I interviewed, um, Stephen Rollnick a while back, who's one of the co-founders of motivational

William Stixrud: Yeah.

Diana Hill: Uh, and he talks about the fixing reflects. And actually in, in the interview with him, he was talking about his own fixing reflects with, with his kid, putting on his shoes and how he was trying, to talk his kid out of wearing muddy shoes.

And I, you know, I thought about that. Interview while I was reading your book because you teach motivational interviewing to parents. Some of these skills that therapists have been using for a long time, you're helping kids get motivated [00:19:00] through this client center approach.

So can you talk a little bit about what that would look like? What would you say as a parent to help your child, especially when they're ain't motivated? Cause that's, I think we get two ends of the spectrum. We either get kids that are highly. Or we get kids that are motivated and we want to kind of help them get motivated in their lives.

William Stixrud: Right. You know, and in the book we make it clear, that motivational interview requires training to use clinically, but it's just the there's two basic insights. So one is what you do, you mentioned is this what they call this writing reflects. You know, that there's a problem. I'm going to try to solve it for you, but we're, we're wired to do that.

And this. Brilliant insight. A motivational interview is this idea that people are ambivalent about change. And it just seemed to me, it did that. Why, why not teach parents that, that this idea that we're already, we're already teaching them about the reflective listening, which is a big part of. Why don't we teach them that this idea that kids are ambivalent about change and the way we've tried to change.

Other [00:20:00] people always backfires. It always just gets resistance. And why don't we teach them to do that? If you listen respectfully. And then if you listen for that change talk, what am I cause change that, uh, you don't pounce on it, but then you kind of reflect back. And the idea is that parents can use these tools to help their kids discover their own internal motivation.

Diana Hill: So what would that, what would that sound like? Say, give me an example of say you're working with a child that, um, doesn't want to do their homework

that you, you work a lot in this department with the testing of kids, how would you work with use these sort of motivational interviewing skills with a kid that doesn't want to do their homework or this, you know, you have tapped out.

Ned Johnson: Yeah. I mean, you know, gosh, this homework is so stupid. I don't even say, well, why do I want to do it anyway? Right. And we can jump into sweetheart. No, this is really important was it's not easy, but you really need to do, you know, and the kids will just argue aside and, and, and, and really not have eyes open to [00:21:00] the thing being really stupid.

You can say, well, gosh, you sure sentence? Sure. it seems like this is pretty frustrating too. And you, and you really, really don't want it. you know, and I can, I can get how I wouldn't want to do something if it. were, if we're pretty dull and parents think that that's going to lead kids to, to then, well, it's okay, then I don't have to do it.

And, but you can say, you know, it seems like it's, pretty dumb, but, but I I would, I'd I'd like to think there's probably some reason why your teacher gave it to you and I, I'm not quite sure what that. What that is. Um, but I'd love to talk about that I have what I consider a profound parent win this past

year.

My daughter had 14 months of school on zoom, which is just the worst. Right. And so like all parents, I was kind of watching her do school or perhaps more accurately not do school. Right. And it's hard. Right. Cause I'm, you know, we're concerned about it too. And she would come to me. Oftentimes I'd be having breakfast.

She'd roll into the interview. Kitchen and say, you know, do I have to go to school today? [00:22:00] and for years, you know, because I'm walking the walk of the self-driven child. And so I can't, I, can't make it go to school. Right. You know, you can just pretend like in front of the computer and, play and played Fortnite or X-Box, or when you're your case, Minecraft all day long and what am I there's nothing I can not get my own work to do.

And, and, and, but then when I, when I in the middle of writing this book, I said, but I also can't tell you that you don't have to go to.

Because it's not my school? I'm not your teacher And I can't let you off the hook, you know, And, and I can't tell you that this isn't important to you only, you can figure that out.

And she gave me the Harum facial Iran, And I said, let me, let me get my hunches. that you're hoping that I was telling you that you didn't have to go to school. So you'd be off the hook. Right. And so but I just, I can't, I can't do that. This is your education and, and, and it's really the reasons why going to zoom schools.

The disaster, but I'm pretty sure there are also reasons why you seeing your friends and maybe keeping up with work there, probably some value to that. And the, idea behind [00:23:00] this is. For folks to identify and ideally articulate, articulate their own reason for doing a thing or for not doing anything for changing way more powerful than if I were trying to enumerate all the reasons why it was so darn important for her, to do it because she has a brain that's way faster than mine.

And she had for every idea that I positive why she would come up with two. Why not? And it'd be like playing whack-a-mole and then no, one's going to win that. No, one's going to win that battle.

