welcome to empowering homeschool conversations your authority in navigating the world of homeschooling diverse learners featuring peggy ployer from sped homeschool annie yorty from annie yorty.com leilani melendez from living with eve stephanie buckwalter from e-larp learning and don jackson from don 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. Thank you. Hey everyone, and welcome to another episode of Empowering Homeschool Conversations. I'm your host, Peggy Pleur, and I'm so glad that you're here today. Whether you are folding laundry, sipping your third cup of coffee, or hiding in the pantry for just a quiet moment, this week's conversation is one I think that'll speak to a lot of us. Our episode is called Homeschooling Autism with Hope and Healing, and I'm joined by a very special guest, Heather Anderson,

a homeschool mom who's been

walking this road with her amazing son,

Tosh, who has nonverbal autism.

Heather's story isn't some polished,

perfect fairy tale.

It's real life, hard lessons,

surprise breakthroughs and

a whole lot of learning

through in and out what works.

She's going to share how she

went from surviving to

truly thriving and how her

family found healing,

joy and academic success right at home.

Before we get started, just quick reminder,

if you're looking for more encouragement,

helpful tips or just a reminder,

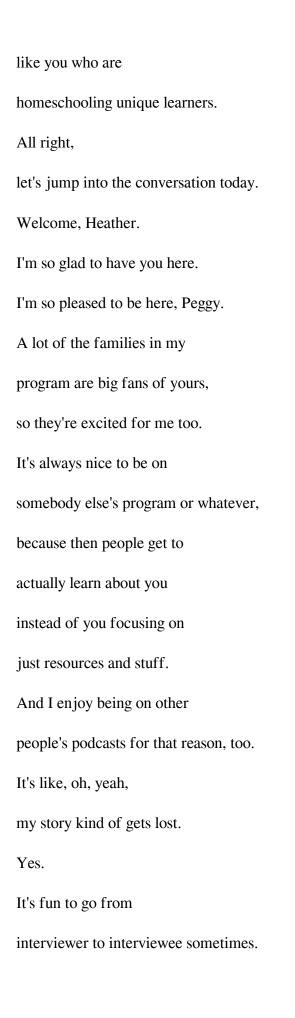
that you're not the only one

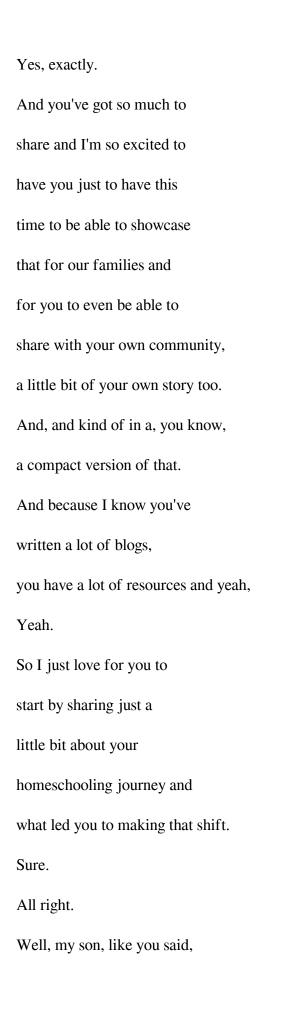
trying to figure out this as you go,

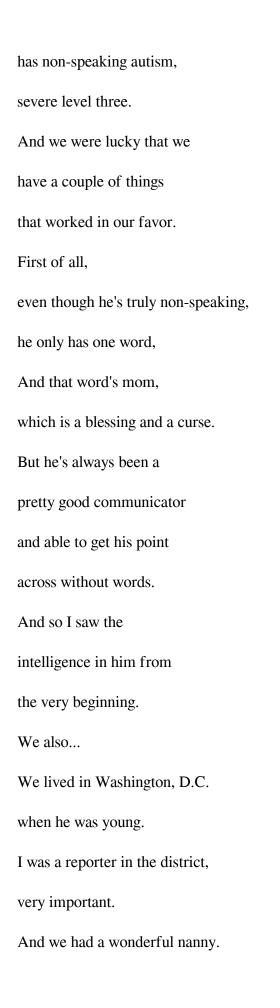
head over to spedhomeschool.com.

It's packed full of resources,

real support for parents







a young woman who was going to college for occupational therapy and had worked in an autism preschool. And so she knew exactly what to do. I had no idea what I was doing. And so she, yes, yes. She discovered that one of the things that calmed him was to sing the ABC song. And yes. And so that kind of opened up a love of letters and reading and learning and that sort of thing. So She also taught him counting. And so he was equipped with the two primary skills that we teach in my program, which is letters mean a sound and numbers mean quantity.

They're not just symbols to put in order.

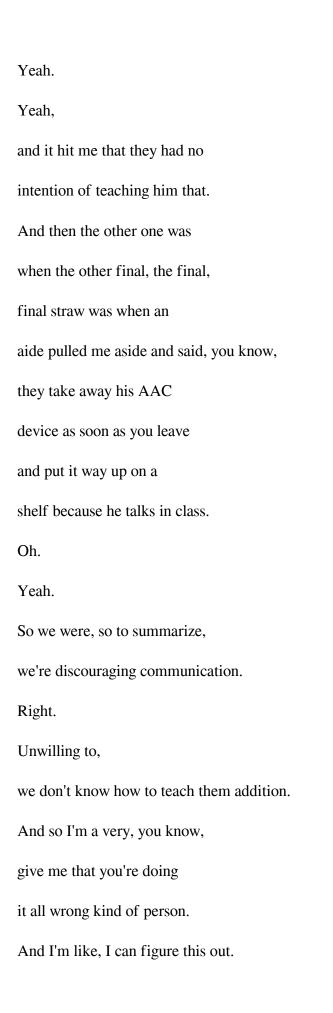
So she helped him get over that very first academic hurdle. And so we came back to California success in Washington, DC is a twenty four hour gig. And I did not have that as the mom of what was becoming Heidi's child. So we came back to California and settled down, put him in public school. We did the head start IBI preschool, the federal program that so many families have a wonderful experience in. And like them, we did have a wonderful experience. He blossomed. He was learning. He was getting great reports coming home every day. And I was very encouraged about public education.

