Parenting Posse

[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 channel. Parenting it's the one job we don't get training in where there is no manual for understanding. As we grow as parents, we learn, we begin to understand what works for us and through trial and error, we somehow figure it out.

When you have a parent with a neurodiversity, from self-regulation challenges to social interactions, being difficult, it can feel really hard. You keep reading the books. You keep talking to people and looking for answers, but nothing makes any sense. So finding a support group and someone who understands what you need can be a game changer today.

I'm bringing you that game changer person, Allana Robinson is a parenting coach and developmental. Her experience with children with special needs. And as an early childhood educator makes her the perfect person to help us better understand our children's behavior through her work with uncommon sense parenting.

She takes parents through the ups and downs of the early [00:01:00] stages of parenting Allana. Welcome to the show. This is bound to be a good one.

[00:01:05] **Allana:** Thank you so much for having me.

[00:01:08] **Delphine:** We've uh, we've talked about doing this for a while, so I'm glad we're finally making it happen. Busy, busy moms that we are. It can be tough to carve out the time.

[00:01:17] **Allana:** Absolutely.

[00:01:18] **Delphine:** So let's start with, I mean, I got so many questions for you. I almost don't know where to start, but. What might be important for tonight's conversation is to really frame what is self-regulation. Let's define it because it's a really big term. Um, that until I had my two ADHDers , I was like, self-regulation sure that's just sitting in a chair.

Right. It's so much more than that.

[00:01:44] **Allana:** Yes. Self-regulation is in a nutshell, the ability to keep yourself calm. And that sounds really easy. We all know it's not though. And more specifically the ability to recognize when you're not calm and bring [00:02:00] yourself back to calm and really. The big, like neon sign reason.

It's so important is because if you're not calm, you can't behave well. People who aren't calm are not their best selves. And if we want our children to be their best selves, then they have to learn how to calm themselves down. Because when you're not calm, You engage in all kinds of behaviors to try and make yourself calm.

And a lot of those behaviors are not what we would call socially acceptable.

[00:02:30] **Delphine:** They are not, you are right. And sometimes that inability to be calm. Causes the adults to not be calm. Therefore the adults lose the ability to self-regulate.

[00:02:41] **Allana:** Yes, that limbic resonance that is like it's so embedded in every single interaction with a child.

We have different parts of our brain and our limbic system is in control of our emotions and our memory. And our safety and unlike the rest of our brain, but just kind of hangs out, up there. Our limbic [00:03:00] system actually gives off brainwaves and so.

The brains that are around us, kind of like a Bluetooth hookup, other limbic systems receive those brainwaves. And it's not telepathy. We don't have any reason. We don't have any knowledge. We don't have any language in our limbic system. So you don't know why you feel these feelings. You just know that you're receiving feelings from other people.

It's the reason why when you walk into a room, you can automatically tell who's in charge. Who's feeling really nervous. Who's feeling really connected. Because your brain picks up on their resonance and resonance is a musical term, which is like, if you, play a note, a G note, let's say in a room full of instruments, all of those instruments will also start to low level, play a G note, not loud enough for you to hear it, but they'll all start vibrating at that same frequency.

And so when our children are dysregulated, We received that resonance and then our brain goes, oh no, they're [00:04:00] not okay. And it ups our arousal level to match theirs. And then that quickly becomes a feedback loop because our children look to us, which is their higher order brain. We're supposed to be the ones that recognize danger.

And so they look to us, they referenced us. And while we're freaking out, because they're freaking out, their brain goes, oh, no, mom or dad is not okay. That means I'm not safe. And so then they up their arousal level, even more. And then it quickly becomes a feedback loop and a downward spiral of everybody just getting more and more dysregulated.

Thats why when parents often say to me, like, it's like, they know that I'm having a bad day and then they behave worse because they know that I'm like, at my worst, they do. They're not conscious of it. They're not doing it on purpose to piss you off, but they do because your residents is giving off. I'm not okay.

And their survival instinct is to up their arousal when mom and [00:05:00] dad isn't okay. When we were cave men, that's how we stayed alive.

[00:05:02] **Delphine:** Are there specific things? Tend to impact a child's ability to self-regulate. So I know we've talked about the resonance of the parents, but are there other external and some potential internal right.

Factors that influence a child's ability to become, to be centered, to be able to function in an environment that might otherwise not be ideal for them?

[00:05:28] **Allana:** Yeah. So there's like five. Categories, I guess I'd call them of stressors. So there's biological there's pro-social, which are the expectations that others have of us there's social, which are the expectations we have of others. There's the emotional, which is how we're feeling. And then there's the cognitive, which is all of those brain processes that are going on, including our executive functioning skills.

And so all of those different factors. [00:06:00] Can influence our regulation. That's why, like we were just saying the week that we've had this last week with virtual schooling makes us feel like walking zombies, because there are so many cognitive tasks that we're having to juggle and, you know, zoom and all of the virtual stuff takes so much more cognitive power than we're used to having to use.

