**Autism Edit – A conversation with Kathy**

[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 challenges. Having a child who doesn't fit in to all of the norms of society can be isolating. Now I'm feeling like you understand how to parent your child can feel scary and overwhelming.

I've said it many times that no child comes with a manual, no child comes with a, how to guide when they arrive as parents, we fumble around trying to figure out how to parent our child so that they feel loved, safe and successful. But when you have a child, whose brain is wired differently, your parenting has to be different as well.

It took me quite some time to figure out how to support my super feeler son. The meltdowns, the tantrums it's sometimes kept us from doing activities as a family. Often as a family, we'd have to think through an activity. Would he need a lead-up to going out? Would it be too crowded if he got upset, what and where could we go to regroup everything, we could plan for we tried to. Over time, we've gotten into a groove, but it didn't come without growing pains. It didn't come without many nights of tears. Mostly for me, trying to understand why my child wasn't quote unquote normal. As he's grown up so too has my ability to parent the early stages were long and hard.

Here on the podcast. I strive to share stories of other families who have been on a journey. No two journeys are the same, but it sure is nice to know you are not alone. Today on the show I'm talking with Kathy Heath, she's a mom of three, she's a coffee addict like myself and a socially anxious extrovert who has a child with autism.

Her child was diagnosed in 2016. And since then, she has created the Autism Edit Community. It's a website and social media space where she shares her experiences and perspectives about parenting a child with ASD. Her goal is to allow other families traveling a similar journey to feel less alone. Kathy, welcome to the show.

[00:01:54] **Kathy:** Thank you so much for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

[00:01:57] **Delphine:** I have been looking forward to this recording for a little [00:02:00] while. So I'm excited to sit and chat. I've followed on Instagram for a while, so it's nice to be able to have a conversation and see you and not through some weird virtual space,

[00:02:10] **Kathy:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:02:11] **Delphine:** So tell us a bit about yourself and what led you to create autism edit.

[00:02:15] **Kathy:** So for me, I am sort of shocked that I ended up, ended up here blogging and putting my life out there on the internet. What led me down that path was picking up a job as a virtual assistant to a local blogger here in Edmonton, where I live. And I learned so much from her and she one day just looked at me and she's like, why do you not blog about autism?

You could help so many people with all of your knowledge, you know, and she's like, you shouldn't be doing this and sharing it. And I was like, yeah, you know, I shouldn't be doing that. And it just sorts of organically started with her guidance and help, and it's turned into something really beautiful.

So I'm glad I took the leap.

[00:02:55] **Delphine:** It is something very beautiful and you are doing an awesome job of, I [00:03:00] think really showing a nice balance between the hard knocks of it and the glorious moments. Right. And I think that that's so nice to see because it's not all Pinterest shots all the time. I mean, it's real life.

[00:03:13] **Kathy:** Yeah. I mean, in the feed, it's a little bit of that, you know what I mean? But then in the stories it's like, Oh, okay, last night I cried. Um, I'm having a hard time because we're all having a hard time at some point or another now, especially, and very, you know, just approachable. Like it's not an easy journey, no matter what.

Parenting looks like for you. And I think we're so lucky to be in this season where we can connect with one another and just, you know, get them. Message out there that like, hey, we're all just trying our best. It's not ideal. Um, we're all gonna make mistakes that were horrified by, but also like there's fun and there's, there's so much to look forward to and be excited about.

So I love celebrating [00:04:00] that with other people and I feel the same about your podcast. It's just been amazing, like the highs and lows and the wins and losses of the education system that we're all trying to navigate. I so appreciate the knowledge that you share.

[00:04:13] **Delphine:** And I think the highs and lows, right? That's the thing I think when we're low, especially when we have kids who are struggling at school or struggling in society, because that's what some of it is. We think we're by ourselves and when you're low, you really you're like nobody understands nobody gets it, but there are lots of people out there.

