

Welcome to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations,
your authority in
navigating the world of
homeschooling diverse learners.

Featuring Peggy Ployer from
Sped Homeschool,
Annie Yorty from AnnieYorty.com,
Leilani Melendez from Living with Eve,
Stephanie Buckwalter from eLARP Learning,
and Dawn Jackson from Dawn
Jackson Educational
Consulting and Tutoring.

With over seventy-five years
of combined homeschooling expertise,
experiences and perspectives,
this group is eager to
share their wealth of
wisdom to empower your
homeschooling journey.

So grab your favorite mug,
settle in and get ready for
insightful discussions,

valuable insights and practical tips.

Give your homeschool the
power boost it needs to
successfully educate the
unique learners in your home.

Hi, everyone,
and welcome to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations.

Today,
we are going to talk about playing
to thrive,
building essential skills for
today's world.

And my guest today is Alan Tang.

Alan is...

career journey has been
anything but ordinary.

After spending six years in
corporate finance within
the renewable energy field,
Alan shifted gears and dove
into the world of hospitality,
cooking in some of London's

top restaurants.

Seeking more balance,

he launched a consultancy

to help startups grow and scale,

serving as a fractional

chief of staff while contributing

continuing his passions for

private catering.

In twenty twenty one,

Alan discovered his love for education,

working with synthesis

before founding CoLab,

an innovative online

program that uses games,

discussions and escape

rooms to teach kids

essential skills for the modern world.

Now,

Alan dedicates his time to creating

unforgettable learning

experiences for kids.

Welcome to the show, Alan.

I'm excited to have you join us.

Peggy, thank you so much for having me.

I am a huge fan.

I just finished listening to

your episode with Chad

Stewart about nurturing

creativity and consider me inspired.

Oh, thank you.

Yeah,

I have so many good guests on and you

are one.

Just helping our parents to

understand that there's so

much beyond what we

consider education or

learning that help our kids

to just grow and grow.

you know,

develop skills that they're going

to use throughout their lives.

And we kind of forget that

sometimes when we get

caught up in the mundane of

we just have to do this today.

And I remember being in that

place when I'm like, oh,

Another day of school,

let's just get through

those books and be done.

But having that bigger

picture of these are

essential skills that we

are using and conveying to

our kids that is preparing

them for their futures.

And that's what we're going

to talk about today.

And what better way to do

that than to play

And so I'm really excited

about this topic and what

you have to share on it and

how you can inspire all of us.

I see we have quite a few

viewers popping on and watching.

If you have questions or comments about...

just preparing your kids for the future,

how to incorporate play.

That's what we're talking about today.

Definitely put them in the comments,

the questions,

or just say where you're watching from.

We would love to know.

So, Alan,

one of the things that I ask my

guests usually when they

first come on is just

sharing a little bit about

their journey and why

they're passionate about

the topic we're speaking on,

which of course today is

building essential skills.

for today's learners and

especially incorporating

play into that yeah I mean

well like I said like you

said my background is not

in education I fell into it

um I was this chief of

staff at different startups
and by some fluke I ended
up getting approached for a
company called synthesis
which is the elon musk online school

And that concept is really cool.

It was all about how we're
using games to teach kids
communication skills, leadership skills,
teamwork skills.

And, you know, I thought the idea is cool,
but how would it work in practice?

Because I went for a
traditional education
system and it was always
rote learning exams,
rarely through playing.

And it completely changed my mind.

you know I was coaching
there for I think two
months and then I got
invited to a tournament and
I was facilitating this

tournament and I remember
this very well it's the
last round of this
tournament and one of the
young girls in the group
was nominated to be a team
leader and she's eight
years old and she had the
self-awareness and
confidence to say thank you
for nominating me but I'm
not the right person for
this round I'm going to
nominate alex to be the team leader
they ended up winning the
tournament and just to have
that confidence and
self-awareness the
articulation to say that
under pressure right it
blew my mind and I thought
wow there's something here
um and I really loved it

and it was at that point
that I started thinking
okay there's more to
education education can be
really really powerful and
I remember distinctly at
this point I read a stat that
think sixty seven percent of
the traditional the public
think that the traditional
education system just
doesn't teach kids the
skills they need to succeed
in life which is incredibly
scary in itself and then
you read all these stats
about literacy rates
falling um truancy rates
increasing and it makes you
think something's missing
something's not quite
working for our young
people and it was that kind

of drove me towards this
root down education learning
everything I could about it
reading a load of books and
eventually ending up
starting collab wow that's
really cool yes um it's
amazing how just you know
experiences in our lives
lead us to to completely
re-pivot and um it's that
that eight-year-old girl
and her decision and just
how much that affected you
that's that's really cool
that um yes um that

And, yeah,

kids just – I know the kids that
I work with,
they make such a difference
in my heart because it's
not something that we're, like,
forcing them to do.