Diana Hill: I love that you're, giving an example of how you use this idea of parent consultant in your book. And you talk about these three. Components of being a parent consultant in terms of offering, but not forcing wisdom, encouraging kids to make their own decisions and letting kids solve their own problems. And when you're doing that, and when you're describing that in the book, Dr. Stixrud read you also talk about what's happening in the brains of kids when they're actually going through. Decision-making of problem solving. So can you talk to us about why also it's healthy in terms of the development of [00:24:00] their brain,

William Stixrud: There's an article that came out a couple of years, uh, written by Martin Seligman And Steve Mayer, , who pioneered the the work on learned helplessness. And the article is called learned helplessness 50. what did we get? Right. What did we get? And basically what they concluded was that the dogs were in the cage would get shocked repeatedly. And then wouldn't, wouldn't bother to try to escape. It's not that they learned helplessness it's that they didn't learn a sense of control. and so selling would eventually got into studying people? and then eventually I created the field of positive psychology. Steve Mayer has just continued to work with rodents and his basic period. Is rat rat a and rat B or, or in plexiglass cage tales outside the cage electrode on them little wheel inside the cage rat AE gets shocked. the tail gets shot. It's,

not painful, but it's annoying. So he discovers, if he turns the wheel, the shock stops rat B gets shot, turns the wheel, nothing. If he doesn't get his [00:25:00] shot, doesn't stop until rat turns the wheel. and what happens is that when rat a is turning the wheel, that his prefrontal cortex activates and when the prefrontal cortex activates it dampens down the stress response. So that it's not as stressful because you go into. And what happened with rat a is he learned I can control a stressful situation. So even when the, when the, eventually when they, they, they, they, uh, the wheel is disconnected from the electrode, did that, it didn't stop the shock. He'd still go into coping. You put him into a cage with the big, scary rat. He goes into coping mode as opposed to whimpering Or attacking.

And Meyer has said that it's that sense of control. That inoculates you from the harmful effects of stress. And so that's what we want. the kids have a problem. We suggest that the kid comes home with. a problem, whether there's a third grade girl who didn't get invited to a birthday party and all your other friends did, or a 10th grade boy comes home, just got dumped by his girlfriend, or didn't get to make the basketball. [00:26:00] We want to remind ourselves who's problem. Because when they're stressed, ideally they're free frontal cortex activates to try to figure out how to solve it. When it activates it dampens down the stress response, they go into coping mode and that's what trains the brain to, go to coping as opposed to, to avoiding or freaking out. Yeah, that's what we want for kids. That's what built resilience is. Ned says, you know, it's, it's that adversity with support and time to recover. That builds, that would be called high , stress tolerance reasons.

Diana Hill: and you also write about how brains are developed based on how they are used. So if your child is grappling with problem solving, then they're actually laying down some of , the myelin sheath of the neurons and some of those connections in the brain to become better problem solvers, as opposed to parents taking that from them.

William Stixrud: Okay, completely. And that that's we talked about in the first book about decision, you made that, that the, the, the pioneering work of Damasio about demonstrating that decisions [00:27:00] are really hugely emotional, as opposed to the logical and the good decision makings require you to pay attention to emotions.

And so we, we want kids from tendered little. We have that experience of accessing, known emotions and triggering these emotional centers in the brain. They get integrated with the rational decision decision-making processes and the prefrontal cortex brain that works in a Morton integrated way. We can pay attention to our gut and then also kind of see a plan out how that works in real life.

So we just think that this, this kind of approach is really, really does. Really healthy brain development.

Tea drinking is a ritual that I do throughout my day and pour a cup of tea between clients to slow down and ground myself. And I end the day with a cup of tea and handle reading with my kids. That's why, when we had the opportunity to partner with the art of tea, it felt like a perfect fit. The art of tea is an [00:28:00] award-winning organic tea company based in Los Angeles on a mission to impact as many lives as possible through healthy and sustainable.

As a mom and organic gardener, I value that the art of tea sources, their ingredients from family run farms and as someone whose love language is gift giving. I'm so excited to give their gift box set of a tea candle in journal as a gift my favorite blend is bright eyes. It's an area of Vedic, blend of tumeric, ginger and cinnamon.

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Diana Hill: So I'd love to talk with you in that you're a test prep specialist and probably work with a lot of high intensity parents that have very good intentions of wanting their kids to have a successful [00:29:00] career.

Ned Johnson: I think three, three or four, maybe over my life. Anyway.

Diana Hill: good intentions. Um, and at the same time, what I, what I noticed in my practice, I work a lot with college students, , is either folks that are kids that are so stressed out that they're not enjoying their lives, the writer, or they're so anxious that, and so perfectionistic that become quite rigid or cause it to kind of given up and, , one of the things I appreciate about your work is that you look at achievement is just one part, one piece of the pie, that achievement isn't all of the pie in terms of the health and wellbeing of children. So how do you talk with parents about, about that? And then also, how do you help parents talk with their kids about that?

Ned Johnson: well, it depends, you know, it depends on the kid or, you know, the parent,

whether they're receptive to it. Um, but, but generally, , I start with the approach. With the assumption that the parent wants the best thing for their kid. Right. But they're using methods that are [00:30:00] ineffective because they don't know methods that are more effective.

