Mable’s Labels

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education product. Where are we talking about all things having to do with learning differences and learning disabilities. Motherhood comes with so many gifts and challenges. All our children. Are you. And the way we choose to parent our children is different for parents of children who are neuro-diverse.

We don't start out knowing what's coming. We don't always know how to handle all the ups and downs of parenting children who don't fit into a box today on the show. I'm super excited to bring to you a conversation with Julie Cole. She's a former lawyer. Co-founder of Mabel's labels and a mom of six within those six wonderful children are six, very wonderful, very different personalities and different brains.

Each one of them has their own story. Julie, welcome to the show. Thanks for being willing to share your story. And I hats off six. I have three and I don't know how I could double that and still stay

[00:00:57] **Julie:** sane. So well done. Nobody's said anything [00:01:00] about me being same here. Okay. Let's just clarify that. Thank you so much for having me.

So,

[00:01:07] **Delphine:** okay. I, listen, we don't need to talk about each six children individually. Cause I, you know, you could write a book on each of them. I'm sure. On multiple copies, you could do your own Harry Potter, you know, series of books on them. I'm sure. But tell us a little bit about your kids and kind of maybe.

Basics of like, you know, this happened that I don't know, like what do you want to share with us about your kids? They're all awesome in their own way. They

[00:01:30] **Julie:** sure are. And my kids are getting very big now. So I'll start. Why don't I start at the top and I'll tell you a little bit about each one of them just to kind of lay the groundwork.

So my eldest child is named Mac and he, he has. And he's now 21. He's almost 22. And he's actually the reason Mabel's labels started. Basically, I wanted to leave the traditional workforce after he was diagnosed. He got diagnosed at three years, three months. We also, already had two little sisters, so it was already kind of [00:02:00] busy household, but that was, yeah, that time I was like, I needed something with a little more flexibility.

I needed to be able to advocate for him. I wanted to set up a therapy program in my basement and all that jazz. So. I didn't think the traditional workforce would suit our family any longer. So that's when I left the traditional workforce and started Mabel's labels with my, my business partners. So Mac is kind of responsible for the whole label thing.

So there's him. And then 15 months later I had Posey. Who's a neuro-typical kiddo and she's very, um, yeah, my kids all say she's got extremely. Biggest sister complex. Like she was born a little old lady and I think also having a brother who was not neuro-typical, she became a little therapist or in her own way, I can tell many, many funny stories about Posey.

It was funny too, having Posey. Cause it was kind of my alert to wait something's going on with Mac because I'm like, why is. Toilet train. Why is she talking? Like, why does she want me? [00:03:00] So there are a whole bunch of things with having like the little sister immediately afterwards. Next came my next child.

Spencer is nonbinary. They are 18 years old and they are in well secondary universe. So the biggies are in, I guess. Third second university. So they're all away from home. And then I had, and that child's very neuro-typical, but interestingly, I ended up doing a different education plan with that one too, because I felt the public system was trying to make them just like everyone else.

And I didn't. Them to be like everyone else. I wanted them to be just like them. So I had to make some educational and decisions, but not around, not around academic ability or anything like that. Totally. A neuro-typical kid and then came just to me. She is in grade 11 and she's a total neuro-typical kid.

And then came number five Clancy, a little boy. And I was really excited to get this little boy, but I was very worried about the [00:04:00] autism thing, because it is more common in boys and I, but then part of me was like, Hey, look, I've already, I know what I'm doing. So if he does have autism, I got this covered, but he's he's neurotypical, but he's had other health issues.

Dealt with education stuff differently for him as well. And then came my little guy, my sixth Finian he's in grade seven and he has add ADHD, LD, and a little bit of giftedness. You know how our kids there's. Sometimes they have very splinter skills and he's just been a delight with a very complex learning profile, but he's doing, he is doing great.

And again, his educational journey has been a little different as well because of his . Funny learning profile. So there we go. That's the six of them. And like I said, three are away and three are home. So it feels very quiet around. I love that.

[00:04:45] **Delphine:** You're saying with three at home, it feels very quiet and I'm thinking there's three at home and I literally just might mute it.

Literally just yelled at the boys to be like, I'm recording.

[00:04:53] **Julie:** Be quiet. I love it. Well, you know what the thing is, it's all relative, right when you're used to six even, well, you know it two [00:05:00] with three, even when one goes like over at grandma's. It's just a whole different dynamic. Right? Totally. So I loved what you

[00:05:09] **Delphine:** had said about how you had.

One, and then you were like, oh wait, this one's not talking, but this one is talking. And how that kind of helped. I don't want to say helped you see what was going on, but did it confirm for you that you felt like something was up or did it make it

[00:05:31] **Julie:** worse? There were a few things, like, part of me was like, well, you know, people would be like, well, boys and girls are different and, and, uh, and you know, I think it is tough when it's your first.