It's, like, they just know,
and it shows just their –
I'm sorry, my brain is,
I'm still getting better from my cold.
I can't think,
but I'll maybe come back to that thought.
Kimberly is watching and she said, yes,
play is powerful.
I agree, Kimberly.
Um, oh, I, but what I was thinking was,
you know, just the, the innocence of,
of their decisions and yet, um,
how authentic they are, um, in,
in those and that it makes
it more impactful to us
because there it's not,
there's no coercion on, on their side,
usually when they,
they do things like that.
And I'm sure the same for this girl,
not thinking that, um,
that she was ready for this, but,
but knowing that somebody else was and,

and not trying to just play the game to,
to, to, to, to try to prove something.

So, yeah.

Yeah.

And just to sort of piggyback on that idea,

I think I like to talk

about student agency and just

when the students are engaged in something,

they want to do something,

that learning becomes so

much easier because they're

invested in the topic.

I know for myself,

I learned to speak Cantonese.

I learned to think strategically.

I learned how to solve

problems by playing a game

called Legend of Zelda.

And you might think it's a computer game.

How much could you learn?

But I learned so much from that.

And because I wanted to do it,

it became second nature to me.

And I didn't need to be

coerced into doing it.

Right.

Yes.

Yeah.

You, you just, you, you desire to, and,

and therefore you're,

there's just so much

research involved with just

how much your brain

activates more when you

want to do something and

all those things.

Um, so, so yeah, it, it,

it totally makes sense.

And yes, um, my kids are big gamers, so I,

I know that game.

Um,

So, um, so we,

we're talking about playing to thrive.

Um, how does that idea of, um,

capture just this approach, um,

when equipping students

with essential skills, you know, what,

where's the crossover in,

in play to skills?

I think, um,

when you're the the sort of

like the the holy grail of

learning is where you're

enjoying it and you're in

that flow state but you're

also learning at the same

time and I think the you

know we just touched upon

this about student agency

but there's so much

anecdotal evidence from you

know montessori schools uh

peter's great peter gray's

book about free to learn

that when you're playing

and like you said it it's your brain is

able to absorb so much more

information and actually

become second nature to you

um you know you see a lot
of young people now playing
roblox and minecraft and
learning a lot of quite
complex things um
developing these skills
through play and it's it's
interesting for me because
I find that most adults I
meet they don't have this
playfulness anymore and I
don't know about you peggy
but I end up gravitating
towards people who have
retained it because they
are full of life and they
make you want to
be curious to ask questions
to try things out right
yeah but it's really
difficult right to to
encourage this sort of
environment because when

you're learning and
typically in a traditional
learning environment
there's always some sort of
monitoring some sort of
grading some sort of
results-based approach and
there are consequences to
that it's quite high stakes
so it just means that
you're always a bit
hesitant to try something new to
to experiment but when
you're in a playground or
you're learning to
snowboard or you're
learning to try a new skill
you're not you don't mind
being judged and actually
you want that feedback so
you can improve and learn
and that's where it just it just happens
Yeah, never thought about it that way.

But yes,

it's more exploratory versus judgmental.

And so you have that ability

to try and to kind of fail

and yet continue to improve.

Yeah.

That, yes,

it kind of takes all of the

restrictions away.

And it's just like, well,

let's just give this a try instead.

And so I see that as,

and you're right about

adults that have lost that experience.

ability to to kind of just

let loose and and and to

try something or do you

know to go go on a um a

jungle gym when they're you

know maybe too old to do

that but you're never too

old to do a jungle gym no

you never but I would say

that you know especially if
you're a young person
listening to this you
should try and experiment because
There are no consequences, really.
You know, as adults,
we have mortgages and we
have jobs and we can't try as much.
But when you're a young
person or you're doing one
of these online programs.
Experiment as much as you like,
because there are no.
What's the worst that can happen?
I remember back in the day I
played this game called
RuneScape and some of your
listeners might remember it.
I got scammed I was so naive
and I gave my password out
to an admin the person
wasn't an admin and he
hacked into my account took

all my stuff and I logged
back in I had nothing and
from that point on I never
gave out personal
information to someone I
didn't know or validated
and it's a really valuable
lesson I've learned without
it costing me anything

Right, right.

Because had you not learned that then,
you could have possibly
fallen prey for some way worse things.

Exactly.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I talk about that a lot is, you know,
letting our kids fail even
at our homes because
they're safe places for them to fail.

And because when they get
out into the world,
we don't want to have their

barriers so protective that
they just kind of just
slide off and do anything
they feel like doing, you know,
once they get out of our
homes because they don't
have any internal barriers built in.
to where they need to stop.

Um, so,
cause we aren't going to be with
them the rest of their lives,
whether you think we are or not, but yeah,
so very true.