Then kindergarten happened. And this is so typical in a lot. It is. I was going to say that shift is so hard for so many kids that have been in that program and it works so well. And then school. Yeah, because they lose the one-on-one and it's, there's just the assumption that the incorrect assumption that the non-speaking kids have intellectual disability and they instantly kind of start treating them differently. The standard becomes a standard of behavior rather than a standard of learning. And so I would pick him up and I would excitedly ask, what did he learn today?

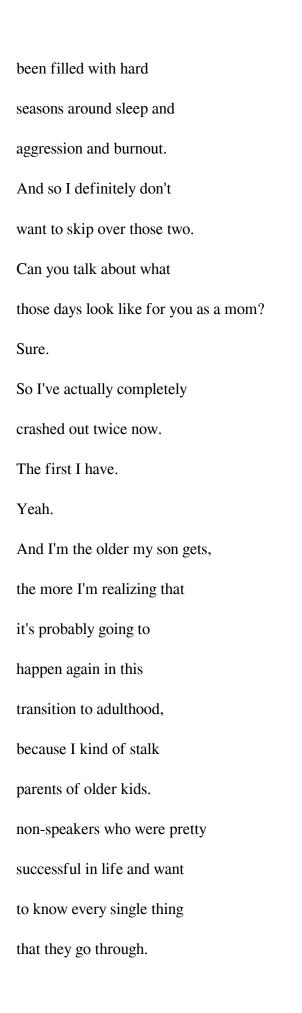
And they'd kind of look at me like I was crazy and say, well, he ate his snack and he went potty. And he didn't hit anybody. Yeah, that's great. What did he learn? And it quickly became clear that they thought I was crazy for assuming he should be learning things. Right. Yeah. So there were a few final straws and that was it for public school for us. Yeah, I, yeah, that's, that's probably the same road my son would have taken. But yeah, we started homeschooling right at that kindergarten age, too. And yeah, we, but yeah, we, we, you know, and I tried a few different

things as a lot of parents do, right? I, I got a lottery spot in a charter school. So we went to the charter school and he was placed in a gen ed classroom because they didn't really have a lot of special ed facilities and it didn't work out for him. It was just too overstimulating, but he had the opportunity to prove himself as a serious student. He tried very hard and he did show mastery of some of, this was first grade, some of the first grade academics, Um, and that was where I met Mr. Sims, who has helped me so much with my program, special ed teacher. Um, but you know, and that didn't work out. Then I put him back into our

neighborhood public school for just a semester. And I was just stunned at the difference between a charter school that was willing to work with him as a mainstream student and give him truly the least restrictive environment and our neighborhood public school. where I had a conversation with the teacher that he's ready for addition. They were trying to tell me he can't count past seven. I'm like, that's impossible. He's counting to one hundred at home. And I told her, I'm like, he's ready for addition. And she looked at me and said, well, how in the world would I teach him that? Oh, boy. She was a special ed teacher.



And, and the experience I had at the, the charter school was such a positive one that I just ended up homeschooling through them. And then that's when I really got the program together for my son. It really started seeing some, some results for him. Yeah. That's encouraging. I, you know, a lot of parents find themselves at that place and they're like, well, what do I do? Yeah. And so your story is filled with a lot of hope as well as, as some encouragement and, and resources too. So, so continue listening. I, and I know you, Some of your other story has



It's interesting that that happens too.

But so the first difficult

time was after we moved

back from Washington, DC,

and it was clear that I was

going to have to give up my career,

which I had worked so hard

on and had always,

I never dreamed of being a mother.

you know,

while the other girls in school

would practice writing, you know,

Mrs. Andy Rogers, you know,

like the husband I would

have and the babies I would

have in the home.

I practiced my name on big

checks because I was going

to be the owner of the company.

And I played entrepreneur.

Like I didn't play dolls or

mommy or house.

I played entrepreneur, right?

So that was, I am work. Like this is me and the essence of me. So to lose that career, and be a stay at home mom and full-time caregiver was a very big adjustment. And so I became very depressed. And then I, you know, I, there was no place for my son, you know, I knew he was smart and the schools weren't helping and I'm very into natural health and the doctors weren't helpful. And. You know, I had I was really into, you know, all of the causes of autism from the environment, which my son was never exposed to. And so it was a very dark place for me. And my marriage was failing at the time. And so I was, you know, waking up in the morning

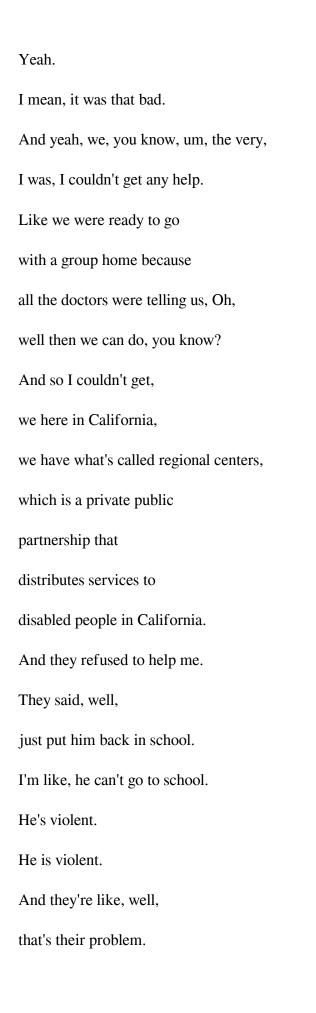
and making a screwdriver for breakfast. And, you know, it was it was bad. And a lot of moms get in that situation. Right. I'm seeing a lot of them on social media that are in that stage. So homeschooling and this business is kind of what brought me out of it. You know, that once my son was finally able to make academic progress, that relieved a lot of the future anxiety that I had and just made me feel like there was something that I could build and put myself into and make use of the talents that I was leaving behind in my former career. So that was the first hurdle. And that's the one that we talk about on my website and my about me page.