That it just regulates us. It's makes it difficult for our nervous system to keep us calm. And when we're not calm, as I said, we do things and we have difficulty with things that we otherwise would easily be able to do.

[00:06:40] **Delphine:** So if we think of those. Five pieces. And we think about our neuro-diverse kids who already have a brain that's wired differently.

[00:06:51] **Allana:** Yeah.

[00:06:52] **Delphine:** How is that going to affect their ability to self-regulate or to just be able to [00:07:00] be, To act, let's listen, I'm going to put it in a way nobody's going to like, but I'm going to say it to, to be in a way and to respond to society in a way that is acceptable, because that sometimes is really difficult.

And we, as outsiders to that child will look at that family or that child and the person they're with and say, oh, what's going on over there. . So how does all of that affect the child's ability to regulate like an average person. And I hate putting it that way, but that's really the crux of it when we talk about neuro diverse kid.

[00:07:33] **Allana:** Yeah. So, I mean, neuro-diverse kids just have more stressors. , Dr. Stuart Shanker uses the analogy of a backpack and everybody's got a backpack and kids who have neuro-diversity have a heavier backpack than everyone else because. There was more shit in it. There's, there's just more in it. So they're carrying around this heavier backpack and compared to the rest of us [00:08:00] who don't have that kind of weight in our backpack, they're going to tire out faster because they're carrying around an extra 10, 20, 30 pounds of weight that typical people aren't.

It really comes down to that. I use the gas tank analogy where like everybody has a gas tank and just like your car. Sometimes it's sitting in the driveway and it's got a full tank and it's ready to go on a road trip. And other days it's kind of running on fumes and we need to fill that tank up. If it's running on fumes and everything that we do takes a little bit of gas out of our team.

Literally everything we do, but things that are very routine to us, that we know how to do competently, that aren't difficult. Brushing our teeth, making a pot of coffee, all that fun stuff that takes small amounts of gas out of our tank. But all it takes is one thing to go wrong. Like the wifi going out, for instance, And suddenly something that [00:09:00] was very routine like logging onto virtual school becomes this big energy draining event because suddenly we're having to use a lot more cognitive power.

We're having to manage our emotions more. We're having to worry about what people think of us about being late. All of those things take energy out of our tank and they take a lot of energy out of our tank. And so add in neuro diversity's and all that goes with that. And there's more things sucking energy out of their tank, which means they're going to get tired faster, and they're going to be running on fumes more frequently than typical people, which means they need more gas.

They need those pit stops to regulate, to calm themselves down more frequently.

[00:09:46] **Delphine:** So what, what are the pit stops look like? , I know they can be different. So I know that I'm asking you a question that like, you can't just put a finger on because I have an idea and I know what works in my house, but I'm curious to hear from your perspective, what you think [00:10:00] those pit stops should be or how parents can maybe structure those pits ups or some ideas that they can use to kind of build those pit stops into their, their life.

[00:10:12] **Allana:** Yeah. Well, I always say to parents, like, what do your kids typically do on a weekend when you have nowhere to go, nothing to do. And they're just enjoying themselves. There's no pressures. There's no expectations. What are your kids do? What are they doing for my boys? It's Lego, constantly Lego for my oldest.

It's. My oldest. I don't understand why, because if I'm running, you should run too. Someone is chasing me, but my oldest loves to run. For him, if he has nothing to do with nowhere to go, he will often ask to go for a run. My youngest, for some reason, likes to hang upside down, like from the monkey bars, that's like his happy place and he will happily do it for a very long time to the point where sometimes a little worried about how much blood is flowing to his brain.

So that's a good starting [00:11:00] point. Look at what your kids typically do when they. No, pressure's on them from the outside world. And that's usually something that they find regulating. Another alternative is to look at what your kids do when they're most upset. A lot for a lot of these kids, it's throwing, it's hitting things.

It's biting things, it's screaming, right? All of those big disruptive quote unquote behaviors. Well, they do that. Because that gives them the sensory input that they need for their nervous system to calm down. There's a function behind that behavior. And it's not just to show everybody how upset they are.

There's actually a biological reason. Some people feel like hitting things and some people throw them. So those are two good places to kind of start critically looking at what your child does and go. How can we insert that into their day at regular intervals, in a [00:12:00] proactive way that's safe and keep that up consistently.

So that pit stops throughout your day. Where can we insert those pit stops throughout your day? I generally started by attaching them to meals because those are natural pitstops in our day. Like we've already realized as a species that. We at least need to stop and fill our physical tank, our stomach at least three times a day.

And we've built that into everything around us. So generally it's an easy way for parents to at least start with. Okay, you're going to have a regulation break after breakfast, after lunch, before dinner, and then you can kind of fill in the blanks. Because if your child has a regulation break after breakfast and then mid morning shit starts to hit the fan, it's probably where you need another pit stop.

