

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.

Hello everyone and welcome  
to Empowering Homeschool Conversations.

I am Leilani Melendez,  
your host for today's episode.

And today we are going to be  
talking about homeschooling  
hacks for neurodivergent families.

And our guest today is Felicia Johnson.

She is a dedicated  
homeschooling mom of eight  
children with over twenty  
two years of experience  
tailoring education to fit  
each child's unique needs,  
having graduated three of  
her children and continuing  
to teach five more at home.

Felicia has navigated a wide

range of learning challenges,  
including deafness, ADHD, dyslexia,  
dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and anxiety.  
She is passionate about  
teaching her children's  
interests and strengths,  
helping them develop  
strategies to overcome  
their challenges while  
celebrating their God-given potentials.

Her approach fosters confidence,  
resilience,  
and the skills needed for  
lifelong success.

So thank you so much for joining us,  
Felicia.

Well, thanks so much, Leilani,  
for having me.

I'm really excited to share  
with everybody.

All right.

So the first question,  
because we want to get to

know a little bit about you.

So you've been homeschooling

for twenty two years.

Yeah, my daughter,

my oldest daughter is twenty six.

So we always say we started

homeschooling her at four.

So it's been twenty two years.

Or is it twenty six?

But eight children and with

a huge range of learning challenges.

So can you just share a

little bit about your

journey and how you first

began homeschooling and

some of your biggest challenges?

Absolutely.

I was the friend that made

fun of all my homeschooling friends.

I was like,

there's no way I'm ever going

to homeschool.

Y'all are crazy.

They were sure laughing at  
me when I started homeschooling.

But it really was because I  
just didn't have the  
resources actually  
available to me for my deaf daughter.

So I started just  
researching options and I  
came to find out that there  
was a lot of help for  
homeschooling and that I  
could provide her better  
than what the school  
district was willing to do.

And so that's how I jumped into it,  
thinking it was just going to be for her.

But then it just became a no  
brainer for my following children.

So here I am, twenty two years later,  
still doing it.

What were some of the  
biggest challenges you  
think that you ran into?

Well, I mean, first,

it's just the overwhelm.

You know,

you think you're responsible for

teaching this kid who

doesn't even speak your language,

you know,

how to read and write and do math.

And so the first big hurdle

challenge was learning a

different language so I

could communicate with her well.

But even if we're not

learning another language,

we're having to learn new vocabulary.

We're having to learn new words.

expectations for our kids

than we thought we were

going to have when they

just they have different

challenges than we expected.

So I think that's the first

big challenge is just

getting over that hump of  
like changing our  
expectations of what we  
thought we were going to do  
with our kiddos.

OK, that makes sense.

OK,  
so I'm going to get into the meat of it  
right now.

OK,  
so it sounds like your focus on  
building confidence and resilience  
or it sounds like you focus  
on building confidence and  
resilience in your children.

So how do you balance the  
need for structure with  
allowing for flexibility  
and creativity in your homeschool day?

Yeah, so I am ADHD as well.

So that really affects a lot  
of how our homeschool day runs.

And I know where my kids get it from.

So we run more on rhythms than schedules.

That is one way that we make it work.

We have milestones that have

to be reached throughout the day.

So if you want to have computer time,

then you have to get your

reading and math done.

If you want to have movie night on Fridays,

you do your Friday chores

before movie night.

Like we have milestones they

have to reach.

Right.

And sometimes no divergent

kids need milestones that are immediate,

not so long term.

So that, again,

I try to keep them for the

day and not so far out.

But we have rhythms within the day.

We have different parts of

the day that school is done,

different parts of the day



that animal chores are done,  
different parts of the day  
that outings happen.  
I don't stick to a hard  
schedule and we just do the next thing.  
I know for some planners out there,  
it's really hard to  
comprehend not planning out  
how many lessons you're doing each day.  
But it has really worked for  
us just to keep moving  
through and we get as far  
as we can during that  
allotted time and then we  
just move on to the next thing.  
So we do that.  
I also give lots of  
opportunities for kids to  
explore their interests.  
So we do the only book work  
we do is going to be the  
three R's reading,  
writing and arithmetic.

Everything else is going to  
be pretty hands on.

We use four H for a lot of  
hands on projects as well,  
but we give them lots of time to explore.  
play with materials.

I've got a mechanic.

He likes to play as a truck  
outside that he plays with.

I've got a animal kid.

So we have goats and  
chickens that he's out  
there building things for  
and learning more about his animals.

So it depends on the kid and  
what their interests are.

And I just,

I'm constantly putting them  
into contact with other  
experts because obviously I  
don't know everything.

So it's really just giving  
my kids a chance to

experience the world and

experience things that interest them.

And then I use those

interests to motivate them

to get through the boring stuff,

the reading, the writing, the arithmetic.

You know,

we use that as a motivator to get

to the things they want to do.

OK,

I'm writing stuff down because there

was a couple of things that

you said that I thought was really,

really good.

First of all,

I think it's amazing that

you're willing to admit you

have ADHD because we

actually I just did a

podcast review on this podcast.

Me and another co-host talked about ADHD.

