Emotions through Books

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education podcast. Where are we talking about all having to do with learning disabilities? I'm the only child for some kids managing emotions can be the hardest thing I know in my house. I have two super feelers who feel emotions on such high highs and such low. There are moments when, out of nowhere, there's an explosion of emotions.

It can be hard as parents to help support our kids through these emotions, with all the uncertainties our kids have had to navigate throughout this year and all the emotions that have gone with it. It's not been an easy time. But it's also been a time of importance for us as parents to help our kids navigate and support their emotions.

The part that they find the hardest has been the separations from friends. This has meant that the emotions have been high and the emotions have been low today on the show. I'm happy to introduce you to Tara grotto. She is a mom, educator and owner of raising resilient children through her [00:01:00] work. She supports parents and understanding how to support their children through emotional regulation and Brazil.

Tara uses her educational background and knowledge of how books can help encourage children to build understanding of their own emotions. Tara, welcome to the show. Thank you for coming on a Saturday afternoon, but nothing like a Saturday afternoon to talk about emotions and dig in and see where we can get to.

[00:01:26] **Tara:** A hundred percent cause the motions don't go away. Oh

[00:01:29] **Delphine:** man. Listen,

[00:01:32] **Tara:** let's, let's, let's be real

[00:01:34] **Delphine:** about when we're recording this, right. We're recording this. I'm hoping God willing at the end, the tail end of this pandemic, that feels like it's been never ending. So I'm sure there's lots of parents listening who were like yep.

Emotions. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Let's talk more about that. So, but I let's start with. I think something that we just need to define or at least frame for this conversation. So people can understand what we're talking about when we talk about what it means to have a resilient child. [00:02:00] What are we talking about when we think about resilience?

Cause I think of resilience as someone who can deal with anything that comes at them. But when we talk about our kids, they can't always deal with it. So how do we. Frame or how do we define resilient children in this context?

[00:02:16] **Tara:** Yes. I think that's a really important, important point actually, because I think resilience is actually something that we sort of slap on as an excuse.

And if it, if there's a term that's been overused, this pandemic, that's it. Right. Kids will be resilient. This is resilient. I believe you can't be resilient if you don't have. If you don't have strategies, if you don't have support. So in order to be resilient to something, you have to have some skills for navigating your feelings.

You have to have some tools for understanding that other people have feelings, being able to identify your feelings. I think that's so important and that support can be from your parent caring adults. It could be from coaches or schools, but you on your own. Don't you're not a resilient person. [00:03:00] Because you face adversity, you have to have support with some tools and frameworks to get you through that, to be resilient

[00:03:07] **Delphine:** and resiliency.

Isn't innate. Like I think we often

think our kids are just resilient because they're kids and because they can ebb and flow with what's happening around them. Yeah, resiliency. Really it to my mind anyway, comes from reacting to situations and learning from and seeing what worked and what didn't work.

Maybe. I don't know. Do you see it differently?

[00:03:31] **Tara:** So, no, I agree with you. I don't, I don't think it is innate. And I think as we face challenges, how we face those challenges and the, the knowledge we gained from. Is what helps us face challenges moving forward. And I think that's where I see skills as so important when you're fostering resiliency.

And I say that, I say we foster resiliency. My, my, my brand is raising resilient children. What are the things that we do intentionally to help build [00:04:00] resilience in our children? Sometimes that's letting them think. Right. Sometimes that's that. And sometimes it's like, how can we process failure? Like what can we do together?

So, yeah, I don't, I don't think it's an age. I think we like to use as an excuse as a maintenance. I think that's, that's common, right? Is this will be okay because children are resilient. Well, no, they're not resilient if we don't help them.

[00:04:24] **Delphine:** So what are some of the tools you've talked about it a couple times, he said, you know, there's some tools and some strategies and some skills, what are some examples of tools that.

Maybe parents are already doing that. They would know without kind of necessarily thinking about it, that you can give as examples of tools that help to build resiliency in our kids.

[00:04:42] **Tara:** So I think it all comes down to me to social emotional intelligence, and that is the ability to identify feelings. So can you name them?

And there's like, sort of in the world that there's a name it to tame. It is the idea, right? Can we identify our. And then the next thing [00:05:00] is, what do we do with those feelings? Right? Cause we have the reactions that we do have to feelings and those things can be an age, right? The things that happened, the crying, the screaming, the stomping, the yelling, but those, I sometimes call it the unwanted reactions, you know, especially in, in public environments or super stressed homes.

Those unwanted reactions can cause a really difficult dynamic. So part of the tools is if we can know what our feelings are. What are the, what are the strategies you can build for those feelings? So instead of sort of, you know, yelling or kicking, what can a child do with their feelings? What are the tools that we're helping guide them with?

