**Journey Through Love**

**Delphine:** [00:00:00] Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about everything having to do with special education and learning difficulties. Today on the show, I'm talking to a mother of a daughter who has had an incredible journey though. Her journey has brought highs and lows.

She continues to advocate and work with her daughter to support her. Amina, as a photographer and mother to a daughter who was diagnosed with learning differences, the diagnoses have each had their own challenges, but she continues to advocate and work with her daughter to ensure success. When our children are given diagnosis as, as parents, it can be devastating.

It can be hard to know where to turn and how to find support, but once you find the right road to travel, things become easier. Parents learn new skills and children gain new supports. Amina thanks so much for being willing to come on the show and share your story today. I really feel that it's so important for parents to share stories because oftentimes.

When we have children, who are quote unquote different, it can feel really isolating. So I really appreciate your willingness to come out and share your,

**Amina:** [00:01:00] Oh, I appreciate you asking me. And I hope what I have to share will be helpful to your listeners.

**Delphine:** [00:01:06] No, I'm, you know, I, I remember those dark days in the beginning where I would have latched on to anybody who could give me any sense of hope and direction.

So, I'm sure it will have lots of useful pieces. So, let's start right at the beginning. Amina, tell us a little bit about your daughter and kind of where, where is your story? Where did it start? And Kind of, I don’t know, what was the story? What is the story?

**Amina:** [00:01:30] Yeah. So, my husband and I have been now married 18 years and we got married late.

Like I was 33, he was 29 and people call me the cradle robber, but I'm not. And we, we. You know, talked about having children right away, because at 33 you don't have, your clock is ticking. And a year down the road, we were like, either something's wrong or we're doing it wrong. So, we went to get checked and we were in fertile and right away, we had made the decision before even getting checked that if we.

If that's the diagnosis that we're going to look at adoption. Now I was ready for it. My husband he's Danish and that's not common in their society. And so, he was not open to it, but once we got sort of the death sentence, he was like, okay, let's look at it. It took us six years of. Back and forth ups and downs, disappointments sincere depression before we got matched with Hailey.

We ended up, you know, we started in Toronto CAS. When all around the world to Ethiopia where the agency that we were with went bankrupt in us. And I think it was 142 families were left bankrupt in $19,000 out. Only to come back into private adoption and our private adoption, a person [00:03:00] got a terminal canceler cancer and died.

And then we finally ended up back at CAS. So, like loss after loss, after loss and when they matched us with Haley, she was three, we were one of four families that were Asked to interview to adopt her. But when we saw her picture, we were like, that's us. That's like, she's the daughter that's meant to be.

Cause she is my husband's Danish, like I said, white I'm Indian. And she is Canadian born, but half Polish, half Sudanese. So, when you look at her, she's got the African features and the African hair, but you can't tell that we are not mother and daughter. Except for the hair. Yes. Crazy. So, when Hailey came, she had a very very, the difficult childhood, more difficult than any child should have faced by the age of three, which in itself brings behavior that I was not ready for.

[00:04:00] So it took us. We've gone through hell and back. And we didn't know what was wrong, but I knew something was there and to push against all odds because she's super smart. Like she is. So she's whip smart, but just to back it up a little bit, Haley's been diagnosed with FSD, which is called fetal alcohol.

ADHD anxiety disorder, which together brings to trickle up to mania, which is the pulling of the hair. And Oh, ADHD. Did I say? Yeah. So, And we don't focus so much on labels anymore. We used to, because that was our way of getting help. Right. I had to label drop to get help. But our challenges were that Hailey was fight or flight all the time because of having come as an adopted child.

Not trusting that this was her permanent home [00:05:00] and having to prove that I'm not good enough. And I'm going to show you, and I'm talking like five-hour tantrums every night, but then she'd go to school the next day. And everything would be normal. And people would look at us and say, well, you're just shitty parents and you need to learn how to parent better.

And there's nothing wrong. She's not, there's nothing wrong here. It must be at home. And it was heartbreaking because. We were constantly being told it's you, there's nothing wrong here. And I think she was four and a half or five when we finally broke down. And one night we took her to the local hospital because she was going to kill me.