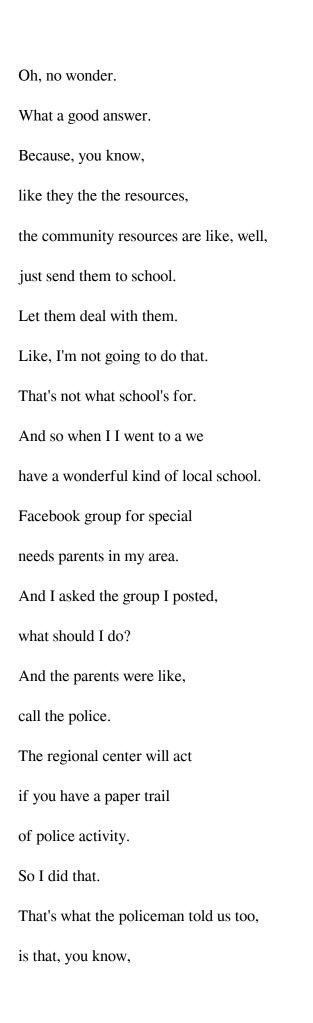
The second one happened recently, um, my son became very physically and mentally ill and I was completely gaslit by doctors, by, by everyone. Um, his pediatrician refused to refer him to psych because, um, those pills, the, that, that doesn't help anyway. And this is just how these guys are. And he told me you either need to toughen up or put them in a group home because there's, this is completely normal. And, you know, we, he was, he was violent and extremely destructive, um, Me and his dad and my son were walking around with scratches and bite marks and bruises and broken windshields and broken

windows and the walls were
down to the studs.
And it was just horrific.
Horrific.
He would look at me with a
fear in his eyes like he
didn't know who I was,
like he didn't recognize me.
And I'm like, this is not normal autism.
Right.
Yeah.
So
I just wrote a blog on this
because we had to involve the police.
And luckily for me,
the police in our area are
extremely supportive and
very well trained.
And it was opposite
conclusion of the horrible
tragedy that we saw last
week with the non-speaker
killed by police.

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Um, so I,
I wrote about that and how
wonderful an experience that was.
Um,
it turned out my son had very severe
mental illness and, um,
that was just waved off by
the doctors as behaviors.
Um,
luckily the police were able to hook us
up with the correct
supports and resources.
And after about six months,
he was completely stabilized.
Um, we,
we were able to do that safely at home.
it was pretty bad.
We could do a whole podcast on that story.
We went through the same
thing with one of our kids
just in the last year or two.
And it is not easy.
I haven't really talked
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about that experience myself. But the police, there's a lot, like in our local area, they have a whole mental health unit and they are very, very good. and what they do and they can walk you. Like you said, we had been asking for resources from multiple people and finally it took the police to get involved before anything really happened. And you feel bad, you feel like this isn't what I should be doing in my house and what are my neighbors gonna think? And at this point, it doesn't matter anymore. Um, because I feel threatened. My child is out of, you know, control and something's got to happen. Losing control with reality.





it's better that you're involved and this is a good situation that we come into instead of us finding something further down, but also they're able to respond in a much more informed way when, if you have other follow-ups, they already have that record in place. So yes. Yeah. They, so the very first, the two officers that came on the very first call, One had a mildly autistic son and the other one had a level three severely non-speaking son. And so they knew exactly what was happening in our backyard and advised me like, you know, if you invite us in and he charges at us, we are required to use police force, which is not appropriate.

We know this as dads. So we're going to stand outside and be here until he calms down. We can come in if needed, but we're just going to, And then they referred me to our behavioral health team and got us in to see a better level-up psychiatrist. And they... They forced me. They literally went to the regional center and said, if we get one more call from this family, because you didn't help them, you're going to hear from us. They like threatened them into inviting us with some support. Regional center expected me and his dad to both stay home with him. For the six months he needed to stabilize. And the police were like, these people need to work.

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Yeah,
that's not you're supposed to do your
job.
So yeah,
that was that was quite an experience.
But through that fire,
we as a family became really close,
even as divorced parents,
we are such a team now.
And
my son trusts us like really, really,
really trust us.
And through that,
we developed some
incredible communication skills where,
you know, he, he can tell us now,
you know,
if these things are coming and right.
And he, you know,
even if he's having an
episode and I sound scary
or I look scary,
He trusts that, no,
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I know that's really mom,
like I can talk him down.
And so it's just like,
I feel like that horrific
experience set us up for
success with him forever now.
Yeah.
Yeah.
I think the same happened for us, too.
It's been it's it's coming.
It was we celebrated.
Yeah.
But a year into this a
couple of weeks ago.
And yeah.
It's our one year anniversary.
Yeah.
Yeah.
And how it has changed my marriage,
how it has changed my
relationship with my child,
how it has changed our
whole family dynamic.

It has opened everybody up

to like being able to do

family counseling that

nobody was thinking otherwise.

Now, what do we need that for?

You know, and so I, yeah, I love,

I love that your story is the same way.

Cause how encouraging that, you know,

two totally different stories, you know,

we're living in different

areas of the country.

And, and my, my child is verbal,

but still has a lot of

other things that he's dealing with.

His was more brought on by,

he was physically attacked and,

Um.

and that led to some really downward

spiraling things.

And, um, but yet on the end,

we can see it as a being a

positive because of what it

has brought about, um, in healing really.

So isn't it crazy that you and I have had such similar experiences and we had no idea. about the other. And that's, I really would like to talk about this more not in your form in your call. But I think this is something that parents need to hear that when your child is prescribed antipsychotic medication, that is such a blow. And there is so much shame associated with that. And we don't realize, especially with the non-speakers, that almost all of them take that medication. And had I known that, like I know that now, now that I start talking about it and I talk to

parents of older non-speakers, they're like, oh yeah, we're on that and this, we tried that and that didn't work. And now we stopped and then we started to get on. Oh yeah, that's the process. And so I really kind of want to normalize this experience so that it's not so fearful for everyone. Yeah, yeah, exactly. Yes. And it is, it's, it's a crazy adventure and it is a lot of trial and error. And I don't think people realize that it's like we change meds and then go on vacation. It's like, well, that was the worst vacation ever because of that med change. Yeah.

