Megan - On the Hard Days

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about everything having to do with learning disabilities and learning challenges. One of the best parts about doing this podcast is getting to meet so many other parents who are walking this journey of neuro diverse kid. When you have a child who doesn't fit into the mold of what society sees as normal, it can feel lonely and scary.

I can't even count the number of times something happened, and I felt alone and thought for sure, no one else was walking this road through the power of the internet and connections. I met Megan. We met through clubhouse of all the crazy things in pandemic. She was talking in a room about her struggles with her own children and looking to build community.

She talked so openly about her journey, the journey with her kids. That has been hard, and it's had ups and downs, but it's been so great to be able to watch another mom go through similar things since I've met her, almost a year ago on clubhouse. Megan has created a following on Instagram and most recently has created mothers together support group for mothers of kids who are neuro diverse.

Megan is making changes to help others feel less alone. Megan, welcome to the show. I'm super excited.

[00:01:10] **Megan:** Thank you so much for that introduction. I loved that. So, kind thank you for having me. I'm super excited to be here. Well,

[00:01:17] **Delphine:** it is really about connection, right? I mean, you and I have talked about this a lot is that, when our kids are.

I don't want to use the word different, cause they're not different. They're their own people, but when they don't fit into that mold as a parent, it can feel very isolating.

[00:01:37] **Megan:** Yeah, for sure. And, um, I think. I can't think of a single mother. I know who at some point hasn't felt that feeling of isolation, but when you're raising neuro-diverse kids, it's like a constant, because there's so much, um, worry.

There's a lot of anxiety. Every single time you take your child to a place, and you leave your house, [00:02:00] you worry about who's going to see what behavior come out, what struggle come out and how people are going to perceive your child and how they're going to perceive you. Generally, I mean, and this has happened to me a bunch of times.

I'm sure it's happened to you too, but there's like this, you know, there's judgment there, like yeah. Control of your kid, get it, you know, what's wrong with you. And then there's the looks and there's the whispers and there's the, whatever the, the grocery store meltdowns, you know, and that is a terrible feeling.

And that is sort of the thing that I, I wanted to, bring out of hiding, to link arms with other moms who are feeling that.

[00:02:37] **Delphine:** So, let's talk a little bit about your kids. Cause you talked very briefly about meltdowns and things, but let's put some context to your kids. So those who have listened to my podcast quite a bit know that I have three kids, two of them are neuro diverse dyslexia, ADHD, and general anxiety disorder.

So that those are that's my, that's my kettle that I live in right now. Um, but talk to us a little bit about your kids because you have a set of twins in there with. I think brings with it its own challenges and own dynamics.

[00:03:08] **Megan:** Yes. Oh boy. Where do I start? Yeah. Um, yes, I do have a set of twins, so my twins are eight and my youngest is five and it's my, uh, boy twin, who was the reason for all this.

The reason for my podcast, the reason for mothers together, the whole, the whole reason behind everything that I am doing. He is the one that made me feel like a terrible mom. There's the truth. I'm not by any fault of his own. He is a wonderful kid, but he has a brain that is so complicated and. I am also a teacher.

I'm an elementary school teacher in a public school, and very much grew up in, , in the part of society. That's very traditional, traditional parenting. You listen to authority and that worked for me. That's that was fine with me. I'm a rule follower and a people pleaser. And then I had a child who's not, and to make a long story short and we can always go deeper into that after, but he is twice exceptional.

No, he's gifted academically and he's a few years ahead, but he's emotionally and socially. And developmentally a few years behind. And so, there's this range of ages. So, he's eight right now. And it's like, depending on the situation, I'm parenting a five-year-old all the way to a 10- or 11-year-olds. And that brings with it, lots of challenges.

He does have anxiety. He does have ADHD, which is a new discovery for us. And, um, it's starting to really make sense and answer some of those pieces. He has sensory processing issues. He is a perfectionist. He's very highly sensitive. His meltdowns are extreme, and they go on, they can go on for hours.

 He's he can be aggressive. There's been, you know, I've had to hold him to keep him safe over the years. Not that long ago. he is, is so much more complicated than I ever knew a child could be. Now. I happen to have two others. He's had, he has a twin sister. She is a mini me. She is a people pleaser.

And, um, she is. Bear the brunt of her twins struggles for years because she just wanted him to be happy and we're working on helping her feel supported too. But I'm starting to think that she, she definitely has anxiety, but I'm trying to think. I see ADHD in her as well. I think in girls, apparently it looks quite different and that's new to me.

So, I'm just starting that road. Um, and then my little guy is five and he just started kindergarten and. I mean, why the heck not? Why not have a third kid with ADHD? Sure. Like, okay. Um, no diagnosis, but that's, that's where I'm starting to lean to for him. we are a special group in this house. Let me tell you, but, but they're all wonderful.

It's just every single child is exhausting. All.

[00:06:04] **Delphine:** That's funny that you talk about your third and not knowing what's coming. So, I literally, before this call had a call with an old high school girlfriend of mine, she wanted to ask me some advice about, for friend of hers, about her friend's child and what to do with support, for reading and stuff anyway.