And then the third part of social, emotional intelligence is understanding that other people have feelings too. So like within your home, within a school environment, the idea that you have feelings, but so to all the people around you and how we experienced those feelings is. We are all unique. So the tools that work for me, and I say this a lot to parents, [00:06:00] the tools that work for you may not probably won't work for your child because just because they might seem like they're a little version of you, they're their own person.

And so we need to find the tools that work for them. And the reason I say tools in such a broad sense is because of that, we have to find the tools that work for that, the needs of the child. So, what is the, what is the sort of out outlet that's needed to help with that emotional regulation?

[00:06:31] **Delphine:** So how early, or is it ever too early to start talking about emotions, identifying, naming them?

Is there like, is there an age to start? Does it matter?

[00:06:47] **Tara:** So from my world, never too early to start. You can start along with like infants. You can actually start, whoa, you seem upset right now. Right? When a child is crying, [00:07:00] I like to help parents see emotions like a language. So think of it, like you're teaching your child another language, right?

So you have your, your house language and then there's the emotions language. So with really young children, we're going to focus on the basics. Sad mad, happy. We're going to focus on the basics. And as children get older, we're going to build jealousy, guilt. We're going to add the layer of disappointment so we can start with very young children, helping them identify.

And one of the best ways, the best ways is to just talk about your feelings in this. Everyday language. So for example, I call it narration. It's this idea of like, when you get upset, you can be like, whoa, my package didn't arrive today. And that was really disappointing. Just saying something that as an adult would typically be self-taught, but by sharing it, I'm saying, Hey, look, I'm an adult who has feelings and I'm teaching you about.

By just talking about some of the things that are happening in the world. I'm really [00:08:00] proud of the dinner I made tonight. I feel, I feel really proud of this, of the dinner that I made. And you're, you're showing that you have these feelings too. You can't marry your whole life. That would be,

[00:08:10] **Delphine:** nobody needs to hear me narrate my entire life.

Nope. That's not necessary, but I get what you're saying.

[00:08:17] **Tara:** Wanting to be kind of like charade, like, oh, sorry. Yeah,

[00:08:21] **Delphine:** no, but charades. I love it. I mean, that's a good idea. You do it a little bit, kind of, I don't know, make it fun and interesting because I think sometimes the emotional side of things is kind of, it's kind of dull.

It's not super fun to talk about and it's awkward.

[00:08:37] **Tara:** Yeah. Well, it's especially awkward because as a society, we. Emotional suppression. You're actually considered a stronger person if you don't show emotions. So there's been an interesting shift in the world. I'm going to say the last five years, but even like really the pandemic has like put it on the spotlight is this idea that we want to make space for [00:09:00] children to have feelings.

But now what, so we used to suppress. And it was seen as a sign of strength to suppress feelings. So let's make space for feelings, but oh my goodness, the feelings are taking over. So we've gone from one extreme to the other and that's where the. Become so important and that sort of balance.

[00:09:20] **Delphine:** So let's take a neuro-diverse brain.

Cause that's kinda what I focus on in this podcast in terms of where I live and what I like to do though. It's, it's a bit strange, but I like the different brains. I like the different wiring. It makes life interesting, but I mean, let's take the family who has. I mean, I'm just the simplest one is the ADHD or right.

Who just is always on hyperactivity, hyper motion, you know, sensitive to sound light things going on all the time. And that sometimes part of that profile as well is the impulsivity to not be able to think before reacting. [00:10:00] So how do we use this idea of. Understanding emotions with that child who maybe can't stop and think, or in some cases who can't be empathetic, not because they don't want to be, but because they can't slow down enough to be empathetic.

So how do families support those? Sorts of kiddos in their homes. I'm

[00:10:22] **Tara:** going to say that's one of those ones where the even more important homes. So I have a lot of experience, personal experience, but also training in this area because it's actually kind of where I started my journey. I've been working in social, emotional intelligence for over 20 years.

But the idea of like, how do we break down feelings was definitely from working with autistic young, autistic children and this idea of like, how do we get super basic to explain something so that again, they can understand themselves and others because that's part of this like relationship that's so tricky.

My favorite tool is book. That is my favorite [00:11:00] tool. I use it with neuro-diverse and neuro-typical kids because it takes the pressure off conversations and it takes abstract because emotions are really. Because how you experienced them, how somebody else experiences them is totally different. So we take this abstract concept and if we put it in a book that helps us put some pictures around it, that helps us create a dialogue.

And I, I often say to parents, because we're concerned about our children, we ask a lot of questions and sometimes we come across as like a bit of like an interrogated detective or like, are you okay? How was your day? What were you, what do you feel like we kind of really get in. And I think when you use a book, especially a picture books, that's a great way to put a visual to a conversation and take the interrogation aspect out.