She was. Manic. She was, it was like six hours, no 10, like the tantrums did not stop. And we didn't know about fetal alcohol. At that point, we hadn't had the diagnosis. We just knew there was an issue. So, we went to the hospital. It was just before Christmas and at four o'clock in the morning, they finally took us in and we were [00:06:00] sitting there from 11 o'clock at night with a screaming child, and then they convinced us to keep her for the weekend so we could get rest.

And the next morning at nine o'clock, they called us and said, Oh, you can come and pick her up now. Cause she's fine. And I'm like, what are you talking about? You just told us you were going to keep her and observe her and help us. And there's little. No, there's nobody here in the psych unit to take care of her because it's Christmas time.

So just come and get her. We go and get her. And she's sitting there watching TV, eating chocolate and cookies and having chocolate milk. And I. Literally lost it because tell me that my child wasn't just hitting me the night before and now, she's hyped up on sugar. So, suffice it to say we never went back to the hospital.

And we went through so many pediatricians who just wanted to drug her but not help us until she was until I just was, I just couldn't give up. I was like, there's [00:07:00] something here. There is something here. So, we finally got into St. Mike's because we had a sleep study done and the sleep study showed that Haley's brain.

Was up every hour, 11 minutes out of every hour. And you could see because her body would flop like a fish. She just couldn't settle. And every minute, like she was just constantly moving. And I said, that's not normal. I went back to St Mike's and they finally gave us these, like got us into the FAA SD clinic.

And she was, it was confirmed. She had FAS and the nurse practitioner said to me, Oh, your daughter and my daughter could be twins. And I said, Oh, is she black? She goes, no, no, no, dear. She is Aboriginal. And the amount of alcohol that her mother ingested is similar to what your child's birth mother ingested, which was on average in utero 12 beers a day.

So, the damage was done. So, she is super smart, [00:08:00] but lacks the frontal lobe, the ability to process and think clearly and make like concrete plans and that's permanent, but the anxiety and the ADHD are what triggered the behavior. Out of the fear. So, we had no choice, but to put Haley on meds.

And we just could not attach, like I was thrown into the fire with this child that I so desperately wanted to help him love but was scared of at the same time. So yeah, that's basically, they were

**Delphine:** [00:08:37] quite an incredible journey. I'm not even really sure. I know where to start. And I have so many things that I want to ask, but I think the first thing I want to tap into and say, For yourself as an adoptive family and adoptive parent.

But for any other parent, if you are adopted, if you are an adoptive parent, if you are a guardian parent, if you are an [00:09:00] aunt, if you are an uncle, if you are a biological parent, that parental instinct is real.

**Amina:** [00:09:09] Yeah. And when people tell you that you're crazy, you feel it. You just got to fight it because the system I believe is not meant.

Too. I know, how do I say this correctly? The system is built not to support you until you push for that support because overloaded, and if they don't have to have one more child for the system, one more family through the system, it's better off for them. It's less money, but you've got rights and you've got.

You know, you've got to fight for your child. I was my child's biggest advocate. When they saw me coming in her regular school, they would run because they're like, oh shit, here comes Amina again because I was like, now look at this, look at this, you have

**Delphine:** [00:09:57] to do your half, put it right under their noses.

Yeah. And you have to use the labels and the words. So, to some extent for my own boys, you know, even on their psychoeducational assessments, it says a specific language learning disability, which is disguised disguise word for dyslexia. Right. But let's just call it what it is. And let's stop trying to pretend that the label and the official label of.

FSD ADHD, autism dyslexia, whatever it's going to be is the thing that is going to push you to the front of the line. Right. If you can use the language and I think that's, what's so overwhelming for families is the amount of lingo that you need to learn. Yeah. Yeah. As well as, I mean for you, I can only imagine because you're trying to learn a new language.

I mean, really learning all of these terms in the diagnosis season and the assessments and the tests and the, this and that, that, and this acronym. And that acronym is a [00:11:00] lot for the average parent. But when you're an adoptive mom, who's trying to figure your way through the fog, right. With a child who not, because she doesn't want to love you, but because she's too afraid to, because she doesn't know what it is because she doesn't know how to build that relationship with you must have been exhausted.

