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 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

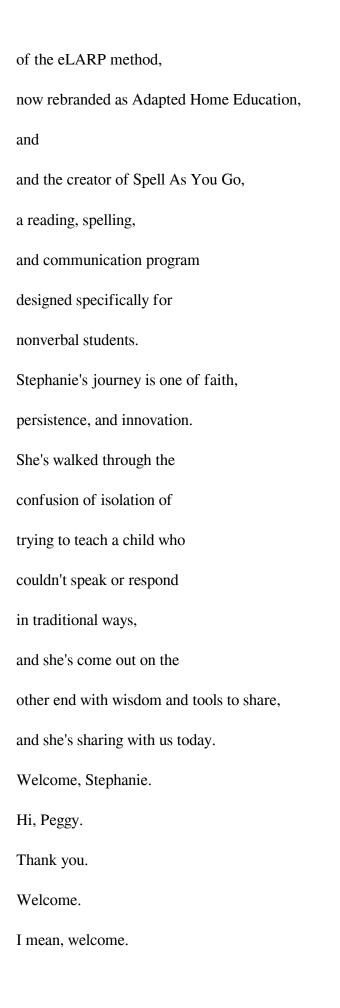
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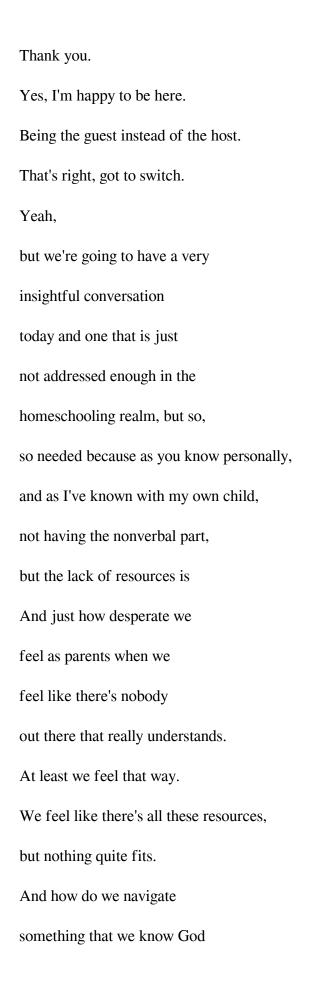
grab your favorite mug

settle in and get ready for

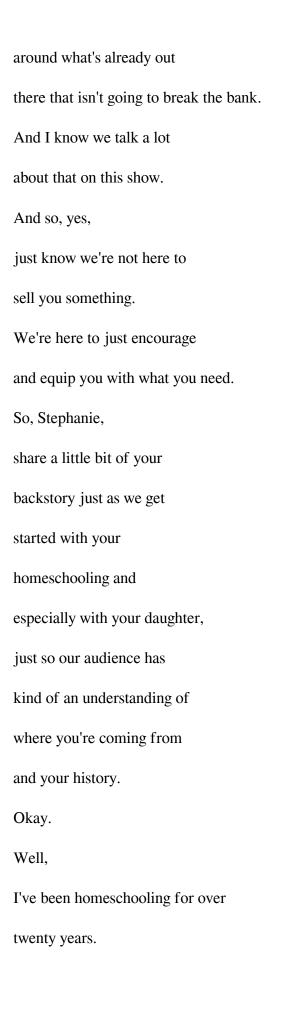
insightful discussions

valuable insights and practical tips give your homeschool the power boost it needs to successfully educate the unique learners in your home Thank you. Welcome to Empowering Homeschool Conversations. a podcast where we bring hope, help, and resources to families homeschooling children with unique learning needs. I'm your host, Peggy Ployer, and today we're exploring a topic that touches the hearts of many parents, teaching a nonverbal child without reading or writing. Joining me is co-host Stephanie Buckwalter, a veteran homeschool mom and curriculum creator who truly understands this challenge. She's the original developer





has called us to? Or we feel like we've been pressured into it out of, you know, the lack of nothing else. And yet... There doesn't seem anywhere to go. So I'm excited for all you have to share today. Thanks. I'll give a spoiler alert based on that. There is nothing that fits, but... There are things we can do to make things fit better. So just look at that spoiler alert right up front. Absolutely. And that's kind of a nice reassurance because it's not like I'm selling you something and you've got to spend thousands of dollars on my program to make this work. There are ways to work