So that's my main tool with, with families is let's grab some books and I have, so one of my favorite books is the way I feel by Jen and Kane. All about [00:12:00] feelings. Every page is about feelings. You can play games with them, you can draw pictures with them and you can just talk about them in a reflective way.

And I think, again, this idea of narration where when you're reading a book, like on the picture about happy, I felt happy today. When, when did you feel happy today? So you leave that conversation, especially with children who are really struggling to identify. What does a feeling look like when you, as the caring adult provide an example?

That helps provide a connection cause you have a relationship with that child. So when you share your happy thought or your sad thoughts or your disappointed thought, that's a cue. It's like, oh, I saw that thing. Oh, that's what sad looks like in real life. And here's what sad looks like in this book. I felt that feeling at the playground today when nobody would play with me.

So you can start to use the book as a way of like having this reflective conversation. Using that narration strategy, but in a fun [00:13:00] way.

[00:13:00] **Delphine:** So that has triggered my brain to ask the next question, which is. When is the best time to talk about the feeling that occurred? Is it in the moment? Is it after the moment?

Is it the day after? Like, you know, I certainly have been that frustrated parent who wants to like take the kid aside and start screaming at them being like you did this because, and that's my emotional dysregulation right there, but is there a quote. Perfect time to discuss the emotion or the feeling that occurred in a situation that you witnessed.

So is it better to do it in the moment after, or a couple of days after, or does it depend?

[00:13:38] **Tara:** So in the moment is. Because in the moment, your brain, I call it dyno brain. When your brain flips, your you're not able to think you're not able to regulate. You're not able to do anything. So any conversation in that moment sounds like, ha ha.

Do you ever watch newbie the peanuts, the peanut though?

[00:13:57] **Delphine:** What went wrong? I say to my kids all the time, I have no [00:14:00] idea what I'm talking about, but they, they know what I mean.

[00:14:03] **Tara:** It's a great tool for adults because in that moment, that difficult moment, that's all your children are hearing woah. So yes, the moment is not the time.

It could be shortly after when calm, when there's a state of calm. If it's the right fit, do you have to be calm? Usually it's late. Probably a couple hours later, a revisit later. One of the things that I suggest to families is actually to do it regularly so that you're not only doing it when you're problem solving.

For example, if you read books nightly, I always say, pick one social emotional book and let the kid pick another book. And for me, when you pick books, you can make any book, a social, emotional book. I don't know if you know the. The dinosaur books. There's a whole bunch of like the hour and Lama Lama. You can totally turn those into social, emotional conversations.

Well, Lama Lama is like super angry here. That's not what the book is saying, but you can totally [00:15:00] use any book. So one of the things I suggest to parents is actually think about social, emotional learning as like an extracurricular activity. We need to do a little bit of it every day. And when can we do it in our busy schedule?

Well, let's read a story and let's read it. Let's pick some stories with intention because when you want to problem solve that moment, you were just talking about if you've never had any conversations automatically the child's brain shuts down because they're like, I don't want to have this conversation because you only have these conversations when things aren't going well, we

[00:15:32] **Delphine:** don't do that.

Parents never do that. We only talk about things when they're going well, I'd be lying. If I said that. It's it's the, you know, it's funny. I was just talking to somebody else about it this morning and catching them when they're good. Right. It's that idea of like catching them when they're good, which is hard because I think sometimes as a society, as parents,

[00:15:56] **Tara:** I think.

[00:15:58] **Delphine:** Well, yeah, [00:16:00] but we also, I think we're so used to catching, to commenting on when they haven't done something right. That we forget that it is as important. If not more, arguably. To comment when it's gone really well, but that it takes more conscious effort to come up with a, Hey, you did a really good job at the swimming lesson at the play date, at the schoolwork, at the whatever, right.

It's the old, like put up the math test that came home, that they did really well on, on the fridge. So they can see that.

[00:16:33] **Tara:** That's hard. It is super hard to do. And that's actually like speaking to a neuro diverse audience, even more important because that is what tells the tells the child. This is, this is the amazingness.

This is, this is amazing. These are the things that, that we celebrate and enjoy because I think. Children here so much. You need to fix, you need to [00:17:00] redirect you. You need to do things differently. You need to fit in. So what is it that you're doing? It's amazing. What about your unique awesomeness? Can we celebrate one of these?

I suggest the parents for that is actually like set reminders in your phone. It sounds really inauthentic. I know, but if you set yourself a daily reminder, connect with child on something positive. So my programs, I have something called the language of kindness and the language of kindness is, is a way of sort of navigating tricky situations.

But the flip side of it is fostering connects. And a big piece of fostering connection is this catching kids being kind. And I see kindness as like the things that kids do, you know, thank you for getting in line quickly. That was super kind of you, the things that kids do as a part of their daily lives, they are helping me set the table.