At differing levels who are going through not the same journey. It is not the same. We are not walking footstep for footstep, but we're definitely walking on the path together. And my trees might look different to your trees and your water will look different to my water and the birds will be singing different songs, but in essence, we're going through it.

Together. And it's so nice when you can find people that you can watch from [00:05:00] a far, if need be, or be right up in width to go through it. Cause it is lonely. And I mean, yeah, you did have a post that last week. That was pretty like, you know, it was, it was sad. It was, I'm a mom and I'm struggling. And here, this is me being, being real, which I loved.

[00:05:18] **Kathy:** Thank you. Yeah. Honestly, it was world autism awareness day or some, something like that. It can't remember exactly what it was that we were talking about. And someone said, you know, I hear these parents. It was just someone on Instagram, not someone I know personally. And she had said, I see these parents who get so sad when their kid is diagnosed with autism and don't be sad.

That's not, you know, autism is great and all this stuff, and it kinda hit me. Like I took it a little personally, which is so silly on the social media apps, but I did, I can't help it sometimes. And it just made me feel like that's so unfair to take away that time for someone, you know, like for sure now my son was diagnosed quite a [00:06:00] few years ago, so I feel very differently about it as I did then.

But. It's not sad because you love your kid any less. It's not sad because you feel like you're, you know, missing out on a better child out there or something like that. It's sad because you have no idea what their journey is going to look like from there, you feel like, Oh my gosh, are they going to be able to do all these things that are so important to us as you know, Most likely neuro-typical people.

I know that's not always the case, but parents who have lived, you know, sort of a model of life that you expect for your kids and you, you project those hopes and dreams onto them, but then you feel like, Oh my gosh, my kid's going to have to go through all these hurdles, all these. You know, social nuances are going to be so challenging for them.

And like that's upsetting. No one wants to see their child struggle at the best of times. And then you're saying like, Oh, here's this giant diagnosis. That's going to make life so much [00:07:00] harder for them. And that is sad and that's okay to deal with that. Right.

[00:07:05] **Delphine:** Well, and I've said it before. Like, I mean, I think that we as parents, or at least I did when I was first pregnant with my first child, because I knew better with the second and third, but with the first kid, I was like, Oh, this is going to be great. And you know, they're going to grow up to do this and they're going to beat this way and they're going to do that.

And you, have to take a minute to grieve what you thought and it's. You're just allowing yourself to say, hmm, somebody has a different plan. It's not mine, it's theirs. And I need, and I mean, listen, you could say that of any neuro-typical child as well. I mean, every neuro-typical child, parent, you know, they, Oh, are my kids going to do this and that.

And then the child has their own ideas and their own feelings. And, but when you get a child who is. Who has a challenge of some sort, whether it's learning, whether it's social, whether it's, you know, physical or whatever, they, there is a, a level of, grieving that has to happen because the life that you [00:08:00] envisioned is maybe not the one that you're going to have, and that's okay.

You're going to have different gifts and different things that are going to be awesome about that journey. It's just going to be different. So I don't know. That's what was hard for me with my kids.

[00:08:12] **Kathy:** Yes, I completely agree. And I went through that and it's funny because for my husband and I, we grieved in a very different sort of way. And for me as well, I think stereotyping, , as a mom and a woman, I've I just projected like right into the future, like, Oh my gosh, is he ever going to be able to drive?

Oh my gosh, is he ever going to be able to go to university or college? If that's the path he wants to take, , are any of these options going to be available to him? And then my husband was like, ah, he's. Well, he was like almost five at the time. And he's like, he's five. Like just, we can relax on college.

But then when he got to grade one, my husband had a little moment of like, Oh my gosh, I just, I wasn't prepared for like teaching him to read, to be such a struggle. [00:09:00] And that was so hard for him. And I was like, what, how could you not have thought about that? Two years ago , which is so silly.