That's the neuro-diverse one because it's all, you know, and for me, I was just like, well, the little friend, and he did develop in a lot of ways, quite typically, like he walked on his first birthday and he, there were a lot of things. The thing is he seemed to be declining. He was losing skills. And then, you know, people would be like, well, he didn't just have a new, you didn't just have [00:06:00] another baby that, you know, people look for excuses.

And I was the thing that I was on top of it was the language he was. Developing language in an, in a, in a typical way. He didn't have the words at 18 months and his actually expressive language was better than his receptive, which is so backwards. So I did at quite a young age, get him in speech therapy and the speech therapist did not think there was something going on other than.

Other than a speech issue. And also, unfortunately we had a red herring that his ears were bad and he, so we had to get the grommets or the tubes put in and the dogs were like, oh yeah. Once those go in, give it three months, we'll be talking your ear off so that I felt delayed things as well. Cause we were waiting and then we're like, well, the language isn't coming and now he can hear, so what's going on.

Right. So. And that was that. And eventually I think it was actually, I was having my third child and, uh, my mom and mother-in-law kind of sat me down and they were like, you know what? We have some concerns about [00:07:00] Mac. And I was like, I know I was like, you, you guys know I'm having like a C-section tomorrow, are you really doing this to me right now?

And they're like, yeah, we really are. And I was like, I know, I know I'm like, let me have this baby tomorrow and then I'll get really on top of it. Um, so that's what I did. And I put together a team of a pediatric neurologist, a speech pathologist, the whole team, and went through many, many, many tests. And then we came back yeah.

With the diagnosis. And I think at that point I was like all of a sudden, like, Okay. You know what? I'll take semantic, pragmatic disorder. I'll take the other things you were really doing to say he was, I don't want this one, but then I went quickly. My sister said, I went from like a hot minute of denial to, you know, just a little bit of morning.

And then by the next day it was like, right now, what are we going to do you have this information? What can we do? And you know, like I said, he. You know, he's 21. Now he's away living at university, living on his own. Uh, he never calls [00:08:00] home. He goes and parties with his high school friends. When it's not COVID times he is a lifeguard, he has his driver's license.

He's done aid work in Africa. He was an Ontario scholar. He, you know, he he's done really great. And, uh, and it, it was a lot of work. We spent a lot of money in therapy when he was a little guy. A lot, lot. And it drives me crazy that, you know, families don't always have access to services and that we let these kids, you know, sit on waiting lists.

There's, that's a whole other topic that, but it drives me crazy. And I, I feel very blessed that, you know, our family all pitched in all of our family got trained in, in the therapy. Everybody knew what was on his, on his skills, acquisition list and worked on. Everybody in our family had required reading and did it.

So it was a real team approach. And, uh, I think we're really benefiting from that when we're seeing how he's, how he's doing and he is he's awesome. But I will say we still have, you know, I [00:09:00] said to him act, do you think, you know, you've kind of outgrown your autism? He's like, oh no, no, mom, I'm just really good at hiding it.

And we still see it with like his executive functioning. He does work with an executive functioning coach, still. He Skypes once a week, helps them stay organized, manage his essays, you know? So there'll be like, okay, the essays. Then Matt, give me your plan about when you're going to chunk out, when you going to be done your research, when you're going to have this part done and cause he's still, you know, that executive functioning stuff is tough.

It's still tough. So he's come a long way, but it's still something that he struggles with. Did you, when did you start

[00:09:32] **Delphine:** the conversation with. About his autism. Did you approach that with him or did he know? Like, I'm curious to know how, because I went one way in my house, but I'm curious to know how it went in your house.

So

[00:09:43] **Julie:** it's so funny how it went with us. So I was actually preparing there's a whole program around sort of outing your kid to themselves. I love that they call an outing

[00:09:54] **Delphine:** to yourself. Like what interesting. Like can't it just be, I don't know, telling your child about their [00:10:00] strengths and needs or like, explain that to them.

Yeah, no, no, I know, but like, you know, to say outing, I don't know. I don't know. Anyway, go ahead. Sorry.

[00:10:07] **Julie:** Well, I mean, that's, that's not a term, that's just something I say, you know, like it's not like an actual, like I just, because I think it's so ridiculous. A little outing, like, you know, it's um, yeah, so it's just, there's just a program.

So I was kind of, you know, starting with things like, you know, race different and doing all that and that, and then actually, when we were on our way, he was probably. Eight or nine. And I was driving him to Cubs like Cub Scouts. And there's this little kid in Cub Scouts who is pretty different and kind of annoying.

And, you know, Mack was saying how this kid's really annoying and whatever. And I was like, look, I need you to be patient with so-and-so because clearly there's something. And we would always use that term. Like if we don't know what the story is with the kid or their diagnosis, we're just like, something's up.

So you know what? We have to be a little more patient, a little more forgiving, work, a little harder to make them feel included, reach out, invite them to your birthday party, [00:11:00] all that stuff. We would always just say, something's up. So I was like, look, man, you gotta be patient, blah, blah, blah. Something's up with him?