And, uh, she said, well, you know, I was telling her about how, you know, your two boys have dyslexia. These are the things that you've done, and you've got this other kid and you don't know what's coming, but there must be something coming. And I was like, yup. There probably is like, that is, um, I think for those of us parents who have neuro-diverse kids and we've, we've done it once and then maybe we did it twice.

It doesn't get easier. It does not get easier. There's there's no, there's no sugar-coating that it is, difficult and daunting and long and emotional. And, and I don't even know that I can find all the words to describe what it is, but with each child it's like, oh, okay, this makes sense. Okay. I can like put these pieces together and it, it starts to make the family dynamic makes sense.

[00:07:10] **Megan:** Yeah. In each case, is so different. I mean, that's true for all children. My kids are really complicated and it has taken years’ worth of research. And I know every mom with neuro-diverse kids can totally relate to this, but you feel like a, a professional researcher just on every single. I didn't know what any of this was.

I had never heard of two E, I had never heard of sensory processing. I mean, I'm a teacher. Goodness. I had no clue. And I thought I knew what ADHD was. My thought. I knew what gifted giftedness was. And it turns out that there's so much more to those too, you know, I'm now, now eight years in looking at the whole child, you're looking at the whole person.

 One of the guests that I had in my podcasts, um, she's so amazing. Kimberly Heilig. She said that when you're putting drops in the bucket for a struggle, that one of that, you know, one of the struggles that your kids have, you're going to maybe help them in one way, but it may hurt them in another. And there's this constant sort of.

Tugging push pull sort of scenario where you can't meet the needs of your child all at once, not all the needs because some of them contradict each other. And that just goes to show how complicated they are. And yeah, I mean, they're all different one child from the next they're also.

[00:08:34] **Delphine:** Well, and I think what can sometimes happen when we have a neurodiverse kid and a family, and there's a lot of kids and the parents are trying to manage all of the things and you're trying to kind of deal with all this stuff.

What happened to us? And, and I've talked about this and there's a podcast that just released today about my eldest diagnosis, We, we didn't forget about our middle son. We just were so focused on the eldest because his issues were the most pressing at the time his behavior was telling us that there was something bigger.

Whereas our middle son was, you know, he was quiet and calm and sort of doing his thing and he wasn't making waves. So, we were just kind of rolling with it and it was fine. I then I had that when we finally realized that something was happening with our middle son, I had that guilt feeling of like, oh my gosh, I didn't realize, but I didn't realize because I was dealing with the fire that was over there.

Right. So, I was filling the bucket on the one side, not meaning to ignore the other one, but I was like, well, your, your fire isn't as big. So, I have a little more time, um, which maybe didn't end up panning out as well. But, but it kind of is. Where I am an and I think part of parenthood quite, frankly, is being able to say, well, I did the best I could with the information, the knowledge I had at the time.

And I'm going to take a minute and feel guilty and feel all the fields that I need to feel, but then I need to kind of move on and make. Better or find the solution or move forward. Right. And those things are hard to do when you're trying to manage all of the different pieces that are happening.

[00:10:17] **Megan:** Yeah. I, I can surely relate to that.

And again, I think all moms can have of neuro-typical kids, neuro diverse kids, but the difference is right. So. We all have mom guilt. It's, it's just this thing. We mothers carry on our shoulders. And when you were raising a neuro-typical kid, you can hopefully get to that place where you say I did the best I could with the information I had at the time, which I think is absolutely perfect line.

And it's true. But for kids who have behaviors that. Lead to judgment from other people that lead to judgment from yourself as a mother, especially when you're first kind of getting into it. It's like, what is my child doing the judgment or the fear of judgment. The shame that comes with this sometimes is what I think gets in the way of almost being able to think clearly, at least for me, like I couldn't say to myself, I'm doing the best.

With the information I have for me, it was like, I'm doing my best, but it's clearly not enough because these meltdowns are happening five times a day for an hour long each time, or because my kid is seven and they still, um, are, are behaving in a way like a four-year-old or because whatever it is, these these moments are so shame filled.

It's almost like you can't, you, you can't think clearly, I couldn't forgive myself for all of the things that I thought that I did wrong over the years. Uh, the guilt ran and runs still deep. It runs deep these moments come back and say, oh my God, I cannot believe I handled it that way. I can't believe I yelled that loud at, you know, clearly my kid was not capable.

Of making a different choice, but at the time, I didn't know that because I didn't understand the depth of who my kid is. And I, I thought, well, if he's making these choices, like let's say hitting, hitting a sibling and not at a toddler age, if he's making these choices that I must have done something wrong.

For him to think that this is an okay behavior and then the guilt piles on. So there's anger and there's guilt and there's shame and there's doubt. Oh my gosh, my, my oldest kid, uh, you know, can't keep his hands to himself and he's like way past the age where that should be an issue. Should I even like, how am I going to raise my other two?