I'm still homeschooling. I have five children, four boys, and then a girl. The boys, and I homeschooled all of them different lengths of time. One of the boys I homeschooled all the way through high school, another one through eighth grade, two through fifth grade. And my daughter, who is moderate intellectual disability, special needs, nonverbal, I started homeschooling her along with the boys. And then we had a family crisis and I put her in school for a few years and then we took her back out and we finished homeschooling at home. We finished high school at home with her and now she's

officially graduated high school, but I'm still working with her. The nice thing about it is I'm not having to work on, um, the things that I think I should work on, I can work on anything I want to work on. And that's so freeing. Yes. you don't have to follow the state standards anymore. You can just do what needs to be done. Yeah, that's great. Yeah, that's... And that's encouraging that you've been at this that long and you stuck to it. And we're going to talk a little bit about that, too, and what that process was was like for you as an encouragement as well. So to definitely stick around. Also know that we this is live.

I know sometimes we broadcast recordings,
but this is a live conversation.

So if you are watching us
either on Facebook
um youtube or instagram just
know that you can comment
and we will see those and
we can include them as part
of the conversation too so
um so don't feel left out
we we want you to be

non-verbal children are

part of this too um so

often diagnosed as having

intellectual disability

what does that label really

mean and can it be misunderstood

Well,

it can in the sense that intellectual

disability,

I found this out when I was

attending a program at the

Family Hope Center,

and I started learning

about all the different

ways our bodies can be

neurologically disorganized.

When it comes to coming up

with an IQ score, most of test designed,

even those for nonverbal kids,

are really designed for

kids who also know how to motor plan.

And we're going to talk

about that a lot today

because motor planning goes

right alongside with apraxia,

not speaking.

And when you can't motor plan,

and motor planning can be speaking,

writing, pointing,

it could be any of those things.

If you can't motor plan,

you can't give a true uh

measure of what's going on

in your head your cognitive

skills and so intellectual

disability intellectual disability where they give you an iq score that iq score is really for kids who are non-typical a measure of their neurological organization not of their intelligence it's an it's not so it's not It's not helpful in the sense, but the thing that's positive about that, if you think about it that way, is you can work on a child's neurological organization. You see all these brain training programs and reflex integration programs. Those are all designed to work on the brain. and neurological organization. And when you start doing that, then you can actually get

better outcomes because

you're improving the brain function, which would, as a result, eventually change the IQ potentially. Wow. So IQ is not helpful, except as a clue that you need to be looking for the right kind of therapy. Right. There's something else in there that, yes, it's just not coming out. So being nonverbal is often accompanied with other diagnoses, which you're kind of leading to or challenges. How does that complexity affect in teaching? Well, yeah. And like you're right, I just mentioned that the motor planning part of it, because apraxia is a disconnect between the

brain and the body. And so you have a motor planning problem. And, you know, I've mentioned pointing, handwriting and speech, but it's also typing, drawing, putting numbers in a column. There are a lot of things that your child may want to do and may in their brain know how to do, but can't motor plan those things. Or when they motor plan it, actually, especially if they're pointing or even if they have verbal tics kind of come out because my daughter can say yes and no. And yesterday we were at our spelled communication therapy and And we asked her a question and she loved shopping and it was about going shopping.

And the first word out of

her mouth was no.

She was so disorganized that

she wanted to say yes, but no came out.

And that happens a lot with these kids,

especially under stress.

And so it also means that, okay,

to demonstrate knowledge,

three things have to fire

at the same time.

And I got this through

talking to my daughter's OT and that's,

the sensory system has to

receive the information.

You have to have the cognitive process,

the thoughts,

and then you have to have

the motor plan on that.

You want to express those thoughts.

And if all three of those

are not firing together,

then your child is going to

look like they don't know

how to think when they may

actually very well have a

high IQ or a normal IQ, but they just can't motor plan answers. So that really affects your teaching because, um, It's just it looks like learning is not taking place. And that's why we get stuck in perpetual elementary school or perpetual kindergarten, even because it looks like they're not learning, but it's not a learning. It's not a cognitive problem. It can very easily be a motor planning problem. That's so helpful in understanding. It takes like that frustration. When you gain understanding, you tend to like lose that anxiety of my child's not learning, I'm not teaching right. You know, all those questions that have

gone through your mind, they've gone through my mind, you know,

they're prevalent in our community.

talked to you about this.

