Danielle

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about all things having to do with learning disabilities and learning challenges. Families can be hard. The dynamics between parents and siblings, aunts, and uncles, grandparents, and beyond then when you add in a separation or divorce, this often creates more uncertainty in a family.

Now add all that and a child who is neuro-diverse and not everyone is onboard with the idea of there being. Well, it's a sure recipe for tension and struggle on the show with me. Today is Danielle. She is a mother of four boys, a unique family set up and a child diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

Danielle has navigated many ups and downs with her family. Today. She's going to share some of the lessons she has learned, and I hope that her story might help you navigate what can sometimes be a difficult time. Danielle, welcome to the.

[00:00:51] **Danielle:** Thank you.

[00:00:53] **Delphine:** I'm excited for us to have this conversation because it's such a different perspective from what I've talked about.

 Up to this point. And I think [00:01:00] that the one snippet that I, I hope we can kind of dig into a little bit there. I guess there's two bits really is the, the differing of opinions with families as to whether or not there is a thing, but then also, you know, Other families together and kind of blending your family with another family that can be challenging for lots of different reasons.

So I'm excited for this conversation tonight.

[00:01:23] **Danielle:** Me too. So

[00:01:25] **Delphine:** let's, I mean, again, I gave a little bit of information about you just now, but I can't do your whole story justice. So can you share a little bit about your family, the ups and downs, kind of how it's all gone.

[00:01:36] **Danielle:** Absolutely. So, I'd like to think of myself as a little Mary Poppins in real life.

 I'm a blended family of , gosh, four boys across the board and they range. Let me tell you they range from, , newborn, like 22 months, 20 oh gosh, 20 months old to, , almost 16. , my oldest is 16, so my oldest son is also, , on spectrum disorder. He's on [00:02:00] the spectrum. However you want to word that and according to what you're comfortable with, but we say, , the spectrum and that's what we refer to.

 And then we have, , a second teenager and an 11 year old. And so we're across the board. We're in the season of teenage years as we speak. So there's a lot of hormonal things that are happening in and around the space at any given point in time, there is some sort of a quintessential meltdown or some sort of, um, mom helped me fix.

So I, I definitely do a lot of fixing, , in this Thom space right now, but, I consider, you know, myself and my husband, who is sometimes our biggest kid. , we, we navigate life one day at a time.

[00:02:42] **Delphine:** I think sometimes when you have that much going on, I think it really literally is. I just need to make it through this day.

And depending on the day, sometimes it's this hour, this minute. Right. Like I think it very much depends on the, the moment and the season that you're in. So I think that's, that's a [00:03:00] really good thing to remember is that sometimes it's just moment to moment, right? It's. And I wonder too, like, do we sometimes try to rush things too much as parents?

[00:03:09] **Danielle:** Hmm. , I really came across this interesting conversation with my oldest and it was, it was something that had already kind of glossed over in my head. Like I've lived through that moment. , we have this, phrase, that we kind of maybe in our Southern vernacular that we talk about in, in general saying that things are, you're a little bit of a late.

 And this phrase has been used to describe the longevity of how, how fast or how slow we're expected, quote, unquote, to do things. And in the early years, when I had my son a very young age, let me just say that out loud. I was 21. I was just starting. No, it was, it was very much a kid almost raising a kid and I had to grow and mature very fast in that timeframe.

And what I did, , that phrase late bloomer was a, uh, was so [00:04:00] casually used all the time. And I never, I stopped kind of getting away from that per se. I'd ever didn't even Dawn on me. You know, w it was a form of conditioning, , that phrase. And so I look back at it now and now, , other things are happening in around, , that particular blended family circle, , more life transitions, other parents getting married things along those lines.

So as that's happening, this phrase came back out of nowhere. Oh, you know, They're late bloomers. And my oldest took the biggest offense to the fact that how can you dictate someone else's growth based upon the expectancy of a broken society? How ma don't understand. And that made me stop in my tracks.

Literally just turn around and be like, no, what? Oh my God. He's absolutely right. I have, I need to reprogram reassess the language that I have been taught. [00:05:00] And so, um, it was very interesting to me. And now I'm like thinking in my head, like, yeah, I raced that so long ago, like control all delete, like it was it's gone.