Right. But, , everyone just has, it hit in a different way and a different time. And I think no matter what, you don't come out of it unscathed and that's okay. And I feel like parents need to be accepting of that and other. People involved in the circles around also have to recognize that is healthy and okay.

And it doesn't mean there's resentment for the child. It doesn't mean there's less love there. Less support there for the child. It just means that you're right. These parents have to totally readjust their expectations.

[00:09:43] **Delphine:** So what for you has been the hardest part about learning to parent, a child who doesn't necessarily fit into society's box?

[00:09:51] **Kathy:** I feel like that's the thing, watching those struggles is challenging. And I have to say. I'd say, I feel incredibly [00:10:00] lucky because we have a great community where the kids have been super supportive. But now my son's because he has an older brother, um, they are 10 and eight and almost like nine and 11.

And so they're kind of getting to that age where kids are getting a little bit more. Me for lack of a better term. And I don't hold that against the kids because that's just, I think sort of a progression that kids go through and, uh, that's been the toughest thing. And then. Also, I have to say, I don't talk about this very often, but I feel like sometimes I really struggle for my oldest child because he has this brother and they're very close in age and all their interests should be the same and they should be out having bike rides in the neighborhood.

Like his friends are with their brothers and they should be playing basketball together and they should be going to get Slurpees by themselves. Cause that's so cool now. And [00:11:00] he. Doesn't get that connection with his brother. And I find for me, that's very, it's bittersweet. There's some good in it, but that's another thing for me that I've had to grieve that sort of, um, sibling bond and relationship between my three children looks very different from what I had imagined.

[00:11:19] **Delphine:** That's a really good example of something that we. I think as parents hold onto, right. When we bring these little people into the world, no matter how they arrive to us, we get them, we nurture them, and we envision right. We dream it's normal. It's what, what we do. So yeah, I can imagine that that must be difficult, um, to watch that, you know, and if you had siblings yourself, you had your own relationship with your siblings and you envision that same.

I didn't have siblings. So I don't know what that kind of dynamic is like. But I certainly watch it in my own three. And it's, it's interesting to watch and kind of watch them navigate the push pull that happens with, but I want to do this, but now I want this, I mean, today there was a fight [00:12:00] over the switch and who gets to play the switch when right.

It's like, you need to have three of everything. So nobody argues, but that's not real life. So we don't do that. But yeah, it's hard for sure.

[00:12:09] **Kathy:** Oh, that's so funny. Yeah, I have. Two older brothers and an older sister. So for me, we lived in an isolated area growing up. It was just the four of us. Oftentimes we played together. We did a lot together. We really grew up together as a family unit. So I did, I had. high and unrealistic expectations of what that would look like.

And, you know, they have a great relationship. All three of them together, it just does look very different. And, but again, it's just goes back to that, like, Oh, I thought it would be like this and it's not, but there's some blessings in there as well.

[00:12:44] **Delphine:** Did something give you strength through all this? I mean, I've watched you and I've listened to you a number of times and there's never been a sense of like, I can't. Do this, or I won't overcome this, or it won't be okay. Or, you know, I don't ever get [00:13:00] that sense from you. So is there something that gives you strength that brings you strength or somehow, how do you find that inner strength?

Cause it, I mean, it's it can be challenging, right. It can feel like you're very alone. And so sometimes I don't know, sometimes I like, like to look for strength and things. And so I'm wondering where you find strength.

[00:13:17] **Kathy:** It's so funny that you put it that way, because during the COVID shutdowns and kids being out of school and all that, there was one point where I said to my husband, I was like, it was the night before they were switching to online learning for yet another time. And. I just said I had so much anxiety about it and I was so worked up, which happens to me like pretty frequently.

And I just said to my husband, I was like, I am just not strong enough to do this. I do not know how people live through this and do it. And especially Ontario has been hit seemingly in Canada. Here are the hardest by a long shot. And I just felt like I am not capable of [00:14:00] doing this, but, you know, I, I think.