And it's just so interesting

just how many of us have been

you know with that and we're

having to adjust I also

like that you said that you

run on a rhythm and not a

schedule and I've heard

that before I've never

heard the term rhythm

before I really like that

rotations versus schedules

before yeah and sometimes

they say routines yeah yeah

routines that's what I was

trying to say routines

instead of schedules um but

I love that term rhythm

Because that really just

kind of sums it up.

And then the milestones,

the immediate milestones.

So I was going to ask you,

what are some examples?

You mentioned movie night.

What are some other examples

of the milestones that you try to reach?

Well, for example,

my seven-year-old this week

had earned enough money to

buy a Lego kit that he wanted.

And he knew it was coming from Amazon,

you know, yesterday,

I think it was when it got delivered.

He knew when it was coming.

And I said, you know,

you can't open that box

until your schoolwork is

done and your chores are done.

And so that was a pretty

immediate milestone.

He knew that if he wanted to

get to that Lego kit,

he had to get his chores done.

And obviously we don't have

that happen every day,

but I try to use things

that they're excited about.

I don't necessarily hold it

over their heads,

but we use it as a target.

If you wanna get to this point,

what are the things that we

have to do before that point?

And I can use that with your, you know,

they get thirty minutes

computer time after they've

done their schoolwork every day.

And because we're not a big screen family,

that's a big deal for them

to get that computer time.

And so I just use little targets.

You know, we had a zoo trip coming up.

And I said,

I can pay to get you into the zoo,

but anything you want inside the zoo,

any of the rides,

you're going to have to

earn your own money.

And so they did.

They had a deadline for

earning money and they had

a motivation to do that.

So I try to use real life

examples as much as I can.

I try to, I mean,

that also helps teach them to budget,

right?

If they know something's

coming up and how to budget for it,

but always giving them a

goal to shoot for, right?

And most of them are going

to be goals within the day.

But like the zoo trip was a

goal that was a little further out,

helping them think further out.

But just try giving them

goals so that they're

motivated to do their own part.

I'm thinking in my mind with my kids,

because I'm still raising teenagers,

I'm thinking what kind of

immediate... I know screen

time is always a go-to and movie time,

but just some of those  
things that I... It could be pizza night.  
It could be let's do something together.  
My kids like doing dance  
night or game nights.  
And so we try to do things together.  
And so but it's like, OK, X, Y,  
Z has to happen before the  
next thing can happen.  
You know,  
that's that just constantly  
letting them know that it  
takes a team to do all the things.  
And if we all do our part,  
then we all get the reward at the end,  
whatever it is.  
I could even I mean, like you said,  
game night, like I love game night,  
having them pick out the game.  
Absolutely.  
Yeah.  
We've done that.  
We've done contests too.



Like the person who brought me the most,  
you know, pencils off the floor, you know,  
gets to be the one that  
picks out the movie for the  
night or whatever, you know,  
depending on what was going on that day.

Or even like shopping on Amazon together.

No, for games.

I know my kids are really  
big into different types of  
games and stuff like that.

And I even love some of  
those logic games that also  
teaches why you play,  
but they think it's fun.

They don't realize they're doing it.

Absolutely.

Okay.

And then the other thing  
that you mentioned that I  
thought was interesting is  
that you try to put them in  
contact with other experts in the area.

And you mentioned something about the car.

Mm-hmm.

Yeah.

So really I network a lot.

I'm a networker.

I like meeting new people.

So my oldest son, who is now twenty four,  
was obsessed with trains.

He was obsessed.

Like everything we did was  
was trains from the time he was two.

So we rode a lot of trains.

I talked to him,  
took him to tons of museums.

He would talk the arm off of  
anybody there that would listen to him.

At twelve, he got to volunteer at one.

And he started walking  
people around and telling  
them about trains.

I just try to connect my  
kids with somebody.

When he got to be the same kid,

when he got to be in high  
school and he wanted to be a mechanic,  
he actually interned with  
another mechanic.  
He ended up getting the job.  
He now is the diesel  
mechanic for the  
Durango-Silverton Railroad.  
So he worked himself up to his dream job.  
But we did this by just  
networking and putting him  
in contact with people who  
know things about trains,  
because obviously I didn't  
know anything about trains.  
I don't even know how to do  
much to my own vehicle,  
nevertheless a train.  
So I had to reach out to the  
community to find people  
That would pour into my kiddos.  
I've got another one who  
wants to be a mechanic.

And so we had a gentleman  
from the church give him a  
seventy six Dodge pickup  
that he can rebuild.

He's twelve years old and  
that's what he tinkers with  
is this truck outside.

And so just reaching out to  
people in your community,  
because if they love something,  
they're going to want to  
share it as well.

And that's where our kids  
really get this outside  
experience that we as  
parents can offer them just  
by networking.

Yeah.

And I think you mentioned church.

Church is like a really  
great place because you  
have such a diverse group  
of people with different talents.

And we have someone at our  
congregation that I always  
sit back and I'm like,  
my kid should have that job  
because everything about  
his job kind of like fits in.

And I'm waiting for the day  
that he connects.

They've kind of talked about  
it a few times, but.

I don't know anything  
because both of my boys,  
they want to be engineers  
and anything about engineering.

You asked me about teaching and education.

