Leo and Cam Emotion School

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about all things having to do with learning disabilities and learning differences. I've done a couple of episodes now about emotional regulation and why sometimes our neurodiverse kids struggle with their emotions, from anger to crying.

The ups and downs of emotional regulation can be. As parents, we often look on not quite knowing what to do or how to support them. We see these beautiful children who we love with all our might, but understanding their ups and downs. With my own kids and my eldest in particular, his emotions can go up and down fast sometimes with no warning.

As he's getting older, we're finding new ways to support and cope with his emotional changes school hasn't always been easy. It takes him a long time to build trust with the adults around him to ensure he feels emotionally. As parents feeling confident to teach our kids about their emotion and how to release them in a safe way can be really hard.

Today's show is all about a brand new program that is about supporting families [00:01:00] and being confident to teach their children about emotions while supporting the whole family, not just the individual child from the parents to the little ones everyone can learn through this program. Jenny Hasan is the creator of Cam and Leo's Emotion School.

She has created a program which helps families learn about emotions in a positive way to help support everyone. Jenny, welcome to the show. I'm excited for this one. , partially I think, because this is such a new thing and so it's always exciting to be able to share something. But it's also not just a one child centered program.

It's like, as you said, a whole family program,

[00:01:38] **Jenny:** indeed. It is. Thank you so much for having me Delphine. I'm really happy to be.

[00:01:42] **Delphine:** So let's jump right in. And tell us a little bit about the program and why you felt you needed to create it.

[00:01:47] **Jenny:** So I really created the program out of my own need. The truth is a couple of years ago now, about three years ago.

 I realized that my own family, I'm a mom of three kids. , we're struggling. We were struggling all the time with,[00:02:00] you know, high tension in the household. Like there was a lot of tantrums. There was a lot of fighting. There was a lot of unresolved conflict and emotions were running a muck. And that was true of the parents in our household, too.

 There was a lot of reactivity going on between the people in the house. And when I went to look for resources, for my family, I really came up pretty short. There were very long waiting lists, said, therapy clinics. I was concerned about, , the practitioner fit for our family. , and it was just a very, like, it was an uphill climb.

, I couldn't find anything that adequately would serve us, so I decided to create it myself.

[00:02:41] **Delphine:** So how did you come up with what you wanted to create? I mean, I think of things that I try with my own family, but I always look at it and go, nah, it's only going to work for our family. So how did you come up with something that, can really kind of work for everybody?

[00:02:55] **Jenny:** So Cam and Leo's Emotion School is based on the [00:03:00] core principles of psychoanalysis. So psychoanalytic therapy. I was, you know, the initial creator of the program, but I brought on, very quickly a psychologist who, who is on our team as well as, , a curriculum developer, a really awesome and talented curriculum developer.

And the three of us together really cooperated on. On the creation of the program and how to disseminate these very, very complex ideas. Like we really, we delve into the unconscious. , and we, we cover, you know, unconscious impulses, those impulses that we're not even aware of. So they're not on our radar, , and in, in how we interact with, with, , you know, our other, our fellow householders. it really was a co-creation. , with, with a whole lot of expertise that went into it. So yeah, it wasn't just me.

[00:03:47] **Delphine:** What is your piece of the short of being a parent of kids who needed this kind of help?

[00:03:53] **Jenny:** That's a super, super question. So I, my, in my. Uh, incarnation my former incarnation, I'm a [00:04:00] brand and marketing person. I'm a writer, fundamentally and this, this was my muse. I wanted to tackle this problem.

I wanted to fix it. I couldn't stand anymore. This situation of having a family that I felt like I needed to escape from so often. And so my part was really, I gathered together a whole bunch of strings of research and I wrote the initial, treatment. And then I sent that treatment onto, to be vetted by the psychiatrist and the educator who made their contributions.

And then, I mean, we're now on when it, when it actually, uh, We'll go live. We're about to go live with the pilot test. It will have been seen already by, I don't know, like six different groups of professionals. So, we also have a research team that's based out of Australia that's um, through RMIT university, psychology department.

So they're also, they've also contributed to content and, and, uh, and editing the content and making [00:05:00] sure that we're just delivering the best possible. The best and most thorough possible product.