But I think it's very interesting that I could hear that perspective from someone I actually put in that particular category at one point in time. Yeah. And now I can just better appreciate that. We do things when it's our season, when it's our season, it's our season. And so, yeah, that's just a little less than that.

[00:05:25] **Delphine:** That's a really profound thing for him to say, to say, don't put me in that box. Right. Which I think is so much about what I'm trying to do is that we don't have to put our kids in boxes, right. That, that they really can sort of do the. But maybe they don't do it when everybody else does it, but they're going to do the thing.

Yes. Pigeon them. Don't say they can't do it. They just, they're just not ready yet. And why do they need to be ready?

[00:05:53] **Danielle:** Yes. Oh my goodness. That's what speaks eons to me through this whole process of, [00:06:00] of being a parent of a special needs child of a child on spectrum. Like what does that look like? What does that sound like?

So it's really important for me to. Live into the words that I want to live into and set those bars for not only myself, but my children, my children who are not on spectrum, being more appreciative and embracing of different people with different mindsets, with different tones and different expectations of life that teaches them on a much deeper level to appreciate people as they are.

[00:06:31] **Delphine:** So this is a really good segue into my next question for you.

 Listen, family. Tricky sometimes. Right. They can sometimes be tricky families. Don't always, uh, extended family because they don't see the inner workings of the immediate. And their opinion on what is or isn't happening can be hard. So not having family always [00:07:00] see that maybe there isn't your diversity going on, or maybe there is a learning disability or autism actually is present or something.

What was the hardest part for you? Like how did that go? Did everybody acknowledged that it was a thing? Did you have some people saying, oh, it's absolutely not. And some saying it was like, how was that for you?

[00:07:19] **Danielle:** I think it's really interesting that the way that I perceive things, obviously, because I'm boots on the ground, I'm with my son, every step of the way. When he's upset on a daily basis, when he's happy on a daily basis, when he's not happy on a daily basis, he was kind of moody, right?

All those day-to-day things are things that I am positively sharing, with them, with other people outside of our bubble. However, they interpret that differently. , it's still very much a water dam. Everybody experiences. You know, it's, it's, that's, that's normal for anyone. You know, that is the kind of feedback that I receive when I share some of those day-to-day [00:08:00] experiences.

It's almost as if I am so unexperienced that I don't know better to know the difference between. Um, what is happening and what is quote, unquote expected to happen. And I understand that comes with some longevity of parental practice. Sure. But there's a huge part of that where every child is different, their makeup is different.

What happened in your generation is going to be different than what happens with my generation, what happens with my kids' generation. So, while yes, there are some certain milestones, you know, walk in and talking and playing. Certain milestones that you know are but on the other level, the other side of that is embracing the fact that there is a little bit of difference and there it's okay for that to be, um, as well.

There's still a lot of struggle with accepting of some of that on our side. Unfortunately,

[00:08:54] **Delphine:** I think. I've talked about on the podcast before, and I've certainly talked with my [00:09:00] clients when they're sort of going through the early stages of understanding a diagnosis is that, that parental gut check of like, oh, this doesn't feel like everything else.

And when you're that parent at the play date, and you're watching your child play with another child, and you're thinking that. Feel right. Or it doesn't look right, or it doesn't seem like everybody else, or when you were at the play date, you are that parent that's kind of having to, to lead the child to play more or to help the, when, like they don't necessarily, those are all the things that maybe the outside the people outside of the bubble, don't see.

And they're not sensing. So it's so important. I think for parents who are listening to this today to really kind of focus in on them, their gut, their feel, and you're right. I think some of it, when we look at it from our, our outside, the outside people who are outside of our, our bubble, we say, oh, it's just a normal thing.

Or it's just, this it's just that. But they don't live the day-to-day. I love [00:10:00] your term of like boots on the ground. They aren't. From wake up to finally, if they ever do fall asleep, you know, they're not watching that pattern daily. They're not hearing from the teacher every day. They're not hearing from right.

Like that's impactful as a parent, when you're constantly getting the phone calls.