And he's like, mom. Yeah. So what's up with. I was like, oh right. I was like, yeah, actually you have this thing called autism. And you know, actually people with autism, but it's a spectrum. And you know, like Johnny's got autism. He's like, yeah, but I'm not like Johnny. I'm like, no, exactly. Ever needs to sort of different.

He's like, oh, that's interesting. Anyway, after Cubs, can we go for ice cream? And I'm like, yeah, let's go for ice cream after Cubs. And that was it. And I laughed because I'm like here, I was preparing for it to be a big deal and it wasn't, I mean, kids know, um, and that, yeah, so that, that's how it happened for us, you know?

And then, then just COVID and with the siblings and siblings have always been involved in his therapy in double sessions and the cousins and that sort of thing. So it's always just been a part of things and it's. Uh, it's not a bad thing. It's just part of him like, but I love, and that's why I use person first language.

Like, I don't say, like I have an autistic son, I have one son with autism. He's [00:12:00] also an amazing son and a great brother and a good hockey player and a good link. So many things. It's just a part of, one of the parts of him.

[00:12:08] **Delphine:** And I think that's the part that's so great. Yeah. Instead of it being a negative or something that you need to not talk about or not be open about or not, whatever.

It just, it just is. I mean, it has, you know, it's like his eyes are whatever color they are. I mean, mine are brown and that is just what I have. I am, it is a part of me and we just move on, you know, and that's kind of the open discussion in our house too. A lot around my kids and dyslexia and their ADHD and their anxiety too, for sure.

Also nice about it is that when there are struggles, you can say, well, the anxiety is causing you to feel this, but then when you can go past it, when you can, whatever the anxiety is. So at the moment it's sleeping with the lights out, this is the big thing for one of my kiddos. Um, But he did it the other night.

He did it with his lights out and I was like, Hey buddy, look, you like you did all night with her. Like, you know, and you can, you can pull them. Not that [00:13:00] you wouldn't do that with a neuro-typical kids. You weren't sure. But when you have all these other underlying issues, you, I dunno, you, you pointed out more, you as a parent, I think you pointedly say, Hey, look, you did this.

[00:13:11] **Julie:** Really for sure, for sure. And you can kind of like, and you can kind of be like, Hey buddy, you know, you know, your anxiety sometimes does this to you or sometimes lies to you or, you know, the brain gremlins got adjust. So let's bring him to some of our strategies or, you know, we, we can, we can put a name to it and it makes them, I think, yeah, it just helps them understand.

Yeah.

[00:13:30] **Delphine:** So we talked a little bit about school. You mentioned that you kind of had one of your daughters in a different kind of schooling because you wanted that sort of different perspective. And I mean, I'll be really transparent as we start this conversation. I have three kids in three different schools for three different reasons,

[00:13:46] **Julie:** right?

Six kids, six different schools. I hear your mama. Right. So we

[00:13:50] **Delphine:** sort of navigate that. And, and I know, I mean, as a, as a public school educator, and now in administration, You know, I'm very conscious of the fact that, like, [00:14:00] I think it's important that children go to public school because I think there's lots of things that can be valued there, but I am now also more open, more aware that there are alternatives

[00:14:11] **Julie:** to these ideas.

So let's yeah.

[00:14:14] **Delphine:** So let's talk about these. Like how did you make these decisions? Because I think as parents, I know for me, it was. I felt guilty. I was unsure. I didn't know. I was like, act, what if I make the wrong choice? What do I do? So walk us through how you did it for your kids, because your kids are all different.

And with six choices to make, I can't even

[00:14:33] **Julie:** imagine. So the first was my kids were at the local Catholic school and I was doing really well there. I'm really trying to advocate. And, you know, Mack had an EA. He probably had an EA when other kids needed it more, all that jazz. But quite frankly, they didn't want to see my ugly mug in that.

Every day. And so, you know, and you know, when I would go to IEP meetings or whatever, I wouldn't just like go home. I had my team, like I had my private educational consultant. I had [00:15:00] my mom, who's a retired special ed teacher. I had the dad, I had like, I had everybody on my side of the table. They knew that I did my research, you know, all that stuff.

And that was super important. I really do. Really, I feel it drives me crazy when I feel so bad when parents don't have the confidence or maybe they're ESL or, and it's very difficult for them to advocate. And I always think, you know, you just need to find it like somebody to go with you. I go, I go in with lots of other parents and, and, and to, to their kids meetings, just because sometimes you need that other set of ears to, cause this is emotional stuff.

So I was getting a lot, lot from the, from the school, but eventually it got to the point where. The classes, the classroom, he was in grade six and the classroom was just too big. And, you know, there was like one EA there for like, I think there were nine kids in the class who probably had an IEP and Mac was not behavioral.

So he was basically just slipping through the cracks because he could pretend he was paying [00:16:00] attention and fool everyone. And at that point, I was like, you know what? It just doesn't suit him. He just needs a small classroom environment. So I did some research and I did pull him and I put him in a private school where there were nine kids in the class.