[00:05:05] **Delphine:** I love that you've been able to pull in all sorts of different disciplines. Like I think that that's, what's really cool about this program is that it's not just a one and done you haven't just put it together and sent it out into the world.

You've actually had it. Kind of peer edited or peer review, really, for lack of describing it.

[00:05:26] **Jenny:** Yeah, it's really true. I have been so blessed throughout this journey, I have to say. And it's because, the content is, is incredible. And I mean, I, right now I can tell you, I have a team of about 20 who are helping me.

It's a combination of professionals and students who are contributing to the Cam and Leo project and they are. Fantastic. And all of them are very passionate about mental health accessibility and, , acquiring core emotional skills they're here because, and they're helping because they believe in it.

And because they really think that it has the [00:06:00] potential to help families enormously.

[00:06:03] **Delphine:** Is this just a program that's good for? Sort of the preschool to 13 or 14 year olds. Are we talking about teenagers to young adults? Like, what is the window up to this point of what you've created? Right? Because not to say you wouldn't shift it to go one way or the other, but like, is there a core tunnel that would be this Cam and Leo's program would be geared towards at this stage.

[00:06:29] **Jenny:** Yes, absolutely. It's a really good question. We designed the program for this is just our flagship. It's just the beginning. As we like to say, we fully plan to, do incarnations that are targeted at different audiences. I would just say that it really is just an issue of brand.

If I'm honest because the content won't change. This is content that's applicable to every single age. From very young childhood, like even two or three to, uh, you know, adults it's completely applicable to everyone.[00:07:00] The program that we've designed is really catering to kids seven and up like families with kids.

Seven and up. And the reason is just that it requires a bit of an attention span and that the concepts are pretty complex. we've done our very best to impart them in ways that are fun and, normalizing and, accessible. But even still, I see with my four year old, he, he doesn't have the attention span to be able to sit and learn. That said he does sit and play Lego and dinos beside where we do emotion school, uh, our weekly, uh, emotion school sit down and he has picked up an enormous amount just by osmosis.

Like he's, he's probably the most emotionally intelligent member of our family.

[00:07:43] **Delphine:** Love that there's the ability for the young ones to be within the space, not necessarily engaged in the activity, but knowing that. You know, to use your words, the osmosis of it kind of follows through, right.

They're listening, but they're not really engaged in the activity, but that doesn't matter. The fact is they're in the [00:08:00] space where it's happening.

[00:08:01] **Jenny:** It's true. It's really true. I mean, they just, I mean, he's lived and breathed emotions. Cam and Leo's Emotion School for the last, I guess, since he was born almost.

I'm very surprised to hear him use some of the terminology and to be able to apply some of the concepts even if he's not capable of articulating.

[00:08:18] **Delphine:** Yeah, that's neat.

[00:08:19] **Jenny:** Yeah, it is pretty cool.

[00:08:20] **Delphine:** And I think that, I mean, we need to be pretty transparent about when we're recording this.

We're maybe finally, maybe possibly coming to the end of, COVID pandemic, which has led to all sorts of, um, I would S honestly, I think. I don't want to use the word door opening, but certainly heightening of our attention to the idea of emotions, mental health, what it does for us to be confined and restricted in our spaces.

I mean, listen, I think we've all been through a moment in these last two years and we're almost at the two year mark officially. Where, you know, we kind of look at our family and go, I don't really like you. Right.[00:09:00]

I mean, kind of right. But there has been nowhere to go. And so I think being able to acknowledge that. Emotional intelligence and understanding your own emotions. And when you need to step back or when you need to use a word that says I'm not okay. I think that's really important. And, I will say from a teacher perspective in the schools, having kids who are able to identify.

And say, I need help or I'm not okay. Or I need an extension on this project because I'm overloaded with whatever I think is kind of key to our youth being really. I don't wanna use the word good, but like really engaged members of society in terms of, you know, they're able to go to their workforce and say, listen, I can do all the jobs, but I need you to understand whatever, but I think it needs to start at an early age.

[00:09:52] **Jenny:** Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. It's really true. Being able to create space between the emotion [00:10:00] that you're experiencing. And the behavior that you execute on, is half the battle, like being able to take a breath. This is what I find like a lot of stuff that does exist out there doesn't account for that in capability and crossing that bridge because it's all fine.

