Rachel Bailey - DONE

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about all things having to do with learning challenges and learning disabilities. When we have children who are struggling with ADHD or other sensory, and neuro-diversity is their ability to deal with big emotions can be hard. We don't always understand as parents why they feel the way they feel.

Emotions can come on hard and fast. Being able to help our kids navigate that part of life can be a challenge. I know for myself, oftentimes it's as much about regulating my own emotions to situations as it is about helping them today on the show, a conversation with Rachel she's, a parenting specialist who has been serving families for over a decade besides being a mother of two.

She also has a master's degree in clinical psychology, a certification in positive. And has provided services as an ADHD coach in-home mentor and therapist through her podcast programs and services. Rachel teaches parents hands-on tools for raising resilient, confidential, and bringing flexibility, peace, and [00:01:00] connection to the families.

Rachel, welcome to the show.

[00:01:03] **Rachel:** Thanks for having me here.

[00:01:04] **Delphine:** I've done a couple of conversations about big emotions. I feel like it's one of those conversations with parents that we can have over and over it. You can't have this conversation enough.

[00:01:13] **Rachel:** I agree, because we so often fall back into old habits.

Like we learned something new and then we go right back to our old reactions. It's really hard. To remember, to do the things that help kids with big emotions.

[00:01:25] **Delphine:** Well, and I find it as my kids age, the big emotions, the way it comes out, changes. So I then have to change like the thing I was using before it doesn't, it's like when the baby learns to sleep and you think sweet, we got it.

And then they go through another milestone and then they regress in their sleep and you're starting all over again. So it's very much, at least in my. I dunno if that way in other people's houses, but it's definitely that way in my head.

[00:01:49] **Rachel:** Absolutely parenting is you think you've got it and then you have another child who's it doesn't work with them.

And then they go through phases and stages and yes, exactly. Parenting is it keeps you [00:02:00] on your toes always.

[00:02:01] **Delphine:** Well, and what's interesting for me is I had two boys and then a girl and I do find. And I don't do this on purpose and it wasn't the way we set it to do it. But did you find the way that the emotions come out in my boys is quite different to how my daughter experiences emotions and it's I, oh, I didn't think they're, they're just children, but it's not.

Yeah. Talk about it. And the, the depth in which my daughter will go into her emotions and how she's scaling versus my eldest son who just like right now he's 13. So that

that's a part of me. That is definitely part of it.

But when he was little, he wouldn't, whereas my six-year-old my little girl, she's like, oh, and I felt this way about this.

And somebody did this and anyhow, it's very interesting. So let's start the conversation. Framing. I mean, we've just talked about it a little bit, but really what our big emotions, I think we use that term and I'm not sure that we always understand what quote unquote big emotions are. So can you tell us a little bit about [00:03:00] from absolutely.

[00:03:00] **Rachel:** And I'm glad you asked because big emotions implies that they're loud and meltdowns and tantrums and they aren't always, so let's start with the ones that probably think of when you hear big emotions, it's the emotions that kind of come up out of the blue like your child is fine. And then all of a sudden you give them the wrong cup and they melt that.

Or, you know, they are expecting one thing and it doesn't go that way. And they kind of freak out a bit. Kids with big emotions also tends to be a little bit controlling and bossy. And if things don't go their way, they get really upset and you know, all about it. But it could also be, I call it big emotion kids, sort of deep feelings.

And they could feel more quietly. So some kids have big emotions, but they're just, you can see it cause they're sensitive to criticism or they get really upset. If an animal gets hurt, they're not necessarily like being loud about it, but they still feel really deeply. And so they're a child who worries a lot isn't necessarily loud, but they're also feeling things really.

So big emotions are [00:04:00] basically in my mind, kids who feel deeply and, maybe a little less flexible they've trouble with transitions and things like that, but it's not always loud.

I have one of each, I have a loud, angry outburst. Uh, what just happened? Oh, his brother just this morning dropped the raspberries on the floor and it was this big thing. Oh, how dare you drop all the raspberries on the floor? That, and it was this big thing. And then yesterday we were on a road trip up to our family cottage and there was a little bit of stress happening.

And, and he, my other, my middle son was sort of very withdrawn and quiet and he was just sort of pacing back and forth quietly. And so I just, I have the spectrum, right? I have the the loud and like, you know when he's really angry and you can, it's all in his face, it's in his body. It's like, he's, we used to call it spaghetti where he was like solid Brock uncooked spaghetti.

He was just, you could see it from top to bottom. And then you'd see the outbursts and then it's the like, oh, the soft spaghetti. Right? Exactly. Then I have my quiet one. [00:05:00] Right, exactly. Right. Just

as well. Yeah.

[00:05:04] **Delphine:** It keeps it interesting if we didn't have differences. I think we'd be very bored with our parents.

[00:05:09] **Rachel:** That's right.

That's right. It definitely keeps us on our toes.

[00:05:13] **Delphine:** So why we, and maybe there isn't an answer to this one, but why do we tend to see big emotions? And I think when I ask the question, I'm thinking more of when I grew up, I'm an eighties kid. I don't remember much of that conversation. I think.

You know, there wasn't a lot of talk about your emotions. That just wasn't something we discussed and, and growth mindset. All of those things were not top of mind. They are now. And certainly through this last two, two and a half years. Mental health and those things have been big, but why is it that we're hearing more about big emotions?