I shouldn't even be a mother. I clearly don't know what I'm doing. I need to take a motherhood one-on-one class, you know. Those feelings stay for a long time, and you really have to do a lot of work to climb out of that hole. Um, so I, I feel that deep level

[00:13:15] **Delphine:** I think too, that the thing that got me was I've always thought of my children as a reflection of myself. And so, if my children are doing something that is socially seen as not acceptable, so yeah.

Older child hitting, right? Like, I mean, we're still dealing with our 12 old and 10 ten-year-old hands to yourself. Like we literally leave the house, and we say to them now, remember, we're going to keep our hands to ourselves today. Right. Because the impulsive ADHD years. They just don't know how to harness it.

Right. And so, it seems silly, but it's one of those things where I'm like, what must people think of my children? And in public, they must think that I let my children do whatever they want whenever they want, however they want. Because I think that the perception that we have is that. You know, children must be, they, they react in the way in which their parents allow them to.

And quite frankly, with the. And neuro-diverse kids, their brains don't work. And you you've said this already, we've talked about it. Their brains aren't wired the way the average kid is wired. So, you know, something might happen to their right, that triggers a sensory reaction in them that says, oh, I need to hit something, or I need to scream or I need to yell, or I need to whatever.

And it's not because they want to be rude or mean, or whatever. It's. It's that it, you know, it takes a greater piece of them to be able to do that. And I realized at one point as a mom, I had become my kids' regulator. I didn't allow them to regulate themselves. So, I would see the situation coming and I'm like, oh, I know where this is going.

And then I would try and reign it in. Which made me feel better. Cause it was like, okay, good. I'm not mom, I'm on top of it. And I got it. My kids are going to be fine. But then when I wasn't there, so school, for example, and that same situation would happen. And then I get the phone call from the teacher at school and be like, well, your kid did this, that and the other.

And I'm like, oh man, I wasn't there. I wasn't there to regulate them. But you know, you've also got to remember that your kids need tools, and they need. Resources and ways to do things. So, I'm sure you've done it. We've worked with occupational therapist and speech language pathologists, and like all sorts of things to try and kind of build a toolbox.

So, I wonder Megan, are there. Like tools that you've kind of come across or built in your kids or whatever, like we've done cognitive behavioral therapy, for example, right. For their anxiety stuff. So we often talk about there's a thermometer that they use to talk about the size of the problem when, when we're getting really anxious about something.

So that's an example of a tool that we use in our house. It seems to be pretty effective because, um, it gives them sort of that visual and they, they understand the idea of a thermometer that goes up and down. So, is there a tool in your house that you've used to kind of help through kind of difficult kind of icky parts?

[00:16:24] **Megan:** I wish I could say I had this. Like I have the answer it's in my back pocket. I'm going to give it to your listeners and then life will be magical. I, I don't, I don't, um, we have tried some different things over the years. My son is, I think this is attributed to the giftedness piece. I could be wrong, but I think he.

You can't get anything over him. You, you can't. He sees through everything. So, he's been an OT for three different times in his life, three different like, 12 week sessions for three different things. I've talked about the zones of regulation. He has literally made a toolbox out of like construction paper with the little, whatever we've done, the things he's not touching that toolbox and he's not touching it because he knows himself.

And knows that it's it's, it doesn't sit right with him. It doesn't feel right. And most of all, honestly, it's not really about the strategies themselves selves. It's about the fact that adults are, are telling him to make a change using one of the ways we are giving him. And he doesn't do that. He owns.

Comes up with his own strategies and we'll try those, but he often doesn't have any strategies to come up with either. So, it's, it's really kind of a mess. I think that he is extremely, and I, I would guess many of our kids they're extremely self-aware. It appears like they have no idea what their behaviors are and what they're doing.

No, it is the opposite. Not only do they know very much what they're doing, but the shame that they have for these behaviors runs extremely deep. And so, when that shame, at least for my own kid, when that shame is so deep and I take him to OT and they're like, okay, so we're going to try 10 deep breaths.

Like, no, no, you're not because it's not a shallow level thing. He is humiliated in his own choices but doesn't feel he can stop them. And there's no toolbox strategy that I've found yet. That touches that. What does touch that? And sort of the only growth that we have seen in the last, I would say year.

First of all, he is now medicated, and he was not, and that's a whole other beast and I'm totally open to people's views, no matter what I mean. Absolutely. We were at what I would call rock bottom. It was completely out of control after eight years and finally calling the doctor and saying, please, there has to be.

And so anyway, that has made a difference, but besides. Here's the secret, the magic, the magic secret here and there. It's really not a secret at all, but I stopped trying to put them in the box. That's it. I stopped trying to shove his arms and his legs in there. Get in there, try to put the cover on you need to fit in this box.

I stopped printing. And instead, I took him at face value. And when I say that, I mean, I really took him because I think a lot of us would say that we do that, but like in the back of our minds, we're like, okay, I love, I love you, just how you are, but if you could just go ahead and XYZ, right. And that's, that's okay.