And well, to say, be the calm in the storm. We know that we have to do it. We know what we have to do, but implementing it in the moment when. Triggered is not most people are not capable of accessing their rational minds at that moment. So I agree completely when I see my kids take that moment and create that space.

That's that's the whole work. The whole work is being able to create just an inch of space between yourself and what you're experiencing in order to. Stop yourself from behaving in destructive ways, both to yourself and to others. So yeah, I think that's really critical.

[00:10:52] **Delphine:** This might be a question you can't answer.

And I'm just thinking about the audience who tends to listen to this. So tends to be families who have children who are neuro diverse. So they're either ADHD. They have [00:11:00] a learning disability that might be autistic. There may be down syndrome. I mean, there could be all sorts of things. Would this program work for some of those kids?

So I'm thinking of my two ADHD years who have, um, I mean, my, my eldest in particular, we used to call them are zero to 60, right? Like, we'd be everything become cool. We'd all be swimming along. Everything would be fine. And then all of a sudden the like, you know, the breakdown happens or I'm thinking. I mean, I remember even myself as a kid with an LD when I would get frustrated with something, because I couldn't read the passage or something and I would sort of lose my, I lose my temper, quite frankly.

I remember actually once in grade school, I, I swatted the math book off the table and it dropped on the floor. My teacher was none too impressed with me, but those sorts of emotions would this program catered to. Some all none, not sure yet. Like, you know, and it's okay to say not sure at this point, because it's still quite new, but I'm sort of putting the question out there.

[00:11:51] **Jenny:** It's a super question and I love it. I have one of those. I have a, can I have one of those with ADHD, who is thriving in this program? It's like, [00:12:00] he loves it. He begs for it every week. He's 11. Is it's working for him. It really is working for him too, to help. I can't speak to, , to the whole gamut of, of, you know, what kids are experiencing because we haven't tested it yet.

But I will say that, you know, it's interestingly, when I started to do the research for the project, What I found was a lot of resources geared toward kids on the spectrum for, for emotional, um, literacy and control. And as I was reading them, I was thinking this applies to everybody like. I don't know, you know, I think that, , that everyone struggles with these things, I don't think that these are problems that are specific to the neurodiverse.

I think everyone doesn't like most people don't have these basic capabilities, you know, emotional capabilities. So I just wanted to say one other thing, which was that, that you had mentioned that I thought was interesting is that. Yeah. Oftentimes when we have a [00:13:00] kid who's, who's a little, you know, trigger, happy on the emotions who like re it was very reactive. as parents, more often than not, I think we react. To that situation. And we're not in the driver's seat of it. It's very, very difficult to get, to not get provoked by someone who is clearly provoking you. Um, it's super hard. And like I said, that's, that's really, the work of Emotion School is creating distance between what you're experiencing and yourself, so that you're able to draw that distinction so that you are not, encompassed with, with emotion and you're not able to put a frame around it when it happens to you when you do get triggered.

And then you're able to. Take a break. I don't know. I do do some other, conscious rational intervention until your rational brain's in charge and you're actually able to solve the problem.

[00:13:50] **Delphine:** Hmm. The rational brain. You need to learn where that is. I don't always know. And I think part of that is just the, way we've been living recently, right?

Like it's day to day, I'd [00:14:00] never know what's happening. I'm always kind of on high alert for the next thing or. You know, waiting for the COVID case to arrive at school, which then sets off a whole cascade of things that need to happen. Right. So totally being able to be calm and present in the moment is hard right now.

[00:14:14] **Jenny:** It really is like, I feel like COVID, I mean, this was always a problem and, the need for psychoanalysis, the need for therapy was always there, but COVID definitely, definitely. Put put the microscope on this situation. It really like, you know, created a situation where we're now stuck at home with our kids and, conflict cannot be avoided.

You can't just drop your kid off at school and say, oh, I'll deal with this later. You know, you can't, you don't have the luxury of doing that often. And, and yeah, it definitely, and it amplified it, it amplified being definitely this is not a normal human circumstance being all stuck together like this and not with peers as much as we have been.

And, you know, Um, that that definitely has, you know, augmented the situation.

[00:14:57] **Delphine:** Well, and I'll say two things that aren't necessarily [00:15:00] related to, to your program, but related to the idea of mental health in general is that first of all, the fact that children have not been able to socialize with each other, we have certainly noticed within the playground that the way in which kids play with each other now it's like, they don't know how.