That was super kind. So where do I show gratitude through kindness? And I always suggest to parents. Set yourself a reminder, put a sticky note on your [00:18:00] stove or your fridge, or, you know, if you have dinners together regularly, make that part of it. Make that a part of your going around the table. Like every Monday I post a prompt on Instagram about this.

Questions to connect with our kids, for catching them doing stuff. And it's this idea of like, how do we, how do we make it routine again? How do we make social emotional skills? Like a extra curricular activity? Cause they're so important. We would never want a child to just go swimming without lessons. We would never expect them to cross the lake without lessons.

It's the same with your feelings. You can't navigate your feelings if you don't have any lessons.

[00:18:36] **Delphine:** Yeah. And it's interesting because we have taken such a turn, I think, as a society, to your point earlier, Talking about digging into accepting, talking about admitting that there are feelings that run our bodies or that run our brain, or that tell us we're in a fight or flight or we're in a we're in an okay.

Calm state. And [00:19:00] you're you're right the last little while, especially through pandemic, but even thinking my educational career working in schools. I mean, in the beginning, when I started teaching 20 years ago, we weren't talking about, you know, the mental health of kids and how home life might affect the academic life or how, what children are living through, or let's even talk about the refugee families who are coming from across the world in different scenarios and how.

Trauma informs our teaching and how it needs to inform our teaching is the same for parenting. You know what I mean? The trauma of what your children have been through, regardless of whether we're talking about pandemic or you're talking about a bullying situation or anything, that's closer to home, those sorts of things will affect the way children navigate things.

And it's true. We've made a huge shift in how we open up about it and that we talk about it. It's not easy for everybody. I think there are still many, many, many people. Trying to make the shift. It's not, it's not an [00:20:00] easy thing to.

[00:20:01] **Tara:** No, not at all. And that's why, that's why I recommend books to parents because the books can help guide you.

I was actually in a conversation earlier today, which is related to this and it was about a child who's struggling because they have a lot of worries and a lot of anxiety and they go to play therapy for it. And they're feeling really uncomfortable in school because they feel different. Why am I the only one who has worried?

Why am I the only one that has anxiety and, and the, the conversation. The parent is one of the first things we need to teach your child as they are not the only one with worries. The whole world has worried. And those, again, that idea of all of our unique feelings come out in different ways for different people.

So your worries are coming out in this way, but everybody has them. We all have worries. Um, there's a great book by Emily Kilgore called the. And it's a picture book about the, the worries that are the grim ones to, you know, the ones that hold you back and prevent you from doing and seeing your greatness.

And then [00:21:00] there's these positive ones. Like what if I make a new friend? What if it goes well? Like, cause there's great. One apps too. Like we can sometimes think of worries as only that and having that conversation with kids too, like we all have worries, right? High performance athletes. I've worried. Yeah, teachers have worries.

I have worries. You have worries. We all have them. And some of us need different tools. So, you know, saying to this child who needs to go to play therapy, that's your tool amazing that you have someone who recognizes that you need tools. That's, that's a beautiful thing. And actually saying, I was like, that's amazing for you that this is, you know, you're not different.

[00:21:36] **Delphine:** I want to go back to something you said about the books, because I feel like it's an important point to make you were talking about. The books being usable. So it sounds to me like you're saying it doesn't have to, like, I don't have to go to the bookstore and buy 15 different books to cover all of the different emotions that I can probably find [00:22:00] examples of a main character or, you know, a main point in the story where.

That character is going through some sort of emotional struggle and that I can use that as the opportunity instead of necessarily having to go out and buy a book about anger and sadness or whatever. Is that sort

[00:22:18] **Tara:** of what you're saying? Absolutely. So I think there's real value in some of the targeted books.

So the, what if type book for talking about worries, but that is how so I used to, I used to run an outdoor and play-based preschool before I was doing. And I used whatever book we had to talk about feelings because the books are always about some kind of journey, some kind of conflict, some kind of resolution.

So there's some kind of story there. And one of the questions I asked, very little kids, actually, I had this conversation with my children the other day. Is there anything that we do that we don't have feelings for? Is there anything we do? The answer is yes. There's not a single thing. We do not a single decision we make on a single our feelings [00:23:00] affect us for everything.

So if you look at any picture book, right, there's joy or happiness, there's sadness there, you can pull out the what's the what do you, what do you think that character's feeling and get them to look at the face? You can really get, you know, especially kids who can't read, what a great way to get them, to really engage with pictures.

When you can have a whole conversation about feelings just by looking at the picture. What does that character, what do you think happening in that character's mind? What about, how would you feel? Would you feel differently than that character? The same? That's where you can have some connected conversations, but yeah, you can use any book

[00:23:38] **Delphine:** in my head.