We all have those times. And what other choice do you have, but to just get up and get through it. And I feel like what I've learned is to let go of how it's going to look like it didn't look perfect that day. I wasn't the chipper hands-on mom that was sitting there. Making sure that everybody was doing their work and staying on task all day.

Like I had tried to be the first time around because that burnt me out. So, I think it was like learning the lesson of, okay. I can't do that for an extended period of time because it doesn't help anyone long-term. And then also I have to say, my parents faced a lot of adversity in their lives and they were always pretty positive about things.

And like, um, I feel like they set a really good example of like, we can overcome this because we [00:15:00] have each other and that kind of tone in our family. I have a pretty big family, so that. Sort of safety net under me too. Right. Of just having those people to lean on. My husband's incredibly supportive, even though he's working.

So that gives me a lot of inner strength and as well as like, we all see our kids, they come so far, no matter what they go through, they still grow. You can look back if you reflect on it, they're still making progress. And that gives me a lot of strength as well to know that no matter what, as long as time goes by, even if it doesn't look perfect, as long as we still keep it.

Giving it just a little bit of effort we're going to get there eventually. Right.

[00:15:41] **Delphine:** They, they all do grow up. They all eventually right. Most will eventually sleep through the night. Most eventually we'll eat with a fork. Most eventually we'll learn to cut their meat. Right? Eventually they learned to tie shoes. Eventually they go to school. I mean there's, but I think in those moments of [00:16:00] difficulties, when they're young, it's hard to remember that everything is just for a short while and then it gets better.

And that sometimes it gets worse before it gets better. I know for my son, the super feeler in the early stages. I was like, this is never going to get better. We're going to be stuck with a kid who goes from zero to 60 forever, and it's never going to go away. And that has, as he has grown, as he has matured, he has been able to learn strategies.

I call it his toolbox of things that he can use when he's right. Like he's learning to regulate that himself. I'm no longer the, um, emotional regulator that I needed to be, which was very draining. But it's also been so fun to watch that growth. Right. And to your point, go back and reflect like, where was I when he was five?

When I was, when he was five, when I was five, I wish when he was five, I would, you know, I was always, I was like his shadow because I was waiting for the meltdown. I was waiting for the [00:17:00] explosion because I knew was coming. And so I needed to, I needed to buffer it. I needed to be there before it happened.

And that's exhausting. I mean, that's tiring in and of itself. So. Yeah. Being able to look back and reflect is a great thing. So those of us with kids who have, out of the box thinkers, who don't fit into, you know, they're, they're round pegs, trying to fit into a square hole. It can be hard sometimes because you might have friends who have neuro-typical kids and you're watching them grow up and they're all fine and they're going to school and there's no worries.

And nobody's asking questions, nobody's getting assessments done and nobody's running to occupational therapy and speech language and this group and that group. I'm wondering if for you as parents, we look to other moms and other parents and friends to help us through the difficult times. But did you find connecting with the, the average and I don't love that way of putting it, but like, did you find connecting with the neuro-typical child parent harder or [00:18:00] hard, or was it a fairly easy connection with those families or those other moms?

[00:18:05] **Kathy:** I during that time of leading up to and during my son's diagnosis had a friend and she had two sons that were just slightly younger than my two boys. And we spent a lot of time together and heard sons are totally neuro-typical. They hit all their milestones, just, you know, textbooks. Children. And I have to say, I'm so grateful for that relationship.

It was incredible. They've moved away, but, they, that was huge for us. And I think it helped that her kids were just a little bit younger because it made the differences more subtle, but I will never forget. This is kind of a weird story. but I will never forget. It was like the throes of potty training with these four kids.

Right. And I feel like, again, this is just a generalization, but it seems like boys are just a little bit more difficult with that, regardless of where [00:19:00] you're starting out from. And I remember one time she had finally gotten over that last hump with her. One of her children. I'm trying to keep this really private because this is an intimate thing, but, and she was like, you know what?