That's normal. That's normal. I did that for years and I finally had to sort of let that go and really just accept my kid, the good, the bad and the ugly. And here's the thing. Here's, here's this thing that. Tossing around in my head for the last few months. Let's just take teaching for an example. It's the same idea with, with kids, with parenting.

If I have a tough class and there's behaviors that are really tough and there's a lot of shouting out and a lot of disrespect and whatever. The other teachers will kind of look at me and be like, what is wrong with you? Like get control of your class. And I may say, well, I can't, I'm doing everything right.

I'm doing what I always do. These are the choices that these kids are making, and these are their personalities. This is who they are. Now. Let's flip that. What if I have a really amazing class? I happen to have an absolutely amazing class right now. I am so thankful for them. They are great. It's like the fifth or sixth day of school.

They are, they totally fit in the box and that's just, that's, that's neither here nor there they happen to fit, and they are great listeners. They're very respectful, very kind, very helpful. All these things. I didn't do that. Their fourth-grade teachers didn't do that. I teach fifth grade. No, we didn't do that.

I don't get congratulations there either. They are who they are. And if we're going to say, so this applies to obviously your own children too. If we're going to say that when my kid has a massive meltdown, but it is out of his control and like, he really, he's doing the best he can. And this is the result.

Then the same goes for children who are behaving the way society expects them to. That's not because mom is a superhero, we're all superheroes. It's not because they have some magic parenting strategy. We don't know about, they got lucky. That's really what it comes down to. They got lucky and it's not.

And when I say lucky, it's almost in quotation marks. Okay. It takes a while to realize that we are the lucky ones. I am the lucky one. My kid has taught me more about not only kids like him, both in my classroom and out of the classroom, but it's taught me more about me. I just kind of thought I was this kind of, I don't know, stereotypical, I don't know, mom who just follows the rules and, and says the right things and my kid will do what they're supposed to do.

And. I've had to strip all of that away and look at who I really am as a mother, how I'm going to show up for my children. It's really all come back to how I feel about myself. And when I have finally worked on accepting myself, like, oh my gosh, I may actually yell once in a while. And by once in a while, I mean every day and that's okay.

It's okay. I had to forgive myself for the times that I yelled, forgive myself for the times that I was just, too preoccupied with my own stuff to, to pay attention to whatever. But when I started to accept myself, I started to accept my kid. And then it was like, oh, we're actually a team. This is not, we're not, we're not competing against each other.

We're on the same team here and I cannot wait to support. So that's a really long answer to your question.

[00:23:08] **Delphine:** it's really just about meeting kids where they're at. And we talk about that a lot of the time in education, right? I mean, you and I are both teachers. We work with kids at differing levels, and we adapt our teaching to the students.

So, in parenthood of these kids, you have to adapt your parenting and other people might say to you, well, that's the wrong way to do it, but this is what I say to people all the time. And when I work with families, I always say to them who. The kid best you or the teacher. And at the end of the day, you are that kid's parent, you have watched the meltdowns, you have sat through the hours and hours of tantrums, of screaming, of yelling, of whatever the situation is.

And so, you are intimately aware of the triggers of the methods that get them to go down, whether you need to just let them scream and yell and cry and let it out, and then you can deal with it. Or are they the kind of. Child who needs some sort of intervention in terms of maybe they need, you know, to be hugged, to calm down because that's what their body needs.

And then. That's where your point of like knowing your child and letting go of what the outside world tells you, you should or shouldn't be doing. And those are the things that I think are really hard because I think we can look at the people on Instagram and we can look at the people on Facebook and we can look at the YouTubers and we can look at the TV shows and the whatever, and how they show it all pink and rosy and sunshine.

But if you strip all of that away, somewhere in there is going to be the muck and the blood and the sweat and the tears and the, you know, crying with the door closed so that your child doesn't know that you're devastated with their behavior. And you're so embarrassed and yeah, there's times where we yell at our kids.

Absolutely. And we say, you know, I'm so frustrated with you. Why can't you just like the number of times I've used that sentence. And then I say it and I instantly regret it. But I say it because part of me realizes that they, they, my children sometimes need to see that frustration so that they then can see the model of, okay.

Mum got frustrated. Mum went to red, and she's managed to get, right. Like if we're talking about Sones, right. To be, to be that model, but it's true. And I was thinking, when you were talking about your son's kind of guilt and how. Affects him. And it's funny because my eldest is very much like that. He's a very emotional kid.

He's he's we used to call him our zero to 60 kid. So, he'd be super, super calm and then something would happen. And you'd be like, what just happened like two minutes ago you were fine. And now you're doing whatever behavior it is, whether he's screaming or crying or running around or whatever it was. And he would have an incidence [00:26:00] incidences at school and I would go to pick them up and before a teacher could even tell me that something had happened, he would come to me and he'd say, mommy, I have to tell you something.

And he would tell me what had happened. And I will never forget his principal always would say to me, the one thing about your son is that he always feels remorse. Instantly. She's like by the time the incident has happened, and he's come inside, and he's made it to my door, he already knows what he did, why it was wrong, how he needs to fix it and what he'll do next time, he's already done all of it.