I can help right along engineering.

I can't do a thing.

And so I'm always looking  
for different people that  
just kind of connect them with.

Absolutely.

Yeah, that's a great way to do that.

And just finding experts and

they don't have to be like, you know,  
you can't you don't have to  
find the top top expert on something.

Just somebody who loves it  
as much as your kid loves it.

And so because not only  
they're sharing knowledge,  
they're sharing passion.

And that makes a difference.

Yeah, it really does.

Yeah.

yeah and and the other idea  
too that that god always  
brings the right people in  
their path you know who  
they can connect with  
absolutely yeah and it's  
really cool to sit back and  
watch yeah it is it's  
really cool um and I also  
like the you know I don't  
know do you do any home  
homeschool co-ops or

anything we have in the

past we have in the past

And you have a lot of kids.

I think it's harder just

because you've got a vast

age range and you've got

kids that are just so far

different as far as what

they're interested in.

So I think it makes it a little harder.

We're all going in different directions.

Yeah, I know.

Like my kids are in one thing.

They're all in that one thing.

It makes it a lot easier.

Yeah, it does.

It does.

OK, so next question.

What role does failure play

in your homeschooling

approach and how do you

help your children navigate

setbacks without losing confidence?

We have a lot of failure here.

That happens.

Some of my kids,

I'm going to say some of

this is going to have to do

with personality of your kid.

So I have some kids who quit all the time.

They're constantly, I quit.

I'm done.

I can't do this.

Of course, they go back to it eventually,

but that's their gut reaction is to quit.

But I think a big part of

that is failing with them.

Like a lot of these skills, like we,

like you said, you know,

nothing about engineering.

I didn't know anything about engines.

I know a lot about engines

now because after doing it

for twenty two years.

But you fail with them.

You mess up with them, you know,



and then seeing you try again,

I think makes a big difference.

And and then letting them

know that it's OK that we failed.

If you have a perfectionist kid,

they're going to be really

hard on themselves.

And I think they're a little

harder because they think

they should do it right the first time.

And so that's a little harder.

But really,

it's just life and letting them

see you fail and get back up.

and then doing it with them as well,

whatever their project is

that they're working on.

Yeah.

Well,

and they all have different

personalities.

And you mentioned perfectionism,

which I think that, I mean,

I'm not a therapist,  
but I've noticed that  
perfectionism goes a lot  
hand in hand with neurodivergent kiddos,  
I've noticed.

How do you navigate that  
with perfectionism, like specifically?

So actually,  
I have a little bit to say  
about this topic.

We're country people.

And one of the phrases that  
we use a lot is a horse kicks you off,  
you get back on.

And that's just the way that

I raised my kids.

And we physically have done that.

Me and my daughter were  
thrown off a horse and we  
got physically back on the horse.

And so that has a real  
meaning in our household  
when we say that.

But it's true in all things.

And

I have a kid who is a perfectionist.

He thinks that he should

have to do it right the

first time or not do it at all.

So it's really hard.

He's my one that quits all

the time on everything.

And it takes a lot of

diligence on the parent's

part to keep pushing,

not in an aggressive way,

but we just constantly go back to it.

It's like,

I give him his break when he's

mad and he wants to quit.

I let him have his break.

I let him walk away.

And then we go back to it together.

He was really mad at his truck.

He wanted to sell all of it for parts.

He was done.

He wasn't going to do mechanics anymore.

And so I took him to our local auto shop,

who does a lot of old parts,

not just new parts.

I took him there.

And I said, hey, let's get some parts.

And so we got to talk to the

guy and ask about it.

And he hunted down some parts,

because finding parts for a .

and he hunted down some

parts um for him but you

know what he came home and

he was excited again and he

was working on his truck he

took his carburetor out and

put it in a box because he

learned that he'd have to

trade that one in for a new

one um for the core

And so sometimes it just

takes relighting that fire again.

And we did it together.

And it wasn't like I was  
yelling at him or it wasn't like I was,  
you have to finish because  
you started this.

It wasn't.

It was like I let him have his moment.

And then we found something  
else to talk about,  
found another entryway.

It is very slow moving.

You can't be in a hurry with  
these kids because if he's frustrated,  
he's not gonna do a good job.

So if you're forcing him to  
do something and he's ready to quit,  
he's not gonna do a good job.

So I really give him more  
time than I give any of my other kids.

But when he, guitar is another example,  
he wanted to quit guitar.

He's been practicing now for  
four years and he can  
finally play some chords.

You know, it's very slow going,  
but I think the value in it  
is the fact that we keep  
him going instead of letting him quit.  
But it's not a forced like, no,  
I paid for this.  
You're going to keep doing this.  
It's a, well,  
why do you want to learn to play guitar?  
Oh, maybe you could play.  
We're going to have a music night tonight.  
You know,  
we're going to have a jam session,  
just us at home.  
Maybe you can play your guitar for us.  
And if he has a purpose and he has a goal,  
again, this is milestones.  
Again,  
I think that it really helps keep  
him on track.  
Yeah.  
I was thinking about that with my son too,  
with the guitar,

because my son also plays guitar.

And one thing that we got  
him involved with at our congregation,  
they started a youth band.