It was one day. He just told me, mom, I really don't like it. When the water splashes on my belt. And I w I was like, wow, that's so great. And I was so happy for her really genuinely, truly happy for her because what a milestone to break through. But I went home and I just cried. And I just thought, like, it's just so simple.

And these kids are able to. Say what bothers them. And I may never know, or be able to hear my child say like, that makes me feel uncomfortable when that happens or be able to just have that little conversation of like, Oh my gosh, like here's how we can avoid it. Or, you know what I mean? And all those little things and , it was just little moments like that [00:20:00] where I would feel jealous again, very happy for them.

So exciting. No ill feelings towards them as a family or anything like that. But definitely that jealousy of like, if my child were uncomfortable in some subtle way that we could make adjustments and help, I just don't get to have it that simply. And I don't know, I, it definitely was harder in the beginning because when people.

Complain about things. You're just sort of like, Ugh, what a minor complaint. I wish those were my complaints. Right. But we can all do that. Someone could do that to me, someone out there has a far worse than me, and I think it's never easier or better or harder or worse. It's just different. And like you said, the water looks different.

The trees look different, but parenting, no matter how it looks for you, there's nothing easy about it.

[00:20:57] **Delphine:** I feel like we don't always talk about [00:21:00] how difficult it is and how scary it is like parenting. I find parenting scary. Am I messing it up. Am I screwing it up? Am I going to do, you know, some sort of harm? Like, it's that, it's that like, am I, am I doing enough? And it's like, yeah, I probably am. But I'm also probably doing more than I should be.

Right. I don't know. Like I have those days where there's days where I do nothing and days when I do tons. So it is hard. Right. And finding that balance of what works in your house for routine, for, um, kind of what are the limits in the house and what limit for one might be a different limit for the other based on kind of what they need. Right. So that's the, that's the tricky part.

Let's talk about something that I often talk about on the podcast with, especially when I have parents on. Cause I love to kind of. Get the inside scoop on how they feel about it. But I'm wondering about what the experience in terms of schooling and education has been, because I find that again, it's different for everybody, but I always find the discussion really interesting.

So what was school like for your son when he entered [00:22:00] school?

[00:22:00] **Kathy:** He went to a preschool program that was just a community program. And he had, , through another publicly funded program here in Alberta, he had, a personal EA for that would attend class with him. And that was okay in hindsight. I think the EA was maybe not the greatest. And I had naiveté around what that relationship should look like.

, I mean, she did a great job, but I think there are now I've since learned, there are better, there's been better fits in that time. And, , he had been suggested as being on the spectrum by our pediatrician that August. Then he started preschool in September. I was still very emotional about the whole process and a lot of denial.

I was seven months pregnant with my daughter. My daughter was more in late October, so we had a lot going on as a family. So I don't fully remember his experience at school. I do [00:23:00] remember at the end of the year in may going into the class, seeing all the other kids and just crying in, in front of everyone and being like, wow.

Um, I was definitely in a lot of denial. He still had not had his diagnosis. He got it two days after preschool ended. And I had been like, maybe he's not, maybe he won't, I don't know. It could be something else. It could, you know, not be this blah, blah, blah, and lots of emotions. So when I went into that classroom and saw how very different he was from his peers at that time, that was a rude awakening for me, that I'm grateful for now, but it was difficult to see at the time then.

Because of that experience when he had started kindergarten in the fall, it was, I had more realistic expectations. Thankfully he had incredible teachers. There's just here. We have a teacher and then an aide in the classroom for kindergarten, half days. [00:24:00] And, uh, so he was pretty well supported. The kids of course, kindergarteners are always.

Welcoming of everybody. It doesn't matter. They don't think twice about what you're doing or what you're not doing. They just want to play with you or leave you alone, whatever. So that was an awesome year. And the whole school there was great. And luckily, we've been. Doing really well, like really well supported by teachers and aides.