I know in the past I've

I'm throwing this little

question in here off the side.

But assumed intelligence,

can you talk a little bit about that?

Yes.

I have read enough stories of kids,

especially in the autism world,

but also other diagnoses who have

learned spelled

communication when they've

gotten older and they're

able to express their thoughts.

And several of these kids

actually go on to college

or they finish high school

or they can do things.

They just didn't have the

means to communicate.

And the way that works,

just as a quick aside,

the way that works is they

get things out of fine motor,

which is all that speech

and the handwriting and

stuff we were talking about,

and they put it into large

motor movements.

And that eases up the body's

cognitive load,

which allows them to think

and spell and get it all out.

But anyway, that's a whole nother thing.

But the, all of these,

a lot of these young people,

young adults have written books,

or even when they're teenagers,

written books that say,

I knew what they were saying.

Some of them teach themselves,

a lot of them teach themselves to read.

And so when they're older

and they start doing the

spelled communication,

it's shocking that a lot of

times they already know how to spell.

quite a bit and or they've

taught themselves to read

and it's because we don't

believe it but they have if

you think about it you have

if you don't speak because

I see this with my daughter

all the time we're sitting

at the table the dinner

table and all this

conversation is going

around because you know we

have a big family and

sometimes people are over

but she rarely gets

included and when she does

it's just like a yes or no

answer so her whole life is

spent observing

And she is picking up just like, just like little kids, you know, when you're a parent, little kids are picking up stuff that you don't want them to pick up. I can't, I just, I was just horrified. Like when she learns how to talk, she learns how to spell communication. She's going to start saying all kinds of things. I'm like, Oh no, I really didn't mean that, you know, from ten years ago. But that's what happens is they're learning all the time, just like you and I do. They just can't express it. They might not be learning what you want them to, but they're learning and they're observing. They're good observers.

So that affects your

teaching in the sense that you want to be aware that they can learn. So just treat them that way. Right. And all of that's going in. It doesn't mean just because it isn't coming out that it's not going in. And it's just a really, really good reminder that, you know, whether we see evidence of the learning or not, what we are doing is making a difference. And I think parents just need to hear that over and over again. You are making a difference whether you see it or not and just keep going. So yeah. So communicate, go ahead. I was going to say another thing about that comes out in those books that I want

parents to know you're

talking about encouraging

them is these kids know

that their bodies are not

doing what they want them

to do and they feel bad about it.

They feel just as bad about

all this stuff going on as you do.

So they,

So they, but they want a vibrant life.

They want to be able to

communicate what they're thinking,

but they also understand

what their behavior looks like.

It's not like that's some kind of secret.

You don't have to keep that

a family secret between them.