**Amina:** [00:11:19] Yeah. And it also causes marriage issues. Right. So, because she, like, she was great with my husband because he didn't do the same work. He didn't have that same. By like not buying he's a great dad, but he didn't do all the work that I was doing. So, I came at it at a clinical way, and he came in as a, Hey, let's have fun that lets me fund that.

And, but it was false attachment because. We noticed that if we were all together as a family, she would find a way to break it down. She would have more behaviors because now she's torn between who do I, who do I attention to? Who do I [00:12:00] play with when it's one-on-one she would be awesome? But the minute.

That he was at work and I was alone at home with her. We would be like explosive. And we got to the point where the cops had to come because she was dangerous not to, only to herself, but to me. So, but the change at school happened in mid-grade five when she started to act out in class. Finally, she finally showed.

Like what she was feeling and what was happening inside her. And she would just like exploding, the teacher would say, Oh, Haley did this. And I'm like, well, aren't you going to get, like, doesn't that alarm you? I said, I've been saying this since grade, like since kindergarten and you guys didn't want to listen and now, you're going to listen.

So, I took that and wrote it all the way and I pushed my principal to make an appointment with the behavioral therapist. We're in the schools so that they could assess her. We paid for our psychoeducational assessment because the lineup was so long, and they weren't willing to do it because Haley doesn't fall under low IQ.

So, I was like, fine. I will go back to CAS. And say, Hey, you guys gave us a bill of goods. You better pay for this. So, they paid for half. And then insurance paid for the other there's ways. You just got to use them. And I would not let my principal give up. So, the first principal kept on telling him, like shutting the door on my face.

The second principal finally was helping me to, to break down those doors and you need, you are the advocate, but you need an advocate for you.

**Delphine:** [00:13:42] I was just going to say it. And part of being that advocates squeaky wheel as the parent with the school is learning to be able to push just enough to get what you need without pushing so far that the door gets slammed in your face.

Right there, there is that like, there's [00:14:00] kind of a sweet spot. If that makes sense. And I think that's true in life. In any situation when you need something from someone, or when you want someone to understand something you're going to push your agenda or your message to an extent. But then I think as parents, as advocates of our children, we need to pull back and go, okay.

I think I've pushed as far as I can. Now I need to back off a bit and wait. I'm wondering about something else though, that plays a role in this relationship. I'll call it between school and family. Right? So, when I work with clients, supporting their children through individual education plans and through this road that is long and hard.

One of the things I try to really support the families with is understanding how to work with the school. And I put the emphasis on the word width. Because I don't believe as an educator. I don't believe this as a parent. I don't believe this. I don't believe that school [00:15:00] is one. Avenue and home are another, I truly believe they have to work together because what is happening in one environment has to sort of happen in the other, right?

Yep. Yep. So one of the things I try to encourage families to do a lot is to be open, which is hard. Right. And I'm that we can talk about that in a minute, cause it's really hard to be open with your school, but it's the sharing of information. So how open was the school or the system let's call it the system because you have a lot of systems, right?

You would have CAS, you would have the hospitals, you would have the schools, like you would have a lot of systems that you were trying to manage. How open were the systems that you were dealing with? To hearing and receiving information for which you had. So whether it was a new assessment, whether it was, you know, we're trying this medication and I need you to tell me if it's working, right.

Because any parent who's put their kids on a medicine needs to understand that, like it's not always going to be the first drug that we find that's going to be the saver right. There, there are a [00:16:00] list of them and you start at the top and you kind of work your way down, but it's a, it's a partnership between the

Hmm.

Right. So, how was that for you? Was it because I get the sense that it, maybe wasn't always a partnership?

**Amina:** [00:16:15] No, not at all. So CAS didn't want to take responsibility for not giving us the information that they should have when we adopted Hayley, all they said to us was, Oh, she's got a bit of attachment issues, but

**Delphine:** [00:16:28] the phone, I mean, did they know that she would have been ASD or did they have inklings that, that might have been a

thing?