About 30 minutes ahead of that.

[00:12:50] **Delphine:** Yeah.

It's tough to find the timing's right. It's trial and error. we can both agree that, this is another one of those, like take a bit of our tip from here and a bit of [00:13:00] our tip from there and use the part that works. So it's very much trial and error and I would say to any other family listening, take a lot of deep breaths and remember you won't get it on the first try.

[00:13:11] **Allana:** You're not going to get it on the 50th try because, and part of the maddening thing. All children is that they're constantly growing and developing. They're constantly changing. So what worked for great for three months is going to work great for three months. And at the end of those three, It's just not going to work anymore because they've gone through a cognitive leap.

They've realized that there are different options available to them. Their nervous system has developed and need something different now. And so it's, it's an ongoing thing. It requires a ton of observation. One mistake. I find a lot of my clients make, as they tried to remember it all, which sounds kind of ridiculous, but write it down [00:14:00] for the love of God, because you know, you're like, oh, well, okay.

We were doing to our regulation intervals for the last month and everything was great. And then, you know, things start to shift and you're like, wow. Why isn't this two hours working anymore, but if you don't have a written down, you may not notice that about a month ago, things started to shift and now we're at an hour and a half.

Really. We were just kind of muscling through that extra half hour. So write it down.

[00:14:28] **Delphine:** And I think the other piece Is that remembering that just because it worked for a sibling or a cousin or a friend or whatever does not mean it will work for your kid. Like it might try it, but

everybody's different

[00:14:43] **Allana:** Every child is so different. It always blows my mind how different children can be. Especially children who have a lot in common. Where you think like, oh yeah, this kid's a sensory seeker and this kid's a sensory [00:15:00] seeker. So we're going to give them the same activity. No,

[00:15:05] **Delphine:** I know it would be really easy though, if we could do it that way.

I mean, how much more easy would it be? I have two fairly similar kiddos whose profiles. Kind of close, but they're just different enough. Is that what works for one does not work for the other. So for sure, that is, that is a, that is a thing.

Okay. You mentioned the word sensory. So one of the things I want to talk about is this term that I feel we sometimes throw around and I've been guilty of it too, where we go, oh, it's just sensory overload. Yeah. Right? Yeah. No, it's fair because I think it's a term that people have kind of latched on to, but I wonder for you, like, can we talk about.

What is sensory overload really? And how does it impact behavior?

[00:15:56] **Allana:** So the best way that I can explain it, that I think [00:16:00] most moms and dads would relate to is, you know, when. Your kids are all talking at once and then your spouse comes in and starts talking about something else. And then the doorbell rings and the dog starts barking and the baby starts crying.

And you want to scream at the top of your lungs. Everyone just shut up.

[00:16:20] **Delphine:** You mean I'm not supposed to want to do that every day.

[00:16:23] **Allana:** No, that is sensory overload. That when you're just like, I cannot cope with the amount of demands that are being put on me at this particular time. And you feel like you're being pulled in 1800 different directions and it doesn't matter which direction you choose.

There's still going to be a frigging long show going on. That is sensory overload and you're right. A lot of people will be like, oh, it's just, it's just sensory overload. Like it's this minor thing that we can just, you know, get over. And if you are very good at [00:17:00] self-regulating, you can probably recover fairly quickly from it.

But most adults that I know are not that adept at. And take quite a while to recover from it. So it's ridiculous that we're expecting these kids to recover from it quite that quickly.

[00:17:18] **Delphine:** So what would sensory overload be for kids? So when I think of it, and I feel free to be like, Nope, Delphine you're you're on the wrong track here.

But when I think of sensory overload for my kid, I think of. Often around holiday times when there's like 20 of us at the cottage. I have an expectation that they sit nicely at dinner and not make a fuss over. Whatever's been put on the table, but then they've got, you know, the cousin across the way.

Who's, , I want to talk about this topic or they've got, , the other adults in the room that are talking about something or expectations on them. Or let's just, I mean, we're recording this just after the holidays. So just after Christmas holidays, the overwhelm of all the gifts and all the opening, and then having to wait, having to [00:18:00] wait their turn to open their gifts just becomes mind bombing.

Like they're like, I can't, I don't want to sit here. Right. So are those all sorts of examples of, for kids who have trouble self-regulating those would be examples of things that would cause the sensory overload.

[00:18:18] **Allana:** Absolutely. One example that I have from a kiddo that I used to work with when I was in Edmonton, he was very sensitive to auditory input and being in a classroom for him was hell because.

He, and this was way before led lights were a thing. So he could hear the fluorescent lights buzzing. He could hear all of the kids around him. He could hear he had, there was a kid in his class who was also blind and had a, a stick. So that was constantly tapping on everything. He could hear the announcements coming over the thing, and he could tell there was going to be an announcement.