And so when I realized that

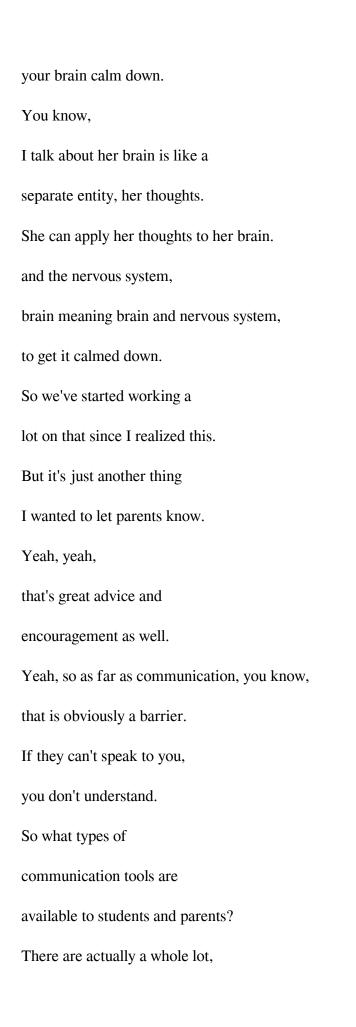
I started talking to my

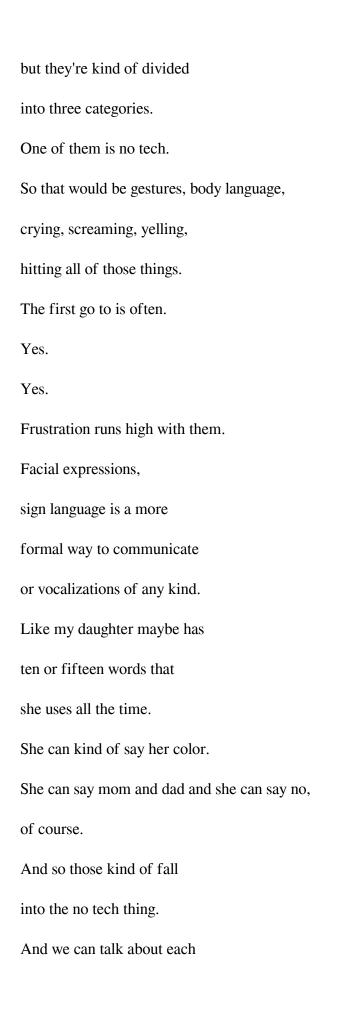
daughter and saying, you know,

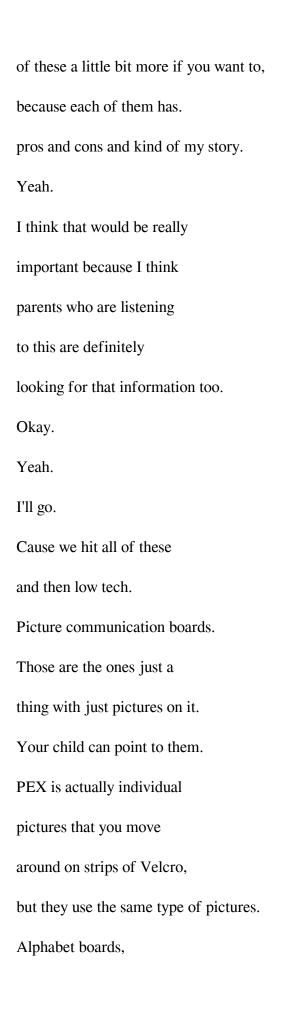
I understand that your

brain is telling your body

one thing you need to help





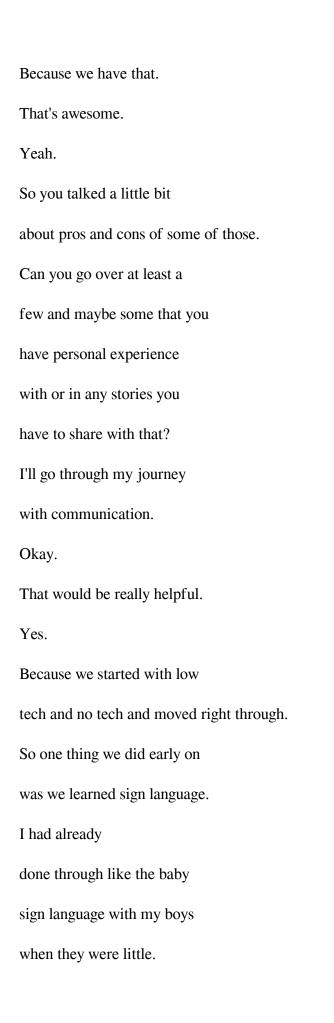


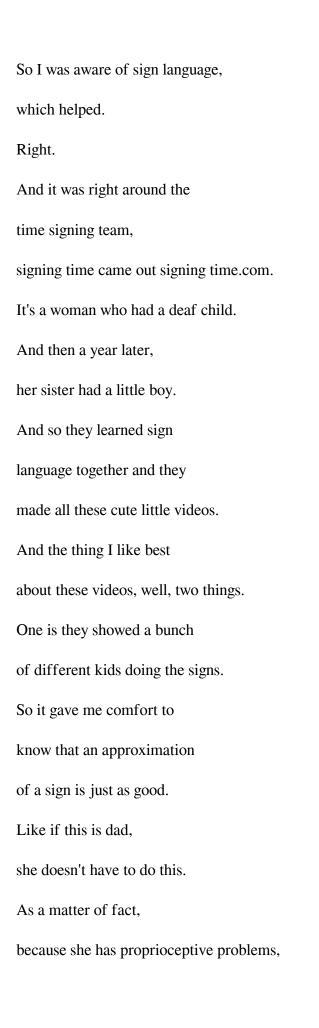
which are the ABC boards that you see for spelled communication. You'll see them, the little stencils and that kind of thing. Core word boards. So if you want your child to at least, if your child, has low cognitive function and you can just put a few words up and let them communicate through those few words like thirsty, bathroom, tired, no, yes. And then using tangible symbols, like the keys, like your child may go pick up the keys if they wanna go somewhere or they may point to the door, go walk, take you over to the door if they wanna go outside. And then another low tech thing,