And he, I mean, he was doing science around a table and it was just, he just didn't meet any other support once he was that engaged. So, you know, as a public school advocate, both my parents were high school were in public school teachers. This was that. It was tough because I am like, I'm a socialist, I'm like a big.

Healthcare education, everybody, even Steven fair, fair, fair. But at the same time, when it's your kid and I'm like, I have the means, this is crazy. I'm going to do it. I'm going to do, I'm going to do it when I made sure I did was always make a big donation because I could, you know, there's a lot of privilege I'm talking about here, um, to the public school system.

When I would put my kids in private school. And that would make me feel somehow, make me feel better. But at the same time as a parent, you have to do the best for your kids. And that was the [00:17:00] best for him. So I have to be a little bit unapologetic about that, and I think, you know, parents out there will understand.

Um, so that was him. And then the next one. So that was great. Six. The other thing that I did, he was a November baby and I took that opportunity when he left public school to put him in grade six, again in private school. And it was such a great decision and he was a little bit mad at me at first. I was like, buddy, you know, we're just doing our victory lap.

Now. You're like, you're a November kid. And that was the thing that I have to say about private school. That was so amazing for me is that all the time I spent fighting against. I was now a client. I was a paying client. So if I wanted his educational consultant to go in three times a week and watch them in class, I got to do that.

If I want it, like I, if I wanted to speak, I wanted to make him French exempt. No problem. He's French accent. I'm like this kid needs another language. Like he needs a whole in that, like he can be working with a tutor or doing other things during French class. Not having a fight for me was [00:18:00] awesome. Um, because you know, you do, you could do get tired and when you have five other kids and you're, you know, fucking focusing so much on one it's it's exhausting stuff, you know, you know, this moment.

Um, so that's what we did with him. And then the next kid Posey totally neuro-typical kept her in public school. The thing was when Mac went to high school, she wanted to be at high school with her brother. And that's how so at the end of those three, all ended up the three big ones who were in grade like 9, 10, 11.

They all ended up in the same high school. Now the third one, again, that was my one who's non binary, but at the time was, they were assigned female at birth. So it was living that life, um, and, and doing fine, but such an interesting different personality and just. Joy to raise like such, um, such a little monkey.

Anyway, um, it was her grade. It was their grade four teacher who said. I'm seeing Spencer change. Like they're going, they're going, they're turning into like the [00:19:00] sort of going into themselves a bit. I'm like, oh my gosh, you're noticing to me too. And I just decided that, you know what that school wants. You know, I think Publix was great if you're an apple and the apples will do great, but Spencer's an orange and I didn't want them not being an orange.

I didn't want them getting turned into an apple. I loved their orange Venice. So again, I pulled that one out of that school and put them in the school. The big brother was at again, it was just a smaller classroom where all the personalities were really valued and they loved the differences and then they blossomed.

And that was, so that was a really great, um, great decision. And then yeah, then the next two were at public school and didn't did find it fine. And then Finn, I put into a private school with all of his diagnoses and I will tell you at one point. I was like, I can't do all these schools. So even though my two kids at public school were doing fine, I didn't move with them to school with Finn, just so that I could have three at the same high school and three at the same grade [00:20:00] school.

So at that point, all of them were at private school. So at that point I did the, like my two kids who did find in public school. I didn't move them to the private system, just so that. Ma I had to manage it a little bit more, but now I've got one in a high school, one at a different high school, and one's still in grade school in three and three different universities.

So back at it, yeah. It starts

[00:20:20] **Delphine:** all over again. Right. And it seems to come cycle wise, I find. But, um, yeah. Yeah. I think the only thing that's saving my husband and I will say with three kids in three different schools is the youngest one goes to daycare in the same school. So we just take her to daycare.

We drop her off and then the boy. The older two, my anxious kiddo is refusing to walk to school. He wants the school bus. He wants the security of knowing he's getting on the school bus. It's going to get them to school. So I'm like, that's fine. He could walk to school. It's like a 15 minute walk, which I think would do him good for his ADHD, but he's not comfortable walking.

So I was like, that's fine. Do the school bus and the 12 year old who this year, we moved to private school for as dyslexia, because unfortunately to your point of [00:21:00] apples, apples, apples, when you have a dyslexic kid, when you have a kid with anxiety, when you have a kid with ADHD that like narrow way of, of working doesn't.

Fit the mold very well. Um, and he, again, much to your example needed the smaller class kind of S a teacher who would, and this is not a knock on teachers with 30 kids in them. You've got 30 kids. You can't possibly personality in there. Um, but I needed someone who was going to know when he wasn't following along and was pretending sitting at the back of the room, pretend.

Right. Like I needed to know like, oh, you're not actually following what I asked you to do well.

[00:21:38] **Julie:** Right. And, and, and it is easy to blend when there's 30 kids. And I hear you with teachers. I'm like, gosh, I have so much respect. My teachers. My kids have had incredible teachers. Our public school teachers were amazing and passionate and caring.