Like almost a minute before the rest of the [00:19:00] class, because he would hear the Intercom turn on before the auditory started going through it. And he would just get so overloaded that he would just sit down in the middle of the class and scream blue murder because he couldn't filter it out. The only way for him to filter out all of that input was to create an overwhelming output But he was overwhelmed. He couldn't do it. And he had, you know, when I got called and it was cause he started bolting out of the classroom and they were like, well, you have to stay in the class. He has to stay in the class. And I was like, he can't stay in the class. You physically cannot stay in the class because he's trying, you've told him that screaming is unacceptable.

So the only way for him to drown out all of that input is to leave. And so it's not something you can power through. It's not something that you can will your way through. It's not even something that [00:20:00] you can control when you're overwhelmed. You're literally overwhelmed. You cannot deal with it. He cannot cope and it's just, it's debilitating.

[00:20:09] **Delphine:** If we keep on the same train of thought. So I'm wanting to ask a question around sort of co-regulation and how that can help, but can sometimes hamper self-regulation. So I'm the first to admit that for a really long time, I considered myself my son's co-regulate because I could see the thing coming. I could see the train leaving the station, and I knew that if I didn't get onto the track with him quickly, Pulling him back was going to cause more harm to me than allowing the situation to occur.

And then kind of letting him figure it out and sort of, right. So it took me a long time to be able to step back as a parent. So can we talk a little bit about co-regulation and how that co-regulation can help a situation like that, where you're working with a child who like, [00:21:00] obviously. Somebody there to help them with the regulation of that situation.

So there, you would need someone to co-regulate to model the behavior, but let's talk about what it would look like from the parent perspective of at what point does the co-regulation become a problem because. It, it can, I would think it certainly has in my case.

[00:21:22] **Allana:** Well, and I think a lot of people conflate co-regulation with compensation and there's a difference between those two things where a lot of the times parents will be compensating for their child's lack of regulation by lending their calm.

So to speak where they'll try and take on some of the input, some of the demands for their child to reduce the demands on their child's. You know, they have more gas in their tank and that's not really, co-regulation, that's compensating for your trial, which is also something that we need to do sometimes.

But co-regulation is really [00:22:00] engaging in that like sinking up when we're talking, thinking back to that residence that we were talking about where your child's limbic system is going haywire, because it's perceiving a threat and we're trying to get their limbic system to pick up on an art calm so that they stop freaking out and they start recognizing that. Okay. If mom is calm, I'm safe. Yeah. And, Lisa Murphy, who is an SLP in the states, she defines co-regulation as a back and forth conversation. So it's not about taking on those stressors for the child. It's about sharing the stressors with the child and using it in a back and forth interaction.

So really when I'm talking to parents about co-regulate. I'm always emphasizing that back and forth, like a conversation. And it can be a conversation, especially for older children who are very verbal. It can literally be a conversation, but when we're talking [00:23:00] about younger kids, it's often using those back and forth interactions.

One of my favorite ways to co-regulate with my kids is to unload the dishwasher because it's super functional and they each have a competent role where they are completely. Of their own competent in that role to one of my kids is usually the dish taker outer. The other one is the dish hander. So the little one will hand it to the big one.

The big one will walk it to wherever I am and hand it to me. And then I'm the dish putter aware. And so it's kind of assembly line style where we're all going to competent. And we're all participating in this back and forth interaction. Lego is another one that I tend to do a lot with my kids where, you know, all start something, put a few bricks together and then they'll put a brick on and I'll put a brick on and they'll put a brick on and I'll put a brick on.

And so . That back and forth interaction. Where they're sinking up with me and that back [00:24:00] and forth and traction is taking them from frenetic and it's inserting my comment to it so that eventually they even out and they kind of resonate with me. The nice thing about that back and forth interaction is that it's much easier to feed yourself out of it than compensation.

Because when you're compensating, at some point, if you want to fade yourself out of that, you have to take that load and put it back on your child. And if they're not ready for it, it's going to crush them. And then you're back to compensating because you have to lift it back off of them again. Whereas when you're co-regulating and you're engaging in that back and forth, and you're giving them some of the load and taking some and giving them some of the load and taking some.

It's a lot easier to start giving them slightly more of the load of moving them to a more competent role or a more complex role that they can now be more competent in. So it's a lot easier to feed yourself out of that interaction because like using the dishwasher as [00:25:00] an example, my eight year old. He can't be the dish putter aware for the top cabinets yet, but he can be the dish put her away or for the bottom cabinets now.

And so now I've faded myself out of one aspect of that interaction. Where my two kids are putting away half the dishes and they only need me to step in where it's actually necessary so that they can complete the task as they get bigger, as they get more competent as they get physically taller. In this instance, they will be able to take on those roles gradually and soon, I won't have to help them co-regulate with the dishwasher anymore because they'll be able to correlate between the two of them.