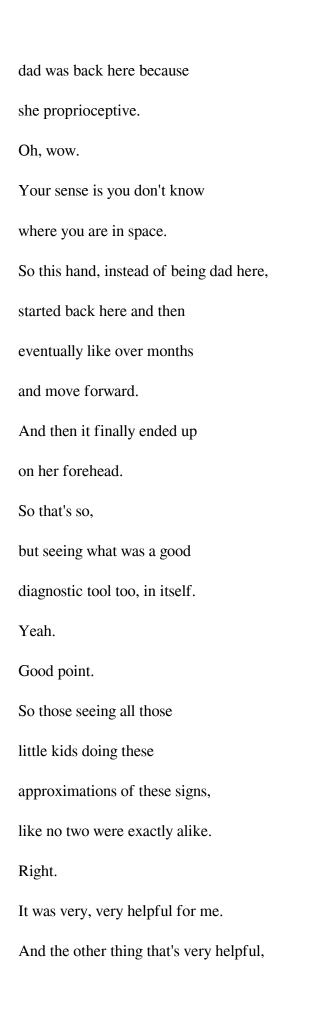
visual schedules. you can communicate through those and they can communicate back. Yes, no, did it, didn't do it. So those are the low tech options. And then there are high tech options. And those are a very simple one is called the big Mac or little Mac and their buttons. They're just single message devices. They just say yes or no. And that's it. And there are also go talk devices, which you would have a, thing of buttons and each one has a pre-recorded message. And so it's like the child is speaking in sentences. There are quick talker devices, the thirty-two message communicators, battery operated devices with simple speech functions,

the AAC devices.

These are all kind of AAC
devices and AAC stands for
assistive and augmentative communication.
So it's any, in this case,
technology device that you
use to assist in
communication is an AAC device.
And insurance will pay for
some of them and some of them won't.
That's good to know.
It doesn't hurt to ask.
Yes.
And if you go to a public school,
the school can actually
evaluate your child for
which one of these is best
for your child at the stage.
You may have to fight for what you want,
but they can at least do
the evaluation and tell you
what they think.
Right.
Yeah.







because if you go to their website, you can, Back then, I had to go to the library and get CDs. Oh, yes. I did the same thing. Actually, I think they were VHS tapes. Oh, we had graduated with CDs. And we had to, you could only keep them for a week. So whatever was there, we'd get one or two. And then we'd return them. And we just cycled through them. And I think the first ten videos were out at the time. Now you can get them online and you can rent them. But if you rent them like that, if you do the subscription thing, At the end of those videos, they have a five or ten minute sections that is just the signs.

So as a parent, you don't have to watch the thirty minute videos all the time with your child. They do it a few times. But at the very end, there was just a summary. So if I forgot a sign, I could just go back there and look at it. I didn't have to try to find it. Yeah. So it's very helpful. So sign language was helpful. My daughter from signing time alone, she learned over the years. It took years. I'm not talking about a week. Remember, she's out of high school now. So this is recently out of high school. But so this was when she was really young, preschool age into early elementary. She learned three hundred signs.

And then what I did was I got I got books of sign language signs and or there's also some things online that I used. And I knew when we were going to church, I was trying to learn sign language too. So I would ask them what songs they were gonna sing. And I would look up all the words in all the songs. And I was doing signing exact English. I was not doing American Sign Language. So I would look up all the signs and I would try to sign to the slower songs. I couldn't do the fast ones or the way I practiced. She also learned the alphabet, A, B, C, D. Both hands. You got to learn both hands because you never know which one you're going to have available.

And I would just spell

things like we were driving

down the road and I would

just spell whatever I saw on signs.

And that's how I got to practice.

So I was practicing along with her.

Whatever communication

you're doing with your child,

you're probably going to be

their primary communication partner.

So it's not something where

you can like send them off

somewhere to learn this stuff.

We've got to learn it with them.

So that's what we did.

So we learned another three

hundred signs that way.

So if I sat down and gave

her a list of words and, you know,

I give her a word that she could sign,

she could do up to six

hundred at one point.