**Amina:** [00:16:35] Yeah. Yeah. And here's what, here's the rub Haley came to us November 2010 am and they wait for a year. For the child to live with you before initiating finalization of the adoption, we finalize the adoption November 2011. I got a package in the mail, this thick or for your just three inches [00:17:00] thick with all of her records that if I had had that, when she moved in.

**Delphine:** [00:17:04] Oh, my God, it would have made things so much easier.

**Amina:** [00:17:06] Yeah. Cause you would have had all the documentation. Yeah.

And we didn't have anything. And that was when you, when I read through it, what I read, I, I was sick. I literally threw up because it was just. I mean like a year of fighting for information, not getting it, not knowing what our history and when I read that, that was my first clue that, Hey, there could be, I didn't really know about FAS D, but when I read that her mom, her birth mom had drank so much in utero.

I was like, okay, it's starting to make sense that the connections the pieces were falling into, I went back, they kept on trying to pass the buck. And then I went. Drove to Kitchener where we adopted her from and sat with my a parent advocate to try and get them to give us money because they sold those.

Like, they didn't [00:18:00] say anything and we. They kept on saying, well, no, we don't have to do this by law. And the parent advocate was like, Oh yes, you do. They need services like respite, they need services like therapy. They need this, this and this. You're going to come up with them an amount that they can tap into every year, even though that meeting came out with, okay, we'll get $5,000 a year.

They nickeled and dimed us and still do. So it was like, You know, forget it because that's a battle that is just wasted sometimes. Yeah. But I did go back to them for that psychoeducational. I said, look, we haven't tapped into anything. And except for after-school care, which was $200 a month that doesn't add up to $5,000 even close, you guys are going to pay for this, or I'm going to the paper because I'm tired and I'm done.

Like I'm we were at the point where Haley was going to have to go [00:19:00] into residential. And like we were breaking down as a family. But when that principal helped me, she opened up our world. So she got us into your Kilz family and therapy school. Which means that when the children are in therapy, so are the parents, so you are not told now that you're a bad parent, that you need parenting classes.

What they do is get you guys talking the same language, your you and your spouse, and then you as a family. And they also get you understanding how to parents differently. Speaking to an FSD child who can't understand consequence. Right because it just doesn't stick. So we started going to FSU courses with Jeff Noble, anybody who has an FSD kid out there check out Jeff Noble, [00:20:00] phenomenal Canadian guy incredible has his own podcast.

But he does travel the country and even in the U S. Giving FSD talks. He's got ADH D himself. So he makes it really hilarious, but he's so approachable that you don't feel shame. The shame is a bad, like it's a dirty word and we don't shame. We used to shame because that's how we parent that's how we learned parenting, or I learned parenting.

And that's how I. Learn. So how was I going to connect with my child, but through all of this therapy, through all of these courses that we started to take it was breaking down that door and allowing growth to happen. And so I think before the interview started, I said that COVID became the gift, the greatest gift for us because.

Haley. And I was stuck together 24, seven, no more school time. She was at home, but it gave her the ability to [00:21:00] take that hat off, where she had to feel like she had to be somebody for some, for like, for her friends and her peers just be herself. And it gave me time to just see her in a different light and connect and we attached.

10 years later, we finally attached and it's, it's still up and down for her because she'll walk around. If I'm out of the room. Mommy, I love you, mommy. Mommy, I love you, mommy. Where are you? But it's just now with a different voice and a different tone assurance is the big thing and talking and asking her opinion, which I never used to do and just learning a different way to parent.

And also we have an amazing therapist that's been working with her on the zones of regulation which has been key on teaching her coping strategies, which don't stick because she can't remember the moment, but [00:22:00] it's about. Reminding her reminding, reminding, reminding, repeat, repeat, repeat, right.

And it can get exhausting for you. But when you see that it's making a difference for her, you forget about yourself and you keep on walking that path because we have seen so much growth in a year from Haley. Last year, this time we had the cops at our house all the time, this year. Like in a year it's been, I don't know, since last March, nothing.

And she's just, just become this amazing little girl. So, yeah, it's just, it's, it's been amazing, but the job is not over the road is long.

**Delphine:** [00:22:42] It's a marathon, right? All of those comments, they're, they're marathons and it's not, what is normal is 26 miles or something. Isn't it? Like, we're not talking 26 miles.