She's like he gets here, and we have a conversation and I send him away because she says there's nothing. There is nothing else to do. And we simply continue to support him and say, remember when, remember what we need to do. It doesn't always work because inevitably they make the same mistake again. But I think, you know, having supportive parents and educators around them who are familiar with them, who understand their thought process is so important to their self-worth and their self-understanding because.

We as parents and you and I as educators. And those of us who are listening, who are educators, it's, it's our job to help the kids through these difficult transitional pieces and through these bits and whether it's giving them tools or not giving them tools or letting them be who they are and helping them figure out what works for them.

I think we need to stop. Assuming that we know what, they need. And to your point of your son being able to say, okay, you know, you, you do, you, you let me know what you need, and we'll make it work. Um, and I think there's been a lot in society. There's been a lot of, sort of the idea that we, as the adults know best.

And, and it's true. If you ask some of these neuro diverse kids, what they think and feel yikes. It can be pretty powerful when you have a conversation with.

[00:28:02] **Megan:** Yeah, totally. My son is definitely like your in that way. Um, where immediately before he does what he's about to do, he knows it was wrong. He knows what to do instead.

I don't know about your kid, but my son, the difference might be, he won't admit it. He won't admit those things. And that's where I have seen that shame, because admitted. Mistake is to admit that he's not perfect. It's to admit that he has hurt other people before, which really pains him to think about other people that he's hurt.

And it puts him in a vulnerable position where he doesn't have control and he hate that. So, he won't. Yep.

[00:28:54] **Delphine:** Yeah. And I would say our eldest, um, he, yeah, it's funny. He, I don't even know. It's a little bit different because he doesn't realize in the moment that it's wrong. He realizes after that it's wrong.

But that, yeah. Then the shame and the guilt of like, well, then they won't want to play with me, and they won't want to be with me. Like all of that stuff. He will not admit that he's wrong or is the perfectionist around academic tasks. So, writing, for example, if he has to write something. And my middle one in particular.

In fact, I just heard a story about him. He started at a new school, and I spoke to his teacher today and he said, well, yesterday he, I had asked him to do a writing assignment and he put his head down for 45 minutes. It wouldn't do anything. And I was like, yep. That sounds about right. You've given him a task that is too difficult, that he feels he cannot accomplish based on whatever the criteria is.

Was given to him to complete this assignment and, you know, rather than, than trying it and he just put his head down, but it's, it's true. Our eldest is very perfectionistic. If he can't do it the first time. If he perceives himself to be incapable of doing it, the meltdown is almost instantaneous and I can see it coming every time, every single time.

It's like, okay, this is going to be one of those cases. Here's what we're, here's what we're going to be up against. Right. and it takes some time for people to kind of learn and understand. But also, I don't know if you've seen growth in your son, but I've seen a little bit of growth in our eldest in that he's starting to kind of branch out a little bit more things are a little bit more difficult.

A perfect example is he's at a new school in grade seven and he gets a locker this year. And so, we had to get him, a lock and he was like, I'm never going to get it. It's never going to work. I don't know how to do it. I'm not going to remember the code. I can't remember, but it's too many turns.

Cause it's, you know, you gotta turn it left and then right. And then left again. And it's just so, and it's the salt. Hours of like, I can't, I don't know how, no, I can't do it. I can't do it. And I said, well, let's just, let's just try. So my husband sat with him and like, they did it and he got it and now it's fine, but it's like they get, they, they perceive the hurdle before the human, like attempted to jump over it even once not. I find that exhausting as a

[00:31:07] **Megan:** mom. That is that whole. Right, but it's tiring.

[00:31:12] **Delphine:** Right? Like I, sometimes I look at them and I'm like, can you just not whine about this, please? And just to do the thing. And I promise if you do the thing in the end, the thing is not going to be as bad as you it's like learning to tie shoes.

I don't know if your son has learned to tie his shoes yet.

[00:31:26] **Megan:** Oh. Type of

[00:31:27] **Delphine:** shoes. Why is that so complicated? And I know why it's complicated, right? I don't know about your kiddo, but my kiddos don't have the best gross motor fine motor skills. They're not awesome. So little things like tying shoes is hard because it requires dexterity of fingers and all these things, but wholly jumping it's like, can you just try with me, can you trust that?

I know that you can do this, right? Like, it's, it's a lot of lifting. It's it's like, I can't remember who it is. You lift me up. Right? Like, it's that, that song you lift in trying to lift the. Yeah. Is that Josh Ruben? There we go there. And I sometimes in my head, I'm like, I just need that song to play in the background to like, prove to them that I can lift them up and that they will be okay.

But it's actually,

[00:32:12] **Megan:** it is exhausting. My kid is definitely like that. Um, because it, and I don't know, I guess it doesn't matter which branch of the tree is the cause of this, but whatever the whole, the whole Oak is a blooming. He. He's extremely cautious with everything he does. And so, he's not going to jump into anything, and I can, can, I can try.