Um,
You know, also,
what about like as parents and modeling,
what can we intentionally do, you know,
other than maybe just being
a little more curious
ourselves or getting in
that jungle gym to inspire
our kids to maybe, you know,
take this approach and be more playful,

especially if we haven't been in the past,
you know,
just to start changing that mode
in our homes.

I mean, you know this better than me,

Peggy,

but young people learn from those
that they look up to and
they often mimic their behaviors.

I know that as I grow older,

I'm starting to show a lot

of the characteristics that

my dad had for good or for worse.

But, you know, I think that's very true.

And

I think that actually we

have to start modeling this

behavior if we want our

kids to also do that

otherwise you know you're

kind of being a hypocrite

right you're not doing what

you preach um and I think I

think it's sometimes it's
quite hard but actually if we want to
to showcase that then we
kind of have to um I mean
if you just to give you an
example right so in our
classes at colab I I often
hope that something goes
wrong in the sense that
when something goes wrong I
can model to the kids this
is how you deal with stress
this is how you communicate
under pressure this is how
you manage your emotions um I think that
I almost wish for those
situations to happen so
that I can show it in a
very authentic way.

And I think, going back to your question,
it's just about being intentional.
Have it in the back of your
mind that I need to

showcase how to act in a
certain situation.

Yeah, yeah, that's so true.

And I always found, you know,
at first as a parent,

I found those really frustrating moments.

But then I started realizing

that those were teachable

moments and I should

embrace them because they

were opportunities that

kind of put you at the

center of something that

was pivotal for your child.

And so you had to embrace that,

that learning environment

right there and then.

Um, and, and take the lesson from there.

And, and so, yes, that, that is so true.

It's those things that do go wrong and, um,

and aren't the way you plan them.

And, um,

cause that's the way life goes and

it isn't like it goes

step-by-step like a book.

There's things that, that pop in and,

and happen.

And I think if you look at

the skills that we're trying to model,

they're not skills that are

necessarily taught in

schools or taught in

traditional education systems, right?

So I don't know if you've

seen the World Economic

Forum's recent report.

It highlights resilience, empathy,

curiosity as these top ten

skills that employers look for.

and they're often

undervalued skills by

society you know they call

them soft skills when

actually the durable skills

um I think that you know

emotional intelligence is

one of them it's a super
important skill I actually
value it as an employer
more than iq more than
intellect but it's also a
skill that can be developed
and it's all about practice
right so when I work with
young people now
I set the tone that it's a
peer to peer conversation.
I'm not here as a superior.
I'm not here as, you know, an elder.
I'm coming in.
We're equal.
And I will always ask for feedback,
feedback on the coaching session,
feedback on the session,
feedback on the class,
because that way I'm
practicing what I'm preaching.
And then what I notice is
that the young people start

to mimic that.

They start asking for feedback.

And it's a two way conversation there,

which is really powerful.

I think the other thing that

we as adults can do is to

create moments of reflection,

because reflecting is

actually such a key part of learning,

and it's often something

that we don't do.

For me, every Friday, without fail,

at four p.m.,

I will write down things

that went well this week,

things that didn't go so well this week,

and I'll think back,

what could I have done differently?

Using that Socratic

questioning to reflect on those moments.

could do the same with our

young people yes yeah yeah

so you talked about

emotional intelligence can
you explain to our our
parents just why that's so
important and then also
what what is emotional
intelligence emotional
intelligence is the ability
to control your internal
emotions right and what the
reason I think it's so
important is that people often
don't really necessarily
remember what you did but
they remember how you acted
in that moment so you think
back to a conversation a
dispute an argument it's
always about the tone the
emotional charge in that
conversation no one really
remembers what you did and
I think that if you can
manage that you often would

be more successful in life
not just at work but also
in your personal
relationships and when you talk to
leadership coaches the
majority of them don't
focus on your technical
skills they focus on the
way you communicate it's
called I think the the
technique they use is
called non-violent
communication um and they
focus on the tools you can
use to regulate your own
emotions you know whether
it's breathing mindfulness
whatever it is it's such a
powerful tool and I find
that especially in this day
and age where everything's
quite distant you know
we're having conversations

over over zoom or we're not
meeting in person just
having that human element I
think just makes us better

Yeah, absolutely.

Yes.

We have to see beyond people
as an object and as another
person and somebody that
has feelings and emotions
and a life that we don't
see all of that and to be
willing to consider all of
that beyond just an
interaction and or a couple
words exchanged.

And that it does,
it takes a lot of
understanding and
willingness to go outside yourself.

And that's becoming harder
and harder in our society, as you said,
because we deal in such

bits of information versus,
kind of holistically like we
used to when we would spend
lots of time together and
invest in relationships,
which we don't anymore.

And so yes,
that can definitely be
something that's of high
value because it is
something that just we
don't see a lot of.