So this was like my third grade,

third or fourth grade. And then when she got then that was about the time we put her in public school and they didn't want to work with sign language. they wanted to work with the AAC device and that's okay because that's what I wanted to. And so we mutually agreed that she would switch to an AAC device. The problem with the AAC device. Oh, we also tried PICS, the picture exchange communication. Let me go back. So the low tech stuff that we did, The picture of Pex, I actually, you know, laminated all the things, got the Velcro, got the binder, you know, the three inch binder with all the pictures. That was really hard for me to learn. Like I said,

you have to learn along with them. And Pex was just so difficult for me that we didn't get very far with it. Maybe she could have, but I couldn't. So that was like a non-starter for us. Right. Well, it has to work for everybody, not just the child too. Because like you said, the parent is the main communicator with the child usually. And if it doesn't work for you, it's not going to work for them. Right. And that was a, that was a pretty much a no. Although we did use the symbols and I used the pictures and I would use them more as a communication board, not the official PEC system. and the way they explain how to use it.

Core words, visual schedules. We use those kinds of things. So we did use that low tech stuff. The visual schedules are very helpful for her. Even today when she's having a really hard time, like she has been these last few days, she just cannot process what you're saying to her. And so I will grab an index card. I always have a stack of index cards and I draw pictures of what I'm saying or even write out the words in some cases. And if she sees it. then her brain can say, Again, the brain is a separate entity. Her brain says, oh, and then she gets it. But sometimes that just, I just have to do that. So I use, you know, hand-drawn,

learn how to sketch. And here's the key when you're doing this sketching stuff. It does not matter what your drawing looks like as long as communication takes place. Yes. It's so true. You don't have to be an artist to make that work. That's right. Because when my boys were older, they would go, mom but you didn't say blah blah blah and I said did communication take place and they would always say yes so that's why as long as communication takes place it doesn't matter what you look like what your dogs look like and then so then we moved into

the high techs moving from the sign language to all the picture stuff the low tech to the high tech and the problem That was fascinating for me. Uh, the school really supported me and helped me and they sent me to the teacher training for the, for the AAC device, the software that she had and everything. So we actually had a pretty good relationship, but the one thing at that training was there was a man there, a young man who was using an AAC device, communicate using lamp words for life. That's the one we were using. And he could communicate in sentences and thoughts and all that stuff. But one thing that caught my attention that he said was,

That eventually, okay. So the device has only like two or three thousand words on it. Eventually he got to the point where he would think in those two or three thousand words. So it wasn't free open communication. His communication was still limited by that. And that kind of gave me pause. I still tried to work with her on the AAC device, but she wasn't becoming fluent in sentences and stuff like that. The other problem with working with an AAC device I found is often And I have friends who are speech therapists and occupational therapists. And so I don't want to. if you're a speech therapist listening, I don't want you to feel

like I'm attacking you because I'm not. But often the people who were tasked with teaching these kids on the AAC device are the speech therapists. And what I have observed, and this is my personal experience, is that most speech therapists are, they kind of move speech therapy onto the AAC device They don't, they haven't learned how to teach. It's not, but it's not speech therapy on a device. It's communication, which is to me a whole different approach in a way of communicating on that device. And so if you're searching, if you're, you know, shopping around for a speech therapist, or if you have, you know, the opportunity to look for

one who has had some kind

of training and understands speech

that this is communication

and now this was in the

early days mind you because

when I because everyone was

getting ipads back then and

so it was becoming more

prevalent in school that

people were using devices

whereas before it was too

expensive cost prohibitive

and you know you're just

kind of look but um so this

was now our experience with

all this with the speech

therapist stuff was in the

early days so that was maybe

five to ten years ago, five, yeah,

between five to ten years

ago during that stretch when AAC devices,

because my daughter got an

iPad six months after they

came out because that's when the communication software came out and we're like, oh, we're getting that. Yeah. So she was, she was ready for high tech and she could, because she could maneuver it. But I'm sure by now a lot of speech therapists have figured out or have maybe specialized in it. Maybe that's the word I'm looking for. So look for a speech therapist who specializes in AAC communication and is not primarily a speech therapist using the physical, you know, manipulating the face and stuff like that because they really are two different skills. And so just, I mean, it makes sense that they