Why is it that we seem to be seeing it in little ones sooner? Is there something that has changed or is it just, I don't know, evolution, I don't know. And maybe there isn't an answer, right? This is probably one of those. I don't know questions, but,

[00:05:58] **Rachel:** well, I actually think [00:06:00] there are a lot of answers. I think, first of all, we know a lot more.

And so our parents kind of, and I'm an eighties kid, too. Our parents kind of just push the emotions aside pigging. It's not a big deal if we push them aside. Now we know that it actually is a big deal because our generation is not doing so much. Mental, you know, mental health wise. So when you push them away, it doesn't actually go that well.

Um, and if you think about it, you know, based on I don't two generations ago where I lived, it was the depression. And so those people really suppress their emotions. Otherwise they would have just really, , not made it probably. So there was all this war. So there was that we push it down, but we didn't realize the impact that it had and it really truly does.

So we know more now I do think also, you know, if you ask that question about ADHD, why does everyone ADHD now? Well, we know more now, it's the diagnosis is there, but there are also cultural factors that obviously play a role in this as well. So it's a lot of things I believe.

[00:06:58] **Delphine:** I wonder too, if at some [00:07:00] of the societal pressure that we have now, I mean, when I was growing up in the eighties and it's funny, cause I've seen a couple of like tick talkers, put this sort of voiceover on of like, can you imagine if all of my mistakes as a kid were. On social media, because it's so common now for us to see it.

And I think that pressure to be socially, not acceptable, that's not even the word I'm looking for, but socially aware and with it and the perfection of that and the view that Instagram gives you on a person's life. And I'm very aware of, you know, when I use my Instagram for my access to education business, I mean, yeah, I'm not showing up in my pajamas with my hair all over.

Like I am trying to sort of. Portray that I'm put together when maybe I'm not put together that day. I wonder, does that influence some of the emotions that we're seeing.

[00:07:46] **Rachel:** A hundred percent? And I actually do a workshop on raising kids with healthy self-esteem and I talk a lot about social media and the pressure there is, and what's ironic is this was before COVID more so than now, What's ironic is that, we [00:08:00] there's more pressure on them, but there there's also a lot of parents who are trying to protect them.

So, especially before COVID, I would talk a lot about parents are like not allowing the kids to feel discomfort. And at the same time, there's more. So, like, I always ask the question. What about, if, I actually asked to in-person when I spoke in person still, how many of you could still get into the same college that you went to?

And like, even something small like that the pressure to get into college totally different. Like half the people said I couldn't still get in. So you have social media, you have the academic pressure, and then you had a lot of parents trying to. Prevent their kids from feeling any discomfort. So it's like this perfect storm of kids have all these emotions.

They have no idea how to handle them. And then yeah, there is, there are these big reactions. And really what we see in the behavior is poor coping skills. That's all it is. Kids who like melt, you know, who freak out kids who do the tight spaghetti. Those are just poor cope. They don't know how to cope with those feelings.

That's all it is.

[00:08:55] **Delphine:** And I don't know how to help my kid cope with it. Yeah. I very much [00:09:00] as a child didn't know how to cope with my own emotions and my own learning disability and my own insecurities that came with that. The social implication that that had for me, I was in a small class placement. It was a way, I mean, I was on the other side of the school. From the quote, unquote normal kids. I took a bus that other kids didn't take. Right? Like all of those things played into how I grew up in Felton, the internalization that I took in from that. And then my kids are living a very different world with inclusion.

And that comes with its own challenges because sometimes when you are struggling in school and you're included in a regular program, as you get older, you start to see that you are more different than others, that you don't get it the same way. And I think that must play a bit of a toll on the mental and emotional well-being of that child as they, as they go through the school.

[00:09:50] **Rachel:** Absolutely. I actually was studying in graduate school, the relationship between ADHD and self-esteem, and there's a huge, risk when you have ADHD of not having really great. [00:10:00] Self-esteem absolutely.

[00:10:01] **Delphine:** I don't and listen, I can only talk from my personal perspective of my children and every child is different.

Every family makeup is different. Every situation is different. Every child comes with their own load. Every parent comes with their own load. But, for my, my one son being able to socially interact with friends is near impossible. A lot of what we did was, sort of socialization groups to learn how to.

Enter into play with others and enter into these things. And I always thought it was ASD. I was like, he must be autistic, like the way he's so rigid and structured. And, and we had about four or five years old. That was like, no, that's not the thing. The markers are for ADHD. Wait until he's six or seven.

And we'll, we'll figure. But then my middle child who is just inattentive, he's not hyperactive and inattentive, so he's not the combined, he's extremely social, but you put them at school and you sit them at a desk and he like, can't, you know, there's somebody over there, who's sharpening a pencil and there's somebody over there.

Who's sneezing. And there's somebody walking into the hallway. All of that means that he can't [00:11:00] focus on the lesson. Therefore he misses something. And so it, it plays on his own emotional tool.

[00:11:05] **Rachel:** Absolutely. And if we actually just very briefly digress though, I think people will be interested in this super quick.