Right. And they're going to do something because sitting on your hands and biting your tongue while watching your kid go through and particularly for the struggling. It's just, it's a really, it's really hard for most folks to do. And so when I talk with them, I, I tend to be a little bit indirect and, and rather than say, you're freaking your kid out, it'd be simple.

Like, well, you know, I mean, Susie, is that a pretty intense school? And as you know, she's, she's really academic and the groups she runs with. I mean, They're also darn competitive. And my hunch is that she's got just more stress coming into our system that than we'd like, and the parent's like, oh, you have no idea.

Right. And so what I think would be helpful is if we can help her sort of pull the stress sponge and pull some of those, the, you know, the stress out of her, um, because we can't, we're not probably going to be able to change the culture of our school. And then also, what does that look like? And then I try to get them to, you know, to, to buy in as allies a little bit, um, But it also, uh, some of the things that are in our book, we talk with them [00:31:00] about as well, ICL, so many kids who don't come to their parents with problems, because they're afraid that the parents are going to overreact.

And that's just a hard place to be because the parents want to help. Right. And the kids, when they're, when push comes to shove, feel like, you know, a home is not a safe space. What do we, what do we do with that? Um, I'm awfully good at figuring out a path that we're going to get there. I don't try to talk people out of the goal that they want to get.

But sort of, uh, the, how, uh, the, how the we get there. You know, I spend an enormous amount of time talking with kids about sort of plan B thinking and about, you know, sleep, um, and, and sort of less is more about not, you know, about the benefits of committing to fewer things, rather than trying

to be perfectionist to can do and do everything.

And when I, when I can, I enlist their parents, I mean, I tend to, frankly, I spend more time talking with kids. Than I do with their parents most of the time. Um, [00:32:00] unless, you know, unless I'm talking to them in the school setting, um, you know, parents, I'm old enough at this point that a lot of parents, um, sort of hand me their kid on their credit card and trust that's going to all going to come out well enough.

And what's just so interesting is as Bill points out is I have a career of helping kids do better on tests by honestly making them care less. About tests where that this perfectionistic must be perfect, kind of thinking it actually undermines performance because you know, with perfectionism, you, you don't see feedback.

You don't see mistakes as feedback and as an opportunity to get better, you see it as the sky is falling and I have to do everything not to make, not to make a mistake. But, but I will want to work with kids. I'll say, look, I'm giving you problems. And I know you're going to get some of them wrong and that's by design.

And they looked at me like what? I said, look, I could give you 25 practice. I can give you a hundred problems and you could get them all right. But that's busy work. I mean, you know, who needs frigging worksheets, right? That doesn't, that's not engaged. I respect to way too [00:33:00] much to do that, but I want you to, I want you to struggle with.

And when you don't know what the answer is, put a big question mark out this, but don't, don't ask your mom or dad or your math teacher. Don't Khan academy. I don't, I'm not interested in what you know, how to do. I'm interested in what you don't know how to do. And at least in the little space that we work in, it's, it's, it's a space where it's a different, from my perspective, it's a different learning environment.

Then, then they've, they've had an, in so much of their other parts of the lives in part, because. I'm not their teacher. I don't grade them. I'm not mom and dad. I have no dog in this fight apart from what's good for you. And it's a really neat thing. I mean, I, in a perfect world, every young person has a, an Andrew, an uncle or a coach or a test prep nerd, you know, who can, who can really take an interest in them and have the performance be an outflow of it rather than having the performance be the primary goal, which seems paradoxical.

I've been awfully successful, helping people by, by, by really taking this approach with them.

Diana Hill: You've written [00:34:00] about how your job is. Not to motivate kids, but to help them find their motivation and your book.

A lot of the work in it is about, I think in sort of helping kids get their own intrinsic motivation, their own inner drive. And part of that involves listening to kids and also having conversations with kids about what brings them meaning and brings them joy. We were chatting about act earlier.

When you have your own inner reasons why they can show up when you've got nothing left, they can motivate you when you are completely spent. Right. As a parent, people know this, you know, I'll take care of my kids in the middle of night because I have a why behind it. Right. So how do you

work with kids in, in helping them find their own pursuit of happiness and, and their own, inner intrinsic motivation?

Ned Johnson: Gosh, I mean, it's a great, it's a great question. And the short answer is I put so much energy into being interested in the.

And whatever it is the kid wants. Right? I mean, I [00:35:00] have a boy I'm working with that. I worked with his mom actually, and now it's her son. And she went to the most tightly wound, private girls school here in DC.

And now her son is incredibly, incredibly, incredibly anxious. And I've been listening and listening and listen, and we're doing this all by zoom. He's up in New York trying to find an angle. And he finally said, well, me and my brothers are coming back on Thursday and I'll and I'm, and I'm, I'm, I'm making Brazil. And I said, we'd say that, uh, your, your, your brothers, you make risotto. He's like, oh yeah. I'm like, well, tell me more about, that? Well, he's this total foodie, this total, you know, food nerd. And I had no idea and I had to wait for. Right. And so it's now that, so tell me, and I found this recipe and now we have some common ground.