It's like, they have to relearn how to interact. And in September it was very prevalent. It was very obvious. You could see who the outsiders were. You could see who the ones were, who were still trying to remember, how do I engage a friend in playing? How do I play in a way that doesn't create conflict?

Right? Because they've been in these small bubbles where they haven't had to share for example, or they haven't had to negotiate with each other. Right. So in the younger age groups, that's very prevalent and I see it in my own kids. Um, Because one of my kids in particular has trouble with social interaction.

So when that's removed from him and he doesn't have the opportunity to practice, it makes it difficult. But the other thing that I think we're, we're clearly seeing, and I think this is something that your program will help with, or at least [00:16:00] give families access to a bit quicker. Is there are not enough supports for mental health, whether you're a child, whether you're an adults, the supports are.

And they weren't there by the way, when my first child was born and I suffered through postpartum depression and trying to get to meet a counselor and do all, I mean, it took months just, I mean, and that was the risk there for me at the initial stages was, was quite high. And it was like, well, why is it taking so long?

Like there's an emergency. We need to get help. And we're certainly, I mean, our social workers within the school system are just running at full tilt.

[00:16:37] **Jenny:** Yeah, I see it. I see it in my kid's school. Also, the, the, the social workers w you know, we have guidance counselors, um, and they they're, they're just overwhelmed.

They're overwhelmed. And they're confronted also with, , with problems and issues that they don't feel equipped to, to handle all ways. So it's true. I mean, I've noticed it in, in the, yeah. The, the wait lines. I [00:17:00] check periodically. Curious, and it's a crisis. It's, it's a real, there's a real crisis of mental health here.

[00:17:06] **Delphine:** So does this program, I mean, when I'm thinking about it now, I'm thinking, can it act as sort of a bridge in the interim whilst you wait? Like, is that kind of your hope is that this is a program that parents can get, get into their homes, play games, engage with their children while they wait for more support.

Is that kind of the idea?

[00:17:22] **Jenny:** Absolutely. This is not, uh, in no way. Could this be a replacement for, for the kind of one-on-one therapy or psychoanalysis that you would do with a therapist? This is not therapy. It's not a replacement for, but we do envision it as a companion. Because you know, even if you can access their.

You can't do it twice a week. Sometimes you can't do it once a week. Sometimes, you know, the roster is so full or the cost is so high that you have to accept only being able to see a therapist once a month. And that's not enough. So if you're, if you're really, you know, you have a problem that you, that you're really dealing with.

So we, we conceive of this as sort of. It's more of an intervention for run of the mill [00:18:00] neurosis. Less targeted to specific problems such as anxiety. We will be tackling that later on, by the way, we will that's this, as I said, this is our flagship sort of general, intervention, but we will be tackling specific problems in the future.

But yeah, we, we envision it as a companion. So we're talking to, therapy clinics and mental health NGOs in the hopes of pairing with them so that, you know, there is an affordable and accessible resource available in the interim while people wait or while they're doing therapy as well. Yeah, cause this also oftentimes only one person in the household will do therapy.

 And it's, and it's difficult to make change universal. So this is this sort of equips, the whole family with a new language and a new skill set that they can use together. That is completely, in line with, clinical therapy methods, um, and ideas. So it wouldn't be, yeah.

I mean, it's a, it's a, it's a great interim resource for general. We collect [00:19:00] generalized dysfunction, emotional dysfunction.

[00:19:02] **Delphine:** I can see how that, that would work. So, I mean, I kind of check things out, obviously on the website and I know things are still kind of developing and growing, but so the program covers or so it says six core emotions essentially. Is that kind of what it works on?

[00:19:16] **Jenny:** There are six educational modules, each one, each one is each one covers a different aspect. Of the issue they have to be done in sequence that's, it's sequential. It's a real, it's sequential. Yeah. It's a, real deep dive and it does require the knowledge that you acquire and the terminology that you acquire in the beginning does filter through to the later modules.

So yeah, we basically, we start with emotional literacy. What are emotions and, and, and why do we have them and, and how do they manifest? What do they look like? We go into self-aware. And then social awareness, which is, is really, you know, uh, about the development of, a lot of it is about the development of empathy.