Like, we've just gotten so lucky, but now he's in grade three and it's starting to feel like we can't continue with this forever. This isn't going to be effective. He's in an inclusive classroom, just a typical class with. All the kids that we would all be going to school with no matter what. And he's starting to definitely fall behind in ways that he's going to need more support than he is.

Anyone is able to give him no matter how great they are at their job. That's just not feasible for them to provide the level of help that he needs as an individual. So now we're very struggling. Like we just, [00:25:00] he has a great where he is. And there doesn't seem to be a better alternative, but it also feels like a very flawed system.

That's kind of not helping him meet his full potential. So it's just such a confusing time of like, I don't know what the right next step is.

[00:25:18] **Delphine:** I don't know that there's a way to really ever know what the right step is. I think you just kind of have to. A little bit unfortunate. It's a little bit like stumbling on, on stones in the dark, right? Like you just kind of, you trip over a stone and go, is that the one I wanted? Oh, no, I don't want that one.

I got to go to the next one. and I think it's, it's very hard, but. I think it heartens me to hear that you've had a good experience thus far with education, knowing that there's still a lot to go, right. I mean, there's, other systems coming that might be different, but I think some of what can help families in particular, especially when they're early on in the diagnosis or when the child is really young as if.

The families can have a positive interaction with the school, with the teachers, with the administrators, with the people in the school [00:26:00] board who make the decisions about identification or not identification, or regular class or not regular class, but being able to have open discussion with those people who.

Who hold keys to things that are pretty darn important , and mean a great deal to those of us who have kids who are different and need an identification or need a placement, right. Is remembering that we're parents and we're human. And we love our kids and we want the best for them. And so sometimes that can get the better of us when we're, when we're going through these things.

It's hard.

[00:26:28] **Kathy:** Yeah, I've been, I just feel so lucky. I don't know what it is. And. The teachers that we've had have connected really well with him. And he's actually had the same aid the last two years in a row, and they have a very special relationship. It's so great to see. And then he has some peers in his class that have, um, you know, some per some of their own challenges that they have helped with and they just make such a great group.

And, and again, like the kids in our community are. So supportive and like uplifting. And even though he's getting older [00:27:00] and things are becoming more clear, differences are kind of getting realized and actualized by these other kids. Like he still has like great friends and all that stuff. We'll do we remove him from that community support and like uplifting, positive experience for something that could be better?

But maybe it's not going to be. And then maybe we were wishing we had moved them out. So it's, it's difficult because the private schools don't really seem to make a lot of sense for his personal , challenges. The public programs are good, but not. Again, they just don't all feel like the right fit. Like nothing feels like, just like, Oh, that's what we should be doing next.

So it's just kind of a guessing game. I think for the next couple of years for us, I wish I had better feedback or like, uh, but I don't, it's just seriously. We're just like grasping at like, okay, well [00:28:00] it's good right now. We'll know when we need to change it.

[00:28:03] **Delphine:** I love that he's had that same aide for two years. I think that that's so helpful because it's meant that he doesn't have to rebuild the relationship and rebuild the trust and rebuild the communication skills and all of those things. It's already there, but you're right. It will be a transition.

It will be a difficult one when, when a change happens, which is always a little bit scary.

[00:28:21] **Kathy:** We're very lucky. And this is one of the things that made me feel like before the diagnosis, is he really on the spectrum? Because the S the stereotype is that these transitions are so difficult. And while he definitely does not like the transition of something new, he adapts quite quickly. And then he loves, um, And kind of under registers stimulation, so allowed classroom as exciting to him.

 And that kind of regulates him and being around all these other kids and seeing like, you know, the bright lights in the classroom and all the colors and all the fun energy of a classroom is [00:29:00] just really, really good for him as opposed to, I think most of the, I always thought it was the opposite, right?