There are two components of self-esteem and you'll hear why kids with ADHD or who are neuro-diverse in any way may be at risk. Two components of self-esteem are number one, a genuine belief that we are worthy of acceptance as we are. That we are worthy of accepted as we are we'll work. We're told all the time, if we're neurodiverse in any way, I mean, we're told all the time, even if four neuro-typical, but that you're not, you're not worthy of acceptance as you are.

Somebody needs to change. We get made fun of all those things. So that's the first component where we're, they've accepted as we are. And the second is I am capable and can trust myself. To do what I have to do. Well, if you're struggling at school, if you have poor executive functioning skills, which, you know, you need good executive functioning skills to do well in school, then you don't believe you're capable or that you can trust yourself.

And they're always getting these messages. You're not good enough [00:12:00] because you're not doing it the way that we're teaching you in school. So when those are the two components, you can see how there's a high risk for a lot of people to not feel good about themselves.

[00:12:09] **Delphine:** Okay. What are those two components again?

Cause I heard you, but I want to hear it again. What are the two from.

[00:12:14] **Rachel:** So the first is a genuine belief that I'm worthy of acceptance as I am. Okay. Not if I change, but as I am. And the second is a genuine belief that I can rely on and trust my. To do the things I have to do. So I'm capable. I'm competent.

[00:12:29] **Delphine:** It's interesting because I have one who feels very capable and competent will do things independently all the time. And we always say, wow, great job. You did this, you did that. You know what I mean? Even last night he like loaded up the boat by himself. Didn't need, you know, he just, he did it, but I had the other one who's like standing there with the bid and he was like, I don't, where does this go?

What do I do? And it's funny. But we always the one who has the struggle of believing in himself the most, we almost overemphasized when he does things on his own and we're proud of him. So interesting. And then something to make a difference

[00:12:59] **Rachel:** sometimes. [00:13:00] Yeah. It's so interesting when you apply it to individual kids because, , sometimes if we tell them how great they are in doing something where they're capable, if they don't have that self image, Then it doesn't actually convince them to feel that way.

It just makes them feel more alone, less understood. So if a child feels, I can't look at what you did and then they're thinking, yeah, but either that wasn't that great or they don't get it in most situations, I can do it. So that's how sometimes we with such good intentions, don't really foster what we think we're fostering.

It's so hard. Isn't it? Parenting?

[00:13:35] **Delphine:** Yeah, it does though. But then how do we change the narrative for our child? Like, I don't know how I would change that because I'm listening to you say it and I'm getting it. I'm like, okay. So I can't overemphasize when he does something. Well, because then he'll feel like, well, I can't get it next time.

Or this was just a fluke or whatever, but then how do I help him instill the concept of, I am good at things I can do things.

[00:13:56] **Rachel:** So there are a lot of ways you can do this. If we're [00:14:00] talking about the capability piece, and I can also talk about the worthiness piece, that first component, but the capability piece actually comes from, I usually say there are few ways you can teach them problem solving skills and practice, problem solving skills.

And I have a lot of actually fun ways to do that. For example, one of the games I used to play when I was a therapist with kids was I would just make up a hypothetical scenario like, your. In the airport and you have to go to the bathroom, but you have bags near you. How do you get to the bathroom? And then I would say, let's come up with all the solutions to this problem.

And we would brainstorm all the solutions. So we're actually strengthening problem solving skills, and I would do that with them on a regular basis. So then when they see a problem, they can actively. Figure out because they've, we've strengthened those skills on their own. They can figure out solutions to problems or another really simple way.

This is when's even simpler that you can do in the moment. Let's say your child is struggling with something instead of saying, okay, I'm going to show you how to do it, or you're really great at it. I think you can do it. You can say something like, [00:15:00] can I offer a suggestion? And that in itself is an empowering question that in itself says, I trust you enough to know whether you need a suggestion or not.

And if they say no, they weren't going to listen anyway. So you stay in your breath. If they say yes, what I usually do to try to build competence is I will say, okay, I'm going to tell you what I would do in this situation. And I want you to tell me all the ways you would change my suggestion to make it work for you.

So you're giving them an idea, but you're ultimately helping them. Take ownership over that idea. And it's really not through words that we improve. Self-esteem it's through skills and through how we treat them. That's how we improve. Self-esteem telling a child that they're great or praise. None of that helps.

It's really, it has to be their experiences by how they're treated and how they feel. They have the skills to do what they need. Does that make sense?

[00:15:48] **Delphine:** It does make sense. It does. It does. So what about the self worth?

[00:15:53] **Rachel:** This one to me, I think we can make such small differences that have a big impact.

So one example I [00:16:00] give is, often when we disagree with the child, like, let's say one of your sons with need to his brother, we often say you can't do that. And what we're basically saying is your perspective is not the same as mine. So it's. And I'm not saying you do this at all. I'm saying most of us as parents do this.

So a way to shift that is when a child does something we don't like, we can say, Hey, I bet there's a reason you did that. We don't talk to our, our brother like that and his family, but I thought there's a reason you did that. What was going on for you when you did it? And then you can say, since we don't talk to each other, like that let's work on this a little bit, but instead of going and attacking what they did, we get into their world with them.

And then we say, I bet there was a reason we basically assume best intent. And when this is one of the big tips I give, well, we treat our children with respect, especially when we don't agree with. That is fostering healthy. Self-esteem it doesn't mean we change our boundaries. It doesn't mean we're being permissive because that actually isn't good for self-esteem it means we have a boundary, but we assume there's a reason they [00:17:00] didn't follow it to begin with and we help them figure out what that reason is.