I just simply just having  
him in the youth band,  
even though there was  
another guitar player,  
but they kind of teamed up  
and played together.

It kind of helped motivate him.

It was that fire that you  
were talking about,  
just lighting that fire.

So they have to have that  
motivation to do it, you know,  
and you have to kind of help  
prod them along because you  
don't want them to quit and  
walk away from everything.

You want them to learn how to finish.

Yes.

Some things aren't worthy to finish.

Okay.

That happens.

That's life.

But you want him to at least

see the end result of

whatever he's working on.

Get as far as he can without

just quitting because he's frustrated.

Yeah.

And that's like a life skill

that I think all of us are still,

I'm working on that too.

Yes, yes.

Parenting is definitely

refining ourselves more

probably than it is the kiddos.

I know.

I feel like just seeing

myself inside of the kids, you know, and,

oh, that was me when I was a teenager.

And, yeah,

that would be a bunny trail to go on.

The different personalities,



the perfectionism, the quit.

Oh, modeling.

You know,

talking about refining ourselves.

That's like a really nice transition.

Modeling.

The idea that we're modeling

how to overcome obstacles.

Oh, that just reminded me, too.

This might be a bunny trail on Bluey.

I end up watching Bluey all the time.

I have an eight year old.

So she loves Bluey and that

I love that show.

But there was they said

something in there today.

I was watching it about the

obstacles aren't going to

move themselves.

And the mom was like doing

the obstacles and the kids

were following her.

And I was like, oh,

that is such beautiful

modeling and such a good teaching lesson.

Yeah.

anyway that was such a bunny

trail so so modeling though

like what are some things

that you can think of with

modeling for our kids um

besides like learning from

bluey well everything

they're always watching us

they're always watching us

you know how we oh gosh my worst

place is driving and the way

I react to other cars and I

know my kids are watching

me and so I really have to

you know control myself or

it gives me an opportunity

to talk about it hey I know

mom got really frustrated

with the the cars today but

That's probably not the best

way to handle that.

It does open up opportunities,

but they're always watching us.

They're watching everything

we do and how we react to people,

how we treat other people.

Even simple things as phone skills,

they're only hearing our

side of the conversation

when we're on the phone.

What are they seeing?

What are they learning from

us without us actually teaching?

Okay.

So I was on the phone yesterday.

Like this is full confession.

I was on the phone yesterday

and my daughter was sitting next to me,

listening to own conversation.

And I just started talking about some,

I was,

I'm just going through something

right now, but she looks at me, she goes,

mom, stop gossiping.

Stop it.

Stop, stop gossip.

Like she's recognizing that in me,

but then I realized I'm also modeling.

And also I've told her not to gossip.

So it just like comes around and,

And yeah, and texting,

you mentioned the driving.

I have my son just, he's in,

we have to go down to the

DMV to get his learner's permit,

but he has all this testing and stuff.

But he's all like obsessed

with like watching me drive.

And the big thing is don't text mom,

don't text dad.

Yeah.

My kids with the rolling stop.

Mom, you didn't stop at that stop sign.

I was like, yes, I did.

I know.

Well, I started to think about my actions.

And, you know,  
coming from a Christian home, like every,  
you know, those things that I,  
my character, my personality,  
all those little things, my anger,  
that's another one.

Like how many times when  
they were little that I  
just brushed them off or I  
got mad at them.

And now that they're older,  
I'm seeing that come out of them.

So.

Yes, they're good copycats.

Yeah.

I also think with neurodivergent,  
a lot of them do, if I'm not mistaken,  
learn from doing and from  
their environment.

So yeah, if you've got ADHD kids,  
they're definitely going to  
be your more hands-on  
learners by doing with you usually.

You know, if you have, you know,  
autistic kiddos who are  
Big, you know, got to follow the rules,  
have a set,  
and you're breaking those  
rules because sometimes  
there's things that are bendable, right?

And a lot of times our  
neurodivergent kids don't  
understand that bend,  
that there's exceptions, that, you know,  
there's certain places  
where one thing is okay and  
another place where it's not okay.

And so sometimes we just  
have to take a little extra  
time to explain that and  
help walk our kids through  
those situations.

But yeah,  
they're always watching and we  
have to be careful.

It doesn't mean that we have

to be perfect.

It's just noticing that and

catching it and, you know,

having those conversations with our kids.

You know,

why did we make that bad decision

or why did we choose to go

serve this family and not

serve another family or whatever?

you know, whatever we are doing,

but living with our kids side by side.

Do you, okay.

I know you said you had kids with ADHD.

Do you have any on the spectrum?

So none that have been

diagnosed on the spectrum,

but because they do overlap,

ADHD and autism overlap a lot.

So I've got hints of OCD going on.

So we've got a lot of the

same issues in some of my kiddos.

My deaf daughter is...

She doesn't have any white

matter in her brain.

And so she doesn't

necessarily have a

diagnosis for that other

than she processes

information very

differently than normal people.

And one of the things that

she has done to understand the world,

it's a very OCD habit,

but she's very much all

about checks and balances

and lists and information.

do's and don'ts.

And she's very, you know,

OCD about a lot of those things,

because that's just how

she's had to organize stuff

in her brain to help her

live in this world.