We're talking hundreds of miles. Yeah.

**Amina:** [00:22:53] Because you might make some gains in other areas and you go far behind

in others. Yeah.

**Delphine:** [00:23:00] [00:23:00] Well, and I mean, to your point of talking prior, just before we hit record tonight, was you and I were talking about COVID and I was saying for my own children, although it's been lovely because I've been able to spend a bit more time with them.

What has happened, especially for my eldest is all of the social skill gain that he had made prior to lockdown. Yes. And that we had spent so much time and energy doing in terms of getting him to therapy and driving him here and going to see this therapist and not therapist and this occupational therapist and the speech language pathologist, and all of these things and putting all of the systems in place.

He's not able to practice now because he's not with his peers. And so now it's over a screen, which he's still having to practice his frustration tolerance and not, you know, just closing the laptop when he's angry. But it's, he's in his safe zone, right? He's in his house, in his safe zone. So he did a a course through another program here in Toronto called Integra child development agency.

And they did a social services program that teaches [00:24:00] kids how to work in groups with small kids, but they did it. From the comfort of his home, his other children were not in his space. They weren't in his face. They weren't having to physically share things. They were on screens. And so that changes the dynamics somewhat not to say he didn't gain and that our children with learning challenges don't gain from these online programs.

Right. They still learn. They're still understanding they're still gaining new knowledge and understanding, but when it can't be practiced in a physical space, that isn't their own, where they feel safe and comfortable.

**Amina:** [00:24:34] If they're not growing, they're not learning.

**Delphine:** [00:24:35] Yeah. I discovered left. I had to leave the floor.

Like I couldn't be on the same floor of the house because I was trying to regulate him. I don't know. I mean, if you've ever tried to regulate your daughter through a situation yes. But I co-regulate, which is not beneficial for me or beneficial for my son. And, and I, I had to learn, I didn't know that the term co-regulation actually exists and a therapist used it with me one day and [00:25:00] I was like, what is co-regulation?

And she's like, you are his regulatory system. You see the incline and you go in there and you stop it before he can do anything. That's like

**Amina:** [00:25:09] mirror images of them. Like she will, if I'm having a bad day and I'm like, she will react to that and I can see her going up, up, up, up, up, and then that's my tutor.

Oh shit. Bring it down. Cause then she'll bring it down. Right. And, and underneath these times, living in a house. Altogether all the time. No space, no outside, not enough. It's easy to get aggravated with each other, but we have to bring it in really fast because she gets off the rails because her mind obviously like automatically goes to the worst instead of two people just irritated.

It's Oh my God, let me daddy. You're going to right. The thought processes just go down and we're like, no, no, no, no, no, no.

**Delphine:** [00:25:57] Well then the anxiety for her

[00:26:00] **Amina:** [00:25:59] constantly on and worried about and not have that moment to yourself to explore if you eat too

**Delphine:** [00:26:07] well. And then you add an international pandemic that is on the news all the time everywhere.

And it's what we're talking

**Amina:** [00:26:12] about just before the news was on. We don't keep it on. And today it was on and she was like, okay. I could see when I was like, okay, bring your journal. You could have sit here and you're going to journal it out, get it out, get it out. This is a new thing because we're trying to stop the tricolor to mania right.

By journaling, because we tried everything else and it's not working by journaling. It's helping her to get it out. So she's not

pulling. Right. So. I don't think, I feel like we might need to do a second episode. I'm just saying, like, I'm looking at this and I'm thinking, I don't know, we might need to do a second round at this, but I, I'm kind of curious a little bit for me.

**Delphine:** [00:26:53] I was like, Were there steps that you took in terms of you, you went to school, [00:27:00] this one person that unlocked an answer that got you to this person, or you went to see this person and they didn't really give you anything. So you went to try somebody else. So I'm thinking like you went to this doctor and they said, Oh, everything's fine.