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Yeah.
Well, or they, they grow, they develop,
they get bigger, you know,
and it stops working and it's, you know,
the med game is a long game.
Yeah, for sure.
Yeah.
And of course it needs to be
supported by natural health
and all those things as well.
Yeah.
Well, speaking of game changers,
you mentioned that sleep in
your story is also a game changer.
What changes did you make
that and how did that
affect everything else?
Yeah.
So I always recommend that
sleep be the first thing
that a family tackles before homeschool,
before education,
because if you're not sleeping,
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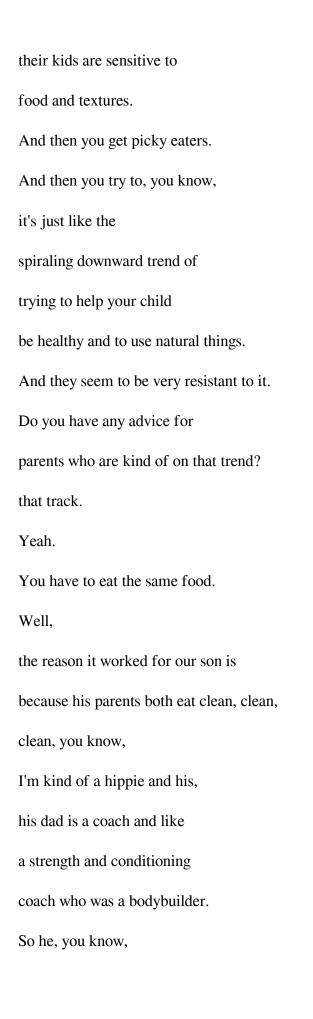
you're not learning.
I love sleep.
It's my favorite pastime.
It really is.
I have a very full life on
the other side when I'm asleep.
And so I was just unwilling
to keep that up.
I can't.
I was the friend in college
who would go out and
disappear before midnight
because I cannot stay awake.
So that was a top priority for me.
So I've been interested in
natural health for
over thirty years.
And so I had a lot of things to try.
For my son, here's what worked.
Diet.
Right.
So the obvious ones,
the non-dairy and gluten free,

that kind of stuff to get rid of the constipation and the tummy pain and that kind of stuff. Right. Because that's highly prevalent in any child on the spectrum. Oh, yeah. I mean. it's it was a problem for me as a child. You know, I was a weekly pooper for many, many years. And so that's the first thing. The second thing, though, is processed food. My son is extremely sensitive, extremely sensitive to processed food, as am I. Just a little bit of MSG will keep me up all night. And it gives me like restless leg feeling and just the feeling that I want to crawl out of my skin. All kinds of processed food, food dyes,

too much sugar and all that stuff. So that's even more important for my son than anything. dairy and gluten. So I've been making everything from scratch for a really long time, but I get to sleep. So it's totally yes. Another big thing for him was Epsom salts in the bath. Oh, yes. Because to the magnesium, yes, autistic people are unusually low in magnesium and magnesium is needed to regulate sleep. So and it also supposedly gets rid of in the body and just makes you feel relaxed and takes away that restless body feeling. And so. and the fun thing about Epsom salts is that they can play with

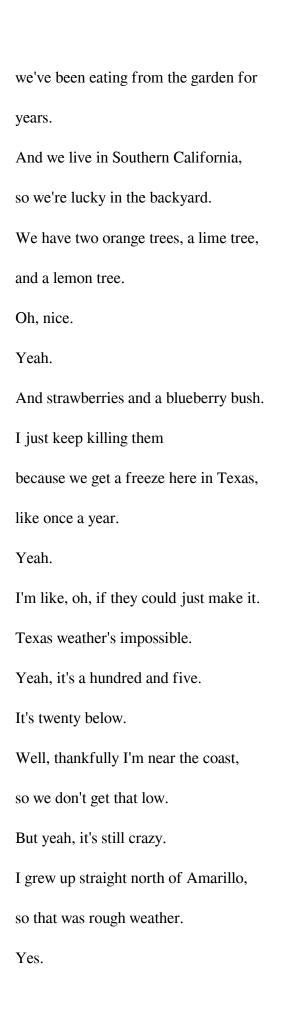
it in the bath and it's, it's, it's everything and it tastes terrible. So if you have a bath, like I did, it will put a stop to that as well. So many, so many benefits to Epsom salts. So we started doing that and those things, those things did it. Also my son, when he was younger, he liked some white noise. When he was an infant, we did the to get him to sleep. Right. And so then we had to keep that going with, you know, white noise apps and stuff. And he still uses those from time to time as well. But now that he's, he has his own, iPad and his own YouTube channels that he likes to listen to when he falls asleep. He's in charge of that now. And he's for years now, he's been twelve hours a night.

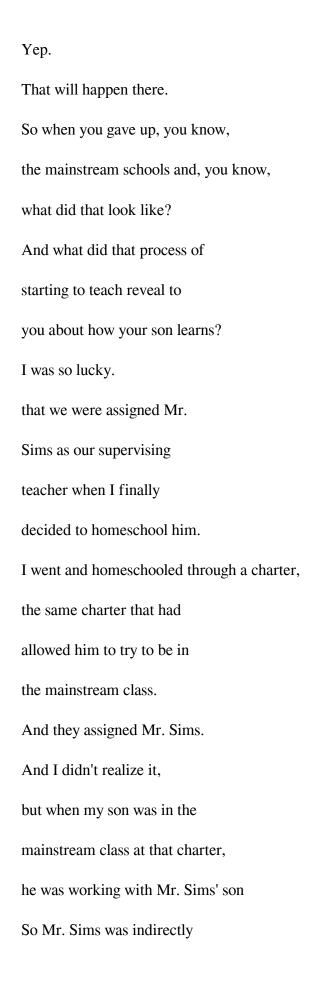
Wow.
Consistently.
Yeah.
That's great.
Yeah.
It's in this home.
Yeah.
I'm sure that was a process, though,
of what what you figured out,
what worked and what didn't.
Yeah.
But I mean,
I started when he was preschool.
three toddler.
And he had like the,
he had the night terrors
and that kind of stuff too.
That was a rough period as well.
Right.
Yeah.
That diet is a huge thing.
And I know a lot of parents
struggle with it because



knows exactly what to eat and how to be clean and that sort of thing. So, um, you know, our son never had, he didn't know what fast food was. He didn't know what soda was. He, you know, the worst thing he got was like hot buttered toast was like his cheat meal. So, you know, he was just, he, he grew up thinking it was normal that like everybody eats broccoli and has a green juice and he didn't know any different. So, you know, you can't have everyone in the family eating you know, pop tarts and then your autistic kid has to have yogurt.