That is how we treat them with respect even when we don't agree with them.

[00:17:08] **Delphine:** Okay. So here's my question about that piece. So we know with some of our neuro-diverse kids, ADHD in particular, the impulsivity of actions. Yeah. Is an issue. So I have one who's incredibly impulsive, like will say things. And it's funny because since he was in kindergarten, maybe even preschool, but for sure it was kindergarten, two things would always happen before the yard duty teacher could get to the principal to say, so-and-so did this, that and the other.

My son had already made it to the principal's office to say, I did this. This is why it was wrong and I should have done. And next time I will. So he was already able to do that. But what would happen is the consequence would be walking in the school yard beside the teacher, which meant that all of the kids at the school knew that he had been in trouble for whatever which good or bad, whatever, that's how they chose to deal with it.

I didn't agree with it. I think there could have [00:18:00] probably been a better way than that, but then. Saying all of that. How do we help our kiddo who is impulsive to then feel the self-worth because he feels badly for what he's done.

[00:18:12] **Rachel:** That's right.

[00:18:14] **Delphine:** That guilt. He feels that he feels it like earnestly. You can see it in his face.

It's the disappointment in himself. And it almost hurts me to watch. Yes. So how do we deal with the impulsivity and still give the self worth while still doing everything you just told me to do? Which sounds lovely, but I'm like, I don't know how that would work.

[00:18:31] **Rachel:** Well, I do because I was an ADHD coach for many years, and I went to the last kids and teens with ADHD and one of the basic principles of ADHD coach.

And you probably know this is, we teach compensatory strategies. And we do a lot of undoing shame. That's basically what I would do. There's the two things I would do as a coach, a new shame and teach compensatory strategies. So what we want to do when a child is impulsive is first of all, we want to give lots of do-overs.

And we also want to think about how we talk to them after the [00:19:00] impulsive. Happens and saying, okay, let's try that because impulsivity, first of all, is one of the, you probably know this too. I'm preaching to the choir, but it's one of the executive functioning skills that takes the longest to master. I mean, you know, this it's like emotional regulation and impulsivity don't happen really until the mid.

They really don't, but we give them opportunities to do, to do it over. And we talk to them about what was going on for them. You're you know, when you did that, your brain was telling you this let's find a way for you to talk back to your brain because your brain is naturally going to tell you to do that.

So let's do it over now. So you have some practice and then let's talk about, I create what I call when then. When this happens, then I will blank. And I would practice with kids when then statements outside of the moment. So when I see that someone is doing this, then I will, and we're basically teaching the brain.

We're creating new neural pathways so that we can give the brain another option besides the impulsive option. But it's a lot of practice, a lot of repetition and a lot of language we're. I always used to say this when I was a coach. ADHD is a reason, [00:20:00] not an excuse. So we don't let it be an excuse, but we do say, you know, what your brain does do that let's help your brain.

Let's give it all the options of other things that it can do. And we practice.

[00:20:10] **Delphine:** That's a lot of practice. It's a lot of, , I mean, we certainly did a ton of, and it was funny and I've said this several times in the podcast and I've interviewed the particular occupational therapist, but understanding how going to see an occupational therapist and learning about the body and the emotions and how that feels like and looks like, and sounds like within their body.

I mean, we just did it over and over. And I can remember in some of my most frustrated moments when there were really, really bad weeks, I would say to him, but we've done all of these things and you've done all this, and we've learned all these strategies and why can't you just use them? You know? And as a parent, it's just out of frustration.

It's not that I don't love him. It's not that I don't respect him, but it is a, like, we keep doing this. I keep begging up against this wall that you keep bringing me. And why, why, why now? As he's getting older, Those when then statements. We certainly have been doing them for a long time, but, um, yeah, they're, they're more [00:21:00] impactful now.

I find as he gets into the teamwork, as he can more accurately sit with me to talk through it. And it's funny because we're doing a program at home, an emotional school program that we're, we're piloting for a friend of mine. And, , it's funny. He'll bring. Situations that have happened, where he was impulsive and he can then say, oh, when I did this, I should have been done.

Right. Like he can, he can backtrack it. It's quite interesting to watch the growth happen because when they're six or seven, they're kind of like, well, I don't know I could have done. I don't know, but as he's getting older and all of his brain is beginning to develop and we're seeing it. It's cool to watch.

[00:21:36] **Rachel:** Absolutely. And I want to go back to your point because they do develop and mature. Go back to your point that when they're young, it's so frustrating. It's so frustrating. And that's why when I'm working with parents of younger children, right? Honestly, it goes back to us and our expectations and what can a young child really, what are they truly capable of?

Because they may not be capable of what you're asking. So many of us set [00:22:00] expectations based on what we want to happen, not what the child can actually. So we set expectations and what I would say about things like emotional regulation, because I talk about big emotions is that. Basically you're teaching a language that they don't know that their brain is not wired to learn.

And if you were teaching them any language like German or French, you wouldn't expect them to learn it right away. And in a moment of stress, they're going to default to their native language. They're not going to go. What's the new strategy when they're like really upset. What's the new strategy of. We literally need to create a new neural pathway where they connect this with a more mature response and that is not natural to any child.