And I know just enough about basketball and the cross and cooking and a little bit about everything. So that one, so that I have a vernacular to, to, to really use appropriate metaphors for test prep.

But. Because it's a painful thing for kids to feel like [00:36:00] they're the sum total of their GPA sat scores and where they go to college. No wonder they're stressed about those things. And I take an interest in everything. There's a story in the book. I had this girl who I asked her at the start of her senior year.

What do you mostly do? What do you like to do most in the world? And she said, honestly, I have no idea. I spend so much of my time trying to meet other people's expectations of me. I have no idea. And I started poking and, you know, just listening to listen to. It turns out she was a fashion kid. There was a, they have this thing at her school where they design clothes and then I have a runway.

And so I found out from her friends when this was going to be, and I showed up there and I ended up sitting directly behind her mom and I brought a big thing of flowers. And here's the thing that it was just a kick to the gut. Well, this girl's friends were modeling her clothes. Her mom was on her phone, not taking pictures to look in her phone.

And I thought my goodness, because she's had a drip feed of the things that matter to you don't matter to me or as your parents. Uh, but, but, and so again, to your point, does it have [00:37:00] to be a tutor? My goodness. No, it can be your older sister. It can be your aunt, your uncle, your pastor, your soccer coach, but in a perfect world.

It's someone who's not just engineers. You know, it's the NEF, your pastor, Justin, you're interested in your faith, but your soccer coach and your soccer coach, not just inserting your performance on the field, but in your faith. Because when we, when we S when we aligned with our values, as you know, better than anyone, but also when we have as broad a foundation about the things that make us.

Then a test or a tech college admissions or a stupid sat score still matters, but it matters a whole lot less. And there's a whole lot less sting if we underperform and we can have so much more curves going into it because this is just one part of me.

Diana Hill: Yeah. It made me think about Alison Gopnik book about carpenters and gardeners. And so many of us as parents want to be carpenters where we're sort of chipping away at our children and forming them into something as opposed to gardeners, which are really just creating really nourishing soil for our kids to grow in. And one of the [00:38:00] suggestions that you make around building closeness was really eye-opening to me because I was reflecting on how maybe COVID has impacted this for folks.

, it was just spending one-on-one time with your kids. Staying close to them, physically expressing that you're interested in what they're interested in and then having family rituals. And a lot of times I think when we're busy, families are overtaxed and very busy, we think we need to do all these special things to, I don't know, to create bonding, but it's just the simplicity of how are we spending our time with them and are we showing interest? And just the day to day stuff.

William Stixrud: Well, I got my PhD in child psychology and started my own practice, people assume that I knew everything there was to know about childbirth, and I didn't learn anything useful in my doctoral program as a parent. And so I. I had to read stuff that's written for parents. And I brought this book is called how to really love your child as to how do you let your [00:39:00] kid know that you really love them.

And one of the main ways is simply spending time. and and because you can go out to dinner with another couple and you get to know them somewhat, but you really get to know them, really get to know them when w when, when you break up and you just talk one-on-one. And so what, I, I have two kids and I knew this when they were pretty little.

So at the time they were four or five, I said there's 168 hours in a week. And I want to, I need at least one alone with each one of you. And I spent those two hours a week with my kids until they went to college. And, I think that, and now, I mean, certainly spending time just a little bit of time without your phone. There's so many, so many kids tell us that I have trouble getting my parents to tip full attention because they're on their phone. They're listening while they're on their phone.

Diana Hill: Or spending time with them on their phone.

Tell me about what's in your phone that you love show me, because I think that's the paradoxical thing that you offer with technology. And [00:40:00] I was just sharing, we did an Instagram live together and I was sharing about how you got me actually going in and learning about Minecraft.

And I actually , I'm kind of impressed by the whole thing at this point of how there's this whole building component of it, but it was the idea of me instead of cursing. My kids technology use, actually getting curious about my kids' technology use and why it matters to him. And I really learned about some aspects of him that I can get why he gets it.

He likes it so much. He likes being with his friends. He likes building things. Uh, he likes problem solving, and those are all some nutrients I want to continue to grow in his garden And support in

William Stixrud: And when we come back to motivational interviewing and that ambivalence, I mean, I ask a group of ninth graders in Dallas a few years ago. How many of you feel that you're on your phone or in front of a screen too much? Every single kid raised. Every single kid. It's not like the kids are lost that I'm wasting a lot of time.

If they're spending too much time on social media or video games, it's [00:41:00] not like that. They are, they, they aren't aware, but the more we say no, no, no, you need to stop that. I'm pulling the plug on this. The more that they, they argued the other side about grading. And if you just change the end. And you say, help me understand what, what is so cool about it in a non-judgmental way, you seek to understand, as opposed to the judging first you seek to understand.