My, my all-time favorite book, and I don't think my daughter likes it as much as I did as a kid, but my all-time favorite book is Robert munches, paperback print. Yes. And at the beginning, when she's all happy and she's going to marry, Ronald and life is going to be perfect. And then everything disappears and you can see her.

She's like standing around around this crumble of a castle and she looks very sad, but there's a moment in the book where she [00:24:00] has figured out she can get the dragon to do what she wants it to do. And she, you can see she. The character almost stands up taller and there's a smile on her face. But my favorite part, my all-time favorite part is when you get to the end of the book and Ronald looks at her and he says something along the lines of like Elizabeth, you smell really bad.

You're wearing a brown paper bag and you don't look like a princess and you can see. The artist has drawn her to be kind of angry. And she looks at Ronald and she says, well, Ronald, you look like a prince and you smell really good, but you are a bum. And that's my all time favorite book. I love that book.

Um, and it's a silly book to love, but anyway, um,

[00:24:39] **Tara:** cool. There's a great example of how you could talk about kindness, unkindness pride, like in that, in that description that you just talked. You know, you could have a whole conversation. Let's say that your child did something super unkind earlier, and you could read that book and be like, whoa, is it Ronald?

Sorry, I don't remember that [00:25:00] characters in that one wrong. This is really unkind. And look how the princess felt. Whoa, you know, when you were, you know, when this unkind thing happened earlier, how are you feeling and how. Your friend feeling or whatever the case. That's a great example of how you can use any book to have a conversation about unkindness or about pride.

She felt so much pride. Look how proud she is. What's something that made you proud today. So we can just make those connections, especially to favorite books. The ones

[00:25:31] **Delphine:** I can read by heart. Yeah. I had that one on tape. It was anyway, so different conversations. So we've talked a little bit about educators. W, what do you think educators need to do in the classroom to help support kids in understanding emotional language?

Because I mean, parents have a role in it a hundred percent, but I mean, educators are also there to build students to help them. And quite frankly, when you're at school for six hours a day, there's six hours worth of [00:26:00] emotional opportunity that is happening. And I promise you, I see it every day. I see the emotional up and down of different children drop off in the morning for our little kindies is really hard for some of them still.

We're recording this in early November and I still have my criers who every morning we have to do hugs and kisses and we go, okay, one more high five, you know, in managing these behaviors. So how can educators support kids and especially through. What has been a hard two years, let's call it two years. It feels like it's been going on forever with the out of school.

Well, right out of school, in school connected to, to friends, disconnected to friends in person at a person. I mean, that's like dizzying for me as an adult. So how do educators support. Yeah, it's actually, you know what, it's really a twofold question. How do teachers support that? But also because I'm putting a different hat on here, how do administrators help teachers, families since, right?

Like there's so [00:27:00] many people involved in these kids' lives. How do we support this through books, through conversation? Like, what is it that we need to start doing?

[00:27:09] **Tara:** I think, I mean, it's, that's a, it's a super complex question, right? Right. Yeah. It's not

[00:27:14] **Delphine:** an, it's not an answer in this podcast. This is like a whole, but like kind of

[00:27:18] **Tara:** a brief, yeah, this is one of my passions because I mean, a lot of people talk about the mental health crisis we're currently facing.

And I, and I'm actually, I'm the one to say, actually, this has been going on for a really long time and this just the pandemic just exasperated it and brought it into our houses because of virtual learning. But the challenges were were already there in a, in a big, big way. I think part of what is really necessary at the education level is empathy building.

I think we do a great job of teaching kids about all the different things, but how do we connect them to the topics by fostering empathy, fostering that understanding piece. So for example, we might talk a lot about bullying. This is a sort of a clear [00:28:00] example where we'll talk a lot about why we don't. We don't bully people.

There's a great book called the proudest blue about a girl who wears her hijab to school for the first time. And the younger sister really struggles in a bully gets involved. And it's a, it's a, it's an amazing, beautiful book. And one of the things that's really important about that book is how do we also say the other side of it, which.

What does it feel like to be bullied? Have you been bullied? So instead of the message being, we don't believe people with high jobs, which is super important, but we just, we don't bully people who are different. We don't bully unique. This we don't bully because we don't want that feeling. So that empathy part where it's not, we don't, we don't want to foster this, understand that we don't do things just because we don't do things because we are also people with feelings and we would never want to feel like.

So, therefore we won't do it because we don't want to feel that way versus we're not going to just do this thing because it's the wrong thing to do. Does [00:29:00] that make sense? How it's sort of two different ways of thinking both important? It's super important not to bully people for their differences, but there's also that other element of like, let's stop bullying because nobody wants to feel belittled.

Nobody likes that feeling. But that next level, which is the empathy level, that connection point. And I think that's the hardest, the hardest to facilitate this idea that you have feelings. I have feelings. And the reason that we don't do things is because you and I both have feelings. There's a great book by Alexander Penfold and Susan Kaufman called big feelings.