So we have to set our expectations.

[00:22:41] **Delphine:** Okay. So this leads me into one of the questions I did have for you. And this is, this is a really good segue into this one. So. How much is the role of my own emotion, my partner's emotion, the teacher's emotion, the principal's emotion, the whoever the adult is in the space, or even the teenager, the older person to that child.

Does that [00:23:00] influence or play into the child's ability to self-regulate?

[00:23:03] **Rachel:** So I have some bad news for us as caregivers, as parents, as educators. It is everything, unfortunately, and I am personally, and I don't know how you are, but I am personally, what's called a highly sensitive person. I'm very reactive.

You too. Okay. See, no wonder I get along so well with you. I'm highly sensitive. So I'm very reactive. And um, so I don't love. But the way we actually regulate as human beings, we use co-regulation, especially for young children. So young children are wired to sense our energy, not our words. And I am parents what I say, well, Rachel, I stayed calm and I'm like, yeah, but were you really calm inside?

Know your kids know that? So it is whenever I teach emotional regulation for children, which I do for a living, it starts with, it starts with the adult. It's co-regulation we cannot expect them to regulate if we.

[00:23:54] **Delphine:** Yeah. So you want a really good example of that. And I'm, I'm putting myself on the line for all of the listeners.

This is [00:24:00] like a window into my world. So we were coming up to the cottage. As I told you, prior to starting recording, we showed up at 10 o'clock at night. It was dark. The first boat that we tried to take to come across the water. Cause we're a water access only didn't start. I was like, okay, this is not the end of the world.

I know where there's another boat. We'll go over and get that boat. That boat was acting funny. So my, like I was starting to be like, okay, it's dark. I don't know if the, the navigational lights are in. I know there's no power necessarily where we're going to, there's no water where we're going to yet that I don't know, like all of these.

Fine. We get into the boat, the boat that we finally isn't working perfectly. So we can only go at half speed. The kids are tired, they're cold, they're hungry. They're getting mad at me because the boat's not going fast enough. And I'm like, okay, well, we're going to get like, I'm trying, right? Like I'm shutting it all down being like, we're going to be fine.

We get here, the water pump won't work properly. So I'm on the phone with my parents to be like, how do I get this thing going? I've got one kid who's cold. One kid. Who's like, I [00:25:00] don't feel well. Cause he gets motion sick. So.

 Got all these things swirling, trying to get my partner to help me. He's trying to like manage the kids bananas. I lost it. I was, I was, I was no. And then of course, all of the children wanted to tell. Right cascaded. So this is your point of like, if we can't be calm then, and my husband is trying to be calm, but then I'm upset with him because he's not doing something fast enough.

I perceive it to not be fast enough because he's not helping me. And then, so that was our last night. So.

[00:25:31] **Rachel:** Well, first of all, I'm so sorry to hear that. Cause that's a perfect storm of misery for you as a parent. Perfect storm. If you could have regulated in that moment, I would have been like, you're a robot who could regulate with all of that happening.

I mean, come on.

[00:25:45] **Delphine:** Yeah, but it certainly did not help my, my high emotion hits, but I'm, I am very much like you, I am, I consider myself not quite a super feeler, but I am definitely I'm, I'm quick to emotion and I have to bite hard to [00:26:00] pull it in and, and in times like that, I'm like, no, right now I can't like it.

Right. Everybody has to limit.

[00:26:06] **Rachel:** We can't all the time. And that's one of the main things. So two things I work with with parents is how do we regulate ourselves? Cause I'm not a natural regulator at all. So I teach strategies for that. How do we regulate ourselves? But also I say, you're not going to do it well all the time.

And if you actually expect yourself to that pressure in itself is going to disregulate you. So I teach lots of repair strategies too. And lots of, you know, I actually think when we mess up, it's a perfect opportunity to, for kids to coach up. On emotional regulation, which actually helps them as well. So we do the best we can and we don't expect to do it right all the time.

[00:26:41] **Delphine:** And I do a lot of like, when I have those moments, like I had last night, my middle kiddo was like, mommy, I'm still really stressed from wrong last night. So we had to sit down and we're like, okay, what were all the things that went wrong? And like, why would we fail? Right. And my, I take that opportunity as the parent to apologize.

Right. Because I think our kids need to see us do that to say, [00:27:00] yeah, I got it wrong last night, you know, but. What worked out, we got over here, we did get the water going. We did get the power on. We did get into warm beds. Like every, we were fine. Right. So kind of the reassuring piece, but yeah, I worked really hard when I, when I do lose it a little bit to.

Allow myself to be vulnerable in front of my children and say, Hey, that sucked and I'm sorry. And you know, let's try and have a better day and let's, you know, do some fun things together. And like we were playing Frisbee and we were just sort of chatting and laughing and get right. Like we tried to move on.

[00:27:35] **Rachel:** It's a relationship. And what I always say too is I actually was a therapist for teens with eating disorders. Believe it or not an early in my career. And I always said, when I was that kind of therapist, it was a red flag for me. If a child thought their parent was perfect, a lot of kids with eating disorder.

I think their parents are perfect. So they therefore think I need to be perfect. We don't want our kids to think we're perfect. It is not healthy. We want to show because what if [00:28:00] we do have this like amazing relationship with them, we're always so calm and patient. And then they go out in the real world and what are they expecting?