Then we then actually think that things are calmer. Kids are not resistant and kids will start to make that kind of comment. Well I love this game, but it is a huge time. But that happens all the time. If we change the energy and we listen and try to understand as motivational interviews you teaching kids will eventually start to voice that other side of their ambivalence, that change talk.

So it's a huge time suck. Uh, so what, what, what, how would you like to be different if you only, if you spent half.

On Minecraft or whatever it is, did that, that you're spending now, what would that be like we have that kind of conversation with them, [00:42:00] but so much of the focus of our new book is changing

the energy in ways that from ways that are unproductive ways, we haven't actually had a chance of connecting with our

kids and influencing them.

Diana Hill: And for the parent, that's really hard. So you do also talk about parents needing to do their own. Work right around their own anxiety and how hard it is to hold children lightly, to not just bubble, wrap our kids or sweep in and solve it for them. It requires a lot of work on the part of the parent, too. Just sort of go for this ride. That's really twisty and turny and not knowing what's coming up next without taking control. And I also really appreciate how you, you bring that up and then also bring up this non-anxious presence and how to, how to model that as a parent. Can you talk a bit about that?

William Stixrud: In our first book, we, we said that w w w when our kids, um, when the kids are having a tough time, our most important work is on ourselves, [00:43:00] you know? And, and, and we talk about it in the same chapter that we talk about, um, motivational.

And then the idea that you really, you can't, you don't try to change somebody, you know, you have more power, if you don't try to change them in the end, we would talk about that this new space program, uh, all it?

limits is a space program out of Yale, the supportive parenting of anxious childhood emotions, and the idea that, with parents, Uh, become, uh, uh, affirming of kids And they make a supportive statements.

I know that makes you really anxious, but I'm a hundred percent competent you can handle it.

Diana Hill: And I'm a hundred percent constant. You can handle it

not, but, but

William Stixrud: yeah. And, and Yeah. and I I'm aware that the way I was accommodating your anxiety and investment, it just makes it worse. So I'm not going to do it anymore. When parents do that without making any attempt to change the kids.

It's as effective in reducing the kid's anxiety as CBT is. And we learned that we thought know, let's really focus on this [00:44:00] idea that if we change our steps and without trying to change our kid, we can be much more effective as parents. So most of the work is on ourselves. Some of it's communication, some of it is emotional regulation.

It's managing our own. As You said, Diana's, it's measuring our own anxiety because ideally.

In any kind of system, the people in charge are serve and serve as a non-anxious non fearful, not emotionally reactive presence. I mean, think how wonderful it is. If you have a boss who you screw something up, who doesn't just lay into you, who's going to be understanding and help you problem solve.

And it family it's wonderful. If parents can be calm. It can be not highly, emotionally reactive so that when a kid has a problem, he can come to the parents and not, and not worry. The persons that happens. They're going to get yelled at parents are the first to try to understand.

Diana Hill: You know, it's sort of like on an airplane whenever it gets turbulent. I don't look at the other passengers. I look at the flight attendant the [00:45:00] flight attendant is cool as a cucumber during that turbulence. And it makes me feel, you know, they've got this, we've got this. We're fine. And so.

Ned Johnson: I was going to say in our first book, there's a story. My daughter, we had a one when those wonderful ground stops for three hours on the tarmac client out of Chicago. And I was in my daughter was maybe a year old and she is she's, we'd describe her as sensitive to secondhand stress. And so they come to us.

Ladies And gentlemen, we shouldn't hear from next to, you know, three weeks or show. Right. Getting everybody on the tubes like, oh my gosh, my daughter of course has no idea what's going on, but she can feel everyone else's stress. And she just, and I am the most, I do the w. Directly bad job Sue than her, because I'm so worried that I'm going to be that guy.

Right. And, and I needed someone's grandmother who was like, 80 years old to pick sweethearts they're they're they're they're they're, you know, and it's, it's hard to do, but it's incredibly powerful and you're exactly right. All of our kids too. We'll we'll [00:46:00] look at, look at the situation, but then they'll also look to mom or dad and say, how do you think this is going to go.

Right. And if, if the, if the sense is this is going to go well. enough, you know, then, then, then the kid it's easy for the kid to believe this is going to go well enough to

Diana Hill: And sometimes it doesn't go So well. So that's the other part of it is that I think as a parent, especially during this year and a half, I've been hearing more and more from parents that have just lost it. Like they have lost it. Their stress has hit a limit and they can't. Manage it, and that's where the close relationship comes in, because then we can talk our way through that, that, you know, even parents lose it sometimes. And I love how you, you model that in your book as well. It's just, when you have this type of relationship with your kids and, you can navigate whatever waters, show up.