[00:10:19] **Danielle:** We're actually in a needy and a kind of situation. Fun is he's doing well in school. However, there's just some general things that just come along with being an autistic child that is just kind of, you know, naturally there.

they're just a little bit of, you know, there's delays and things. There is not as many assignments being turned in on time. His, his missing assignment number is, is kinda going up this year. And unfortunately where I'm here. With him on a daily basis, you know, reminding him and doing the things, telling him constantly to stay on top of your studies, things along those lines, the other co-parents, his father is really struggling with [00:11:00] understanding why, you know, why, why am I not staying on top of him?

Why am I not doing more for this child? And on the outside, looking in. Sure the numbers don't match the amount of intellect and wonderful knowledge that he can, this child contained. But. There is one, you know, the elements of spectrum that we're not taking into consideration. When we're just saying, this is just a child who just needs, he's being lazy or he's, he's just not being competent enough.

If I was there, then maybe I could, you know, that sort of feel, and it's very hard to explain to. The other parent who's not been as boots on the ground who doesn't see that day to day routine, the amount of actual effort that the child is actually putting into said studies.

[00:11:52] **Delphine:** That's another one of those examples of. Well, it's the age don't turn in

assignments. It's normal [00:12:00] for him to not turn in assignments, but it sounds endless, and I don't know your son, but it certainly sounds to me like he's a very smart, very bright boy who has lots of information to share.

The struggle is getting it from in that big, beautiful brain of his. Into whatever form the assignment needs to be in, but then not only get it onto the paper, but then actually take that physical documentation and say to the teacher here is my work, right? So there's two steps that are really hard for some kids.

One of those steps might be. Both could be really difficult, but either way you're dealing with a teenager, right. Who already is like, why do I need to do this assignment? How is this going to change my life? Why do I need to know this? Right. How does this affect me later in life? Right?

[00:12:47] **Danielle:** Yeah. He wants to be a philosopher.

He wants to be this, you know, this amazing, um, ecologists, maybe he talks about these wonderful aspiring ideas. And then we kind of go back a little bit and do that homework. [00:13:00] Okay. To be a philosopher, you need to have this type of degree in order to get that degree. There's these areas of studies that you must focus on.

It's totally into mythology. He wants to be in mythology, mythological studies. There we go. And that's just another area where we can, we can help support that. Without necessarily pushing him over the cliff of stress, stressing him out to the point where he doesn't, you know what I mean? And I think there's just realistic viewpoints from both sides of parenting co-parenting and blended families that we can support now.

My personal stance is I don't care if you mop floors for a living or if you're creating the next fine discovery. I want you to be a good person in the world. I am more. Excited about the idea of my child, knowing what he needs to do to be the next academic person. But I am more concerned about him actually, just wanting to appreciate nature, wanting to [00:14:00] appreciate community, um, which is a real struggle, a lot with various types of teenagers on the spectrum.

So the fact that. Our parenting values can sometimes vary. Um, it doesn't mean that there's not common ground there and you can still, you know, compromise in some areas in regards to how you want to raise your child.

[00:14:18] **Delphine:** So blended families can be different. To come together on a good day. I do not have personal experience with it.

 But when we look. Blending families and bringing families together. And we look at your current partner and then you bring in, you know, your autistic son who then has to kind of, and again, I don't know him personally, so I don't know kind of where his parameters are and where his comfort levels are.

But I think when we think generally of autistic people, you know, we, we think of, you know, they have very set mindset on like how things are going to go with. So their way of life. And then you say to him, okay, so mommy's met this new person and he's he or she, they are going to come into our life. [00:15:00] How did that go over with your partner, with your son?

Did your partner bring in new children that then like brings a whole other element? And I know you have a tiny one, so that's like a whole, so how, how did you. I think walk through that. And how did that season, if we're going to talk about kind of putting our life into seasons, how did that season go over?

Because I know for my kiddo and he he's, you know, the anxiety when we change things. Yeah. There's a lot of talk. There's a lot of setup. There's a lot of prep, like talk to me a little bit about how you blended the families and how the partner kind of. The new partner kind of deals with and how was that for them and how, cause that would have been a whole, other thing to take on.