And relationships that people are calm and patient all the time and they're not. So that's what we, we don't need the pressure. We need to do the best. We can have the tools we have. And do what we can do. So that's all like all we need. So

[00:28:17] **Delphine:** we may have talked about this question and you can just kind of say, oh no, you know what, Delphine let's, let's move on from that one.

But. What really is executive functioning, because I think every time I talked to someone about it, they have a slightly different spin on it. And each spin, I think helps everybody understand it, because it is the same, but the way they explain it is different. And I, I find for me, it makes a difference.

And how does having a learning disability on your diversity, uh, differently wired brain? Affect their ability to, to use executive functioning like a, and I'm using air quotes. Nobody else can see it, but like a normal child, right. There is really no normal. All children struggle with self-regulation, executive [00:29:00] functioning throughout their lives.

But what, what is the main difference with a neuro-diverse child whose brain is wired differently? Because that's the way they were made. How does that affect their executive function?

[00:29:13] **Rachel:** So, first of all, I did not define executive functioning by the skills that we need to plan and execute responsible behavior or the behavior we want to see in our kids that kind of, the two to meet goals and things like that.

So that's how I define executive functioning skills. And when we ha with, with kids who struggle with some executive functioning skills that don't necessarily come naturally to them and they need to use some other strategies, Well, emotional regulation is an executive functioning skill. The ability to monitor your internal state say, okay, I need to pause and I need to do something different and cope with this in a healthy way and release these emotions.

I mean, all of that requires executive functioning skills. So when you have a child who is missing, even one of those, what you're going to see is the behavior. Where they're yelling or they're aggressive or they're angry, [00:30:00] or they're holding it in and saying I'm the worst kid ever, which also absolutely happens.

Yeah. So, I mean, when you are wired differently, you simply it's like saying, if a child can't say two plus two equals four, or maybe they literally don't know how to put those facts together. I mean, they just don't have the skills. So we teach them ways around. And ways that work for them based on their strengths.

That's what I was used to do as a coach, but it's going to impact their emotions and their behavior tremendously because to me, behaviors only, uh, it's a symptom of what's going on inside the Hebrew is a way of communicating how you're feeling inside. That's all. So you're going to see the behavior as simply what's happening inside of a job, which may be that they don't have , some executive functioning skills haven't been mastered.

And I would love to say one more thing too. Cause we don't always think about this with big emotions. There are executive functioning skills required to like clean a room and turn your homework in on time. And all of those things, probably all of your listeners know that. And what I find is that a lot of big emotions happen when we [00:31:00] don't realize that the behaviors like I haven't cleaned my room.

I've been mean to my brother and sister. I haven't turned in my homework when we don't realize that that is poor executive functioning skills. And we just get mad at the behavior. You see a lot of big emotions. So a lot of the families that I work with, big emotions, I'm saying let's back up and see, where are your kids with their executive functioning skills.

That may be the primary issue we address. And then the big emotions don't happen as much big emotions happen when a child feels helpless often. And so if we actually help them with their helplessness, you're not going to see those big emotions. At least I'm not going to be as intense and the duration will not be as.

So it was a long answer, but hopefully that helps.

[00:31:38] **Delphine:** No, no, no. It's a great answer. But then I'm going back to the behaviors and how can we as parents help our children. Understand their behavior in a way that's age appropriate. Because as an adult, I can say to them, you know, I mean, one of the situations with my kid the other day, he was like, well, somebody said something to you that you didn't like, [00:32:00] and you reacted in a way that was way over the top.

And it absolutely wasn't necessary. And like, you should've just walked away, but how can I backtrack with that behavior with him and revisit it in a way that is still going to keep in, talk to self-worth. And keep his self esteem kind of together and feel like, how do we, I like that. It's all going through my brain right now.

I'm like, I don't know how to do that with,

[00:32:23] **Rachel:** I tell you.

[00:32:24] **Delphine:** Okay, good.

[00:32:25] **Rachel:** Tell you right now. First thing you want to do is go back to him and started his world. The best question you can ask is what was that like? So we don't one more correcting behavior, which I think is super important because remember, permissiveness does not lead to healthy.

Self-esteem where resilience we go back and correct behavior. We say, what was it like for you? Because that question is both treating them with respect. And also I love this question and I love questions. Like what was bad about it? Or what did you hate about it? Because they tell us with the problem. So if he says, well, what it was like for me is, , I was so angry that my friend did this.

[00:33:00] My immediate thought is, oh my gosh, you weren't angry and you didn't know what to do with that anger. Did you? We can't. And then another question I would always ask is did that reaction work well for you? Because a lot of emotional regulation, teaching emotional regulation with kids is getting their motivation and their buy-in.

They're not going to use all these strategies we teach if they don't want to. So I always used to ask the question. I asked my own kids. Do you like how that turned out? Did it work well for you? So first we say, what was it like for you to try to identify, to treat them with respect and identify what was the problem?

Well, the problem is he did this to me and I was really. And then I would say, did that reaction that you had, did it work well for you? And what I will tell you is sometimes they'll say. Don't expect them to know it didn't work well, sometimes you have to, they say yes, and you have to stay in that with them.