Like that's not going to work. Everybody has to do it. Yeah. I think the greatest blessing for us was we moved to a farm when right after a couple of years after my son was diagnosed and we started growing our own food. And, and so, you know, our, our kids, they not only worked on the farm, but they ate what was from the farm and, And it was. it was a huge shift and yet it made dramatic differences in, in their health and, and all of, all their wellbeing all over. Oh, absolutely. I grew up on a farm and, you know, was in four H and went to Kansas state university. So I know a lot about plants and Yeah,





already working with my son because his son came to him and said, dad, I have this non-speaking kid. He's really bright, but can't keep his body still. What do I do? And so Mr. Sims put together a program for my son that presumed his competence. Mr. Sims is known in this area for taking kids off the completion track and getting them a diploma. And I charged into that charter, that mom, who was like, he is going to have mainstream academics. Don't you dare give me this presumed incompetent stuff. And so they said, we have the guy for you. Let's put you with Mr. Sims. And we hit it off. And the first thing that he did was through his son,

work with my son to teach

him beginning consonant

sounds and make sure he had

those down before we moved

on to the CBC word families.

And so instead of sitting

him at a table with a

pencil and trying to get

him to do a worksheet,

Mr. Sims had me put letters

on post-it notes and stick

them up on the wall and

then tell him which letter

makes the buh sound,

which letter makes the mm sound.

Which letter makes the sound.

And Mr. Sims even took it a

step further where he would

put several of them up in a room.

And my son had to go around

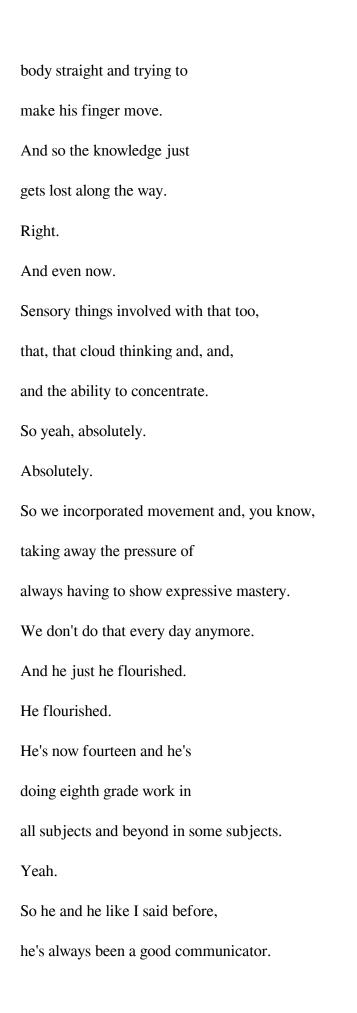
the room and find all of the beans.

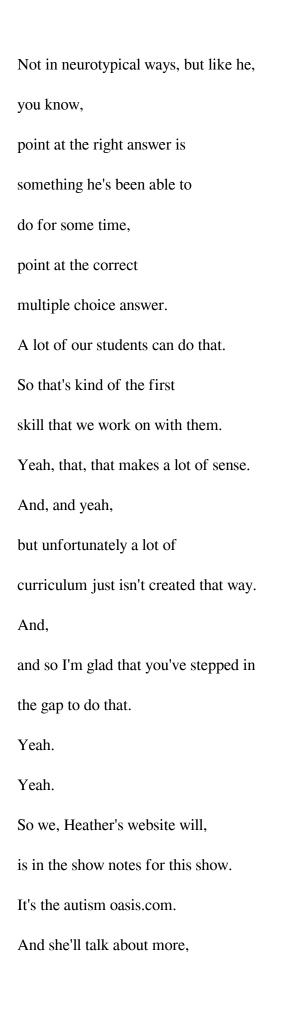
Okay.

So it was a treasure hunt, active.

Right. But also showing academic mastery. And that method is included in my program. I basically digitized all the things that Mr. Sims showed me from his thirty five years as a successful special ed teacher. But he hadn't worked that much with the non speakers. And so together we kind of developed it, made it more geared toward non speakers. And so, you know, once my son, if he is allowed to move. And also we learned, I learned about errorless learning, which is where you show the student how to do it first and then gradually back off instead of doing hand over hand or just throwing them to the wolves. Our children tend to be very

anxious about getting it wrong. And so if you can tell your student, when I could tell my son, I'm not going to let you get it wrong, I'm not going to let you get it wrong. Just watch me. You can join in when you're ready. And my son's like a lot of our students has a nice big ego. And so as soon as he figures it out, he's pushing me. I know how to do this. That's when you know you got him. Right. That's I figured out that that that was a big part of his learning style. He needs to move. He can't, you know, if. the second you make him sit down and hold a pencil, that's going to be all of his focus is keeping his



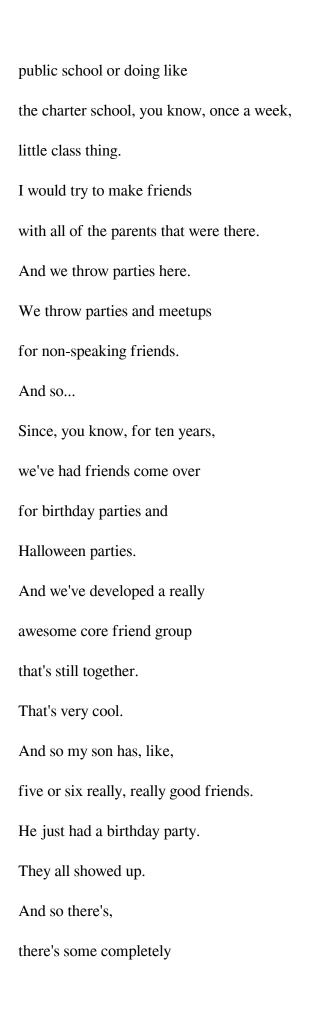


more about that site as we, we progress into our conversation. But so I'm assuming, you know, that wasn't your only support system, the father and son team that you've added to that team since then. How did you go about... just figuring out who would best support you with your goals in mind for your son versus what you had received. Because I think a lot of parents are like, well, what am I getting into? You know, putting myself out there for, you know, therapists and other people. And do you have any advice on navigating that? Sure, I do. So when it comes to therapies, therapy is so individual. So individual.