And then eventually there'll be able to self-regulate because one will step out and the other will be able to do it completely on their own. So when we're thinking about co-regulation, I think keeping that kind of back and forth interaction is really the key to the whole concept.

[00:25:58] **Delphine:** Yeah. It makes sense that it's sort of a [00:26:00] gradual release of responsibilities. Right. But that you're not taking it on completely. You're allowing the child to sit in the emotion and the feeling that's there, but supporting them and understanding what it is, why it's there and then how they deal with it. .

So that does make a lot of sense. Let's talk for a minute about behavior, behavior self-regulation issues. However you want to word it within the education. Oh, well, let's talk about school. And I mean, to be very fair because everything we do these days is in a heightened sense of anxiety and really dysregulation because we know that every five minutes, there's a new rule that changes.

There's a new system. We have to follow. There's something that changes. And that can be really hard for little ones who. Quite frankly, are vibing off of the parental stress, right? Like I can only imagine. I mean, my husband and I are both in education. we're both physically in schools, so there's a lot for us to deal with.

And then we've got three kids in three [00:27:00] different schools. So we're getting, we're getting Jeremy's from a lot of places, which is anxiety writing at the moment, but how. We and listen pandemic or not. We're always dealing with kids and behavior. We're just, it, it just is because it's part and parcel of childhood is learning how to deal with your behaviors and being okay.

Right. And doing it in safe spaces like at school and by doing it, I mean, misbehaving or having outbursts of sorts at school or at home in safe zones, where there are adults who will support you through the process. Yeah. So, um, let's be very clear about where I'm talking about behaviors happening, but how can teachers, administrators, office staff, custodians, like let's think of all the adults in the building who can be safe.

People for these kiddos who are struggling, what is like maybe one or two key things that they really could do to [00:28:00] help a kiddo who has become dysregulated? What is something you think that. They should know to do.

[00:28:07] **Allana:** Well. Those pit stops, I think are the main thing. And, I've had a lot of clients recently who have really advocated hard for their kids to get those pit stops throughout their day.

And it just made a massive change in their behavior at school because. Let's be Frank school is not designed for kids who have their own divergencies and a lot of our curriculum. And the way that our day is structured is made by people who don't actually have to deal with the kids. So oftentimes we're pushing kids through long periods of time without many breaks, and we're not recognizing.

They need a break, even though we don't. And so I think advocating for those breaks is a huge thing because we want to make sure that our kids are getting those gas tank refills. They're [00:29:00] getting those pit stops. To regulate and making sure that they have somewhere, as you said, safe with an adult who can competently supervise them and co-regulate with them to go and do that or supervise their self-regulation so that they can go and do that.

A lot of my clients have been having a really hard time because of. Of the desire to keep contacts to a minimum has reduced the availability of adults to supervise pit stops. So it's made it very difficult for them to do things like I have one kiddo who. His, one of his most regulating activities is hitting things is punching things.

And so previously he had the ability to go to the gym and the custodian would go and keep an eye on him. And he would literally kick the shit out of a gym mat for five minutes and then he'd go back to class and it was fantastic. But now they're trying to reduce contacts. So he doesn't have that adult who can go with him to the gym [00:30:00] to kick the shit out of a gym mat anymore.

And then they tried to bring them at gym mat into the class. And I'm sure you can see how that didn't end. Well.

[00:30:08] **Delphine:** It was a good thought a definite I mean, you have to try it to know whether or not it's going to work, but, , I could see how that might've been slightly challenging.

[00:30:16] **Allana:** So, harder right now. There's no denying it. And we're having to kind of generalize kids into activities that we hope are regulating, but probably aren't fully scratching the itch simply because they are more feasible in a group setting than previously.

 So that's, that's one thing that I think is really. Important. And also recognizing that because of that, due to that, a lot of children aren't able to self-regulate right now, they need that co-regulation because they cannot, self-regulate in a way with 30 other children around, it's just too high of a demand [00:31:00] for them.

So trying and having those adults engage in those back and forth activities. Where the child has a competent role and they have a competent role and they are sinking up with them. Unfortunately, that tends to have to happen a little bit more frequently again, because they aren't able to leave the area where the demands that are being put on them are.

So, yeah, it's, it's definitely a juggling act.

[00:31:24] **Delphine:** But I think too, I mean, even before COVID so over that word, but anyway, I think even before that, In my experience with kids with behavioral needs and self-regulation needs, whether it was. Attention deficit, whether it was autism, whether it was just, there was stuff going on at home that was causing them to not be available for school, which was causing the behavior, finding the human resources to be with that child.

And, and I love the example that you were able to give of the [00:32:00] custodian, being the person who was willing to help and support, right. That's a school that really looked outside the box to find. A solution that would work for both the child and the school and the PA, right. Like it, it takes, it literally takes a village with these kids, you know, and it cannot be on the parents solely to support it just can't that they're already running at full tilt.