You know what I bet you did feel powerful when you got really angry. Anger is power. And in that moment, that probably did feel really good. And then maybe then maybe later I would say. Are there any problems with just using anger? Is [00:34:00] there anything that you can see as, or is there something you'd want to get that maybe you would get if you didn't use anger as a strategy?

So we have to really help kids see this on their own, because again, what that's doing, treating them with respect as if they're worthy of respect and helping them feel capable. So it goes back to that self-esteem piece.

[00:34:17] **Delphine:** Okay. I have a question that wasn't on my list of questions.

[00:34:20] **Rachel:** That's okay. Bring it

on.

[00:34:21] **Delphine:** But I'm thinking about it now, because I'm thinking about my eldest son's interaction with friends and one of his friends a long time ago told the friend, told his mom and she and I were friends and we talked often and she was very pined to understanding my eldest and that, and, and her. Was for a long time, a good friend, but it eventually got to the point where he said to his mom he's unpredictable in his emotions.

And I don't like it, which totally fair. Right? Like, and I think in life, if you are a person who can say, you know what, I'm not down for that. And I [00:35:00] think that's a wonderful skill to have, but how do we, as parents of neuro-diverse children help families of neuro typical. Kind of bridge the gap and understand each other, to be able to create positive social interactions because not for my eldest is really what has happened.

He is an emotionally charged kid who is unpredictable. It means people don't often trust to be his friend, because they're like, well, yesterday you were nice to me, but tomorrow you could like blow your top and then we're all done. And that for me is hurtful as a parent. I mean, to be brutally honest about it, because I, I he's the kid who never gets invited to.

Right. Whereas my middle kid is invited to everything because he's not emotionally that way. He's emotionally quiet people don't see it. So what, how, what, how, I don't know, to, to the neuro-typical parent listening, how do they support the friend who has a child with ADHD or self issues, but like, do you understand what I'm asking?

I don't know that I'm asking it clearly, but I don't know how to [00:36:00] get to that answer.

[00:36:01] **Rachel:** No, I should. I, should you ask it? You asked it very clearly and I do understand. And I'm going to say two very simple things. One is I'm taking this from Bernay brown, who I love. I'm sure most of your listeners know she's amazing.

She has an, I love is you can't hate people close up. Not that I'm saying your son's friend hated him, but the whole point of that is once you understand people. You actually have so much more compassion rather than, oh, I want to separate myself from them. The second. So first is asking the S your F your son's friend, if he wants to understand him more.

And most kids honestly say yes to that question, especially if there is some sort of friendship or, or, or, you know, there's something positive. They get out of it because kids are pretty egocentric. So if there's something positive, Um, and then the second part is science. Science is a friend. I believe when someone doesn't understand someone and you just start to explain the science, why is his brain like that?

How does his brain work? Has your brain ever works like this? Well, this is, and I show [00:37:00] pictures and I show, you know, because what I do a lot of his work with siblings of big emotion and neurodiverse kids to help siblings not, not resent their siblings. That's so what I said to him, Ask if they want to know more, teach them science.

And then the last piece of this, and this is just as important. And I do this with siblings is really respect what that child is going through. The predictability is hard. And I always said with siblings, don't just go to the sibling or the friend and say, well, you need to understand that because they're neurodiverse.

You want to say to the sibling or the friend, how did this affect you? And what do you want to do about it? If this happens? What plan do you have? So it's kind of, like I said, three parts, teach them you science to do it. Cause it's very effective. And then when you respect that it does affect them and they have a plan.

There are a lot less resentful when it happens. So that was kind of a long answer. I hope that was helpful.

[00:37:52] **Delphine:** No, it's good. It's good. I think. You know, I think the social interactions for my son is forever going to be the [00:38:00] struggle. Right. And, and it, it leads to the isolation. It leads to the feeling of self-worth not being there.

Um, and, and that's hard to watch and I'm sure there's lots of parents, you know, either listening to this or out there who, who watched that happen and it, and it's very, especially when there's siblings involved and one sibling has the social interaction piece. And

[00:38:21] **Rachel:** one, does it have the same dynamic in my family?

And one of the things that I try to do, and I suggest to other people, and I know you've all thought of this, but one of the things I do a lot for my daughter is five similar kids because my, my older daughter has really poor social skills. She has very few friends. Um, so first we talked about, do you want friends?

And she did. Cause I'm actually a big believer. If a child doesn't want them, they're just introverted and we get to sit back, but she did. So we, we found a lot of interest based friends. Geographic based trends because geographic based friends are not going to understand. And then we found a lot of kids who were sort of like her who were emotionally dysregulated often and that's, [00:39:00] they bonded over that.

Sometimes I have an adolescent daughter who's going through this as well.

[00:39:05] **Delphine:** Yeah. And I think every kid is going to be different. And I think as a parent, I always say to my clients, when I work with them, listen, at the end of the day, you know, your child best what, right? Like the teacher can tell you to do a, B and C.

The psychologist can tell you to do X, Y Zed. The doctor can say M N L like, it really doesn't matter, but you, you created that thing or you were given, if you didn't create that child, you were given that child at a certain point in time. And you have grown to care for love and adore this person in front of you.

And you need to say that feels right or that it doesn't feel right. And if it doesn't feel right, I think we are both saying to you, let it go. It doesn't feel right. Move, move on and take the thing that feels right. Because if you do the thing that feels wrong and I've certainly done it. You run up to a [00:40:00] wall where you're like, well, why am I still doing this?