And it's all about this. It's about diversity and feelings and problem solving. So it's about the idea that we all have. And how you're going to solve your feelings on how I'm going to solve my feelings may not be the same. And that is what we have to respect.

[00:29:56] **Delphine:** I really liked was the idea of taking it away from the idea [00:30:00] of, we just don't believe.

Cause we don't believe to what does it feel like to be? Because so often we talk about the beliefs being the. They bully because they've learned it because they've had it done to them. But if you change, if you change the question from why don't we bully to, what does it feel like to be then? I feel like that might be, although it's a bigger question and a scarier.

To some extent, I feel like it's almost easier because I F I don't feel like there's a person on earth who hasn't at one point in their life felt like they've been talked down to, they've been, you know, told to do something. They don't want to be like any of those things. And so it might almost be easier for kids to identify what it felt like in that moment, even if maybe that.

A moment where they were being bullied, but they felt that it wasn't. So if they felt that they were, then they are being bullied, whether or not it was intentional, like that's, that's the important thing is, is validating the

[00:30:54] **Tara:** feeling. Absolutely. And I mean, I can, I use this example because it was one that I was [00:31:00] working with a client a couple of weeks ago, and I was reading the product blue to this client cause they had, they had been having quite a bit of bullying at school.

They are on the spectrum and. They were like, oh, they read the proudest clue to me at school. I was like, amazing. We're just going to read it together. I just want to have like a different conversation. Let's see if we have a different conversation with it and then message that child had taken away was I shouldn't bully people who were his jobs.

And I was like, right. And how do we, how do we make sure that, that it's, that's the message. Plus we just don't. We don't want people to feel that way because we don't feel that way. And I used it. I was like, because there's a picture, there's a picture where these, like, kids are pointing at her. Hands-on like, has anybody ever pointed at you?

Have you ever had that feeling? And the child was like, yeah. And they gave me a bunch of examples. And I was like, that was the empathy part, right. At the end of the story, they then understood. I don't participate in bullying others because that [00:32:00] feeling is horrible. That is a horrible feeling. And it is, it's a much harder conversation to have because you got to put stuff out there.

But if we really want to do something about bullying and we really want to talk about feelings, empathy is the place to be understanding our shared humanity and in the classroom. That's, what's so important, right? This idea that we've got to talk about feelings, but also realize that all our friends have different feelings.

All of us. And I say a lot to parents. We see, we see our children and ourselves. Right, right. But they're not us. They aren't us. And even though there's maybe elements of them that we see, they have their own feelings and their own ways. So part of social, emotional intelligence is helping them identify those feelings and helping us realize that the feelings that are experiencing might not be the same.

And you'll see this with kids sort of five plus, cause they'll get angry if you're labeled their feelings. That'd be like, I'm [00:33:00] not mad. Don't tell me how I'm feeling when truth, believe your feelings or your most personal thing. So applying that to the classroom, how do we help children see each other as all experiencing different feelings and that we don't do these things to make sure that everybody's feelings are valid and that nobody's belittled for those

[00:33:23] **Delphine:** feelings.

Okay. So my next question is around. Partners parenting co-parenting, whatever that looks like for families. Yep. Everybody is raised differently. Everybody has different memories of how their parents dealt with them in various. Parts of their lives around this. And as we sat in the beginning, we're shifting our thought on this, right on how we deal with emotions.

But how do we as parents, parent, effectively the emotions of our children, if our partner who we're co-parenting with doesn't [00:34:00] necessarily believe in dealing with emotions in the same way. How, like, do you have any suggestions on how to kind of navigate that? Because it's also different. Neuro-diverse to neuro-typical like how you're going to handle those things are different, but also your experience, your life experience with emotions and how you dealt with them when you didn't, as the case, maybe will affect how you parent that.

So how do you have any suggestions for parents who are listening on how to navigate that difficult road? I guess

[00:34:27] **Tara:** we'll call it. Yes, absolutely. So, I mean, speaking from experience, my husband and I come from. Very different life experiences and cultural backgrounds. So this is something that I've navigated on my entire relationship and parenting journey and what it comes down to is hard conversation.

I think one of the biggest things in, in families when we're parenting is we have to make space to have some conversations about how we're going to parent and talk [00:35:00] about what our differences and our similarities. So I really think that's the starting place is have you had a conversation? Not in the moment again, because when your brain flits in the moment and you're arguing over how to handle a situation, all your child hears is my parents.

Aren't on board with this. So I'm definitely not going to tow the line because the two caring adults or, or whatever the case may be, whatever the family dynamic is, aren't online. So I'm not, I'm not on board with. So it's really important to have those conversations outside of the moment and it means making time.