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 . So what was your path? What were the stepping stones? What were the, the crevices that you jumped over? I don't know. Was there an order of operations or did it all just kind of, I don't know. Was it helter-skelter? Was it like,

**Amina:** [00:27:24] I'd say the first, like we started out at our family doctor who's.

Very best doctor. I've had him for 25 years and I love this man. I even traveled from new market to Toronto to see him. However, he wasn't a, he wasn't a child specialist. So he said to me, you know what, you need to find a pediatrician. So we went to see a pediatrician. We thought at first he was great, but then he would bring in.

All these medications. Cause he just thought let's treat it with medication. And I was like, no, no, no, no, no. We need to treat the mind, not the medication. And we always had a zone of [00:28:00] difference. So we left him and then we went to another and he the same. And then out of, I can't even remember how, but I think.

I went to an F a S D talk at sick kids. And one of the moms in the room was talking about her child. And I was like, Ooh, sounds very like similar. So I approached her and I said, Hey, can you maybe share with me who are. Medical professionalism is we're really struggling to find somebody for our daughter.

And she goes, Oh, I see, I see sick kids. So I went to the guy who gave the talk and I said, how do I get into sick kids? And he said, you have to go back to your doctor or your pediatrician and get a referral. So I had to fight for that referral and it took us a long time, but finally, We got into SickKids psychiatric children's psychiatric unit, and we see Dr.

Gorham who is lo best. He's so good. But when I have to say, when I first met him, I thought, [00:29:00] Oh my God, what an asshole. He's telling me the same thing that you need parenting courses, and you need this. And I was like, okay, it's not going to work. And I kept on saying to him, why are you not treating the FAS?

Cause you can't treat the FSD. We have to treat the side diseases. And I would constantly be like, well, she doesn't have ADHD. And he said, yes, she does. And I said, no, she doesn't. She can sit there. And he goes, ADHD is not just about concentration. So he helped break it down for me. He taught me all these things.

And then he was the one who said, okay, I want you to call CTN children's treatment network. And start the conversation with them and they're going to bridge you into the services that they have. So the first time I call CTN, they said, Oh my God, you're so complex. We don't know where to fit you because you have so many things going on.

So it took a long time for us, for CTN to make the connections for us. But then we got into Mackenzie [00:30:00] health. And up in Berry cause we live in New York and our therapists. Oh no, Whoa, Whoa. Back up a second. Haley had made a false claim to. One of the health providers that mommy was hitting me. So they call CAS, which was the best thing.

Cause CAS in new market came out and did a house call. And after meeting us and doing the interview and seeing all the stuff that I had been doing and meeting Haley there, she was like, okay, we're not here for Haley anymore. We're here for you. So she made the referral to Mackenzie health. She made the referral to Catalpa, which is another like service provider here in our area.

And they starting to open up the doors. So they were the ones to say, okay, you're going to go to sick kids. You're going to see Dr. Gorman. We're going to get you a behavioral specialist. That's going to come to your home. Every week and work with you in the family and then could tell, [00:31:00] was there to help with the respite with all the other services that they could unlock.

So it was me reaching out to everybody I could to say, Hey, we need help give us help.

**Delphine:** [00:31:16] And I think that's the important piece just as you were talking. I think it's the idea that like you have to find. Your key to unlock. And the key to unlock is often a medical professional somewhere at some stage or depending on that'll, that'll depend for sure.

But I think it's so important

**Amina:** [00:31:42] to

**Delphine:** [00:31:43] keep. Digging, you can't give up, not giving up because, because there is someone there is going to be someone on that road that is going to be able to get you to, you know, kind of what happened to your family. Who's going to be able to get you all of those [00:32:00] services.

And it is really hard. It's a full-time job. Like, let's be honest. It took the job. Yeah. I mean, I call them

**Amina:** [00:32:06] CTN. Every three months, every three to four months.

**Delphine:** [00:32:09] It's almost like you have to put an alert on your phone to say, Hey, it's been like six weeks.

I need to call again. Oh, it's another six weeks I have to call again. And like, you really do have to stick with it. But the, the payoff of being able to stick with it. Oh, yeah. It's I mean, it's huge. It's huge. And I remember at one point with our eldest, he got suspended. I think he was in like grade three, it was some physical altercation.