A million times to convince him that I know what's best that I know it's safe, that I know he can do it. Nope. It means nothing to him. He does not get reassurance from me. He gets it from himself and, and, and that's, you know, that's, that's never going to change. We've had that struggle. Riding a bike took years, years, years, years of meltdowns, gosh, soulmate.

So many meltdowns on a bike. He got it. He did get it finally, but it was later than what I think might be typical. And that's okay.

[00:33:07] **Delphine:** But what's so fun about that though. Megan is getting to see them when they accomplish it. And I think that's the thing that I want parents, moms, grandparents, whoever's listening to take away is that when you watch them, when you see them.

Accomplished the thing that they think they can't do the look of confidence in their faces. Like those are the things I think we can get bogged down a lot in the like, Ugh, God, this is hard. And this is that, and this is negative in that, but you got to take those wee little wins and sometimes, sometimes you don't get one.

Sometimes you don't get one in a week. Right? Like, but yeah, those moments of w I mean, it must've been awesome. When he finally managed to ride his bike, it must've been like a huge accomplishment for him.

[00:33:53] **Megan:** It was in fact, all three of my kids. The same day, the same hour, all learned to ride their bikes at once.

And I think that actually helped. He does not like being put on the spot. He doesn't like being the center of attention. The pressure he puts on himself to do something perfectly is immense. And his little brother happens to be. Athletic naturally and was riding a bike with no training wheels, basically by like two and a half.

The kid's a dare devil. He's a beast. And that actually pushed my son to want to move faster on things. That's happened in a couple of areas when it didn't come from me. And it came from his little brother instead. And, the thing is, is my son, I don't know about yours or the children of your listeners, but my son also hates.

He only likes praise when he feels he deserves it and an instance, it depends every, it, it really depends on the situation, but if there's an instance where he has complied and done a thing slightly against his wishes, and I say, see, I knew you could do it, or that was amazing. Great job for. He's filled with rage and a hot second zero to 60.

I learned that when he was three. But if he is proud of himself, he has a drawing that he made and comes over. Look. He's currently into Star Wars, it's Obi wan Kenobi or whatever. I'm like neat, cool. And if he is proud of himself and he comes to me already smiling, I know that he is asking for praise and, and wanting to accept it from somebody else to validate what he's already thinking.

But when, like I said, when he's not thinking that, and I keep that praise. Forget it. That has been something that when he was so little, I thought this is not normal. What kid doesn't like to hear, great job or a great effort. I'm so proud of you, not my kid. And I think he's because he's highly sensitive.

I think, I think there's a lot of reasons. There are, kids are complicated, but in all of this, and this is my sort of my, my platform on it in all of this, the complications of our kids. As a mother, my mental health can, can sink because I'm just like, am I even doing this? Right? Like, where is the manual on this kid?

Because I don't even, like, he's not even from earth. I have no clue what I'm doing. And I feel like a terrible human because everybody else is like, you should just, you should try. Okay. Well then you try it. You've come here and spend a day a week, a month. A year is yes,

[00:36:32] **Delphine:** I have. I've had. People in my life, in my circle who have said you should just, and my retort to them is sure.

I like I'm go ahead, knock yourself out. Please like help yourself, let me know how it goes and, yep. Game on. Really? It really is one of those for sure. It's it's so it's, I don't want to use angering when people say that to me. Cause that's the wrong word to me. It feels disrespect. Mm, because don't tell me that I haven't been over backwards to do everything I possibly can.

You are telling me that I have not done enough and I'm already telling myself I'm not doing enough, so I don't need you to pile it on. That's really what it feels like.

[00:37:18] **Megan:** Yes. And I would say that that pushed my, my mental health even lower over the years because I got that from many different places. I got it from.

Extended family, friends, colleagues, whatever people I know personally, I got it from. Doctors’ nurses. Oh my gosh. I had a, uh, pediatrician, um, years ago had this like in-house sort of counselor lady and was like, why don't you give her a try? And my okay. And her, we met once and that was too long because she was like, well, have you given him two choices?

Like he can pick a or B and let him feel like he's having some control. I'm like, do I was not born yesterday. First of all. Second of all. When I give him choice a or B, he chooses seen none of the above. And by the way, screw you. That's what he does. Um, it came from a book that, uh, another counselor in school sent home.

She was like, you know, take it or leave it, but you might find it helpful. It's like literally raising children one-on-one or something. And inside the book, or like your basic traditional parenting strategies, it's just. It's frustrating. It is angry. I might say that I do feel anger in that because you know why, here's why, because I already feel like crap.

You just made me, you just validated that I should. Like I already feel bad about myself. I already feel like I'm doing something wrong and I'm a terrible mother. So, anybody who just is like, well, you know, it would be so much easier if you just, or whatever. That's another person saying we see you; you're doing it wrong.

We know the answer. Hertz and over time, but long periods of time, I mean, you, you really start to believe that, and you resent your child and you're mad at yourself and it can affect marriage and it can affect friendships and like everything.