And so I see a lot of that

my my twelve year old is

got ADHD among everything else.



He also has a lot of OCD tendencies.

And I think he does that to

help process the world

around him to understand

what he's seeing and how to

interact with other people.

So then,

because I know we mentioned

earlier where we talked

about you run on a rhythm,

not a schedule.

And you mentioned the

daughter that it's by

checks and balances.

And I know with my daughter

that has Down syndrome, like we have,

like you do this in this

order at this time.

Everything's like very

specific what you do.

So then with the, how does that,

like having that routine

and not a schedule, how does that work?

OK, go ahead.

Yeah, it doesn't sometimes.

And part of that,

I always felt like my

daughter needed to learn to

live in a world where

everyone wasn't going to

follow her schedule.

Everyone wasn't going to go

by her requirements.

And I think part of that

created where she did it herself.

She's like, OK,

everyone else isn't going

to go by the schedule, but I am.

And she started to take

responsibility for her own

schedule and her own order of things.

Now, she is a firstborn,

so she's a little headstrong.

And so she just decided that

was how she was going to do things.

We have lots of frustration.

She's been through lots of  
counseling to help her deal  
with transitions.

She had a hard time  
transitioning through middle school.

And so she's had held down  
Three different jobs now.

She's twenty six now.

And all of her jobs.

This has been an issue  
because she has you know,  
they tell you this set of  
rules when you get hired.

Right.

This is the way we do things.

Does everyone do them  
exactly like they do?

No, they don't.

So she doesn't understand that.

She gets angry.

There was times where she  
was like upset with the customers.

I'm like, honey,

the customer's always right.

You can't get upset with the customer.

So it's lots of conversations.

It's lots of mistakes.

It's because she does get

very frustrated with the

fact that the world doesn't

run the way she thinks that

they should do it.

And but part of that's learning.

It's a lot of learning.

She may be twenty six,

but she's probably emotionally, you know,

sixteen.

And so it's still a lot of

adjusting and learning.

Today, she went and got tires on her car.

So that was a big deal and

learning how to talk to the

people without getting

upset with them because she

has a certain expectation

of what they should do for her.

So it's a constant  
conversation and something,  
and I'm going to throw this in here,  
this little tidbit,  
because years ago when she  
was about twelve,  
I was really frustrated  
because I couldn't figure  
out what her brain was  
doing and I couldn't figure  
out why I couldn't teach  
this kid to read.

And it was just really frustrating.

And I found a  
neurodevelopmentalist and I  
cornered her because I just needed help.

That poor woman.

I was like, I need help.

And so I told her, you know,  
what my daughter's MRIs look like.

I told her about what she  
could and couldn't do.

And I say,

I just need help with this child.

And she looked at me and she said,

Now, one, she goes,

I'm going to let you know

that from that MRI and what

your child is doing,

she shouldn't be able to do any of it.

But her brain has

compensated because our

brains are amazing.

And she's figured out how to do things.

She goes, that's good.

And you need to be happy and

excited about that.

She said, but second,

everyone else thinks

they're on an eighteen year

plan with their kid.

But some of us are on thirty year plans.

You know, some of us,

we need to get out of the

mindset that our job is

done in eighteen years.

And that is so true because  
our kids always need us,  
even when they're adults,  
even if they're neurotypical.

Our kids need us.

There isn't a there isn't a  
deadline for this parenting gig.

But for our our kids that  
need a little more help.

We need to prepare them to  
be independent as they possibly can.

Yes.

But we also need to be  
looking at it as a long-term goal.  
commitment relationship like  
we should anyway with any of our kids.

But we need to get out of  
this eighteen year deadline.

You know what I mean?

Like we just need to think  
about this a little more long term.

And my oldest has done very  
well for herself.

She's very independent.

She's lived on her own.

She's worked her own jobs.

She is back at home now.

But that was for personal reasons.

And she does very well.

She just needs help

navigating things sometimes.

And that's OK.

That's what we're here for.

Because we're all supposed

to kick our kids out when

they turn eight.

No,

I think that's funny how like we're

homeschooling and we're

homeschooling because we

don't want to do things the

way that the public school did.

Yet we still have some of

these ideas that randomly

pop in our head that are

directly taught from the



public school system.

Well, that's how we were taught.

Yeah.

Yeah.

That's how we were taught.

Yeah.

We're done.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I think that applies with everyone.

Not just...

Neurodivergence or.

Absolutely.

Absolutely.

Yeah.

But we have to have our

mindset in the right place

so that we're not getting

like where we don't feel

like we messed up or we did

something wrong because our

kid isn't ready to launch at eighteen.

You know.

Right.

Right.

OK,

I'm going to move on to the next question.

So as a mom who has successfully homeschooled children with a variety of challenges, what is one of the most rewarding moments you've experienced in your homeschool journey?

Well, my favorite thing is always seeing them succeed at the one thing they love doing.

And I love it.

I love seeing them do that.

My son is, we call him my poster child because his ADHD created this hyper-focus thing in this kid.

And he was so obsessed with trains and that's,

I just took it and ran with it.

I was like, okay, you like trains.

What are we going to do with trains?