And I had, when Mac was in JK, I went to an autism event and his teacher was a year away from retiring. And I ran into her there and I like. [00:22:00] What are you doing here? And she's like, I'm learning about Mac. I'm like she's a year away from retirement and spending her time on a Monday night learning more. And I was like, you are unbelievable like that, but it's funny, you know, I always said to.

Like our private educational consultant, our teachers and my like our entire team. I'm like, we know Mac can learn, you know, having autism, it isn't a learning disability. He can learn. So if he's not learning, that's on us, we need to do it differently. Like, cause we know he can learn. So that's on us. We gotta change things up.

And we always just took that approach that if he's not getting. That's our responsibility. Yeah. Strengths and

[00:22:40] **Delphine:** needs. This is one that I struggle with sometimes. How do you work with your kids or help them or support them, understand the things they're good at how those good things support the things.

They're not always so good at, but here's my big one, because this is the one I struggled with. So Julia, if you've got, if you've got any words of advice, how do you help them? [00:23:00] The things they're good at actually build on the things they're not good at, but get them to work on the things they're not good at because the things they're not good at are going to be the like, well, I'm not doing that.

Cause I can't, I don't know how it's too hard.

[00:23:12] **Julie:** Uh, I do. I do find that that's a thing with our kids. I'm sure to a certain degree, neurotypical kids as well. But I find that like my kid on spectrum, for example, like, I don't know if you've ever had this with your kids. So it's almost like they have to do things.

It was almost like a stim actually for him. He had to win a games. And if he, if he didn't win at a game, like it was like the table flip meltdown and I'm never gonna play again and all that jazz. Right. And I remember being like, okay, he's getting to the age where I'm like, I don't want him going out for recess.

And losing it because he lost a tag or Manhunter Dodge ball or whatever they're doing, because I'm like, that is no way to make friends or influence people. And I would actually like cognitively have those conversations with [00:24:00] him and be like, cause he, he could understand it and be like, Do you want to get invited to birthday parties?

Because if you're that kid who cries at recess, cause you lost, that's not going to happen for you. You know, like I would have these and then we actually did a program where this sounds so mean, but we had him lose over and over and over and over again. Like I wouldn't play. I'm born game with him and he would lose.

And then he wouldn't like, take a deep breath, good game, mom, would you like to have another game? And I'd be like, right. Mack. That was well done. Good job. And if he was going to lose it, he had a strategy where he's like, I need to go sharpen my pencil so he can go sharpen his pencil, take a few deep breaths, bring it back.

So kind of teaching him that self regulation. And I always like would be like, teach the skill. So won't like talk to him like, okay buddy, you have a problem with losing. And it's not cool. It's not cool at all. So we're going to work on that. And then when he was good about it, totally reinforcing, oh my God, buddy.

That was so great. The way you want high five, let's go have some Smarties, [00:25:00] whatever. So it would be teach the skill and then practice the skill and then generalize the skill. So an early generalization might be like, have his cousins come over to for board game day. And see how he goes losing in front of them and if he's able to hold it together.

And, and so it was a, and that's what I did actually with a lot of things, a lot of things that they weren't good at, it would be like, teach it, practice it, generalize it. And then also after an event or after a social experience, I always would autopsy it. What went well even better if okay. We had a birthday party, there was one.

But some good stuff happened. And we talk about all the good stuff and be like, okay, what could have gone better? And I always had, um, I always had like, non-verbal cues. Like if I saw some behavior, thumbs that I liked, I was always reinforcing thumbs up. If it got like halfway thumb, it was like, okay, I'm watching that needs to be improved.

Thumbs down was like, you need to switch it up right now. Um, and then, yeah, just always like, I was a [00:26:00] big. You know, five positives to one negative. I was always, I had the sign on the fringe saying, catch him being good. You know, if you could only sit at the dinner table for five minutes at four minutes, I'd be like, buddy, good job.

If you get run around and come back, catch him being good. Cause otherwise if you start fussing at five minutes and I let him go, I'm rewarding the behavior I don't want to see. So I would try and catch the behavior while it was, it was the desire and behavior. It's a

[00:26:27] **Delphine:** hard shift. It's a hard thing to

[00:26:28] **Julie:** do too.

That's a shift in parenting, right? Cause we're used to just being like, and that's why I'm like kids have temper tantrums because they work. As soon as they stop working, they stop having them. Right. So there's, there's a whole lot about just reinforcing the behavior you want to see rather than, rather than rewarding the negative behavior.

[00:26:47] **Delphine:** What about, um, judgment judgment from friends judgment from colleagues judgment. Family. Like, I mean, I know that that's a, that's a hard one, I think because [00:27:00] I've S I've certainly had it. And I've certainly felt as a parent, the way I've chosen to do my kids in some circumstances by some friends, um, was maybe seen as not the right way, but how did it go for you?

[00:27:15] **Julie:** Look, I'm pre. Gave up like mom guilt and caring what people think about four kids ago. So I really, I'm really quite confident that I'm the expert in my family. And certainly there'll be judgment, but you need to always consider the source. Like if my mom comes and says, Hey, Julie, I was thinking about this.