Like, Oh, People on the spectrum generally tend to avoid loud noises and avoid bright lights and a lot of stimulation it's too much . So he's the opposite. And that has made school, thankfully, a very good experience in that sense, too.

[00:29:22] **Delphine:** It's interesting to hear you almost give the polar opposite of what we think of as ASD ? You're not giving us that quiet, withdrawn person who wants to play with Lego in the corner. You're giving us that person who wants to be in the mix, who wants to be, , the social butterfly and involved with, the lights going and the sound and the music and all this stuff.

. That it's true. It's another really good example of how the person to person is so different and the needs can be different because the person is different. Right.

[00:29:52] **Kathy:** ASD It is a challenging thing to talk about for that reason, because you can have the exact same diagnosis as someone, and they have [00:30:00] nothing in common with them in terms of, , symptoms or what bothers you, or, or challenges or whatever you want to call it. Right. And so it's just one person's experience is vastly different from another person's experience.

[00:30:13] **Delphine:** so their parents. Who were probably like me, probably like you were like, I need to read a book. Somebody tell me what book I need to read to answer all of my questions.

And I always say, well, there isn't just one book and there are several, and there are too many to name, but I have one favorite one. So I have my favorite one. Do you have a good book that has helped you or that, you know, you read it once and you're like, Oh, okay. This is, this is it. This is the one I get.

[00:30:38] **Kathy:** Okay. One of the ones for me that I really loved was born on a blue day by Daniel Tammet. I don't know if you've ever read that one. It's an autobiography he's from, I think London, but somewhere, somewhere in the UK and what my big takeaway was from his story was that he grew up not. With a [00:31:00] lot. He's a male.

He's probably in his forties now. So autism was just not really on the radar during his childhood and his parents didn't have a lot of means to provide for him and his family. He comes from a pretty large family by today's standards. And he has grown up through all of that. Like no knowledge of autism or any kind of diagnosis, not like any therapy from early childhood or anything like that.

And he is thriving as a person. And I'm not saying that like, Oh, because he's successful and he's written a book or. Anything like that, he just has a full life. He has a partner, he has traveled and he just tells his story and he works and all those kinds of things. My big takeaway was he feels what benefited him the most during childhood was that his parents forced him to go out and play with , Neighborhood children.

[00:32:00] And he was like, we didn't have a lot of toys at home. We did not have a lot of stuff. Like it doesn't have to come down to things therapy, how much money you have to pay for therapy for the right toys, for the right devices, for, you know, all that kind of stuff. It can be as simple as you need to go out to the neighborhood playground and learn how to take your turn on a swing.

Or you have to go to another person's house and learn how they play and how you can observe and hopefully integrate yourself into that . It doesn't have to be this big overwhelming, complicated thing of, well, if I don't do XYZ therapy, my child has no future. And that book for that reason, I was just like, yes, thank you.

 It takes the pressure off.

[00:32:48] **Delphine:** And there is a lot of pressure I find to do what. To do what is assumed to be the thing that will make it better, that will, you know, be the, the, [00:33:00] the beacon. . But I think there's something to be said for that parental gut where you go, Hmm. That's not a right fit for us for whatever reason, because you have to do too much of the homework that's involved.

 Or there's the reading that's involved, or you have to do it in a prescribed way that like maybe doesn't work depending on where you live, your family situation, that particular building or home you happen to live in.

Like these things may or may not work. So I like that idea of just let them go outside. And I actually think that's for all children just go outside and go play with the neighborhood children, and kind of learn how to be. I love that message. So you touched on technology ever so slightly, just now talking about how you don't have to have the latest and greatest and all of that stuff.

But I think nowadays with Google being so close at hand, in terms of we carry it in our hand on a daily basis, I have been caught in the Googling rabbit hole at 4:00 AM or 2:00 AM because I got a phone call from the teacher at the end of the day, because there was some big [00:34:00] meltdown. And so I'm going to research, like why did my kid have a meltdown?