But it's a skill that you
can practice though, Peggy, I think.

So one of the things that we
we built at Colab was this
escape room where ten kids
in a dungeon and they need
to escape together.

And we intentionally built
these guards in this room
that if they catch you,
they send you back to the

beginning of the challenge.

And it's quite interesting

to watch it because the

rule that we apply to the

game is that if you get caught,

all of you have to get

caught and get sent back to the start.

And when it happens five, ten times,

it's fine.

Imagine it happens twenty

times and it's just Alan

sending you back to the start.

How are you going to have

those conversations?

How are you going to manage your emotions?

I think it's about

experiencing it firsthand.

You need to have that in

order to learn this skill.

And doing it in a risk-free environment,

which there are no consequences,

I think is really important.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And I love that whole group.

kind of scenario and team

building environment.

So can you talk a little bit

more about teams and just

doing things with other

people and just that kind

of corporate play and how

that is also can lead to

just some skills that our

kids need to work on and

grow with and also can benefit from?

Yeah, absolutely.

I mean,

as an employer myself the

key skills that I care

about are your ability to

work with others your

desire to learn and your

ability to learn I think a

lot of the other skills I

can teach you and you know

I don't think that's just

me the the world economic
forums report does say
teamwork leadership
emotional intelligence um
communication skills
critical thinking they're
all skills that are valued
not just by employers but also by
people you know, right,
you want to be surrounded
by people who are,
who have those attributes.
And so I think it's a really
powerful skill.
And it's also a really hard
skill to learn.
I think, like I said,
in this increasingly
digital remote AI driven world,
just being able to work
with others and practice
that skill is becoming rarer and rarer.
But it's also the skill that

I value the most.

I think that, you know,

If you think about entrepreneurship,

it's often described as

quite a lonely journey.

And I know a lot of young

people these days want to

be entrepreneurs.

But you can't do everything yourself,

and you also don't

necessarily have the skills

to do everything yourself.

So if that's the case,

you have to be able to work

for someone else.

You have to be able to bounce off others.

And the best way to do that

is to experience it.

Join a club, join a program,

do activities that foster this skill.

I think it's really useful

to do it outside the people

that you know as well

because when disagreements
happen you have to learn
how to deal with those
emotions but you also get
that real-time feedback
from someone who doesn't
know you and you can start
to think okay there are
consequences of acting like
this okay I have to be I
have to do this um I've
actually found peggy that
board games like baron park
pandemic are so amazing for
learning teamwork skills because
know it's play based low low
consequences but you can
start to see and learn
those skills yeah that's
that's a really good point
it's that yeah you can
start start practicing
those outside of you know

making large financial
decisions if you're an
entrepreneur and um and and just
Yeah,
and seeing how your decisions affect
others and affect just
different scenarios that
you move into next.

Our kids often don't learn
that cascading effect
through if and then type of things.

But board games have a great
way of building in
the if then and then what
whatever else um that um
that are great because they
kind of follow more
especially now the new
board games that are that
are out um we we play my my
older children or my all my
children are adults but um
they're all gamers and so

when my husband and I get
roped into playing games
with them when we get
together as a family um
And they're complex and kind
of push our limits,
but it's so fun to just be
able to see how these games
have evolved to become
almost stories in
themselves and to play that
out and to work out those
scenarios with other people.

It's kind of cool.

So I see where that's going.

I have a recommendation for...

If you haven't played it,
there's a game called Istanbul,
which is an amazing board game.

It's really fun, really strategic,
and you could spend hours playing this.

Cool.

I'm sure my kids know about it already,

but I'll have to mention it.

Very cool.

You talked a little bit

about student agency.

And can you talk a little

bit about for parents why

that is so important for

building skills for a child's future?

So for me,

student agency is where the

student can make choices

themselves independently

and have control over their

own learning experience,

their own learning journey.

And in my experience,

when the student feels in

control of their own destiny,

they're more engaged,

they're more curious,

they're more willing to be involved.

And I think it can have a real impact,

not just on the learning journey,

but also on their own mental health.

A lot of the young people
that I speak to talk about
how not having that control
really does impact their
mental health negatively
and when they do have
control they start to feel
more confident more curious
they start to figure out
their why and that's just
so powerful I think I can
only imagine how empowering
it is because if you've
gone through you know
education k to twelve and
you're being told every
step is set out for you
it's organized for you
you're then going to expect
that the rest of your life
is kind of going to be given to you,
right?

But that's not the case.

That's absolutely not the case.

And just having to make decisions,

having to sometimes suffer

those consequences can be a good thing.

Absolutely.

I remember interviewing somebody,

I think it was probably a

little over a year ago.

And they said, you know, we,

we give kids these

curriculum and we tell

them what to do year after

year after year.

And then we ask them to make

the biggest decision of

their life at the end.