[00:39:15] **Delphine:** Oh yeah. And I mean the marriage and friendship thing as a whole, that's a whole other podcast magazine.

That's like, it's right up there with talking about meds, right? Like that's a whole other discussion on a whole other level. Um, But I will say on the marriage point, cause I think it's important and not necessarily marriage, but on the relationship part with whoever your partner is that that it can be a very push pull.

And one of you will often feel, I think in my opinion, cause that's how I feel in the middle. I often feel in the middle between what I. No, I need to do for them and what my partner thinks we should do. And then I'm like, well, I don't know who to. Okay. So, I'm just gonna do my thing and hope that I'm right.

And don't tell me that I didn't get it right when it flops, because it's that same thing. Right? It's that, it's that whole idea of, of being judged and being told you were wrong and, and there's no right answers with these. Yeah, no, there's, there's no manual. Gosh, it would've been nice. If there was a manual wouldn't there.

[00:40:21] **Megan:** You mentioned how thick that book would be. I mean, first than an old-fashioned telephone book, like it would be. Yeah. Yeah. We can prop my

[00:40:28] **Delphine:** five-year-old up at the dining room table. She'd actually be able to, you know, that'd be a pretty great, great book to sit on. Um, Megan. Yeah. Tell me a little bit about the two things I want you to tell us a little bit about.

So the first one is I want you to . Tell us a little bit about your podcast, because that's where things started for you. Um, so on the hard days as the podcast. So tell me a little bit about the podcast.

[00:40:51] **Megan:** Yeah. Thank you. On the hard days is the podcast. I only started it in January.

It has not been that long. It. Absolutely. I was a blogger for many years in the process of writing about things that were happening in my life with my children already felt natural, but I never went to a podcast format until relatively recently. Um, at first, I was like, I need to share my story. My anxiety, my depression, my just, just discussed with myself was at an all time.

Because my kid was struggling, and I was struggling and I was keeping it all inside. And it's like the secret that moms have, because we're afraid to talk about it. Who would we even tell our neighbor? That's got the perfectly behaved kids that listen right away. You know, our, our family that thinks they know better, like who would we even tell?

So, we keep it inside and it sort of festers and poisons us from the inside out. And I couldn't take it anymore. So at first with the podcast, I started by doing. Sort of venting and there's like, I think 12 or 13 episodes, the first group, the first bunch where I'm sharing my own struggles. And some of, some of those stories are pretty personal.

Um, but I always feel so much better after I get it out. And after I released those episodes of just me struggling, moms started to come out of hiding and it's like, you know, is it safe to come out? Yes, it's safe to come out. And it's like, there are other ones. In the same position. And that's when I was like, well, what if I, you know, my story now, I don't really have, I mean, I can complain all day and I can also rave all day.

I have amazing children, but they are exhausting, but I I've done it enough. What if I start to share the stories of other moms so that the people who are listening? Feel validated and supported again and again and again, and that has taken off in a really awesome way. So, every week I bring a mom onto my show who is raising neuro-diverse kids and I'm no, I'm, you know, I'm no OT or, or speech and language.

Like I'm not here to. Give advice on children raising. Like I need the advice too. I, I don't have the answers. What I'm here for is to hold space for moms who are struggling in raising neuro-diverse kids. Um, it is a place to share those stories, or if you're not comfortable sharing, it's a place to hear the stories of others and the moms would come on my show.

Are amazing like yourself, um, which was such an awesome recording and conversation that we had because it is raw. It is real. Every mom, you know, everybody's got a slightly different story, but the theme is the same. And it's about wanting to feel validated and supported and knowing that you are actually doing what's best for your kid, you are, you're actually doing the very best.

For your kid and there's nothing you could be doing differently. And that is a message that I'm trying to get out. So, every week I bring on a mom and I'm always looking for more guests, I'm currently, um, scheduled out a bit, but I'm always, that's what this show is. I will always need moms to. Take a deep breath and feel brave and come on the show and share how hard it is.

And, and then of course we will surround you with love and support that you need. And that's the whole point. Yeah. So that's, the podcast

[00:44:12] **Delphine:** is so many great episodes in there. There's so many good nuggets in there and. Yeah. There's been a lot of awesome mums. I mean, asides for myself. Of course, of

[00:44:21] **Megan:** course. I mean, my goodness.

[00:44:24] **Delphine:** Okay. But now you've got this new thing going on, which I really, really like, and I've been watching very, very closely. So tell us about, your, , mothers together, support things. So I want you to talk about that because that, I think, in an age where we have now learned how to connect. In a more broad way cause that's how you and I met.

Right. I, I mean, if, if the internet, weren't a thing, I think if pandemic hadn't been a thing, if, you know, needing looking for other outlets, hadn't been a thing we might not have connected. So, tell us about the mothers together, support thing that you've started on. Yeah,

[00:45:01] **Megan:** so, I, I started a support group community for specifically for mothers raising neuro-diverse children.