would put it with speech because it's kind of speech. And the speech therapists have a lot of background in what needs to happen in the progression. But just look for one that specializes in AAC is my recommendation on that. That was our experience with AAC. So now we've come full circle and we're back to no tech. So we're using an ABC board. We're using a letter board now. And I didn't bring it. I didn't bring it with me to this area. But it's very, so it's no tech at this point. And then eventually, hopefully, it'll transfer to a keyboard, which then would be high tech again. But to learn, the way those things work is, and this is why we're doing it,

is we learned that it gets,

remember I talked about the three things that have to fire at the same time. The sensory, the cognitive, and the motor. And by putting it on, what they do is they don't just stick you on a twenty six letter board. They put you on three boards with just a few letters. Like I think it's nine or ten letters on each board. About nine letters. Eight, nine, and nine. I had to add up twenty six real quick. I'm not good at the math. And the letters are bigger. They're spaced out further. If you only have to search eight things at a time to make a decision, it loses lessens the cognitive load. And it also gives you a bigger target. So when you're motor planning,

so because the cognitive is less, the motor planning is easier. It frees up space to do the motor planning, which is the problem. And, you know, usually we're trying to do it in a fine motor sense, but by using pointing or using large motor. So all of those things are reducing the cognitive load. And the motor load, the load on the brain, the overall load. so that you can scan with your eyes, you know, target the letter you want, think that's the letter I want, and then hit it. And doing that takes a lot of energy. And I know that because my daughter has brain problems. And we have been doing this therapy and we switched to a more intense, the next step up,

which is more intense therapy. And she just started falling apart in her life. And it's because the cognitive load, the brain load was too much. So we have to step back from that and do it in smaller steps, which is kind of the whole thing, nonverbal apraxia. That's what I just said now, if you didn't catch that, is hate to all my moms. That's the key is hate. sometimes the steps are just too big and you've got to find ways to make it smaller and smaller. And I know I've heard Peggy say before that when people, curriculum developers want to help our community. And they say, well, what can we do? And Peggy, tell them what you always say.

Oh, yeah. I always say, well, just give us more to do in the curriculum you've already created. The problem is our kids can't take as large leaps as they mentally think that kids can take from one step to the next. It's that scaffolding in between and those extra activities, those extra hands-on things that you can make a one-year curriculum into two or three years. And that's really what our kids need. And so, yes, I say it over and over again to the curriculum developers. And actually there's one big curriculum company who's going to be doing a summit in November. I'm not announcing it yet because they haven't announced anything, but they're bringing in a

whole group of people that

I gave them a list of and said,

we want to have a summit

and we want to hear what

you guys have to say so we

can change what we do and

make it more adaptable.

So things are changing rapidly.

because people are listening

to what we've been talking

about for years.

But yes,

it's a very exciting time in the

homeschooling industry and

for parents who are really

seeking for something to

help them along that isn't

taking large leaps and

bounds that their kids

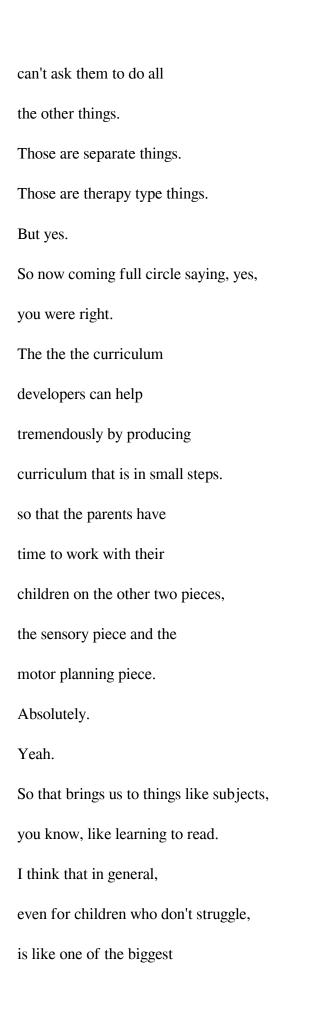
mentally can't take.