And we did,

we wrote papers about trains and we did,

Studies of aerodynamics.

And, you know,

we turned everything we

could into trains.

We've ridden trains all

across the United States.

And so seeing him take that

and then learn how to be a

diesel mechanic and then

take that and learn

actually do diesel mechanics on trains.

is seeing him progress in

the one thing he loves and

now he's a daddy.

So that's even really fun.

Just seeing them succeed is my just,

it's just the icing on the cake.

Like I just love seeing them

succeed at the one thing

that they just love.

My deaf daughter is obsessed with flowers.

She went to floral design

school and has her

certificate in floral design,

and she just loves it.

She's also very good at photography.

So seeing her take her

skills and her talents,

even with all of her challenges,

and be able to just, in her mind,

succeed at something that she loves,

that is my reward for all of this.

It's just seeing my kids use

the talents that God gave them

to do the thing that they

were created to do.

What about the little kids?

Because I don't think you

mentioned much about them,

if that's okay asking.

Yeah, no, it's fine.

Yeah.

People always want to know

the end results.

So we usually talk about the older kids,

you know, because they're kind of,

you know, I'm done.

Now they have to do their

part kind of thing.

It's like, okay,

how did I get them to point A to point B?

But the little kids, I mean,

we talk about my

twelve-year-old a lot too.

He's one that we call him

our alphabet soup kid

because unfortunately that

kid got everything in our family.

But he's also very

interested in motors and the things,

the way things work.

And so

We do lots of hands-on things.

lots of power tools, lots of tinkering,

lots of building.

And so I love seeing him when he,

cause he's my quitter.

Remember that's the one

that's the quitter.

So when after he finishes

something and just,

he is so proud of himself,

it's still that same thing

where they have succeeded

in something they wanted to do.

So even if it's small things

and not big life-changing things,

it's still amazing.

to see them when they know

that they did something and

they finished it and they did well.

Even just finishing your assignments too.

Yeah,

they don't get as excited about that

as I do though.

You're like, I'm done.

They're more excited about

the song they played on the guitar or,  
you know,

the ramp they built for their  
bike or those are the  
things that excite them.

And I like seeing them excited.

And I'm sure, you know,  
you mentioned the twelve  
year old likes motors.

Does his older brother come  
over and do stuff with him?

He does.

They live about six and a half hours away,  
so we don't get to see him often.

But yeah, no,  
most of the work he's done on  
his truck has been with his brother.

Six and a half hours.

Wow.

But I've noticed like even  
just with siblings, how they just,  
you know,  
they're part of the same family.

They have like, you know, just.  
very, a lot of similarities,  
but they can help each other out,  
especially the older  
siblings teaching the younger kids.

I mean, do you see that a lot?

Yeah,

that's definitely a blessing of a  
large family is we usually  
have what we call buddy systems.

And so we have a buddy that  
helps an older kid that  
helps a younger kid.

It's really nice.

It's not always beautiful, but when it is,  
it's very beautiful.

Yeah.

But yeah,  
we definitely have older ones teaching.

Like I have my twenty two  
year old lives at home and  
she's my my introvert animal kid.

She's also a farrier like



she's very into animals.

And then my fourteen year

old is also my introvert animal kid.

And so those two do a lot together.

They're always out doing the

goats and the chickens and the rabbits.

And and those two really

like to work outside together.

Oh,

you have goats and chickens and rabbits.

Yeah, we have a little home spread.

Yes, well, we always got stuff to do.

ADHD people can't be bored, you know?

Yeah, we'll go crazy.

No, you're just like,

it's so funny when you said to me, like,

it doesn't always go well.

No, not always.

But like, there are bad days, too.

Yes.

And, you know, personalities clash,

you know, and when you live with somebody,

you know, all their stuff, you know,

all the good stuff, all the bad stuff.

And so it's a little easier

to get upset with them when

they do things.

dumb things.

And so we have siblings that

don't agree with each other.

We have siblings that don't

like each other.

But you know what?

I always told my kids,

because my oldest was very

difficult to live with and

her personality.

And I always raised my kids with, you know,

sometimes we have to learn

how to hug the porcupine.

And y'all get to practice every day,

hugging the porcupine.

And that's just part of, you know,

showing God's love to everyone around us.

And so we have to be able to

to love the, hug the porcupine sometimes.

And that's what we're doing.

Have you ever gotten like

little stuffed porcupine?

We have a stuffed, okay.

Well, it's not really a porcupine.

It's close.

You know, I was thinking modeling.

I don't know why my brain

went in that direction,

but modeling with a porcupine.

Or like a pin, no, that wouldn't be safe.

Well, my daughter,

my twenty two year old

actually works with zoo

animals and they she

actually takes care of two porcupines.

And so she's taken the

little guys to go meet them

and they always bring me

home porcupine quills.

And so that's a very good visual.

OK, yes.

There could be so many jokes.

I could think of so many different jokes.

But I'm thinking using those  
real-world examples or even  
having inside jokes like that, too,  
helps.

Actually, what is it?

I heard when you have laughter,  
it's connected with memory,  
and you remember things more.

Sure.

So I don't know.

Yeah, we definitely have our jokes.