And I know that's hard. That's the hardest part is making time in our very busy schedules, too. What I did ask people to do is come up with the top three, because I think, I think different parenting styles is actually super healthy and important. I think that's a really great way of helping kids understand the world is not linear, but.

Consistency is also really important, especially with neuro diverse children, because the more [00:36:00] inconsistency there is, the more challenging it is to navigate the more difficult. And I use the classroom as an example of this, a classroom that runs well as a teacher who has put all the expectations out there, clear there they're out there.

Usually there's someone, you know, little rules on the front front of the board or whatever, and they don't make up rules on them. Those classrooms tend to run pretty smoothly and sort of by Christmas, everything is just like trucking along because there's no surprises. My teacher has these expectations.

This is how it's going to go. And that's why people will be like, why are, why do my kids be any differently at school than at home? That's one of the reasons that's one of the reasons. So if you apply that to home, it's like, what are we going to have as our clear, consistent. And where are we okay. With the inconsistencies?

What's the message we want to give, but you do have to have a conversation around that to be, to be able to say, oh, [00:37:00] we need to have these top three. Consistent rules or ideas or guidelines to be able to share that message. Is it

[00:37:08] **Delphine:** better to have one parent, do you think who takes on the bulk of the social, emotional kind of directing or should both parents.

Equally share it. Like I'm even thinking Steven in my own house. I mean, the way my husband was brought up with kind of emotions and, and talking about things and sometimes the way he says things, her kids I'm like, oh, they just have to do it because we told them to. Right. Because that was, that was, that was how I grew up.

Right. It was just, even, even my parents have said a couple of times you give them too many choices.

[00:37:41] **Tara:** Fine. But I wonder

[00:37:43] **Delphine:** sometimes would it just not be. If we just said, okay, well you deal with that and all deal with this. Or does that create that good cop bad cop? And then the kid knows who they can cause kids are smart.

They're very, very, very smart.

[00:37:57] **Tara:** Well, so you're setting yourself up for inconsistency with [00:38:00] that model. You're also setting yourself up for exhaustion.

[00:38:04] **Delphine:** Think what do you mean? I don't need more exhaustion

[00:38:06] **Tara:** than I already have, because like, I mean, I'm a social, emotional. For obvious reasons, but partially because my husband works in hospitality and isn't home very often, but also because this is what I do, but I, we, we have sort of a clear understanding of this is how we're gonna handle certain ways.

This is how we're going to react to certain things, because if you're carrying all the emotional load, because that's what's happening, it will be the positive and the not positive. If you're at the social emotional lead, you. You don't have the mental capacity to sustain that indefinitely. It will exhaust you drain you.

It also turns you into a tool instead of a guide. So I talk a lot about how we as parents need to be guides, not tools, and you will know you're a tool. If you're the only person that can, that can calm your child. Yup.

[00:38:58] **Delphine:** We, I, you you've heard this [00:39:00] story, but, um, the, the day I realized I had become my son's self regulator, I knew that I had to change something because he'd gone to school and some things sort of like nondescript had like pushed him over the edge.

And I was like, yeah, but if I had was there, then it, oh, if I was there. Right. And that was the like, okay, clearly I have to become his self regulator because I could anticipate. I knew what was coming. I could see the train, leaving the station and I wouldn't hardly get my ticket and get on the train and like stop it in its tracks.

But then it meant he would go to school and I can't go to school with him. Um, and so, yeah, it's, it's hard to, it's hard to do

[00:39:40] **Tara:** that. It's not same experience in my home. I got called out on it actually. And it's funny because I mean, I've been doing this work for like 20 years, social, emotional, and, and I didn't apply it to myself.

Because you had different expectations when it comes to your children, you have different levels of comfort with their discomfort. And that's, that's the [00:40:00] core of resiliency. I want to say there's a core of resiliency is parents have to get used to their children's surviving uncomfortable situations. We.

We like to problem solve things. So we like to fix things and if you're the social emotional lead, you're, you want to make sure that you're helping them calm and all those things, but actually you're not giving your child any tools as a result. You are the tool and they don't learn how to cope. And I was, same thing happened to me with my eldest.

I was, I was the one who could talk them through and bring them down. And then my husband couldn't and the point that was made was. If you guys are in this together, and this talks to your parent question, right? It should be, either person can do that. And if they can, it means you're the tool, not the guide, right?

[00:40:47] **Delphine:** Yeah. Equal sharing of the responsibility.

[00:40:53] **Tara:** So you will never be equal. Let's be honest. There's always

[00:40:57] **Delphine:** one lead, right? There's always one parent who is lead. [00:41:00] But I think that, yeah, I think that that's normal because I think every child has a parent that they, that they go to, that they, that they. Have a closer relationship.