And I'm trying to fix it and find it. I learned over time that like, that's not the best way to go back to sleep. It doesn't stop very effective, but there are a lot of web pages. There are a lot of sort of applications or apps that people can get on their phones and things. Are there any websites or apps that work well for your family or that you have found through your journey have been really helpful and, or supportive?

[00:34:30] **Kathy:** For me personally, I love to learn from autistic adults because I feel like especially given that they would have had such a lack of support back in the day. It feels like they have more perspective on what maybe should be the most important thing to focus on as opposed to, you know, some of the things that neuro-typical therapists are talking about, like how can we make this kid.

Be more normal. I'm not saying that's, you know what I mean? I'm not saying that [00:35:00] anybody actually says that, but sometimes that's what it feels like. Like how can we just make this kid fit in? Right. And again, I, for any of my therapists listening, I love you all. You're all amazing. And I'm not. Saying that about you, but I feel like that's where I learned the most.

So on YouTube there is asking autistic, her name is Amythest Schaber I believe, I don't think I'm pronouncing that right, but you can find it on my website. I actually have a tools and resources page on the autismedit.com where you can see all of these that I'm talking about right here. , and then there's also a guy named.

Dan and his is like the Aspie world and they just give great insights as to like how they view the world. What's important to them. And for me, I find, yeah, I learned so much and it's so insightful because they're sharing first world experiences with things that I see from a totally different perspective.

And then I'm like, Oh my gosh, I never would've thought of it that way. That makes so much more [00:36:00] sense. And then I have a much better approach for my son that I didn't have before.

[00:36:05] **Delphine:** I would imagine reassuring. And I guess, I can't say imagine because I'm dyslexic and my kids are dyslexic and I've turned out.

Okay. I'm okay. It wasn't easy. There were some big struggles there, but we got there. And so I can imagine how it must be for you as an autistic mom to then be able to look up to. Adult autistics who are living independently, who have partners who have jobs, who, you know, are able to live a productive life.

And I can imagine that being able to kind of, you can kind of play that dream out again, right. Because you can see it from someone else's perspective. So I could see how that must be encouraging.

[00:36:43] **Kathy:** Yeah. And it's just, for me, I feel like that's how I am fulfilled. Right. And that's not necessarily the case for everybody else. Maybe my son will be like, I'm happy to not have a job. You know what I mean? I hope not. I hope that's not the case, but like, [00:37:00] it's just again of like, Oh, what. Could we do to support you in feeling fulfilled and feeling like you're doing something that matters to you and you're living a life that feels so pleasurable.

And like, isn't, life's meant to be fun. Life's meant to be good.

 that's the thing is when people can tell their stories and they feel so good about who they are and where they've landed in their life, that is what I find inspiring. And of course it's different for all of us, but like again, yeah. I just want that for my children, for them to grow up and feel like I've accomplished something that's really deeply meaningful to me.

[00:37:35] **Delphine:** Yeah, no agreed. And I think we probably all have that, even if it's I built a Lego car. Right. Or I built a real car. Like it, you know, it is whatever is going to bring that child fulfillment and joy. So that's really important. Kathy, you mentioned it very quickly, but let's have you say it again.

Where can people learn more about what you do and find you and kind of, where do people tap into all of the [00:38:00] greatness that you have going on?

[00:38:02] **Kathy:** My personal blog is the autismedit.com where I share, , blog posts. Those have slowed down since this COVID shut down I've since the latest COVID shutdowns, but I'm going to get back on track with that. I'm sure of it. And you can also catch me on Instagram in real time. I am on there. Pretty much every day in some capacity or another.

I love DMS. I love connecting with people. So that's @theautismedit. That's what I am everywhere,@theautismedit. So you can find me pretty easily through that.

[00:38:35] **Delphine:** Kathy. Thank you so much for coming on today.

[00:38:38] **Kathy:** Thank you for having me. It's been such a joy.