Well,

one of my things was I raised my kids  
to understand their differences,  
their challenges.

My first daughter being deaf,  
and she had to wear a hearing aid.

I always told her, I was like,  
you wear a hearing aid,  
but I have to wear glasses.

I was like, we all have challenges.

We all have something we have to overcome.

But if we can figure out what that is,  
then we can find the right  
tools to help us overcome them.

And so we are always making  
jokes about our differences.

We're always making fun of  
ourselves because we are  
broken people and none of us are perfect.

And that's not the  
expectation at the Johnson household.

We are not perfect.

Right.

And no judgment either.

Right.

It's just how God made us.

And now we learn how to work  
with that and do the best that we can.

Yeah, I love that.

Okay, so the next question is,  
how can families create a  
homeschooling environment  
that supports supports both  
neurodivergent learners and

the parents needs?

So it's going to be

different for every family, right?

Every family has different

requirements that they want to see.

It's always changing, I will say,

because as our kids grow,

their needs change.

And so it is a constantly changing thing.

The one thing that's been

consistent for us is the

way that we learn things in

the sense of like,

Like I said,

I've never been good with a schedule.

I don't think we've ever had

a schedule in all of my homeschooling.

I probably tried at the very

beginning and failed miserably.

I was like, okay,

this isn't going to work.

But we do lots of read-alouds.

And read-alouds may be fiction,

but they may also be science.

They may be...

field guides.

Like we discuss things and

read them together for

chemistry in high school.

My kids read Thomas Gray's

molecules out loud and it

was hilarious and they enjoyed it.

Like it's a nonfiction book

about the periodic table, but it's,

it was just a good read and

we read it out loud.

So we've always learned that way.

We've always learned on field trips.

My kids call me Ms.

Frizzle.

That's been my nickname for

years because I'm world

known for turning anything

into a field trip.

We used to go to the grocery store.

We lived in Texas with HEBs

and they always had this big,  
huge cheese section.

And so we would go to the  
cheese section and we'd  
talk about how they make  
cheese and where it comes from, like what  
because some of them came  
all the way from Italy.

And I would turn that into a field trip.  
I would turn everything into a field trip.

Lots of hands-on things.

And then at home,  
just we have craft supplies  
that are available.

We have Legos that are available.

We have wood and nails and things outside.

Just giving them opportunities to explore.

We have a garden.

And not everybody can do everything,  
right?

I think when you have more kids,  
you have more hands to do  
different things.



And so that helps as well.

But really,

it was just constant opportunity,  
either through materials or  
through networking and  
people and just putting my  
kids in touch with these things.

And that's kind of my only  
consistent thing I've done.

um over the last twenty some  
odd years um our days look  
different all the time um  
we just have our bare  
minimums we have to get  
through so parents needs  
kids needs they change all  
the time and you just kind  
of have to be willing to  
change with them and make  
it work and there is a  
balance I mean I need one  
of my things is I can't  
have stuff everywhere I

need a path through my  
house I don't want to walk  
over your piles of legos  
and I don't want to walk over  
you know, whatever creation.

So for me, I'm like, guys,  
you're going to have to  
find a home for this.

And,  
and so that's just one of my  
requirements.

And, you know,  
but their requirement is  
that they have Legos that  
they can get out and dig  
and whatever with them.

And, and so you have to find that balance,  
whatever stage you're at  
and just figure out what's going to work.

And sometimes you try things  
and they don't work and you  
just got to try something else.

Yeah.

I keep it when you said the grocery store,

I keep I keep imagining you

with your kids at the

grocery store and like all

the other people around

just kind of listening in.

And then by the end,

you have this group of

people following you like at a museum.

It definitely starts conversations,

I will say.

Yeah.

With like, yeah, definitely.

And then also I was thinking,

mom needs to get groceries.

We're going to make a field trip.

That's a need that we need.

And I love the more kids, more hands.

Because I'm listening to you.

And when you said that, I was like, oh,

yeah, she has eight kids.

Because I was like, I don't have a garden.

I don't have a farm.

but I also don't have any  
kids right more hands kids  
right but in time it's hard  
it I would think I don't  
know you correct me if I'm  
wrong that it's hard to  
find things for them to do  
sometimes or are they  
always I think that there's  
a skill in that there's a  
skill in teaching our kids  
how not to be bored  
Like if you're bored,  
that means you need to find  
something to do.  
And my kids have learned.  
So, so it's funny.  
My older kids learned,  
you don't tell mom you're bored.  
And I never taught that to my younger kids,  
but the older kids taught  
the younger kids.  
You don't tell mom you're bored.

She will find something for you to do.

And so we have something

hanging up in our house

called the board board.

And I have a list of things.

If you are bored,

here's a list of things that can be done.

And so they've just learned

not to tell me that they're

bored because then they're

going to have to go do a

chore they don't want to do.

And so they get good at

finding things to do.

Nice.

So it's like a little, like a board.

It is.

It's a dry erase board.

And it's B-O-R-E-D, bored, bored,

B-O-A-R-D, the bored board.

And I write on it the tasks

that need to be done.

And so if you're bored,

let's go do something.

And so one of them is dig post holes.

I've got a kid who loves to

dig post holes.