He got suspended and I was like, okay, full stop. Like I need to figure this out. And I think I took a week off work. Like I think I just looked at me. He got home that night and I looked at him and I was like, Hmm. So I'm taking a week off so we can figure what we're doing. Cause we need a plan. Like I was, we were already working on stuff, but

yeah, almost like you need to map

**Amina:** [00:32:47] it out on a big thing, so.

Okay. Here's all the services. Here's where we are. Here's what I need. How am I going to get right. It's like, and it's overwhelming when you look [00:33:00] at it that way. And some services are not the right services for you.

**Delphine:** [00:33:04] It can be trial and error, which is the crummy part. Right. It can be all, yeah, this sounds like it might work.

And then you try it and you realize, Oh, this isn't at all what we needed.

**Amina:** [00:33:11] Right. And it's okay to turn it down, turn it away because it can be more damaging to you to keep going. Just because it's a service rather than saying, okay, this is not good for our family. We need to do something else. So there was a lot of that as

**Delphine:** [00:33:26] well, or to say, we want your service, but we're not ready right now because we're doing whatever the five other things or three other things are that you're doing, right?

Like you may already be doing some sort of therapy that you feel like, ah, this isn't a good fit now. And you just defer the next round. Like that is also okay as well. I mean, honestly, I feel like we could keep going. And maybe we will, maybe I'll have you back in and we'll talk some more, cause I feel like more in this story, but one of the things I I'd love to hear you talk about for a minute is just, if there's a parent listening right now, What would [00:34:00] your piece of advice be for them?

So if somebody is listening right now and they're going through a particularly rough patch, what would your advice be? Reach

**Amina:** [00:34:07] out to others who have walked your journey or reach out to others who understand where you are. And don't be afraid to approach them, ask questions, ask for help, because people are out there to help.

I. Used to go to these adoption. Adoptive mom get together. It was in Florida and would be three days of a lot of fun and crying and all that. And I'd come home a bigger mess than when I left. And my husband was like, you can't do this because I'm an empath. And I wanted to take everybody else's problems onto me.

And then I couldn't deal. I was just. Like tear me apart. So I stopped doing it and I don't even go on to support groups on Facebook anymore because when I read all of that, I start thinking, Oh, that must be me. Or that's that. So you got to find where you fit in. [00:35:00] I'm great at the one-on-one or the small group of, you know, Hey, ask questions.

Let's share, let's get support. I'm terrible at the big group things, because. It, it just can't, it's overwhelming. So know what you can take on nowhere like reach out for, to other people who have walked the path and just ask everybody's out there and willing to help. I'm willing to help. I'm willing to, you know, talk to anybody who needs it.

**Delphine:** [00:35:30] Yeah, . And that's, I mean, the catalyst to this podcast, right. Is that having families feel less alone to know that maybe they're not ready to reach out, but if they could hear your story and say, okay, , I'm not alone. That I'm not the only person going through this. This next question is a little bit more well, not a little bit more.

It's directed at educators. At the education system. And I, I, this is when I, I like to ask the parents because I think it's important that as educators, we we understand, or we take knowledge from your [00:36:00] experience and try to support that way. So I'm wondering that if they're educators listening and I'm hoping that there were a couple, what would you like them to know about.

Supporting you and your family and your daughter, what do you think that they need to understand? To support you because they ultimately are, are there or should be there to support and help. And, and your daughter spend several hours a day at school. So what educators need to know about families who are great

**Amina:** [00:36:32] question.

So when we were in the regular school system I would be in like every couple of days talking to the teacher because Haley would come home and she couldn't do the homework and she was struggling and she. Couldn't the problem with FIS is I, we are talking right now and the child could be on the first or second word still, and you've gone like 10 sentences forward and they're still stuck there.

And in a classroom setting when it's flight [00:37:00] or fight and they're struggling to get a handle of their emotions, a handle of their environment, and then still try and. Learn from the teacher, because these kids are visual learners. They're not written learners, so you can't peg them all into the same board.

And you need to learn to listen to the parent when they come in and say, Hey, my kid is struggling this way. Can we try it this way and not discount because you've got 30 kids in a class and you're trying to just get through your day. And I get it. Teaching must be so difficult. But it's really important to not.