[00:32:25] **Allana:** Yeah. And it's, I know from, cause I'm more on the parents side of things now. I'm hearing the burnout and I'm seeing the burnout and, you know, they have been managing so much for so long, over the last two years, and then to have their children's needs being denied in a setting where the one setting where they do have some help. Has been really, really difficult for them.

So yeah, it, we to be looking outside the box and trying different things. So much of this is just trial and error [00:33:00] and it sucks because a lot of administrators and a lot of teachers, and even a lot of parents, they want a firm answer. They don't want to try things. They want. The bullet, the magic bullet, that's going to work right now because, and I get it.

There y'all are burning out too. Everybody's burnt out. So it's, it's that , willingness to play with it, I think is, is really important right now because we just kind of have to keep swinging at the balls that are coming our way and hope that one of them connect, and being willing to. To try and try new things.

[00:33:36] **Delphine:** Well, and so much with self-regulation I find requires, , an ability to interact with others.

And when you have, I mean, I know my, my eldest bless him struggles the most probably out of all, three of my kids with his self-regulation. And when things like online learning happen and he no longer has to work in that [00:34:00] social environment where he has to navigate what is expected of him. Even though those social situations are a stressor and cause him to disregulate and become sometimes aggressive, explosive all of those things.

But when he hasn't had. Attempt that in a long time, he forgets how, and then it's like, we start over at ground zero and we have to put in all the tools and all the systems that, you know, we've worked so hard on. And for those families listening, who've done the therapies privately all of the money that we have invested.

 Because let's be honest. I mean, there's only so much that you can do within the public system. The wait lists are huge and so many of us decide to go private. And, you know, lucky that we can forge that I am able to do it, but when we go back to ground zero, again, we almost start over again.

And so that is as, as a parent is super frustrating. Cause you're like, oh, we just solved this and now we have to start over.

[00:34:58] **Allana:** Well, it's that baseline. [00:35:00] Right. And I've seen it with a lot of my kiddos where, you know, you get used to things, you habituate yourself to things. I was just talking to, one of my colleagues from when I was living and working in Alberta.

 We were talking and she was like, do you remember when we used to work with five different kids every single day, and then we'd go have dinner and then we'd go and work with four different kids in the evening. And then we'd go to school for two hours and then we'd go to the gym. And then we come home and do a set assignments over night, and then we get up the next morning and do it again.

And I was like, I'm not sure how I didn't combust. But that was normal to me at that point in my life. And I had the capacity for it. So I just kept doing it now, even thinking of working with five kids in a day in that environment sends me into like a mental tailspin. I don't think I could do it. I would be exhausted after two.

And so it's the same thing with kids. They get into a rhythm, they get into a flow and. It becomes [00:36:00] typical to them. It becomes their normal. You notice it less, you notice that it takes less effort when you're practicing it constantly versus when that demand gets taken off of you. You're like, oh, this is nice.

And you start, rebudgeting your energy, right? We all budget our energy moment to moment. And that's often why you'll have parents say to me, like, you know, everything was fine and they just blew up. And it's because, and I'm like, okay, well, so they had a budget for their energy, which isn't a conscious thing.

Any of us do, we're not sitting down and being like, okay, so I need to use this much energy for this. And then we're going to go and do this. And that's going to take more energy. It's something our brain is constantly doing in the backroom. So, you know, they had a budget for their energy. They had an expectation of how much energy they were going to need.

And then you put a new demand on them that they weren't anticipating and boom, they lost it because you just sucked up all [00:37:00] the energy that they thought was going to take them through the next three hours. which is why, you know, a lot of regulation, especially when we're teaching kids to self-review.

What there has to be some predictability, which is really hard right now, as you said, there's a new expectation. There's a new rule. There's a new venue and environment, every 10 freaking seconds. So that predictability and that consistency though can really compensate for regulation to a certain extent.

I think that's something that we can be looking at different ways to provide for our kids right now. How we typically do, because there's just, there's so much inconsistency and so much unpredictability.

[00:37:44] **Delphine:** I know, which is hard, right. And it's hard for us as adults. And I know, you know, we keep that word has been thrown around so much.

Our kids are resilient, our kids are resilient. They're resilient to a point, there is a point at which the ability to bounce back. [00:38:00] I think, I think we all need to be very honest that there is going to come a point. And I mean, my she's six now, see, the time has not moved. My six year old just keeps talking about when COVID is over.

We will. Right. And I. Th there's a resiliency there to some extent, but you can hear that even just that like I'm over this in her, in her voice too.

[00:38:19] **Allana:** I think we're reaching that point with a lot of kids where we're going to start seeing some long-term impacts. Unfortunately like I was, and I was the first one, like when things shut down and you know, 20, 21 beginning of the 21, 21 school year, I threw up my hands in the air and I said, Yeah, I just, I pulled my kids from school and I didn't formally pull them from school.