[00:15:51] **Danielle:** It was the funny thing is, is that we were older. And so again, I mentioned like I've had, I had my oldest son when I was 21 and I didn't [00:16:00] meet my partner until I was well into 28, 27. And so it was one of the situations where I had matured a lot since the time that I had my first child in the time that I had my skin.

 And then also on top of that, my beloved, partner also also was kind of embracing his nephew, which eventually became ours. Partnering or player number three, before we had player number four. And so there's a large gap, between some of these age groups. I mean, there's a 12 year gap between, embracing, children from all backgrounds too.

And let me just preface that with my children, not all the same ethnicity, so I want to make sure I make that very clear it's for some people that's, you know. Oh, okay, great. You have. Kids from different backgrounds, but it's also like a matter of like honoring all of the kids and all of their cultures and all of their heritage as well.

So my husband knew that he wanted children. He didn't have children at the time. He knew he wanted children. And so when I came along and I wasn't prepared for that [00:17:00] whatsoever, it was really a stumble to be honest. And then he was like, gotcha. Um, it was very, very cool that. The way my kids were young. So my oldest son at the time was like four.

And so, because it happened so young in their lives, it was just a natural acclimation. So, um, you know, we went from, Hey, let's play blocks together. My husband and my oldest son is still a very old picture of them when they were just meeting each other. And, for my second fun at the time, Just one. He was a little under one actually, when they first met.

And so he was able to play at the park with them, but miles, my, oh man, my oldest, he was so into wanting to play blocks and put things together and create little, , little play toys and things like that with him. And I felt like that was a good building block for the two of them to kind of. Naturally gravitate toward each other and over time, year after year.

And so we were married. That's how it was. they just kinda created this little cool, neat bond at the [00:18:00] time. My oldest father was not as engaged with him, so it really almost kind of was like a swap at one point. And then eventually, if he started to be more, his father became more active in his life.

 My partner was able to still kind of keep up with him with school and awards and you know, all those types of fun activities, but I always tried my very best to keep everybody celebrating in the same space and that. Big family rule that we have today, we have kids from multi multitudes of different families, but we always invite them , for birthdays major holidays that we jointly celebrate things along those lines, because I really wanted that message of this child is loved by so many different people.

So that blended family aspect was. Was a little bit, for me it was great. It was like, yes, turn the fire up. This is exactly what this child needs. And then from all my other children's aspects, as well, and then a couple years later we added one more child,[00:19:00] to the mix. And that was player number three.

 Michael, he was, originally our nephew that we adopted and that helped bring this whole new element into play. And we also got to see my oldest son. Who's on spectrum, really interact with someone close to his age. He didn't have that before. Before we were, the father's family was kind of a polar, if you will, they only had one child and there was not any additional kind of cousins sing along those lines.

Necessarily be as around miles, they were there. They were present. But I feel like on a day to day basis, he was flying solo for awhile until my, my second youngest. And then my, our adopted nephew came into. And so it was really interesting to see how this dynamic work went very quickly from it's my world of Legos and whatever I want to do to now I have to share and navigate in play with other people.

So that was a little bit different that Amanda was really, really [00:20:00] like a little bit of an adjustment period. Little did we know he was very quiet in the very beginning and we didn't know how to take that. But there was definitely some. Anxiety building from that, which we later kind of discovered as he got older.

But, I definitely, in the beginning he just kind of seemed to fall in line with everything he wanted to be the leader of course, because he was the oldest. So there was that. But as he got older, he really just kind of formed into this really kind of leadership. Kind of person into this very day.

When you hear his voice, it's like a commanding voice. You don't expect a teenager to sound that way, but he does. And so I think it's very profound that over the years he's been able to, to really just blossom in that way.

[00:20:43] **Delphine:** What was it for your partner? And this is maybe an unfair question because I'm asking you to give me a thought or opinion on his thoughts.

So probably not entirely fair, but I'm going to ask the question anyway. Okay. How was it for you to explain to your partner and how do you think your partner felt kind of trying to understand your eldest [00:21:00] and his differences and difficulties? Because, you know, it sounds to me like, oh, they just sat down and played blocks together, but I'm sure there were moments that were.