I don't want to say that they favor because no child, no parent favors one child over another. But yeah, I think somehow there's something in the personalities that draws that child to that parent or that parent to that child. Right? Like there's, there's something in there that creates

[00:41:25] **Tara:** that bond. I think part of that is whether you've had conversations about how you react to things, to be honest, right.

Because if you're consistently reacting to things, then nobody should technically. Do it better or whatever it should be. This is how, and I'm talking about the big things. Like when someone has a tantrum, we're going to react this way or both. All of us when I say so I, I just talk about parenting. I was like a really big community, so it could be nannies.

It could be grandparents. It could be, you know, I call them caring adults, right? If [00:42:00] your children and the more caring adults that are on the same page on. Reactions to things. So the tantrums, the meltdown, the, you know, overwhelm the more on the same page that those caring adults are, the faster the child will learn how to regulate the more complicated, the more people who have ideas, the harder it is for the child, because they're not only navigating their feelings.

They're also navigating the expectations of the caring at all. But they're present with. Yeah. Yeah. So if we can remove that expectation. You allow your child to actually navigate their feelings with some tools versus I'm going to do it this way because my mom is one who's present right now. I'm gonna do it this way.

Cause my grandma's the one who's present right now you change the narrative depending on who's present. That adds another layer, which is really hard for kids. And that's where that idea of like kids will say like, are you happy? Are you right where the kids starts to ask you in the moment? Right, right.[00:43:00]

Sort of way to think about it. It's like, okay, can my child navigate this? And does it change? Am I adding my own layer to something they're already struggling with? You've talked about

[00:43:09] **Delphine:** a couple throughout this conversation and you've talked about storybooks specifically for kids, but I'm wondering if there are books that you would direct parents to that are more directed towards adults rather than.

Sort of the storybook picture book kind of thing.

[00:43:27] **Tara:** So I only use picture books and storybooks for both adults and kids. I mean, I read the work of like some psychologists and things like that, but in terms of like, I don't have a set person to send people to. And I say this to a lot of people because your child is unique and your family dynamic is unique.

I can't tell you. What resource is going to be the best professional resource to work for you. It has to be the one that fits your [00:44:00] family's needs.

[00:44:00] **Delphine:** Right? So using the picture books is no, but I think that's a good answer, like I think instead of, but also as a parent, who's read far too many parenting books on, or, or.

Books that I was directed to read by professionals because they felt it would help. And I've taken, you know, a piece from this book and a piece from that book and a bit from here and none from that one, right? Like I've spent hours reading, reading books and I'm, I don't, I don't enjoy them.

[00:44:33] **Tara:** Right. And I don't, I don't think a lot of people do.

And it's funny because this is not, this is a question I get asked regularly. I read the books from an academic. And I take the information like you from the things that work. And then when I'm working with families, I take the bits and pieces. I've always taught that way though. I've always, my preschool is one on this model.

My, when I worked in guidance and administration, I have always been the kind of person who's like, not every path is going to work for [00:45:00] every child. It's impossible. So how much can I know, parents can't know all that. And I know that. So that's part of what, what you and I do, right. Is to help parents with that process.

[00:45:14] **Delphine:** But that's, that's, I mean, in a really black and white sense, it's why they come to us because we do all of the heavy reading and we say, okay, let's try this. And let's try that. And when that doesn't work, it's our jobs as the experts to go back into the reading, to find other solutions, to test out again, instead of.

Right. So I love that, but I also like your model in terms of reading the book, the picture book, not that the parent couldn't read the picture book by themselves. You could, but you probably wouldn't. You would sit with your child and read the book, which then reinforces your idea of having conversation and talking to your child because you're sitting together, you're reading the book, but you're also, let's talk about the things you're not doing when you're reading that book.[00:46:00]

You're not on. You're not working. You're not answering emails. You're not dealing with the dishes. You're not doing the laundry. And sometimes that five minutes snuggle on the couch, whether the kid is two or whether the kid is 16, you're spending that. Interrupted five minutes with them, have a conversation, read a book, have a discussion, and then everybody can continue on their way.

And in this day and age, it's really hard sometimes to even carve out that five minutes as sad as that sounds.

[00:46:32] **Tara:** No, and that's why I recommend parents put in the bedtime routine. Yeah. And I, I highly, strongly, strongly, strongly recommend parents when their children sort of quote, unquote, graduated from picture books.

I think picture books for everybody. But I know there's an age and stage where kids are like, I don't want to read them. Although I have middle grade children. And if you leave a picture book around, they still read them. Are they as keen for me to read them? Maybe not because they would overhear me reading them [00:47:00] sometimes and totally take it in.

Yes. But I do still read chapter books to them and. I know that if you w when you hit that stage, you hit the stage of like, okay, we're done reading together at night. I urge any of the parents you have, who