William Stixrud: Know, I I'm I'm S 71 years old. And I, I can't, I don't really remember a specific incidents, but I remember when I was in my forties, I could still remember specific times that my father had gotten [00:47:00] pissed at me. And then at that night and come into my bedroom and said, I, I

want to apologize. I really re overreacted. I had a really stressful day at work. I I'm crazy about you. And I just, and I just remembered how, much it made me feel loved and respect. Um, and so I think, you know, Under stress, we do things with it that are not necessarily advisable And as long as they have that kind of relationship where it's w we apologize and we repair our relationship.all good.

Ned Johnson: and I love that too bill, because it's such an effective modeling of I'm not a perfect person, but I can make things better when I make a mistake. And you as a kid you don't have to be perfect either with me, with your friends and, and here's the tool. For if when you make a mistake and you hurt someone's feelings, here's, here's how you, you, you, you mend that right. And move forward

William Stixrud: Yeah. Yeah, I'm just, I'm going to be evaluating a girl. Um, in a couple of [00:48:00] weeks who, uh, has been very perfectionistic, always a straight a student, extremely high pressure school. She, she, I think she's 15 now And she just, thought she was a psych psychiatric hospitalization in the spring as is a lot of anxiety, OCD and depression. She made a suicide attempt. So she's in yeah. And DBT right now, the parents are getting training

for, for the DBT people, uh, on validation. And that the moms, I said that recently, this girl was really upset about something. The parents and the parents validated her feelings, as opposed to telling her what to do, or is it solving the problem for her? And the girl brought the parents an email the next morning. I can really tell that you're changing. This helps me so much that it's just, it just made us feel like this kind of work of focusing on how do we talk to our kids,

How do we respond to them? It really, it makes a huge difference and it's not too late, you know, it's not like, , you have to start when they're two to do this, you know, you can always repair.

We can always go back and [00:49:00] heal things.

Diana Hill: And with, with DBT Marsha Linehan is such a master of validating. Um, she's validating the thing. Many people would say you can't validate, like you don't want to validate someone that's actively suicidal because it might make them more suicidal. But her form of validation is revolutionary because it starts with just being present.

And then it moves into these six deeper levels of things like validating. What is valid that you're feeling is valid, even though your thoughts that led to this feeling, they have been, you know, not the most helpful thought to, to take you down that road. What you're feeling is valid and the radical genuine.

Of just being human and showing up as a parent and being radically genuine with your kids. I think a lot of these principles that have been kind of tucked away in therapy and psychology and yeah. Treatment centers, you're kind of like digging them up a little bit in this book, you're using some stuff from positive psychology and Seligman's work.

Motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral approaches. They're actually just really practices of how to relate [00:50:00] to people well, and be effective as a, as a human. And we don't have to wait until we have a mental health concern to use them, and we can use them right now as parents and in our own lives.

William Stixrud: It's so true. And , I was trained you, I think on our earlier conversation, use the term paradoxical and, and I, I I'm old enough that I was trained in a paradoxical family. Uh, and, and so the

idea of being able to do something that seems counter-intuitive and having a good result, you know, so I, I became pretty comfortable early on just saying, I know I can't make you do that.

I'm in bit by bit. If my kid fought me on Sunday, I said, obviously I couldn't make it. I'm not trying to force you to do that. If I did you beat, he takes his

fall and I, prescribe all the ways he could beat me. you could just fall on the floor. You can start. Yeah. You can pee in your pants. You know, I can't make it do this And I'm not, I'm not gonna, I'm not trying to make you do this. And, I think it'll go better if you kind of worked together on this like that. and just, um, initially when I first admitted, [00:51:00] I know I can't make you do this if I felt a little powerless, but eventually it's so empowering. We just give up the illusion that using force. Ever works there, it works in a productive way. In one of our chapters, in the chapter on being a parent consultant, we talk about the language of no forms. I love Ross Greene's line, , with resistant kids, I'm not going to try to use the force of my will to make you do things

Diana Hill: and I think that what actually happens, not only do you get freed up. as a parent, , your kid starts doing stuff When the pandemic hit, we started the homeschooling, our kids, and I, you know, it was pulling my hair out. How am I going to get my kid to do the thing that they were doing in school. And I did this give up approach one of our first assignments with my eight year old. Okay. Make a museum of all of your favorite things, Cadillac it, and take us on a tour. And that was, that was the assignment for the week. That's all I did. And he spent, he was so engaged in that project.

He was [00:52:00] writing things. He was doing all the things that we were supposed to do in school. He was even presenting to people, uh, all the things. Well, but it was self-driven, it was intrinsic and it was about what mattered to him. So I had to do such little work and I think as parents, we have to kind of step out of the paradigm of what it's supposed to or should look like and into really listening to our kids of what, what they care about.

And all of a sudden they're off to the races. If you give them a little bit of that control and power.

Ned Johnson: And, I such a good point and I love that story.

And, and, you know, part of the thing, that's part of the thing we're so excited about in writing this book And bringing as you, as you point out, I know the collective wisdom, so many people have spent careers thinking about these things.