I'm paying attention and I'm listening if some like troll on Instagram or Facebook, it's like, oh, you know, then I'm like, consider the source. I don't, I don't really care. Like, you know, so I, I think about the people who know things and the people who care about my children, um, otherwise, yeah, I don't, I don't, I don't really give it any airtime.

And, you know, I often tell this story about when I gave up, um, or really when it really became clear to me that I can't care what people think. And it [00:28:00] was, you know, Mac had been diagnosed with autism. And he really, he didn't seek me for comfort. And so I had to teach him when he got hurt or was sick. He needed his mummy.

And um, so then he, of course he had this little sister and I thought, like, I thought she was such a wimp. Every time she fell down, like mommy, mommy, mommy. I was like, geez, why can't you be more like your brother little did I know? And that's how normal children are. So I remember going to the park and Mac wa would fall down and I would like run over.

Kisses knee and be like, buddy, you need money. You got her, come here. Let me kiss it better to teach him to come to me when he needs, when he's injured, meanwhile, then Posey would fall down and I'd look the other way because I'm lying. She's going to, you know, we've all done that we've got that kid you'll have to look away.

Otherwise they make a big deal of it. So I remember thinking, oh my gosh, all the moms in the park must think that I love Mac and I'm hate so much attention to him, but that I ignore Posey. The fact of the matter is [00:29:00] what I needed to do right then with my children was pay a lot attention to Mack, getting hurt in ignoring Posey when she gets hurt.

So I was like, I can't care what they think. Cause I'm actually right now fulfilling my skin's needs. And I'm the expert. And I can't care about the judgment. They know nothing about my family and what my kids' needs are, but I. So that, that was probably that moment where I was like, eh, don't care.

[00:29:26] **Delphine:** I love that idea of you're the expert in your family.

Cause you really are. Yeah, totally. When I talk to clients and we go through like their kid's IEP is for example, you know, when they they're like, well, why is the teacher saying this? I'm like, because the teacher's not the expert in your kid, you are not as why you are allowed to take the IEP back and say, I'm sorry, this isn't going to work

[00:29:44] **Julie:** and you know what, it's a team effort, right?

Like I always, you know, like we just got to really get our teachers on board and like, we're always we're we called ourselves team Mac and that was the cert, the teacher, the principal, us, like it was [00:30:00] T-Mac and that one, like we in the hashtag Lenny Tema. All we're on the same. And we just kept the communication open and you know, like I never felt, you know, if they came and had feedback about Mac, I wouldn't get defense.

I'd be like, what do you suggest? What are your suggestions? What do you think we can do about this? Like, let's all work together. You know, in that and that, and that's what the teacher wants. They want the best for your children too. So, you know, when sometimes they're not going to get it, sometimes they're not going to get it right.

Sometimes we're not going to get it right. And that's why we're all working together.

[00:30:31] **Delphine:** Th there is no one way to teach parent or support a child who has. The the, every, every situation is going to be different. And you, you literally reinvent the wheel every time because you can't use this the same wheel

[00:30:45] **Julie:** every time.

Well, and that's to your point earlier where you're like six kids, six different personalities, and honestly, six different parenting styles. People, people think, oh, well you just apply that. I'm like, no, that doesn't work for that one the way it works for that one. And I mean, sure. It'd [00:31:00] be really easy if they're all the same.

It's apparent all the same, but boy, it'd be boring. It's quite fun. Having all these little different personalities, it would also be easier if they

[00:31:08] **Delphine:** all came with manuals, but none of them either.

[00:31:10] **Julie:** So here we are just making this up as we go along and, and,

[00:31:15] **Delphine:** and if we screwed up along the way we learn, and I think that is an opportunity I have done with my kids a couple of times where I've said to them, Hey, we tried this and it didn't work.

[00:31:26] **Julie:** Totally

[00:31:27] **Delphine:** shifting it up again. Like this is where we show vulnerability to our children, where we show them that being perfect. And I'm the first one to say, I am a perfectionist. I stand up and say it. Yep. I expect everything to be perfect all the time, but I'm learning as I get older, she says what the birthday around the corner, um, that perfection is not possible.

And that if I never made a mistake in my life, I wouldn't learn anything. And so what would be the fun in life? There wouldn't be much

[00:31:51] **Julie:** of it. The other thing I love about that, and I love role modeling. Imperfection and I love role modeling. Wow guys, I, mum, didn't get that right. I'm going to [00:32:00] do better next time.

I'm sorry about that. Because then I feel like they are okay. Apologizing. They are okay. Feeling vulnerable and it's not a bad thing. It's life. Right? So it gives them.

[00:32:12] **Delphine:** What I want to know, because I'm thinking there's probably some families who are listening with kids who are on the spectrum and whatever level they're at.

Right. Cause now it literally is like a spectrum of you're at one to whatever it is. But they're hearing you say, oh, he's gone to post-secondary. So he's gotten to university or college. And how awesome is that? Because I'm sure there are parents who are new to their journey thinking, oh my goodness, like they're maybe never going to get through high school.