What do you want to do with it?

You know, and it's like,

no wonder they just, you know,

they get so depressed.

They're unprepared because

they haven't made a

decision all their life until this point.

And then you ask them, you know, well,

what do you want to major in in college?

What do you think can be your career?

What are you going to do with your life?

They have no idea.

They haven't made those even

small decisions to even be

prepared to make a big

decision like that.

I mean,

I think you're luckier in the US though.

So the US,

at least you can have a major

and a minor when you go to college.

In the UK,

it's one subject and you specialize.

And I think there are pros

and cons to this.

But if I think back to my own life, right,

working in corporate

finance and then becoming a chef,

It was through doing both of

those parts that I've
developed into who I am,
into developing the skills that I have,
meeting the people that I know.

And there's a really
interesting story about a young lady who,
at the age of twenty five,
did twenty five different
jobs in the year to figure
out what she wanted to do.

And by, I think, job seventeen or eighteen,
she already knew and she
could figure that out.

I think that's so powerful.

Just trying different things.

I mean,

you have to commit a year to doing this,

but I think that would be

quite beneficial to a lot

of people who feel a bit lost.

Absolutely.

Yes.

And we don't give our kids

those opportunities.

I often tell parents when
they're homeschooling,
the best years are high school,
because like with my kids in high school,
that was the years they
could experiment at trying
all the things that they
thought they were going to be good at.

Yeah.

and then see if it worked or not.

My oldest kind of figured it
out right away.

He, he loved welding and,
and building things.

And he thought he wanted to be a welder,
went to school for that,
but came back and actually
he's a biomedical engineer now,
but knew he still liked building.

So, you know, that was,
he was on the right track,
just didn't have it pinpointed yet.

And

Um, and so, yeah,

and my youngest thought she

was going to be a tattoo

artist and then took a year

in corporate or not in corporate, but in,

um, just in, in retail and, um,

just decided that she

didn't really always like

working with people and

being on her feet.

And so now she's going to school to be a,

um, an archivist, but, um,

and she loves details.

So, I mean, that,

that was the thing that

stuck with her the whole time is,

you know, very detail oriented and,

But, but those,

those years through high school was like,

try something out,

do something different.

And cause we've,

we've done all the basic
learning up through middle school.

And, and now, you know,
we're kind of preparing you
to make a decision for life.

And so it's,
try things out and really
you can fail all you want
while you're at home.

And that was the beauty of
homeschooling during those
years was that we didn't
have to follow a specific path for them.

We were just kind of
discovering and and that's
what I loved about it.

But yeah,
But it's very countercultural to getting,
you know,
all of the typical learning done,
which we kind of did, too.

You know,
we threw all that in as they were

kind of discovering.

But yeah,

just so much more important for learning.

kind of launching them in a

way that they felt

confident about their

skills and about what they

wanted to pursue and really

where they felt called.

I think you mentioned

something so important,

the idea of failing.

It's often got negative connotations,

especially for a lot of

traditional school students

where there are these high-stakes exams.

But actually failing is a

really important thing.

I think it's really powerful,

a really great learning opportunity.

For our students,

we often frame it as just the first steps,

first attempt in learning.

And when you talk to, I mean,

you look at startups, right?

They have this mentality of fail fast.

It really tells you a lot

about how powerful it is,

not just because it gives

you an opportunity to try

new things and experiment,

but also it helps to build

that resilience.

You make a mistake,

the ability to bounce back

from that is probably as

equally important as that

learning you have from experimenting.

Yeah, yeah.

I'm a scientist by nature.

I have a degree in physics.

So I always kind of look at

life as an experiment.

And so my kids kind of got that from me.

But yeah,

I always loved when things would

kind of go awry and then we
could ask the question, but why?
And so, you know,
talk about that reflection
a bit and how parents can
build that into conversations.
um when as a learning
opportunity from those
things versus you know just
a cut and dry well that
that didn't that didn't
work out how can we
actually benefit from that
I think it's um it really
requires you to frame it
the right way to not see it
as a mistake an error a
failure but to create this
safe space where it's more
of a learning opportunity and
I think part of it is just
putting less emphasis on the results.
I think the journey itself

is equally important as the destination.

I also think it's about modeling behavior.

If I've made a mistake, talk about it.

And often when I do these

one-to-one coaching

sessions with my students,

I often talk about the

failures I've had in life.

And it not only makes you more human,

more approachable,

but also makes it tangible.

And they start to see, okay,

this is what happened.

Maybe I shouldn't do that.

And I think it's to get to

that stage that you need to

have that trust,

that relationship with the other side,

right?

And it takes time.

I think sometimes in this day and age,

we want immediate

satisfaction and gratification,

but sometimes it's not possible.

You have to build that relationship.