And so when he's got time, hey buddy,

I need four post holes, go dig them.

Yeah.

Oh, wow.

I've seen the board jars

where they have a bunch of

slips and you just slip out too.

Yeah,

they probably have more fun things in

their jar.

My list isn't really fun things.

It's mostly chores that need to be done.

Yeah.

But what about, I mean,

what about your time,

like your quiet time?

So I have a rule.

Yep.

I have a rule that if mommy

has hot coffee in her hand,

you can't climb on her.

You can't, you got to leave her alone.

So I get my coffee time.

As long as I have hot coffee in my hand,

then they leave me alone.

I think some of the moms are like, well,

then I'll just hold my

coffee all day long.

Yeah.

I think they would say that

that wasn't fair.

I think my kids would call

me out on that if I did that.

yeah no I get it I like that

rule a lot um do they do

they also watch each other

so that you can have a

moment to escape if you

need it yeah I mean I have

adult children that live at

home so that's a little

different for us because I

have kids that can help um  
if I have a meeting like  
right now they're outside  
oh yeah well I'm having a  
meeting so um which is nice  
it definitely is an  
advantage to having kids with  
spanning age gaps.

So.

Gotcha.

Yeah, that's true.

Cause that's, well, my husband's home,  
but my kids are watching  
each other and they're not  
adults or they're teenagers, but yeah,  
that's true.

I didn't think about that.

Okay.

I don't know if there's  
anything else you want to talk about.

Anything you want to mention?

Any encouraging words for  
any parents out there?



Yeah.

Let's see.

Encouraging words.

I have loved homeschooling

and the relationship it's

given me with my kids.

It has not been easy.

It's been a really hard, bumpy road.

But my adult children love

coming home and hanging out with us.

And they like to critique me

on how I'm raising the

younger set for sure.

But it's such a tight knit

community that we've, our culture,

family culture that we've

created through homeschooling.

So even if it is bumpy and

rough and you think your

kids are never going to like each other,

just keep at it.

Like,

this is a huge blessing for you and

your family.

And it has been really a blessing for us.

Um, and like I said,

it has definitely been

refining for myself.

Like I have had to grow up

so much and I've had to

really lean on the Lord for

help through a

professionals to include, which therapies,

which doctors.

When I started,

I'm just going to reach out

to the special needs

community here really,

is that when I started with

my daughter and we were having two, three,

four doctor's appointments every week,

all the testing and your

whole life kind of revolves

around your special need

kiddo and the other ones

kind of feel left behind.

It's just a season.

And I let my kids know that

this is just a season.

And I always try to make

time for each kid so that

they would know that it's not all about,

you know, my oldest in her sense.

And now it's my twelve year old.

We're going to all the appointments for,

you know.

There's going to be the

right people for them and

the right season.

And so even though we do therapy,

that doesn't mean we're

always going to do therapy.

We only do it for when I

feel like it is breathing

life into our family.

It is breathing life into my child.

But there are times to take breaks.

You're not going to ruin

your kid taking a break from therapy,

you know.

God chose that child to be  
the way that they are for a  
purpose and a reason.

And I just find beauty in that.

And now I can say that  
because I'm looking back on  
years and years of doing this.

And I know that when we're  
in the heat of it,  
it's really hard and it's  
really exhausting.

And you just feel like  
you're not doing anything right.

I put my oldest in school  
when she was in fifth grade  
because I thought I could  
never teach her to read.

I was completely,  
I thought I was going to  
ruin her because she wasn't  
reading past the first  
grade reading level and she

was at fifth grade.

And I put her in school and  
the teacher had the exact  
same problems teaching her  
to read that I did.

So it wasn't me, it was her brain.

It was the way her brain functions.

Language is a frontal cortex  
thing and she has a really  
hard time accessing frontal cortex.

And so it's just her.

And so just having that  
teacher who was a wonderful  
Christian lady walk beside  
me and help me through that  
was a real growing  
experience for me in that  
because I realized that I  
am doing good for my  
daughter and we have a relationship.  
It hasn't been beautiful all  
the way through,  
but we have a really strong

relationship because we've  
walked through really hard  
things together.

And I think that's part of  
the blessing in raising  
these special kiddos.

Yeah.

So now we want to know where  
can our listeners find you?

Find more of your work, resources,  
advice on homeschooling?

Yeah.

So I have a little corner on  
the web called [thetailoredhomeschool.com](http://thetailoredhomeschool.com).

That's really just to find  
my products and a little bit about me.

But I am pretty active on  
Instagram and Facebook at  
The Tailored Homeschool.

That's where you're going to  
find me most of the time.

The Tailored Homeschool.

Okay.

And we'll probably have  
those down in the show notes as well too.

Great.

Thanks.

All right.

Well, thank you.

Thank everyone for tuning in  
to today's episode of  
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So let's make your  
homeschool journey extraordinary.

And once again,

I just want to thank you so  
much for chatting with me  
today and with our audience.

And I know a lot of people  
appreciate this.

Thank you so much for having me.

It was a lot of fun.



Good.

I'm so glad.

It was fun, too.

It was a nice little break.

A nice little break from life.

Absolutely.

All right.

Thank you.

Thank you.

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