When my son was. When the re the, the tough, tough behaviors really started to come out around two to three years old. I would have given my left arm to find a group of mothers who aren't even necessarily wanting to give me advice, but they're just going to tell me that I'm doing a really great job and they're going to mean it, and I'm going to believe it to be true.

And I did not have that. I mean, I, you know, friends and family, and, but if they don't get it, they don't get it. And lots of people don't get it. That is the driving force behind the whole thing we need each other. We can't do this alone. We've really cannot. And so, what I have done is created a judgment free, safe space that is off of social media.

You know, it's password protected. It's very private. Moms joined this, it's a forum at first. It looks like Facebook, although it's, there's no algorithm and none of that, but it's a forum that has all these little rooms that you can post questions in, perhaps, a homeschooling room or a twice exceptional room or a, I need a 5 0 4 room, all kinds of different spaces.

But in addition to that, all of these moms are broken up into small support groups. They fill out a questionnaire that show kind of says, you know, what's the age of your child. Um, do they have a diagnosis? Would you prefer to be with other moms who are in the same time zone as you, or who had the same age child as you, or the same diagnosis as your child or lack thereof?

And from there I put moms in small groups of four or five. And we want them. I want the groups to be small because the whole point is personalized support. Facebook groups are great. I mean, I've joined a million of them. But there's like 10,000 people in each one and you slip in unnoticed. Nobody knows you're there.

Nobody knows your name. Nobody knows your story. You can get some good advice there, but that's not what I was looking for. I want. And this is what I've wanted all along. I want friendships. I want connection with mothers that I don't have to explain, but I know their names and we see each other's faces and we talk all the time.

I want friendships. And so, each of these support groups is small and we meet weekly on zoom. If we can make it, you know, sometimes they can't. And we just, it starts off kind of formal, like the first couple of weeks, it's like, it's kind of go around. How was your week? What were your struggles? Your wins by week three, where we've got wine, ice cream, Bernard PJ's hairs and a mess, whatever who cares and we're just laughing and prying and it's, it's so good.

It just feels good in my soul. It's what I needed. And I've been now running mothers together for a few. I've got multiple support groups going. Um, and every month I reopened the doors on the first of every month to start up, um, a new support group of, of mothers who are just joining. Um, it for me has been.

What I needed all along. And now I'm looking to kind of take it to the next level. We're going to have guest experts on once a month, just for like a live Q and a, I've got a therapist I'm bringing on an OT, um, and maybe a book club. There's all kinds of things you can do in this space, but it is different than social media.

It's personal. It is so personal. And I, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about mothers together because it feels so good. I was just talking to, , one of the they're called pod squads. I was just talking to one of them earlier, and then I just was getting a call from another mother on mother's together a few minutes ago.

We're friends. We are here for each other. We get it. We don't have to explain. We don't have to feel shame. Um, we're all in this together. So that, that's kind of the mission behind that.

[00:48:46] **Delphine:** the whole thing is just great, you know, to be able to have the openness and you're right.

The Facebook groups are awesome. Um, But they are big groups. They are, can be very impersonal unless they're sort of private Facebook groups and that's a different beast altogether. But, um, yeah, I love that you've pulled all this together and, and the way it's come together and, and I've watched, I've been honored to be able to watch you go through it all.

So I think it's, it's really awesome. So thank you for bringing all of it and creating all of it and putting it out there. So thank you. Where can people, um, learn about mothers together and on the hard days, do you want to drop your socials? Yeah,

[00:49:29] **Megan:** for sure. Yeah. Thank you. On the hard days, the podcast is wherever you get podcasts, but most people seem to listen through apple or Spotify.

My website is www.ontheharddays.com. And if you add a slash to be into that on the hard days.com/mothers together, it'll take you right to the page about the support group community. But you also, if can just hit me up on Instagram, I'm at on the hard days with dots in between each word. And I'm also on Facebook.

I have a Facebook group called on the hard days, podcasts and community, which is a private. But it's not our, it's not the main support group. It's kind of a gathering place to, to start. Um, so there are many different ways that you can reach me. And, uh, of course I'd love for you to check out my podcast, but more importantly, if you are in need of support or if you were at sort of the end of your rope, like I cannot take this anymore.

And I have no one to talk to about it, please. Please, please reach out, um, to anybody that you feel connected with. But we have a growing group of mothers who are unbelievably supportive and warm because we're all in this same boat as you. And so, I Delphine thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on all of this.

I appreciate it. No, of course

[00:50:42] **Delphine:** I'm always happy to provide resources and support. , it's important that we share what's out there. I think we don't talk enough about. You know, just like we don't talk about our own issues. I don't think we share out the information that we have to offer, whether it's me sharing my kids' story so that you have something to relate to or Megan, whether it's you providing the support group so that other people have people to kind of feel like they have allies.

I think it's just, it's so important that we talk about it and, and we share it because if we keep it to ourselves, we're really not helping. So, Megan, thank you so much for this conversation tonight. It's been really fun.

[00:51:19] **Megan:** Yeah. Thank you so much for having me. I really enjoyed it.