And, uh, we, we [00:20:00] really believe that a lot of these skills, a lot of these, ideas like empathy, which historically, I don't think people thought of them as skill sets, can be acquired as skills. So, so can curiosity, um, the same way that growth mindset can be acquired, with consciousness, we move on to emotional intelligence.

This is really like, this is the module. That's the, really, the deep dive we go into, the unconscious and our whole. You know, the unconscious makeup, how we, how we're structured as human beings, why that's sort of like the big why of why we have this situation and why we behave the way we do and where often the, the critical points are like critical problems happen.

 And then we go into emotional regulation, very, tactical. Tools for how to, how to do it. But we find that, I find that a lot of programs do exist in the emotional regulation space, but they don't give you the depth of background of the unconscious. So there's not really the same basis of rationale for why.[00:21:00]

 why these things might work. And then, and then finally emotional agility, which is, basically our, our summary, where we build plans for the, for the future, like really concrete, specific plans, for each individual, , going forward so that they have, you know, immediate and clear access to the things that work for them.

and we find that we, we find that this is, it really does work. It really does work to change. The tenor of the household to change the temperature.

[00:21:27] **Delphine:** So how long. Does it take to start the program and finish the program? Or is this just something that you sort of continually are working on or do you kind of go through the program and then there's kind of review portions?

[00:21:38] **Jenny:** Yeah. So it's a it's it's a good question. It's long it's it's um, so each there are six educational modules, each one. That varies in the number of lessons. There are three to six lessons in each, each one. And each one takes about 45 minutes to an hour. So it, I think we're talking about, uh, all in all it's about six to seven months, it takes to do the, to [00:22:00] do the program.

It's not short.

[00:22:01] **Delphine:** But even if you think of, I mean, I've certainly done programs. I mean, Integra child development Institute for example, is a program that my kids have been involved with. And even there, I can't remember what it's called now, but it was a social skills group, even that was eight weeks long and it was only once a week for an hour.

 So it's not, I don't see what you're saying to be, you know, I mean, that was only two months versus seven months, but. I just, I think if you're doing it as a whole family, it changes how long it takes in. Anyway,

[00:22:27] **Jenny:** it really does. And the truth is that, , a couple of things, one, we, we don't encourage people to do more than one lesson, a week because the content is heavy and it takes time to percolate and it takes time for people to see.

 to gain consciousness of these phenomenon actually happening in their real lives. So we, we, we don't want to run through this quickly. You want it to take its time? The typical therapeutic trajectory is, is about a year, uh, sometimes much more. But at least a year usually. And that's yeah, that's about how long it [00:23:00] takes to change.

I mean, I wish that there was a quicker fix. I, I read all the time about quick, short interventions that are. That promise great long-term results. I have never been able to implement any of those with success myself, but I say all the power to anyone who's doing anything in the mental health space, uh, to help people.

I'm very, you know, and if it helps people very good. I'm happy that it exists, but yeah, in my experience doing the, the, uh, permanent change in the way that you interact with the world, and the way that you interact with your family. Time and investment. The good thing is the good thing is, is that.

The, happy outcome of, Cam and Leo's Emotion School is that this one hour together a week, , is fabulous for the family. It turns out it's fantastic because it's like, it's kind of like game night from the eighties, which I enjoyed as a kid, in this world of screens, I feel like it's, this really, it's a relief to sit face to face with the people in their family and do something intentional and deep learning and have [00:24:00] really, really important discussion.

That you wouldn't normally have that you wouldn't have otherwise, um, about stuff that's going on in their life. I've learned enormous things about what's going on internally in my children's lives, through the program, through sitting with them weekly. So it's got that benefit to so much so that when we finished the first iteration, my kids they're on iteration.

Number three. So, uh, when we got through the Guinea pigs, when we go through the first iteration, they, they, they were begging me to do it. They were like, come on, are we going to do emotions? Well, let's just start from the beginning that, but they just wanted the routine of sitting together and learning together.

[00:24:37] **Delphine:** I'm just thinking, as you're talking about families, You know, in the era we're living in it, families tend to be multi-generational within the four walls of their homes. So is this a program that grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, whoever happens to be living in the house can fall in and out of.

Do they have to be there from the beginning to the end? Like how do those [00:25:00] people potentially impact what's happening?