Is it so hard It's so stressful. It's so painful to. be ineffective in communicating with our kids. I mean, for the person said, I've told them a hundred times, I've told them a thousand times, well, how, how powerless that person feels. And from my, when I've fallen into the trap, what a [00:53:00] jerk, I feel like, you know, for the umpteenth time telling my kid, you know, and like, why aren't they listening to me?

Why aren't I listen to them because if they haven't listened to me the first 99 times, they're telling me this isn't what I want to, do. And so you really have to, you have to turn up the volume 11, right? to, this time. I really mean it. Right. And because we're such so such fans of self-determination there and trying to foster autonomous or intrinsic motivation, you realize when you tell the kid the 300th time and the kid finally does.

What they're doing is sacrificing their autonomy of foundational psychological need in order to maintain the relatedness with you as mom or dad, because at some level it's really scary to not have

the connection and it shouldn't, shouldn't be, And it doesn't have to be a trade-off between relate relatedness and autonomy and probably competency as well.

If you if you know, without me this one, And [00:54:00] this just, and so we want kids to be as successful as they can be. We want parents to be able to share their wisdom and their advice And and have it really be considered in that a perfect rule applied. But we, but we know that w when there was so many people who are strange, I mean, gosh, there's a David Brooks article a couple of weeks ago, the 27% of adults are strange from at least one parent in their family.

They, my goodness, there's gotta be a better way. And so this book is really about the house. Of communicating effectively because It's so stressful and so painful. And in some cases to a stranger thing, if we're ineffective in how we communicate with our kids,

Diana Hill: In the book you give really specific dialogues that, um, around everything, from sleep conversations, to conversations about technology, um, and you, you actually lay it out like this is what you would say. If your kid said this, and this is what you would not do. Can you, um, can you, as we're sort of starting to close here, can you give maybe just a few statements of, of what [00:55:00] to say to kids,

Like what, what are some of your favorite go-tos of what to say to kids for each of you?

William Stixrud: my absolute favorite. Is that I love you. And I'm crazy about you, regardless of how hard you work in school, how well you perform, how well you behave, did that. And the unconditional expression of love and acceptance. I think that's the best message you can give a kid or another human being. And so often we, we talk, there's a book, the chapter in a book about expectations.

Yeah. And you know, some parents say, well, I don't. I tell them you don't have to get all A's but you always have to do your best. And I liked it. I love you as much if you don't, if you do a half ass job. And I think that that, that unconditional love is more than likely to create somebody who has that healthy drive to, just for excellence.

And th th th that, that this more conditional I approve of you, as long as you're [00:56:00] trying your hardest kind of idea. So for me, that's my go-to. And the second is I love you too much to fight with you about whatever it is that my relationship with. Morton's more important, and I'll be. And I'm not going to let you just run the family.

I'm not, and I'm not going to do things that I don't feel are right, but I'm not going to fight with you about stuff. Cause my relationship with you is more important whether you do this or that.

Diana Hill: Well, that that statement we could use with pretty much any relationship, our, our partner, our parents are our planet, right. The divisions in the world. Right. Um, come up for you now. what are your favorites?

Ned Johnson: well, I, I I'd add to that, Because we talked about values and, and communicate that we're more than just our grades or test scores. And where are we going to college? Uh, things, like, I love watching you play soccer, you know, it's so fun to watch you and take such enjoyment from playing for a day with your friends.

I love when you play music, even if you're terrible, because this is saying that the things that matter to you. [00:57:00] Matter to me. Right. And we want to have this connections, you know, cause you

talked earlier about the you know, th th the carpenter, right. You know, w we have this metaphor of that first book about that.

So many parents are like Edward Scissorhands. They're sort of trying to make bonds eyes out of their children. But we don't know what kind of plant they're going to be. You know, bill and bill makes the point that when the great joys of raising teenagers every day, watching them figure out and try to end to decide who they want to be.

And so we don't know where they're going to end up. and so just, I love watching you do what. And the last two little pieces are things that really aren't what we say to kids, but, uh, but just a couple of them nuggets that I enjoy. One is that I make, uh, I'm incredibly conscious of my words when I'm talking with someone else on the phone or talking to someone when my head when there's any chance at all that my kids are in earshot, but they, but they're not in the room because I think it's really easy for kids to say, well, mommy, dad, you have to say that because that's just your job.

You don't really believe that. But if my daughter [00:58:00] hears me talking to my in-laws what I'm saying. Yeah, man, she just did the coolest thing last week. It must be valid if she, if she doesn't believe that I know that she can it be anywhere nearby. And then the last thing cause we've had a conversation the other day with a, a parent of saying, you know, I try to engage them.

I try to have out, I try to show up at the end. They just don't want to. I don't want to have that conversation. And some of it is just honest to gosh, how we look at people, right? when my daughter, she was full school refusal for three months of eighth grade. I get teary every time I think about it, it's just a really hard time for her And everything that she was that makes a kid happy in eighth grade was just hard for her.