I just didn't send them to school. And I started getting calls from administrators and teachers and stuff, and I just hung up the phone and said, I'm not dealing with it because I was like, they'll be fine. They're resilient. They will bounce back. And I have two painfully neuro-typical kids. [00:39:00] So I had the privilege of being able to do that.

But even with that, I'm starting to notice that they're not bouncing back as quickly. And I don't think any of us could have anticipated that this was going to go on this long. Yeah. And so we're, we're running out of steam, we're running out of gas in our tanks and those refills are taking a lot more effort than they used to.

[00:39:23] **Delphine:** Yeah. There's a lot more thought. So what advice do you have. Parents to deal with the shame and isolation around their children's behaviors. So if I think about even sometimes, you know, conversations that we have, amongst friends or, you know, I mean, even sometimes, within the school system, when we talk about different kids and things, I mean, it's natural to do that, but what advice do you have for parents around dealing with the shame that they might feel about their child's behavior?

[00:39:52] **Allana:** I think the first thing is really to find a community that gets it. and that might look very different for [00:40:00] different people, but we weren't intended to deal with any of this in isolation. We may have to be physically isolated from each other right now, but I think mentally isolating yourself is a.

That happens far too easily. A lot of us don't realize we're doing it but then it's very difficult to call your way out of it. And so, and this is why I run my program as a group program. I used to only do one-on-one coaching and. So tired of literally getting off a call with one family and then getting onto a call with another to hear both families say, my kid is the only one that does this.

It was literally just on a call with another family who was having the exact same problem. So I stopped, I just stopped doing one-to-one because I wanted these families to connect. And so. I run everything as a group now, because I found that it makes for more resilient kids. It makes for more [00:41:00] resilient parents.

When you are connected to people who are going through similar things and who are using similar tools and taking a similar approach to coping with that and to dealing with those things. The first I think is really find a good community, whether that's like in a program like mine or more informally in a Facebook group that you feel gets it and can commiserate with you.

The second is, and I really wish I could like get this tattooed on my forehead is that the only normal families are the ones you don't know very well. Right. Every family has something going on. There are no normal families. I used to roll my eyes when I was in early intervention. They, you know, back in the early tens, the thing was normal as a setting on a washing machine.

And I used to think like, oh, that's such a stupid thing to say, but [00:42:00] it's true. The only normal families are the ones you don't know very well. I think, accepting that your differences may be a little bit more on show than others. sucks, and it's, it's difficult, but that everybody else, anybody who, shames you or who makes you feel less than for.

They're seeing of, you're not normal is just trying to hide. They're not normal. And that compassion can often really, really help, but find.

[00:42:37] **Delphine:** Yeah, I think it's remembering too, that the people around you don't know the whole story, they don't, they don't know what's happening behind the scenes. And I used to do that a lot.

I remember, I mean, my poor eldest I'm picking on him a lot tonight, but he was the catalyst for a lot of the work that I do now with families in terms of really feeling like I was alone. And I had to do all this work and do it by myself and the fact of the [00:43:00] matter. It really doesn't have to be done alone.

There are lots of communities. There's lots of informal groups to, to be a part of. But I had to continually remind myself that not every teacher, not every administrator, not every other parent knows what I've done to help my son, but I know that I'm doing the best I can. All right. And that's hard. It's, it's hard to come to that realization tonight.

I think many of us get there eventually.

[00:43:25] **Allana:** Yeah. I had a really unique experience. Because I was an early interventionists before I had my own kids. So I was more embedded in the special needs community before I had kids than I am now. And I had a lot of experiences of people coming up to me and making comments or, you know, giving me advice, assuming that I was the child's parents.

Because I did community therapy. So I was out in the community. I was at playgrounds. I was at playgroups. I was in kindergarten. I was everywhere and so I had to grow a pretty, pretty [00:44:00] thick skin pretty quickly because one I'm not their mother. So I was able to tell them where to go, but it also gave me a lot of practice.

Tell it like confronting people with you. You really don't know what's happening here. And the proof of that is that you assumed this child was mine and they're not, this is what's happening. And, so I think giving yourself permission, even to, when you feel like you're being judged or you feel like someone is completely missing it.

And a lot of people will say it's oversharing, but. I'm a big fan of laying it all out on the table so that if you feel judged those other people actually do know what you've done. Like to have your own horn.

[00:44:44] **Delphine:** Well, that's the advocacy as a parent, right? When you go to the school and advocating, and I did that a lot where I would say, okay, listen, here are all of the things that we're doing or have done.

What more can I do. Right. And I'm having that conversation with our eldest administration team right now of [00:45:00] like, you know, there's been a couple of instances this year that haven't gone so well. And it's like, well, here's the laundry list of things. And when I finally tell them, they're like, oh, you really have done a lot of work.

It's like, yes, I've been aware for a long time. Like you just have to start sharing the story because people make assumptions and they're not, they're not right.