What works for you will not

work for another family.
What worked for another
family is not going to work for your kid.
So the only way you know is to try.
All you can do is try.
I give therapies six months.
Six months to see something.
If I see nothing, then no harm, no foul.
It's either not for my kid
or it's not for him right now.
And nobody's wrong.
Nobody is right.
It just didn't work.
So I think that attitude is
very important.
Just try it.
All you can do is try.
Also,
you don't have to do all of the things.
I feel like parents get the
hard sell from therapies.
If you don't do ABA,
if you don't do speech therapy,

if you don't do OT, if you don't do PT, if you don't do feeding therapy, if you don't eat equine, you're a horrible parent. that you have to do all of these things, right? When I meet moms who are completely burned out, I tell them to cut the therapies in half. Fifty percent, gone. Get rid of it. Pick the fifty percent that's doing the best, and then get rid of the rest. Let your kid be a kid. So that's on the therapy side. On the support side, I am obviously very friendly and talkative. And so I would purposely try to make friends in the waiting room, the lobby of the therapy, or back when he was at

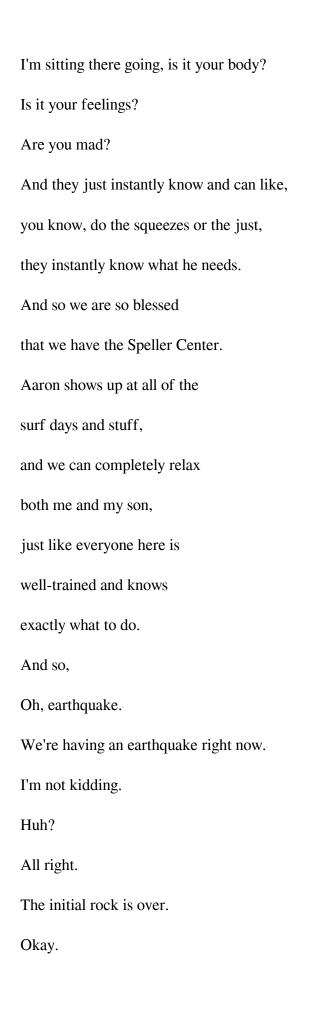


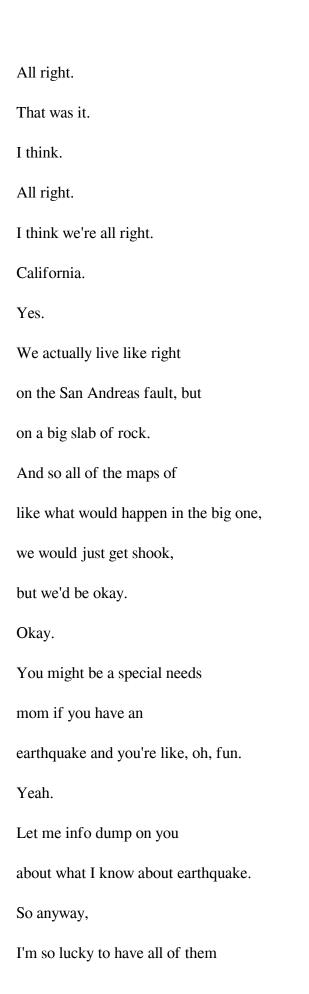
non-speaking friends. And then we have some like mild to moderately autistic friends as well. And, you know, we, we'd lock all the doors and, you know, it's, it's, it's such a good environment. Like, you know, the new parents that come, the new friends are nervous. Oh no, you know, he broke something like that's, not a problem. I always like to say it's not a party. If, if nobody is drug kicking and screaming out of the place, it wasn't a good party. That comes with it. Right. So I have, I have a mom group, a local mom group. I have friends who are parents of non-speakers who we text all day long, you know,

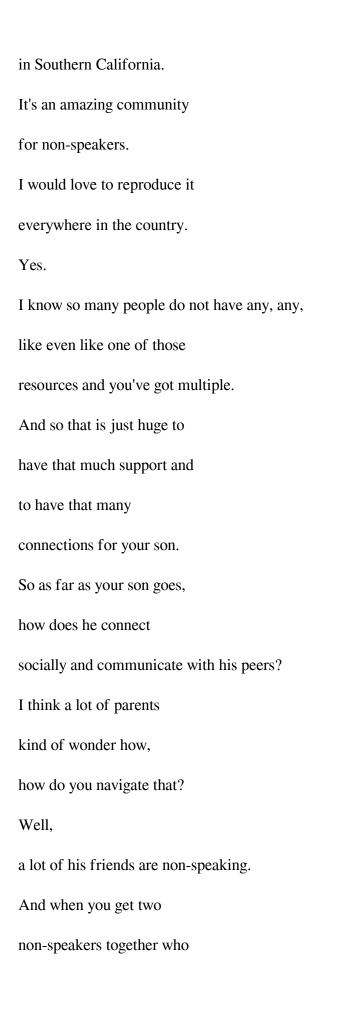
and whenever we're cleaning up poop or whatever, we have that outlet of, you know, the Other mom on the other end that says, yep, I get it. We lost a window this morning, you know, or whatever. So that's important. And then educationally, of course, Mr. Sims, I was so blessed with Mr. Sims, but we also have had some really good therapists along the way. At that charter school, there is a wonderful speech therapist that got my son to use AAC for the very first time. And she figured out right away that he's an action guy. And so he loves office chairs rotating. He loved her chair. And he got as a reward a spin at the end of each session. Right.

So she turned it into, well, I'll spin you right now if you use your device and tell me how many spins you want. And then she took that out to the playground with pushes on the swings. And that made the connection for him that. oh, this iPad, this app can get me what I want. And that opened the floodgates. And she was so great with him that even during the pandemic, he was able to do virtual sessions with her by himself without me sitting right there with him because he trusts her so much and wants to impress her. So she was amazing. And then, of course, like many families, we discovered Spell to Communicate. And we live close enough to

the Speller Center in San Diego that we can drive there every day. We also are close to Autistically Inclined in Hemet, California. and the Speller Family Camps up in the mountains of Idyllwild. We do that each year. And we met Erin Clarelli of Sunrise Therapy. She's an OT who specializes in non-speaking people. kids and apraxia in severe autism and trains other OTs. It's actually her birthday today. And so she's very visible in our community and very helpful. She's like the autism whisperer. She can, she and her staff can knock out my son's meltdowns in seconds, seconds. Like they immediately know what the problem is.







have been friends for a long time, they just click, they groove, you know? And like he has one friend, my son is very physical and kind of rough. And he has a good friend who has a few words, but is also impulsive body and kind of rough. And they will roll around like, like a cartoon of just, like, stars and marks, you know, and laugh and, like, have each other in a headlock and just be giggling like maniacs, right? So he's able to relate to his non-speaking friends very well. I'm lucky. I'm lucky in that he is very aware of the world around him, and he's pretty good at matching his... behavior to what's around him. Like when he's feeling great,

he can move through the

world kind of undetected.