[00:25:05] **Jenny:** You know, that's such a good, it's such a good question. We did as part of the, like our, our Guinea pig, tests here. We do it with my mom, my mom decided to participate. Um, so that's fantastic.

She really contributes so much to the conversation and to the ideas and to the, you know, she's been fantastic. So it is for anyone. I will also say that not everyone in the household needs to participate. A lot of people are resisting. And don't want to, I can say that it works anyway. It works for those who work at, you know, like, um, the good thing about, about the program and about getting help in general is that it really only takes the individual to change the world.

It really does. If you suddenly begin to interact differently with the world, then you're no longer provokable, you're no longer a reactor. You can uplift the whole household. One person has the power to do that. So not everyone in the household needs to participate by any means. The more the merrier [00:26:00] I say.

[00:26:00] **Delphine:** This might be a future question. So feel free to be like, well, I don't know yet. But as you're talking about it, I'm like, well, is this something that, and maybe you're already thinking it that could be implemented at the school level in terms of teachers could once a week for an hour, teach a lesson on whatever part they're on.

I mean, one of them was emotional literacy. So is that something that potentially in the future you might consider as you go through iterations? Yeah.

[00:26:23] **Jenny:** Absolutely. So I love, I love that idea. It would need to be adapted for, for school because right now it's like small group, very small group. you know, it's really formulated for the household.

 just, just one thing about that though, is that I've seen, there are other programs that are implemented in schools. I love the idea of doing an intentional, emotional. Health and education in schools. Historically, I think what the problem has been is that it really has to come from the top. Like it really has to be universal.

Otherwise there's no carry through from year to year from teacher to teacher. And, and the other [00:27:00] issue is from, from school to home. So kids could be learning these fantastic ideas and implementing them in the classroom. And then they come home to a family that is not. On the same page. So one of the same way.

And unfortunately it does have to, like, I really do think that this sort of learning she has to start at home. I agree. I actually think about it the opposite way. I think that I, I would be, I would like to work with schools so that they could refer us families. The emotional competency. If we're able to establish it in the home, it would really benefit schools.

Ultimately, , it would relieve the social workers in the school who, you know, who are having to grapple with, with kids who can't control themselves or who are experiencing so many challenges.

[00:27:43] **Delphine:** yeah, it's an interesting way to look at it too, to be more of a referral process rather than a. An in-class resource.

[00:27:49] **Jenny:** That said, I mean, if, if it would ever, if it could ever be a top-down thing, like if it could ever be universalized or mandatory or part of the actual curriculum in school, I think that would be great. I mean, we, we do see it. [00:28:00] We do see like play-based learning and things like that, that didn't exist when I was a kid.

And then I see my, my kids that have benefited from, in the, you know, in the school system, like they have they're much more advanced, um, educationally than I was. Growing up. So I think this is the next logical step is doing intentional emotional education in the curriculum would be fantastic.

[00:28:20] **Delphine:** So Jenny, where can people learn more about, Cam and Leo's Emotion School.

[00:28:25] **Jenny:** Everyone is welcome to sign up on the wait list. We haven't yet launched. We're aiming for may. June is when we're looking to do the public launch. As I mentioned, we're right now, pilot testing with about 150 families, to test, you know, we're re we really want to test and, uh, improve, you know, this is like one of many iterations before we offer the, the, the product to the public.

But I encourage to get on the wait list. We don't, I don't blast anyone with emails. I simply don't have time. I really don't. But, but it is a [00:29:00] good way to be on my radar so that I ensure that you're aware of. Available and also I encourage you to follow us on Facebook. We are, on Instagram handle is @emotionschoolorg, and we're at Cam and Leo's Emotion School on Facebook as well.

[00:29:13] **Delphine:** I'm really looking forward to seeing this come out full transparency. I've seen you start this from the beginning and ask questions, so I'm excited to see how it plays out and what happens.

And I'm just super thrilled that you've gotten it off the ground, so well done.

[00:29:28] **Jenny:** Thank you. Thank you so much. Yeah, it has been quite a journey, but a fantastic.

[00:29:33] **Delphine:** Jenny, thanks for the conversation. I'm excited for everybody to be able to hear it and learn more about cam and Leo's.

[00:29:39] **Jenny:** Thank you so much.