I think some of the

practical things that you

can do maybe to implement

this stuff at home is,

to just ask better questions

and be genuinely curious.

You know,

when I was coming home from school,

my dad would say, how was school?

I was like, it's great.

You know,

one word answer because he wasn't

asking me something specific.

But if you were genuinely

curious and you were

digging a little bit deeper,

then maybe we could have

more of a conversation there.

I find Socratic questioning

actually and those

techniques really powerful.

It allows the student to
start thinking about
different perspectives and
maybe questioning their own
assumptions there.

But I think the best thing
you can do is just to listen.

A lot of the students that we coach,
They come to us because they
don't have a third space.

You know, they're homeschooled.

So their parents and the
family environment is really one space.

And they have, you know,
their social space, which is another.

But they don't have someone
who they could trust and
talk to about things that
maybe they can't speak to
their parents about.

And I think that's quite a
powerful thing when we just
sit down and listen,

because I don't think they

want the answer.

They just want to talk.

Right.

Yeah, so much so.

And yeah, just another,

another set of ears to, to kind of,

and so we,

so many people process

auditorily and so they have

to get it out in order to

really understand what they're,

they're thinking.

And so to just be able to

say it and hear themselves saying it.

And,

and so just to have somebody who sits

and listens, it's just, it's,

it's very rare that somebody

will take the time um for a

child to um to be able to

do that and it just but how

important that is um for

them to have somebody that
they can confide in and
listen just listen like you
said um it's um I mean it's
interesting because my wife
sometimes will tell me
uh she told me this once
I've listened ever since so
she'd come home from a
birthday at work and she
would tell me something and
I'll immediately think oh
here's a solution it's a
solution and one day she
just told me I'm not
looking for a solution I
just want to talk and I
want you to listen and
that's stayed with me for
years because actually it's
it's so true they just want to share
Yeah,
I have a friend who calls me and

she's she's single.

And so she's like,

I need to process got an ear.

And and so because she just

processes auditorily and

and needs lots of friends.

So, yeah.

And she's taught me the same thing.

And what a good lesson to learn.

Because, um,

and I know I process more when

I write things out.

So, um, we're all different, but, um,

to be able to find that and, um, and,

and to be able to let kids,

that's a whole nother skill

in itself to know how you

process things and, um,

And definitely a skill to

take into the future.

So you had referenced the

World Economics Forum's The

Future of Jobs in twenty twenty five.

What are some of the most
essential skills for
today's learners as we're
moving into jobs that maybe
junior high high schoolers
right now are going to be
kind of entering into in the next ten,
fifteen, twenty years?

It's a great question
because we don't know, right?

The world is moving at such
a speed that we just don't know.

But I think my hypothesis is
that in this day and age,
in this world where things
are increasingly automated
and machine-led, AI-driven,
the skills that actually
make us fundamentally human,
skills such as creativity, empathy,
leadership,
are probably the skills that
will become increasingly important.

For me personally,
I think that technical
skills get you in the game,
but the human skills are
what will help you win it.
And it's quite hard because
I think education won't
intentionally teach you those skills.
And it's about you actively seeking out
those moments to practice
these skills um so for me
education really is about
can we develop the holistic
elements of a of an
individual you know and can
we can we help these
individuals become more
empathetic better
communicators more creative
more playful and I just
think to myself imagine a
world where everyone is you know
twice as good a communicator,

twice as empathetic, twice as curious,
much more playful,
wouldn't life just be
better for everyone?

Right, absolutely.

I think so.

But, um, yeah,
that would definitely take a change in,
um, in how we, we handle life right now.

But, um, but you know,
with those technologies coming about, um,
we have the freedom to do that too.

Um,
it's whether or not we are going to
embrace that as what our, um,
what we can do best versus
what technology can do best
and to kind of partner again with that.

And, and I, I love that too.

I love that I can kind of
alleviate some of the,
the more mediocre tasks to AI and,
and to allow myself to be

more creative in other ways.

And, and so, but, but it's a balance and,

and it's learning,

I think learning to be a

little more human.

in a world where we become

so industrialized.

And we're kind of trying to

move out of that now and to

think in a whole different way.

But we have to get our

education system out of

that mode as well and

really prepare kids for a

lot of change that they're

going to go through.

It's interesting because I

speak to a lot of educators

and teachers and, you know,

examining boards and they'll say, oh,

kids are cheating because

they're using AI.

But I don't have an issue of

that because for me personally, if I was,

I think education should

mimic the real world, right?

And if I was at work and I

had to figure out an answer

to a question or how to do something,

first thing I'm going to do

is go into google go into

chat gpt go into one of

these right tools right and

I'm going to say ask a

question and then start

brainstorming about it and

it's not so much about

memorizing certain facts

you know when the battle of

hastings was or you know uh

how do I make a pina colada

whatever it is it's more about

actually how do I take that

information and apply it I

think those skills are what

people are looking for and

what are more important so
that's what exams and all
this sort of I guess
grading should be focused
towards can we apply the
knowledge that we have and
turn that into wisdom

Yes.