So it's, you know, but of course he's big,

he's five, ten, two hundred pounds.

So in the event that there is trouble,

you know,

that would be kind of difficult.

But he's he's always been

very social and friendly and

you know it's it's difficult

for him like when we go

driving around and he sees

boys his age zooming

through traffic on e-bikes

you know I can tell like he

really wishes he because he would be

the one who would be out

there zooming through traffic,

risking his life.

Personally, I'm kind of glad he can't,

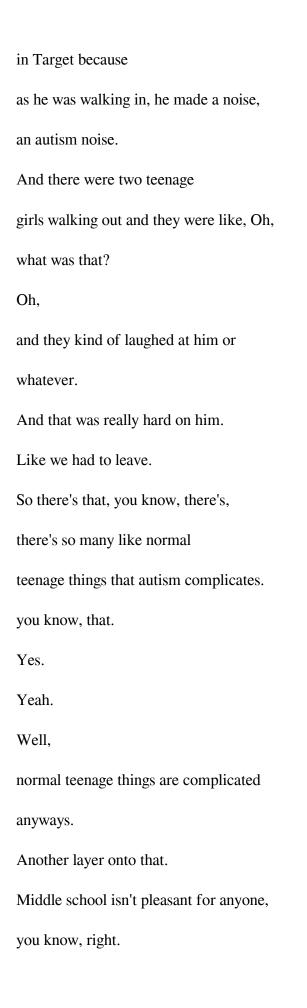
but you know, he wants to be in school.

He wants to be in public school,

but he knows that they will

infantize him. And he knows that he becomes very aggressive when people speak to him like that. So he knows it would not be a good situation, but he's lonely and bored at home. So I. try to get him together with friends and get him out as much as I can. It's, it's difficult to get two non-speakers out at the same time. Usually one guy's ready to go and the other one's having a bad day, you know? So that makes it kind of rough. But he just, he really shines when, you know, we have our local get togethers, the Speller Center in San Diego has little monthly social events to the, You know, when we go to the camp,

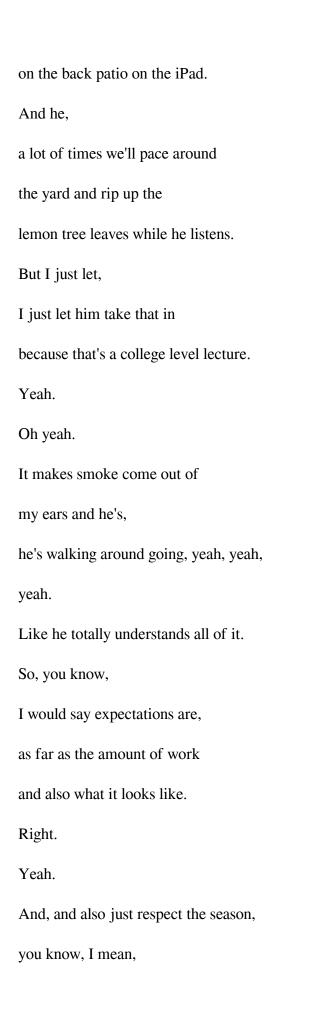
he's very, so it, I would say, try to find your non-speaking student, other non-speaking friends. You can't just assume that just because they're non-speaking, they're going to be the best of friends. Right. And other kids I've tried to pair him with. And he was like, no, I don't like that kid. It's normal, right? You have to presume competence. To presume competence is to understand that they're not going to be best friends with everybody. That's a tough one, especially as teens. Because they want to be social, but they're also easily embarrassed and very self-conscious and very aware that they're different. My son had a meltdown once



So what would you say to the mom who feels like nothing's working right now and is questioning if homeschooling is really the right choice? I worked with a lot of parents on expectations and, We have this Pinterest image in our minds of what homeschool looks like. And that is not the reality. And I'm lucky that we have Mr. Sims as part of our group. Mr. Sims comes on this time of year and says, oh, we're not getting anything done in the classroom either. Like it's spring. Nobody's killing it at school right now. So when we have brand new students, students who are young, or are new to the expectation of academic performance,

sometimes you might only get twenty minutes of school a day. Three activities. We advise to start with three. Do one, take a break. Do a second one, take a break. Then if they can get that third one, they get a big prize. Go to the, you know, go for a drive. we're making cookies, whatever your kid's into. But just those three things per day can be a full day. And it doesn't have to be sitting at a desk, doing a worksheet with a pencil. My son does math in my chair here. We do history at the airport. We drive to our little local airport. We park out at the end of the runway and, And I read to him history and sometimes we do a quick spell to communicate lesson.

And then we regularly take breaks to watch the little airplanes take off and land. And it's a perfect rhythm because we both have ADHD and we both need something else, you know, every couple of minutes. And so. and for some reason he can sit still in the car much better than in a chair at home or standing at home. So he's more of a captive audience in the car. So we do that. We do science on the patio and we do like others spell to communicate literature and stuff out on the patio. He also is really into physics this year. And so, yeah. And so I let him watch physics lectures and,



this year we're crushing it, but in, none, you know, he couldn't, he just, he couldn't safely be within six feet of him most of the time. And so, you know, our kids do well and then they get sick and then they do well. And then dad gets deployed and then they do well. And then grandma has to come live with us because she's end of life, you know, like, Right. Yep. Success is not a straight line. But it's the academic success that we're often looking at. We're not looking at what they're learning in the process of all those life

experiences and how we're handling them and how they're integrated into that family, just kind of, you know, navigation of that whole experience. So they are learning. It's just not they're learning what's in the curriculum. Well, they could even learn the curriculum receptively. So we, I did homeschool with my son, but it was all verbal and he just listened. And, you know, during those, during that time, I was like, just, just listen to me. I'll speak really softly and you can just listen. And now this year, now that he's able to, once again, expressively show mastery, he's showing mastery of all of those things that I only

exposed him to, you know, yeah, possibly. So, yeah. The receptive learning is real and it works. I was going to say, in the span since you've started homeschooling until now, what's one thing that you would have just never dreamed that your son would be able to do when you first started that you've now seen happen? It's spell to communicate. And I have the same story as every parent. I always presumed my son's competence, his intellectual competence, because he's always been able to show it pretty well. I presumed that he had average intelligence. Spell to communicate has shown that he has superior intelligence.