[00:45:18] **Allana:** And we always oversimplify others' issues, right? Like we all, we think everybody has it easier than we do. And so we always oversimplify other's issues and I've used to be a very, very, very private person.

Um, and I'm not anymore because I've just decided that it's, it's isolating it when I don't share what's going on with me. It's isolating and then I feel bad for not being great. And I found the more that I share what I'm doing, what I've tried, what, how I'm feeling, um, everything that's [00:46:00] I've got going on.

People recognize that they empathize with it. It makes it easier for them to, to connect with me. And then I don't feel so alone anymore, even though I'm still going through whatever crappy thing it is. Um, I don't feel so alone anymore. So. I've it's hard. It's definitely not something you can flip like a switch.

All right. I'm just going to start telling everybody everything that's going on. And I don't, you know, there are things that you want to keep to yourself, but, Practicing letting people in

[00:46:34] **Delphine:** well, and especially when you have kids who might have slightly higher needs than others, you, you need to bring those other people in aid to give you relief.

Right. So when I would drop my kids off at. Speech therapy or occupational therapy or whatever therapy was. I was, that was my hour. That was my, okay. I can take a breath because I don't have to be watching. So letting those supports in letting family take the kids, even if they're not great. And you know, [00:47:00] that those family members don't necessarily.

Follow the rules that you would normally have in your house. The fact of the matter is there's somebody there who's willing to take on the kids for an hour or two or whatever it is and give you that break. So you can, to your point of filling your tank, you can fill your tank a little bit.

[00:47:17] **Allana:** That's so important.

It's important that we take those pit stops for ourselves too. Like a lot of my clients will get so fixated on creating the pit stops for their kids. They forget the residents asked. And they start giving up their pit stops to facilitate their child's pitstops and. It's a dangerous road. We don't go this way.

There'll be monsters. You'd have to find your pit stops too. And yeah, I mean, we're adults. We tend to be a little bit more flexible. We're able to hold it together for a little bit longer, but we still need to prioritize those pit stops because at the end of the day, we are that higher order brain that our child is referencing for their safety.

And if we're not [00:48:00] okay, our child cannot be okay.

[00:48:02] **Delphine:** So speaking of taking pitstops and time for ourselves , a good place to do that often as well, reading books. So are there any good books that you would highly recommend? I often like to try and leave a book or two from guests. I figured you'd have at least one, maybe two hiding up there somewhere,

[00:48:22] **Allana:** Self Reg by Stewart. Yeah, read this book as many times as it takes you to. This is not an easy read. I love this book, but I'm not going to lie. It is not an easy read. His editor could have used a slightly heavier hand, but it's a bit dry, but once you internalize this book, everything changes

[00:48:46] **Delphine:** Stuart.

Shanker's a good, great one.

[00:48:51] **Allana:** We were talking about co-regulation. Co-regulation handbook by Linda K Murphy.

 This is a really, really good [00:49:00] one. It talks about how to set a co-regulation.

 Is an awesome one. It's quite practical too, which I really, really like beyond behaviors by Dr. Mona Della hook. This is. Every parent who has any child should really read this book. And then the explosive child or raising human beings by Dr. Ross green.

[00:49:25] **Delphine:** Webpages are their webpages that you tend to send people to you. I mean, other than your own or mine, for example. But are there any other webpages that you find or.

[00:49:35] **Allana:** Dr. Ross Green's website has a lot of really good tools on it, and I, once you find them, they're awesome. This is more of a tool website than a learning website, but lesson picks.com is my new. Obsession. Well, it's not so new. I've been using it for about four years now, but, it's for kids, especially little kids who are using [00:50:00] visuals.

If, and especially with virtual learning, I've been bingeing on their virtual learning resources because you can make visuals that are usable on zoom, on Google meet. They're interactive. Instead of like having to like make a first then board and have it all. And I've constantly got new ones because my kids are in virtual school and I'm having to be like, Hey, okay, so first French class, then we're going to have a break and they need to be able to see it.

Um, you can whip them up so quickly because it's literally, you just pick the pictures and be like, I want a first then board. And then poof, it's like a visuals generator, right? Okay. Fantastic. Nice.

[00:50:46] **Delphine:** So most importantly at this point, where can people learn more about you Allana?

[00:50:51] **Allana:** My website is allanarobinson.com two L's one in Allana.

I also have a Facebook group called the parenting posse. It, we [00:51:00] have about 10,000 parents in there. It's a peer support. But I am in there and I have a lot of my former clients in there who are very competent at working out different issues. So that's a great place to go hang out if you're looking for tweaks or some new perspectives, or, you know, even just brainstorming on different issues.

And then Instagram I'm @parentingposse.

[00:51:24] **Delphine:** Amazing. Well, thank you so much for tonight. It's conversational. And I know that, um, it's left me with a lot of things to think through.

[00:51:30] **Allana:** Thank you so much for having me.