Yeah.

That's that's a whole different.

But then how do you then it
comes back to how do we measure that?

And I think we we get so
caught up in the
measurement than in the the
skills that we're
establishing that really
you can't measure other
than through just seeing it
play out and work its way
out in somebody's life.

And those you can't really
quantify sometimes ever.

And I think we have a hard
time coming to terms with,
we can call success, you know,
just one person's life at a time.

And so, yeah,
it's a very different way to
look at establishing those
skills and building our kids up.

So, so true.

Yeah.

So do you have any like
day-to-day strategies that
parents could use to
integrate some of the
things that we've been
talking about today into their,
just into how they teach,
how do they set up their lessons,
approach education?

I guess you could take it from any angle.

It's a really good question.

I think coming from a non-educational
you know, educational background,

and then go into the world
of education has given me a
different perspective.

And the things that I
genuinely found that made
my life better is to be more patient,
to model behavior, to be more curious,
you know, asking good questions,
and just using Socratic
questioning techniques.

Having that coaching mindset,
I also think is really important,
just be able to listen,

Embracing the silence,
which I know some people
find quite difficult,

but that silence is often
where you can have the
biggest difference and the
biggest breakthroughs.

And the final thing is
obviously just not to go in with,
I'm going to help you solve

this mentality,
but just creating a safe
space for the other side to listen.
to speak and allow you to listen.
Like I said,
often the other person on the
other side doesn't
necessarily want the solution.
They probably will feel
better figuring it out
themselves by using their
own agency as opposed to
being told this is what you have to do.
That's so true.
Yes.
We,
we all want to feel like we're
contributing.
Um, and, and so, yeah,
oftentimes when somebody
asks your opinion, they're just,
they're just asking for confirmation or,
um,

maybe a little insight to what you
shared.

Um,

I know the people that give me feedback
in my life, um,

I appreciate that about
them is that they can help
me kind of digest and,
and work out things.

And, um,

And our kids are the same way.

And yes, if we can model that well,
if we can do that with
others in front of them well,
and if we can work out things with them,
just kind of coaching.

I found that my role as a
homeschool parent,
if I could see it more as a coach,
versus a disciplinarian or a instructor,
that things went much
better because we had such
a close relationship that

it was kind of this back

and forth more than it was a top down.

I'm feeding you and let's

just come together and

share information and let's

see what happens.

Um, you can learn from what I,

I have to talk about today.

So, um, but yeah, it, um, it,

it changes everything and

it also changes how your

kids relate to future employers, um, to,

to just the world around them as they,

they interact with,

with information data and learning and,

um,

So I love all these these

ideas you've been sharing with us.

Can you talk a little bit

more about games and

projects and group

activities and the concepts of teamwork,

leadership and empathy?

just kind of how all of that
kind of works together in building those,
those skills that we're
really looking for versus
the books and the, you know, just the,
the typical,
I guess what we would call curriculum.
So, you know,
how do those untraditional models work?
how are they much more
capable of giving our
children the skills that we
actually want them to have
versus what we've been told
will give them what they need?
Well, I'm sure we've all done this,
but reading a self-help
book about leadership, communication,
relationships, whatever it is,
it doesn't necessarily make
you a better leader or a
better communicator.
You have to

You have to practice those
techniques and practice those skills.

And it kind of goes back to
our point earlier, Peggy,
about learning by doing,
practicing those skills so
that it becomes second nature to you.

So then actually you start
using it more and more.

In our classes at CoLab, we notice this.

We give our students
personal missions every month.

And it could be something like,
you're the question master,
you're the team leader, whatever it is.

And we'll give them a phrase,
a technique that they can use.

And what we find is that
giving them that technique,
they'll start using it.

It becomes second nature to them.

Their fellow teammates,
their friends will start

using it as well.

And that is real knock on

impact because kids,

when they see it successful and it works,

they either try and copy it

or they'll keep doing it.

And it can be such a game changer.

But it's quite simple, right?

It's just getting the

positive feedback loop.

I also think that by doing something,

you start to adapt it to

your own personality.

You know, I think it's quite funny.

Salespeople often get given

the script and they will

use the same script.

But the best salespeople are

the people who can adapt it

to their own style, make it theirs.

It's true for storytelling.

It's true for a lot of things, right?

And I think that's kind of

where the experimentation comes in.

Try it, adapt it, try again,

adapt it until you find

your right solution.

Yeah, yeah, that is so true.

Practice makes perfect.

It all goes back to that.

You don't learn anything until you use it.

And we have to use it a lot

in order to be good at it.

There's very few things that

we are just naturally good at.