And why did I think this would work? And then as a parent, you start to feel like, well, I'm a crappy parent. Clearly I don't know what I'm doing. And in fact you did. And so that gut check that gut feel, I think is so crucial in everything that is our children, whether they're typical or neuro-diverse or somewhere in between.

[00:40:20] **Rachel:** I could not agree more. I think I always say a competent parent is actually more important than a correct pair. Okay. Well, not that there is any, correct. Yeah. There's no, there's no accurate, but we need to believe in ourselves and trust ourselves. And we do spend the most time with our children. We have a bond with them that no one else will ever understand.

And even there I'm going to be quite Frank. There are a lot of parents who say in winter, Feeling safe. I don't really get my kid. I don't really like my kid, which happens to all of us at some point very often, even if, cause a lot of parents I know will feel guilty. Well, I don't have a bond with my child.

What do I do next? I still believe, you know what to do next. And what I do a lot is just coach parents and I ask [00:41:00] them questions, but the answers come from them. And they do know, I think there's a guilt and feeling like, well, I don't really like the way my child is. So therefore I don't know. And yes, you do.

You, the reason you don't like your child is probably because you're exhausted and depleted, honestly. And you may, you may not get that because you're not like them.

[00:41:18] **Delphine:** Yeah. That, uh, that, that expression of like, you need to fill your tank first. It's such a key piece of it's hard. Well, that's not true. I think for some it's easy for some it's hard.

I will admittedly say for me, it is extremely difficult to fill my tank first. I'm always trying to fill everybody else's tank and then I'm like, oh, crumb. I'm like, there's nothing left in here for me. And then the reactions of say last night, right. Bubble to the surface because I can no longer. Continue to tread water.

And it's funny, I was just talking to someone the other day and I'm like, you won't [00:42:00] seem so calm and I'm like, Hmm, because you don't see what's happening underneath. Like you don't see

the leg on top, but underneath,

I think that's a lot of us parents, right. Where our feet are moving a mile a minute, but across the top, the surface or where the iceberg, where you only see like a third of us and then everything is kind of buried underneath.

And I think. And I mean, I'm taking this from our conversation that we've had, but I think that's a lot of our executive functioning kids where you see one piece on the top that you think and perceive to be what it is. But if you actually dug deeper, there would be so much more in there that that is unpredictable.

That is unknown. That is difficult. That is stressful. That is all of those things.

[00:42:39] **Rachel:** Absolutely. Absolutely. And that's part of what I see my job as for parents is to help them understand what's underneath because kids don't always know, we ask our kids and they say, I don't know why I did that. They don't know.

So we trust our instinct. We get a little information, which is what I try to give in my podcast. Just understanding what's under the iceberg, what's what's going on and we do our best. And [00:43:00] again, like we said before, we don't have to be perfect.

[00:43:02] **Delphine:** Nope. We just have to do our best. That that is, uh, I like that line from this podcast today.

We just, we have to, as parents do our best and if we mess up. It's part of learning. It's how we, as parents acknowledge what we've done and be able to move forward in a way that is positive, both for ourselves and our kids. It's

[00:43:18] **Rachel:** how we teach kids, how relationships work. Honestly, the relationships are not perfect.

They are

[00:43:25] **Delphine:** perfect relationship. That would be interesting. I think that would actually be boring is actually what I think it would be. Exactly. So this is a good segue into sort of resources , things that you think parents should tap into, um, that you think would be helpful kind of around this executive functioning conversation.

[00:43:43] **Rachel:** So I love Daniel Siegel. He has a lot of books related to the brain. I'm obviously very interested in the brain and executive functioning. So Daniel, Siegel's an author. I love, he has a lot of books out there from kids to teens. There's also a book. I love it for parents of children who struggle with anxiety, which is called the [00:44:00] opposite of worry. And that's by Lawrence Cohen. Those are two books I often recommend. So the, I mean, there's a lot out there, but those are public. That's the people I recommend the most.

[00:44:09] **Delphine:** I always say to people, the, the Google rabbit hole, when it comes to executive functioning, ADHD neuro-diversity is massive.

Um, and I've certainly been that parent at, you know, three or four in the morning, trying to understand why they had the. I had the day before. And I, I think for some reason, Google is going to answer my question. It never does. I always feel right. We hope upon hope. Um, Rachel, where can people learn more about you and what you do?

[00:44:34] **Rachel:** So, first of all, I'm going to give you for your show notes. If you have them, a video series that I have, if you are raising a child with. Um, and it's gonna be very easy to access because it's going to have your direct link there. And then I have my own podcast. It's called your parenting long game, and it talks a lot about raising resilient kids and raising kids with big emotions, but also not kissed without big emotions.

And then I have a Facebook group that goes with that podcast. So there I'm all over the place, but I will give you a [00:45:00] special video series that you can send to your audience.

[00:45:02] **Delphine:** Amazing. Well, Rachel, thank you so much. For this, I feel like we could go on hours and hours and hours, but, we're all busy. We all have things going on.

So thank you for this. I hope we connect again, but I really, really

appreciate this conversation.

[00:45:15] **Rachel:** Thank you for having me. I really appreciate it too.