Discount the parents' feelings or the child's feelings. Cause it just goes down from there. And I was on a meeting today about FSD and good news is bill one 72 just had its second passing. And what it States is that all educators, all like kids who are coming through the education system, going to be teachers, social workers, what have you.

I'll have to [00:38:00] have FAS training. And now even if you aren't a teacher educator, principal, whatever, you will have to do the training. So that is the best news because when you're a kid, your kid is in a school of 500 kids. They might be the only one, even though FSD is two and a half times more prevalent than autism.

Wow. I didn't, it's an invisible disease. Right? So, because the kids present as like very high IQ, but lack that ability to grasp concepts they're pegged as troubled or behavioral, which is so not true. So they can't look at, they can't paint all the kids with the same brush.

**Delphine:** [00:38:46] Yeah. And I think. I mean for me and I'm taking my educator hat off here, and I'm saying this as a parent, I know my kid best.

And if I, if I can open myself up enough and be [00:39:00] vulnerable enough to walk up to my teacher, my kid's teacher and say, my kid has, or my kid struggles with, or this is what we need to be supported. Then I think there needs to be a bit of reciprocation in terms of the teacher taking that at face value. Yeah.

**Amina:** [00:39:17] Right. But so many times we'd have, Oh no, you're, you're worried for no reason. Oh, no, she's fine. When clearly she wasn't. Right. And like she's behaving this way in your classroom because she's not fine. So, you know, like, but then we'd hear it again. Oh. But maybe you just need a parenting class. I'm like, okay, thanks.

Karen.

**Delphine:** [00:39:40] Can classes fix many things, but they don't break it.

Are there any kind of really good books that you've read in your dream that you think are. Kind of worth the parents time to read, because let's be honest, us parents with children, with learning needs and difficulties. We are busy because we are [00:40:00] shuttling to appointments.

We are supporting, we are there, but sometimes there are little golden nuggets everywhere that, that are worth the time to stop and read. Yeah.

**Amina:** [00:40:10] I've got a couple, the connected parent by Karen Purvis. It's more attachment based, but it can work for any parenting relationship because. You're going to have those misunderstandings between neuro typical and atypical.

Right? The spark only because I love the message of that book. It's about a mom with a kid who has autism and she believes in him so much, he propels him forward. She doesn't hold him back. It is an incredible book by Chris, Christine Bennett. The two story and hold on to your kids. It's about creating attunement.

So somebody, I haven't read that one yet, but I it's on my list to get, because somebody explained it to me today. So you know how kids on, especially when our kids lacks those social. [00:41:00] Skills or lack those friendships, close friendships, and they think everybody's their best friend. If that, if they're showing a video, say of a meme or something and their peers, get it, they're going to.

More attuned with their peers because their peers are going to be totally into what they are too, but you know how they show us something and we're like, Oh, that's boring. Oh no, I don't have time for that or whatever. It's about making time for it. Cause I'm guilty of this too. Making time for it, getting interested in it.

So they become more tuned to you. Rather than their peers, because their peers can lead them down the wrong path, whereas you are always going to have their best interest. So it's a, it's just sort of like a way to learn how to parent differently by being more tuned to their needs or their interests.

**Delphine:** [00:41:48] That, that sounds like an interesting one. I think I need to put that on to read list for 2021.

**Amina:** [00:41:53] Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Only because they, you know, more social media, which I hate more. [00:42:00] Always being YouTube or what does that take talk and all this garbage, it's all that where they get their stuff. So we don't want to be left behind and we want to be in their world.

I guess they're going to get onto that stuff.

**Delphine:** [00:42:14] Yep. I'm on Tik TOK for that exact reason,

**Amina:** [00:42:16] actually. And I husband takes that battle. I have enough on my plate, no way

**Delphine:** [00:42:23] parenting problems. One-on-one right. I mean, I am so grateful for your openness and your candor and your ability to. Frame this journey of yours in such a beautiful way.

I hope someday. Maybe I can meet Haley because she seems like the incredible person who I am quite sure with all of your support is going to do some amazing things in this world. So

**Amina:** [00:42:51] I think we're hopeful. We're very fruitful. Thank you so much for the opportunity to share.