There may be never going to get through college. What were the things that you think were the most valuable in getting your son. To that point and I'm sure there

[00:32:43] **Julie:** are lots of things there are. And I might say something that's like sometimes the autism community is a little, we can be a little funny, um, and it's very conflicted and divided in a lot of ways.

So I might say something that's wildly unpopular, but, um, I think the early intervention and [00:33:00] the therapy, I mean, I was doing 40 hours a week from the time he was three. I'm sorry. Like I do accept my son and people are like, well, they're just not around diverse except them the way they are. I'm like, I accept him, but I also want best outcomes for him because quite frankly, I want to be an empty nester.

One day. I do not want him living with me. I want him to have a job. I want him to have fulfilling relationships. I want him to be a taxpayer. I want him to be a homeowner. I want all those things for him. And if those couldn't be for him, I wouldn't be 100% fine with it. I was wanting to give him the best shot possible.

So yeah. My biggest thing is autism. That was our life we live. There was Ida zero stem policy. There was no, I remember my father-in-law saying he's just playing with blocks. Leave him alone. I'm like, no, he's stimming. He's just lining crap up. We don't do that. We don't need dead time. So come on back. I would read direct, let's do this and more, you know, um, More effective way.

Like I'm not just going to let him because it's easy for me to let him sit and rock in a [00:34:00] corner. I'm not, it was, it was interrupt. Redirect, interrupt, redirect. So we were doing that all the time and, uh, like I said, we had an AP. Therapy program 40 hours a week. He did nothing alone. I sent a therapist who is gymnastics with him to a soccer with them so that they can redirect him every time he got off track, just re indirect reinforce.

And that's I think how we did it. And, uh, I'm I don't regret that decision and I don't, it doesn't make me not accept my son for who he is. I just was looking for the best outcome for him possible. And I'm feeling really good about, um, how that's worked out Mack.

[00:34:37] **Delphine:** I'm sure at some point. Wanting to be independent, wanting to have all the things you want him to have in order to have those, it meant he required, you know, the supports that were provided.

I mean, early intervention for me is the biggest, biggest thing. I mean, it was for me as a learner, when my parents realized there was something going on and, you know, at seven it was the psycho ed and then it was [00:35:00] into placements and all of those things. And if I hadn't. I, I honestly truly believe at the bottom of my heart.

If my parents hadn't done those things and had waited until grade four or five or six, it would have been

[00:35:10] **Julie:** too far gone. You know what I do? I do wonder what Mack and a parallel life would look like right now. Like, I, I, I, I just, I would be so curious. Um, You know, that little boy was raised without some of the, you know, the things that we could provide, what he would look like right now as a 21 year old.

I'm glad he's the guy. He is the other thing. Um, and this was, this was like, I would highly recommend, but not recommend. This was not why we had all the children, but it was. Super cool benefit all these siblings, because like, for him to have like, so he immediately had those three little sisters, like when he was six, I had my fifth child.

And so he was like drawn into imaginative play. He was socialized constantly. My standards for him were like, clear your plate. Like everyone. Um, I couldn't [00:36:00] spoil him. I, so there was a standard, I think, with having lots of siblings. And like I said, the siblings socializing him. He shared a room. He did bath time with them.

He, so everywhere has deficits where they were there, making sure he was engaged and playing dress up and, and doing those things. So, I mean, I would never. They have children to socialize your kid and launch them, but it did work out very well for us, but

[00:36:26] **Delphine:** you have to look at those things, right? You have to look at those dynamics as you see the progress happening, you have to say, okay.

And it's true. I mean,

I

[00:36:33] **Julie:** just reality. It's just reality. It was, it was super helpful. It was super helpful. They were, they were like all the little therapists and also, you know, a part of. You know, when they were a little, and again, I did not have them because back at autism, like I said, he was three, he already had two younger siblings.

Right. Um, but I did think also, you know, at the time he got diagnosed, I didn't have a crystal ball. And I did like the idea that maybe he won't be independent and there'll be a lot of people to love and share him. Um, you know, when I'm [00:37:00] gone because every parent of a child with a disability or his neuro-diverse.

To death about who is going to take care of them when I'm gone. That is something that keeps parents awake at night. Of course. And I did it. Didn't bring me a little bit of peace that I figured out. They'll probably all fight over me, so awesome. But yeah, that's not really a concern right now, but at the time, you know, you don't know me.

Like I said, you don't have that crystal ball. No,

[00:37:25] **Delphine:** it's true. It's a concern. It's like, well, if something happens to me is the parent who is going to know. What is happening and how to support, especially if, I mean, if they're in a state of state they're, they're non-verbal, for example, like who in the family is going to be able to step up and, and, and kind of take that on.

And, and it's, that's a hard thing to ask of someone in a family, right? So when you do your siblings who love you and, and family, and you've, you've grown up with that bubble and not understanding that we all work together, we all support each other, you know, when we're here together. So. Those things are important and not everybody has that.