Yeah, it's not easy because he may not have wanted the block to be placed quite that way. Or, you know, those are the wrong color or no, or this is you're sitting in the wrong spot, right? Like, so how did your partner handle that? Cause that's like, it's different when you, you, I think, I think it's different when you start with that child from an infant and you start to learn their.

Synchronicities, but they need their things that they, and you can kind of, you know, you can play the Tetris game of like, well, I kind of want them to feel this way, so I'm gonna, but when you're new on the scene and you haven't had them since they were little, how did that go?

[00:21:46] **Danielle:** Okay. So there's a really good story that comes from this.

It's actually the first time that my partner Kevin made peanut butter and jelly. So back in the day, Mom made traditional peanut butter and jelly, PB and J with a knife. [00:22:00] And so when my husband, future husband walked into the picture, he started making a peanut butter and jelly with the spoon.

Myles would not touch said sandwich. I mean, it would just. It's not the same. And he kinda would throw on this a little bit of a fit. Like you can't make me eat this because you know, it's not, it's not made. Right. So he already had, like you said, the sequences in his head, he already had those built into the system.

And if it's outside of this line that it doesn't fly, it doesn't get the pass. And so that was our running joke in the beginning that, you know, Definitely mild is a little extra particular about how he likes things. , I will say also that in the beginning, before we had a formal diagnosis and it was just me being, you know, aware of what was kind of happening in and around him.

Other people were supporting this habit. And so it was one of those things that just kept snowballing. And to this day, there's still a [00:23:00] group of people, extended family that continued to keep things and the exact same place as they are. So he can return back to exactly how things are every single time visit.

[00:23:11] **Delphine:** And there is something sweet about that. There is something very sweet and very kind of heartwarming about family who understand that he needs things to be a particular way to feel. Comfortable. However, as a parent of one child who is not autistic, but does require things to be very particularly done. I do find it is important for them sometimes to be shoved out of their comfort zone.

And for you to say to them, life is not always pretty with a bow and in the same order sometimes. The cart falls over and the stuff falls out.

[00:23:49] **Danielle:** Yes, exactly. Exactly. Yes. And to continue to go about life, not, not necessarily worried about what's happening with the next step, [00:24:00] but how can I contribute to make it what I want it.

And I think that is the mindset that I've continued to try to embed a little deeper, especially with my oldest, with all the children and trying to help them better understand their surroundings. It's not about what's been given, but what you can give. And what you can create based upon where you are.

And so that type of mentality, that positive mentality is what I want to keep echoing out over and over again, , to, to people who are in similar places. Maybe they can't, maybe not, I don't wanna say camp, but not as appreciative of that spark of their child. Maybe that's a super annoying thing to you, but try to see that as such an amazing gift that they're so intentionally focused on details, they're capable of doing that.

That is a gift. People want people want to pay money for that. The people want to pay surgeries for that. It's one of those situations where you have to kind of embrace those things and realize, okay, how can I make this,[00:25:00] , equitable for my children as an example, but also how do I make this equitable as a life lesson for them to continue to grow and blossom based upon those foundations?

So, yeah,

[00:25:10] **Delphine:** so I know your family is super diverse. Your kids come from various backgrounds, and I think that. Allows conversation about differences to happen more openly in your household than it might in the average family, my family, we don't have that, that wealth of diversity in it. I mean, there's a bit of diversity here and there, but by and large, we're all kind of.

But how does it allow you to talk more openly as a family about the struggles that your eldest son has? Because I would imagine that your nephew who you adopted didn't grow up with neurodiversity potentially around him. And then he's coming into a family with a neuro diverse person. How, how do you keep an open line of communication?

What is the conversation that happens around the dinner table about that?

[00:25:55] **Danielle:** Oh yeah, I think it always kind of comes from a place of curious. [00:26:00] So I think that's the best thing about it. My wife has tons of questions. He wants to ask all the things we'll also have them were inappropriate sometimes. And it's one of those situations where we've built a tolerance, but in the beginning there wasn't one.

And so it got to a point where it started to become almost vindictive because they're so close in age, they're going through the same things almost back to back, miles, more so less than his younger brother. So younger brother kind of progressing in a lot of areas in older brother. It's not as much.