I mean... the kid has understanding of things I never thought I taught him. Like he must just pick up everything. And he has such an understanding of history and other cultures and just a respect for things happening in the world. And so to be able to discuss tariffs with him, He gets it like he and he's interested to know all of it. You know, as a former journalist, I I watch documentaries for fun. Like I just I want to know everything about everything. I don't care what it is. Just give me all of the information. And I I would info dump on my son a lot as a homeschool teacher. And I assumed it annoyed him. And one day I was saying, I'm sorry,

I know you probably don't want to know the complete history of Wall Street, but, you know, I'll tell you anyway. And he grabbed me by the face. Our kids do this thing where they grab our face and they put their faces right up. And he looked me in the eye and he went, like, yes, I want to know. And I'm like, you want to know everything about everything? And he's like, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm like, all right. So now we... I start every Monday talking about like what the news is. I read to him from the Wall Street Journal headlines, you know, and he wants to know all of it. He watched the entire Republican National Convention,

just kind of how you started it, why you started it, and then what you do to help families that are in a similar place where you were? So I originally started this Autism Oasis to be a resource for moms. Um, I was, you know, it was the influencer girl boss life coach kind of, you know, it was the, the, the late twenties tens and that's what everybody was into. So that's what I was going to do. And I quickly discovered that special needs moms don't like to spend money on themselves. Um, which I should have known cause I wasn't doing it either. Um. and then the pandemic hit and I saw the opportunity for homeschool

because so many families had their kids come home. And number one, couldn't do online school. Number two, we're horrified at the lack of academics in the online school and we're searching for something better. And I already had a program and I know how to build websites. So I just digitized it and it took off, took off, you know, as a single mom with a non-speaking guy, I don't get to work full time. And yet the company has doubled in size every single year. since I started offering it without much work on my end. So it works. We really focus on the foundational academic skills. the skills that students must master in order to move up.

Things like understanding

that letters aren't just symbols.

They mean something.

Something about numbers, right?

So we are very focused on

getting all of those skills

up to a fourth or fifth grade level.

And then after that,

it's all just repeat and

slightly more complicated, right?

And so we take our time

getting to that fourth or

fifth grade level.

And then Mr. Sims has found

from experience that kids

often leapfrog up after

that and can catch up to their peers.

And that happened with my son.

This year, we did sixth, seventh,

and eighth grade math.

yeah and he's just zooming

through it he loves it you

know and it's because it's

because we spent two years

on place value I mean he

just placed value was so

hard and we grinding and

grinding and he finally got

it so now when we're

dividing fractions you know

it's he understands it um

right working in decimals

decimals are easy he

understands decimals because it's

We worked so hard on place

value four years ago.

So that's really what we

focus on is getting that

foundation down and

providing the support to

parents each semester program.

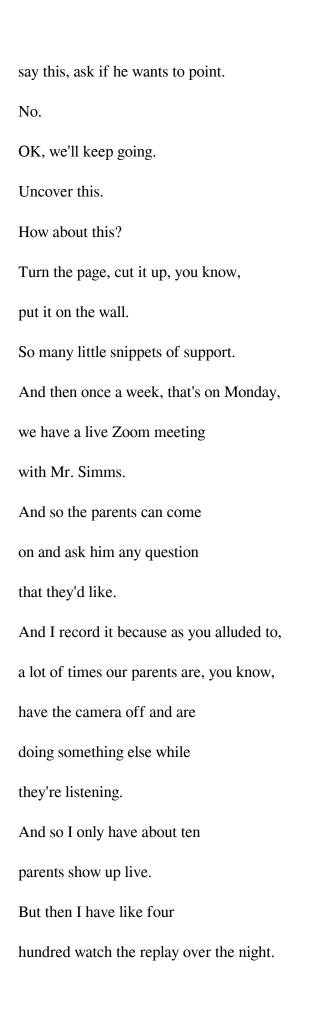
That I have online has about

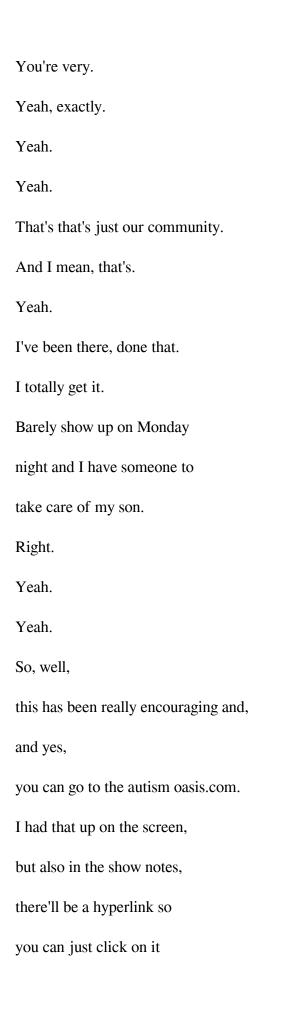
two hundred little five

minute instructional videos

where I go clear down to

like cover this up, point at this,





and then find Heather and her resources and and reach out to her if you have any questions about that. So thank you so, so much. This has been such an encouraging conversation and thank you for sharing your heart and your story with us today. What a gift it was to hear what's possible when we keep showing up for kids, even when their path is anything but clear, which is hard. And so just, just thank you for, for keeping on keeping on and being that example. Well, thank you for sharing your story as well, Peggy. Like I, I feel better talking to you now. And I, you know, I've always respected you

as being a mom kind of like me that can't just do the homeschooling the mom that has to. build something as well. And so thank you so much for sharing your format with me. I appreciate it. Absolutely. And thank you all for joining us. If you're in the thick of it right now, we know, just know you're not alone. There's hope, there's healing, and it's possible. It may not look like someone else's story, but it is worth pursuing. Be sure to check out the Autism Oasis to connect more with Heather. And don't forget to visit spedhomeschool.com for practical support, encouragement, and some great freebies to help you on your homeschool journey.

And if this episode was encouraging you, take time to scroll through our other conversations. There's so many amazing guests who have walked this road and have wisdom to share. Thanks for spending time with us today. And remember, you're doing wholly important work at your home. Keep going. We're cheering you on. Until next time, homeschool boldly and confidently. And we will see you next week. Bye, everybody. This has been Empowering **Homeschool Conversations** provided by Sped Homeschool, a nonprofit that empowers families to home educate diverse learners. To learn more, visit spedhomeschool.com.