And those of us who have it are very [00:38:00] fortunate, a habit.

[00:38:01] **Julie:** And, you know, I was raised in a family. I haven't, I have an aunt, um, who, uh, is intellectually disabled and, you know, she was one of eight kids and you know, it is amazing her siblings, like we all eat. And now the, like the nieces and nephews, we just, you know, got the signup sheet on email from my aunt.

Everybody signs up. Um, for a Sunday to take Joan out and she's just, you know, she's coming out tomorrow and everybody just it's the many hands make light work. Everybody gets to enjoy Joan. Yeah. So we were raised with it. It was part of our family

culture

[00:38:33] **Delphine:** now. And I, but, and I think what's important too.

Is anyone with. Neuro diversity is so interesting. And if you sit with them even for five minutes and have a conversation, the things that you learn, the things that you gain and the perspective you get from them, because it's different because it's from a different angle. Absolutely find it so interesting.

And I come away feeling full we've died

to.

[00:38:58] **Julie:** So true. [00:39:00]

[00:39:00] **Delphine:** I'm a, I'm a midnight Googler when things aren't going well, I don't know about you, but it's what I do. And I have my own list of things, but I'm wondering if you have any webpages that you think, um, parents should go to or webpages sites that you think parents should really check out.

If their kids are a little.

[00:39:17] **Julie:** Oh, that's really good point. Um, you know what I would actually say? I think the best value is talking to other parents and, you know, back when my son was diagnosed, there wasn't things like Facebook. And I would go to a meeting once a month at the local autism, Ontario, and it was my.

Night out. And it was awesome. Connecting with other parents, keeping each other accountable, sharing our stories, saying next month, I'm going to come back and say what I've done about this. And it was like, honestly, it was, I loved it so much. Um, but I would say find your, you know, your local there's online groups.

There's so much access now, as you know, you can do the midnight Google, right. So I know I'm a part of many. Facebook groups. [00:40:00] I'm part of Facebook groups for parents, with kids with add. I've got, um, I've got a few queer kids. I'm in a Facebook group of parents with gay queer kids. I'm in Facebook group with parents, with kids, with autism.

I'm an, all the parent Facebook groups and they are an incredible source of knowledge and let you know. No sense in reinventing the wheel. I, now that seasoned mom who is a 21 year old. Yeah. This is where you can talk to people like me and say what words or, you know, have you, is your kid gluten-free did that work?

Did you see any shifts in behavior, blah, blah, blah, all that stuff. So I think really, um, connecting with other parents is really where you're gonna find your people. Yeah,

[00:40:40] **Delphine:** that's the biggest one for me too. I've got a couple of mom groups or not, I don't even want to call them mom groups, parent groups, because they're not just moms in there, you know, who have kids who are different.

And it's just so great to be able to be like, oh, this day sucked because, and a couple of people would be like, yeah, that did, or, Hey, I need help with this. And somebody can give a suggestion. So that's a, that's a good one. I

actually,

[00:40:59] **Julie:** I don't know if [00:41:00] you saw, I got to pull it up. I just posted on my Facebook, this hilarious one.

And I think your audience. Your listeners would like this. I think I saw it this morning. Yeah. It was a meme and it says, so Netflix has this new show called awake. Where can, where contestants stay awake for 24 hours, then stumbled through a variety of memory and reflux challenges to win a million dollar grand prize, special needs moms and response.

I'll take my millions and tens and twenties please. Thanks Netflix.

[00:41:30] **Delphine:** I did see that one this morning and it's funny. I texted you to say, we should talk about that on

[00:41:34] **Julie:** the side. So

[00:41:36] **Delphine:** good job bringing in great minds. Think alike, for sure. For sure. Um, Julie, where can people learn more about you read? Cause I know you've done lots of like blog posts, articles, all that stuff.

So where can people find more about all of your knowledge?

[00:41:51] **Julie:** Okay. Well, if you go to , https://mabelslabels.ca/en\_CA/juliecole you can see a lot of them. Like my media, my blogs, my blogs are [00:42:00] on the Mabel's labels blog too. And they're also on modern mom, a bunch of places. Find me on Instagram at Cole dot Julie Twitter, Julie Cole, Facebook.

I'm an out on the place. And definitely also autism moms and parents with special needs, like our Mabel's labels. Now we also have like allergy alerts. We have so many labels that are so perfect for kids who, who have, who are neuro-diverse or have special needs or special diets or whatever. So of course go to Mabel's labels.com and check those out.

Awesome.

[00:42:27] **Delphine:** Thank you so much for this conversation. Really awesome. Excited.

[00:42:31] **Julie:** It's such a pleasure. Great to see you.

[00:42:36] **Delphine:** Thank you for listening to today's episode. If you are looking for help and support in creating a roadmap to success for your child through challenging times, contact me at access to education dot. I work with all families to help them build power and knowledge in understanding their child's needs and how to [00:43:00] build success through advocacy.

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