And so there's that kind of, you know, positive and negative charge they're happening between the two of them in a lot of ways. And so we got to a point where it was so, surmountable, I mean, you could just couldn't ignore it. They were both kind of just going at it. Boys and teenagers and all the things.

So they were just kind of verbally going at it. I always make the joke that, you know, these two talk to each other very well, but just talk different languages. Miles' talks with his mouth. And my second oldest son, talked with his hands. And so it's one of those [00:27:00] situations where.

Words and hands aren't gum mix very well. So we actually had to lay, you know, eventually some, ground rules, things along those lines to kind of, this is the stop sign that you're not supposed to cross. And so that was kind of how we worded it and the how I still use it to this day with my oldest.

So he better understands that I can make a joke about your shoes, but I can't make a joke about my brother's girlfriend. I can make a joke about. Something that happened on TV, but I can't make a joke about, how that is. A little bit more conflicted with, you know, racial inequity and things along those lines.

There's certain areas that he is learning in his growth of social, emotional learning, that he realized, okay, that's a no fly zone. I'm learning a little harder. Don't say that. That would cause my brother to want to use.

[00:27:46] **Delphine:** So I think one of the things that I think is important to talk about, and I think you can just speak about it uniquely.

We've talked about, I think in education where we see that there is a difference in the way in which [00:28:00] we perceive, or we might perceive whether we do it intentionally or unintentionally, that sometimes navigating the system when you have a marginalized child, whether there's a learning disability, whether they're autistic, whether whatever it is that they can quickly be labeled, it can be thought that there isn't anything that can be done, or they're not as capable.

What are those obstacles and how can families who are of mixed race or are of a minority group, be able to advocate for their children in an effective way. I asked that question even makes sense.

[00:28:37] **Danielle:** In terms of this past year, especially in the era of COVID and in the era of black lives matter and the era of, just celebrating recently autism awareness month, like in all these spectrums, if you will, there's this level of seeing people for people. And I think that is one of the biggest advocating messages that I can give to someone who is maybe struggling with [00:29:00] that.

Of course, profiling will always exist in the world. It's never going to go away. Unfortunately. And in all to see a part of our human nature in areas to do that. But what I challenge you to do is kind of go against that grain and start seeing people for people, knowing that yes, this child may have some sort of disability, may have some sort of, area of spectrum that.

May not completely embrace, but I need to make wiggle room to see him for himself without labeling it, whatever it is that the world or society is telling us to do. I would love to give an example of my youngest second youngest, Ellington, who is my. Black child. And it's so interesting because through the S the way that he has gone through some of the public school systems, the way that he encourages learning on his level, is different from other kids different from, the way that we typically [00:30:00] learn in a classroom setting.

And so he's definitely more hands-on learning, but as we progress through middle school right now, I'm noticing. He's very easily profiled as the kid who may or may not need extra, extra, or the kid who is, assumptively doing something he's, you know, a behavioral issue in the class and it goes to that direction.

And there's just a lot of, I understand the reasoning why, some of these educators go that direction. There's a level of profiling. Have right, but it's also appreciating the different types of diversity or different types of gifts in that child Ellenson BA's head. So he loves talking. He, we, we did. And when he was two, we called him, you know, we did a politician politics party birthday, for him as a presidential, we called it L for two campaign because he is just the most.

And unfortunately he picked up his mother skills, the gift of gab, and he definitely just [00:31:00] loves talking. So he just naturally talks. And so as he's growing into his teenage years, he's becoming more and more of a social butterfly that when you kind of like put that, sit down, be quiet. And so he's better learning now how to use his tone and his language a little bit better so that he can get his point across without sounding like, you know, he.

I didn't understand the question or he was belligerent or, you know, being something that he didn't intend to be in that moment. So we're working a lot with language and tone and voice and things along those lines. So he can continue to be that great oratory person he wants to be as he grows. But I want to apply that same logic and thinking to.

To this spectrum, to how we see each other on spectrum or how we see others on spectrum. We can apply that same basic law logic of let's use these tools that you do have let's focus on how we can connect those things and how we can morph these things into something that would actually benefit [00:32:00] them on a long-term.