I, I totally get that.

But, but yeah,

and I think we live in a day

and age where we just,

our kids think that

something's going to come easy,

and they're going to have to work at it.

you know,

adapting and seeing people model

that and and show them that, yep,

we're this is what we've learned.

We're going to tweak it and change it.

And but again,

like you talked about in a

safe environment where they can do that,

that's it's powerful to to

But I would love for you to

talk a little bit about

CoLab because you've been

talking a little bit about

your program for a while.

And in the show notes,

I'll also share the video

that you link you shared

with me about some of your

students talking about

their experiences with your program.

But why don't you tell us a

little bit about your program,

Collaboration Laboratory?

Yeah, I mean,

we kind of set this up

because we wanted to help

kids learn the skills they

needed for life,
but in a way that's student-led,
that they want to be there
as opposed to being forced to be there.

And the idea of it is that
kids from around the world
will join a cohort once a
week with two life facilitators,
and they'll be given an
option of three challenges.

One's a game, one's a discussion,
one's an escape room.
and they will decide which ones to do.

So they start to develop
that student agency, that voice,
that confidence in negotiating.

They get through the
challenge and we don't tell
them how to play it.

We tell them the goal and we
let them figure it out.

And really the point of
CoLab is that we want young

people to develop the
skills that they'll need in
real life and is meant to mimic real life,
but without the consequences.

And what we find is that
because it's online and
they're behind these avatars,
the kids start to be more confident.

They start to be more curious.

They start to try different
things because the person
that's failing is not them.

It's the avatar.

And you start to see huge changes, right?

We've had parents message us saying,
my son's more confident.

My daughter's using more
inclusive language.

My daughter's making friends easier.

Stuff that actually matters.

And I think that's where...

It makes all of this really worthwhile.

We're doing this because we

want to help these kids and
we're not here to replace
traditional education and homeschooling.

We're there to supplement it
and help these kids learn
those future-proof skills
that we all know they need.

but doing it in a way that's kind of fun.

And I love it where parents
have described us as
Pokemon meet Sherlock Holmes.

And I think that's kind of
the biggest badge of honor
that we can get, you know,
when it is truly fun and
it's about making,
giving kids the opportunity
to control their own learning journey.

Yeah.

Yeah, and what easier way to play.

And like you said,
that kind of anonymity with the avatars.

But yet in a safe

environment where people

are monitoring and making

sure that everything is safe.

watched over too.

It's kind of comforting to

parents as well as the kids

and a safe place to explore and learn.

So thank you for providing

that for families and all that you do.

So yeah,

I will definitely share that in

the show notes, the link.

to the collaboration

laboratory or co-lab as well as, um,

some other information that

Alan shared with me, um, for you guys to,

to look at.

So, um, well,

thank you so much for this discussion.

It's,

it's been great to talk about play again.

I know I haven't,

we haven't spoke about it

in a long time on this show and, um,
just how it always reminds me.

Just it's, you just gotta have fun.

Life is too short to,

Don't make it too serious.

Exactly.

Absolutely.

The kids are there to remind us of that,
too, I think.

So we're never too old to have fun.

And and I love what you said
at the beginning, Alan, too, was,
you know,

we we lose that as we get older
and we shouldn't.

We are the ones modeling for
our children how to live
and how sad if we forget how to play,
because that just teaches
them that it's not important.
and it is so very very
important I mean peggy if I
can take on skateboarding

at my age I'm sure that
should inspire some of your
listeners to to start
embracing this playfulness
and this curiosity
absolutely yes if you are
not doing anything yourself
definitely be thinking about
how can you be a little
more playful around your kids.

So whether it's sitting in
the middle of a pile of Legos,
which I remember doing with my children,
or donning a costume and
running around the house,
which I have done as well.

So,
but it all keeps you young and it just
teaches your kids just how
important that is and how
important they are in your life too.

We tend to forget that that
is their love language, how they play.

And if we can get down on
the ground and play with them,
we can see the world from
their perspective a little
better as well.

So so don't forget that.

So next week, we are going to talk about.

alternative educational
models so that's um coming
up on next week's show so
definitely join us for that
we're gonna kind of go
outside the box um and and
talk about some some ways
that you can um teach when
you think you probably
aren't teaching just like play so um
I'm sure it'll be a good
continuation of this of this topic.

So you'll want to join us then.

But thanks again, Alan.

I appreciate you.

Definitely check out Alan's

website at

CollaborationLaboratory.com and

and see if that's a good

fit for your student maybe

to to start finding ways to

build those future skills.

in some group environments.

So we just appreciate the

conversation today, Alan,

and all that you had to share.

Peggy, thank you so much for having me.

It's been a pleasure.

Absolutely.

So thanks, everybody.

And we'll see you next week

here on Empowering

Homeschool Conversations.

Bye, everybody.

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