And so it was hard for me as her dad wants her to. Hmm, for people who are listening to this, I'm tearing up. And as she and I made this effort, the one when she'd walk in the room to, to, to put down my phone, but also just to, to kind of look at her like, like the sun has risen and wow. And not, hopefully not in a way that's completely Daffy, but just like, [00:59:00] as bill would say your joy creating organism and you bring so much joy to me.

And so sometimes it's our words, but so much of it is just the energy.

Diana Hill: So, what do you say boils down to, I love you and, I trust you to make the decisions for your life and I'm here to be with you. , and that is a powerful approach to not only have with our children, but also to have with ourselves. Actually, a lot of the things that you talk about parents to tell their children are, are the same approach that we should have with our, our own selves in terms of our own intrinsic motivation and, um, tapping into what, what's important to us and how we want to live our lives that are aligned with our own personal values.

And where do you learn that you learn that as a kid, um, from how people have that in you.

William Stixrud: Well, that's true. I mean, so certainly we, we talked to ourselves And we talked to our kids oftentimes in ways that we wouldn't talk to anybody else in more critical, harsh ways. And then certainly there's a lot, there's a lot of overlap. Absolutely.

Diana Hill: And [01:00:00] at the end of every chapter, you also do a remember what it's all about, which I just love, because oftentimes at the end of my day, one of my bedtime practices before bed, instead of thinking about everything that went wrong for the day is I, um, I do a little rehearsing of

what was my most meaningful moment of the day.

And then I try and like, Really remember that moment. Cause I wanted to just have that downloaded into my, my being. And then I also know if I, if I think about that at the end of the day, then probably the next day I'll be thinking about, oh, is this a meaningful moment that I'm going to remember later? So oftentimes those meaningful moments have to do with our kids.

And they're really simple ones like , holding your baby when they're right out of the bath. And just having that quiet time before bed with reading your chat to your child's or the moment when, you know, something just was really sweet to remember what it's all about.

So for you in having written this book, and hoping to spread it to lots of people that need it. What do you want to remember? In terms of what it's all about for you.[01:01:00]

William Stixrud: For me, what, what, what, what it's all about most nights, when I go to bed, I have a little practice where, where I asked for kind of guidance to be that I may radiate. Peace love happiness and courage. The world has enough suffering and I prepped for me.

I don't want to add unnecessary suffering to the world. And so I, I personally think that I I've been practicing transcendental meditation for 47 years , and want to be able to read it. That, that kind of calm and courageous view of my friends have posted with fearful one. And that was really all about for me is kind of development that, that human development direction of enlightened.

Uh, and it also, I'll just say that accepting the world as it is. And I, I want to learn more about act about the acceptance part. Um, maybe because, um, so much of, uh, probably most of our suffering in the world is based on not accepting the world as it is. And then thinking that we have to change it [01:02:00] before we can feel better.

There's so much evidence that actually, if we accept the world, as it is, we make peace with it. much more adapt to

changing.

Diana Hill: Yeah, that's beautiful. I think you already do know a lot about the acceptance part because it's what you teach and what you preach and what you practice in your work. , and, , it is, are really are a lot of our freedom is just letting go of trying to change our children. Change ourselves, the self-improvement project that makes us feel terrible. Our children, aren't a self-improvement project either. And that, what is it all about for you?

Ned Johnson: Well, for me, what it's all about are, are, are two things, one paying attention to what really makes us happy. And we actually talk about in the chapter, in the book about the difference between pleasure and happiness and a couple of thoughts. I'm just bouncing through my head the past couple of months, one, it occurred to me that the thing that makes me happy. Is when I help people. and that made me not true for everyone, but it, you know, but it's really to really figure out what that core value is too, because then [01:03:00] you organize your life around that. And the other thing that occurred to me last night, you know, bill and I have had all this wonderful support about a book. And I just find myself writing email after email and texts and texts, but I'm so grateful for your help. And I, it occurred to

me the more grateful. The happier I am. and as a parent of two lovely, lovely kids, you know, I am so happy and so grateful to have people in my life who I, who I just adore warts and all, because we're all, you know, none of us is perfect.

And, and so. for me. And I think the message we come through with the book over and over is that we want to, when we can value their relationship with our kids and be as close to them as we can, even when things are hard, I mean, what's the point of life. If you don't have relationships, you.

Diana Hill: Wonderful. So gratitude and, um, and appreciating the relationship that you have right here available to you. Well, thank you for your time and your wisdom here and, uh, [01:04:00] go get. What do you say? It's, it's incredible book, uh, as, but start with, you can do both get them as a pair of the self-driven child and the, what do you say?

Cause it's it's how do you apply the self-driven child so thank you for your time. It's been a delight and pleasure to be with you.

William Stixrud: you're wonderful. Diane.

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