Or benefit them for a future purpose. And I think that's something that we forget to do as adults. We forget because we're so concerned with our own fears. We forget how easy it is that these, these kids now in this technological age are often lost in their own spheres. And so my job in a lot of ways as mom is to put these fears together, make one giant circle and just kind of stare at each other and be like, okay, now what.

[00:32:30] **Delphine:** That's true. And, and I think we've learned to begin to see people more. I don't think we're there yet. I really don't. I think we have a long way to go, but I would say, I think you're right. I think all the things that have happened needed to happen, it was going to happen anyway. But I think what happened was we found ourselves in a spot where we really couldn't do anything, but reflect upon.

What change needed to happen. And the other [00:33:00] things happened to push the balance, to create the need. And I think it's a lovely thing that has happened, but it does. I certainly have found myself in my educational role taking a minute and going, okay. I need to check myself for a minute here and see where I'm at.

But the last few years have taught me that it's okay for me to say, can you hold on a minute? I need to think I need to reflect, and then I need to check my tone. Right. I need to check the comment. That is a bad, but that it's okay to take that minute and reflect and think before you make a decision or an assumption about someone or something.

[00:33:37] **Danielle:** Absolutely.

[00:33:38] **Delphine:** And I think that's, what's so great about what you're saying is that we need to see the person. Yes. Before you see the other, because it's the person in front of you that okay. Is the thing that matters, you know, the whole person.

[00:33:52] **Danielle:** Yes, absolutely. It is definitely not like a 200 page book of this is my life.

It's more of a, what can I do in this moment [00:34:00] to best honor this person in front of me. And that takes a lot of guts to be able to say that to yourself, it takes a lot of guts to be able to say, it's one of the. You know, what could I do in this moment to best honor this person in front of me? Yes. Yeah.

[00:34:16] **Delphine:** Yeah. It's respect and understanding. Right. But yeah, absolutely. Should be given without question, in

my opinion, but yes.

You've I'm sure if you're like most other parents, you know, you're looking for resources, you're looking for information. I mean, were there any things that you came across, whether it's about, you know, the blending of families when families can be very different, whether it's around, sort of the.

 Scenario in terms of understanding how best to support that biases, are there some good resources out there that you think either educators, parents, whoever might be listening might want to take a look at to help understand kind of what it looks like? [00:35:00]

[00:35:00] **Danielle:** Yeah. We've had a lot of different types of books that we've read on Amazon there's webinars out there now, that really work with blended family lifestyles and multiethnic blended family specifically.

So I think that's really important because we talk about how easy it is to have, you know, sometimes biracial children. Are, you know, the stopping point for that conversation. And it really isn't like there's so much more that is, can be done on a deeper level and honoring our children's heritage is also really important that we honor parents is here to just nothing that's really important as well as we kind of dive a little deeper with the blended families.

But, , just in general, a couple of different books that absolutely absolutely loved. On top of my head, there is, the miracle. Bye I'm Mariam kosher, which I absolutely love her perspective and her personal life story and how she's raised her six children from across four countries. And that was really helpful in helping me want to appreciate [00:36:00] life and helped me appreciate the life that I have.

[00:36:04] **Delphine:** . That's that's life, lesson, number one for

everyone and anyone, right?

A hundred percent. That's a great one. Um, So Danielle, I, I know you don't just do this.

You do lots of interesting things. I follow you in all kinds of fun places. So where can people learn more about you? I mean, they've gotten a chance to listen to you for the last little bit, but I, if they want to learn more about you, where can they find you?

[00:36:27] **Danielle:** They can definitely find me on the gram @octanedesigns with an s or you can checkout our website at lexoctane.com.

I am a creative director of a 12 year old digital marketing and branding firm based in the heart of the. Amazing.

[00:36:42] **Delphine:** Well, Danielle, thank you so much for this conversation. This is really, really fun. I feel like we could talk for hours and hours on all sorts of things, but I appreciate you letting us into your family a little bit, helping us understand how you brought two different groups together and how you continue to grow your family.

So thank you so much. Thank you.[00:37:00]