And Stephanie,

you've done a great job of

really helping us to understand that better. Because I think we just, we get frustrated because we're like, well, why aren't they getting there? And to understand from the child's point of view that they want to get there, but it's just not mentally, they're not mentally capable of making that leap. And we have to figure out how to help them get there. And that's where I would say with my new understanding, this is a new understanding. Yeah. So fairly recent. And that's it's not really even the cognitive. It's getting them all to fire at the same time. And that's what I'm learning

through this communication stuff, which we've only been doing since last September. So this truly is new information. For me. that slowing by slowing down the curriculum, like you're talking about having the curriculum to give you more to do, then you have time to work on those motor plans, the motor planning part. Yes. And manipulating that sensory input so that they can express themselves. But you need the curriculum to be, you need the curriculum to address the cognitive part. So that's that's one hundred percent right. And that's what because we



stressors for a homeschool parent. I remember when I hit that first roadblock with my oldest and went, I don't even know how this works. And yet now if you have a nonverbal child, how do you teach them how to read? What, what approach, you know, can you take? And then how do you know if they actually are reading and can't show it? You know, that is, that was my biggest question in the beginning. Cause like reading is so important because the rest of the school relies on you being able to read. And it's like, well, how do you know if they're reading if they can't, read out loud you know and no one could actually no

one could answer that

question for me I asked all

over the place and even now

most people won't have an

answer so I may not have a

good one but but you have

one I have a a clue I have

a clue I don't know if it's

an answer I have a clue to

the answer when we uh we

went for intensive speech

therapy at one point

when my daughter was at the

end of fifth grade,

getting ready to go into sixth grade.

Oh no, she was already in sixth grade.

So she was in sixth grade.

We went to Arizona for a

couple of weeks for

intensive speech therapy.

And while we were there.

the therapist gave her a

nonverbal reading test.

And I had never seen this before.
And I know they existed,
but they don't like to put
examples online because
they don't want anybody copying it.
They're all copyrighted and
that kind of stuff.
But what it was, it was a picture.
She would have like two
sentences and a picture and
it would be like a boy and
a dog running across the
field and the sun was close
to the horizon.
Is that right?
Yes.
And so you would show the
child the picture,
have them read those two
sentences and then answer the questions.
And the questions were like,
and the picture would give you clues too.
Right.

But it's like, is the, Oh no, I'm sorry. There was the picture and then you had to answer the question. So there were no sentences describing the picture. It was just the picture. And then you had to read the question. So if you could read the question correctly, they knew you understood the question. So which sentence is describing this picture? The boy and his dog are going home for lunch. The boy and the boy is going home for know to fix the car or something or the boy and his dog are going home for dinner and the child you couldn't say any of it they would read those three and they would have to pick

they're going home for

dinner and the clues from

the picture are that the

sun was going down it was

close to the horizon it

wasn't noon so they wasn't

going home for lunch and in

one sentence the dog wasn't

with him it was just the

boy so they would change up

different elements so you

knew that the child was

reading all three to get the right answer

And found out she was

reading at a first grade level.

And I was like, and I told the school,

they're like, no, she doesn't.

And I was like, oh.

And then they tested her and like, oh,

she does.

And I said, yes,

that means I taught her that,

not the school.

If they didn't know it, that means they weren't doing it. I was doing it. So that kind of made me feel good as a parent. It's like, okay, I can homeschool a special needs child. I was, I did, I taught it to read the first grade level. So that's, so the clue is you have to give them ways to express how they know, and you can do it through the pictures. You could do it through words. You can do it like that, where you show them a picture and then you write out some sentences and you kind of, that's not how you teach them, but that's how you know if they are. So that's kind of the testing part of it. Right.

Um, so that's my clue. And the way I, the way we got to the first grade level was I was using the SOMA rapid prompting method. I just got her red book or the red one, I think was one of the first ones she wrote there. I think she has six or seven books out now, but it was a red one. And she, uh, said, and it was basically all I did up to this point. I wasn't even doing the spelling boards, even though that's what the method eventually ends up as back then. I was just, as we would talk about things, when I came to a word, I thought I want her to know. I would say it take a little index card usually cut into four because she could read smaller text write out the

word as I said it and then

say it again and then keep

going and then after we

finished talking I had all

those words I had spelled

and I would give her you

know a couple of choices

and then she would choose

the answer without me

having to read the word

back to her and I believe

that's how I believe that's

how she learned just using the

pre-letterboard stage of the

SOMA rapid prompting method

where you just, you're always.

And so that's why my program

spell as you go,

because if you just spell stuff as you go,

and now if we're out in

public and I don't have

something to write on,

she knows the twenty six

letters in sign language. So I will spell it with sign language. And it's a visual because if I just say it, their auditory processing is kind of an issue. So I will spell it like the word is lamp. L A M P. And it's funny because when she's spelling words on her letter board, sometimes she'll be pointing with her right hand and she'll be spelling it with her left hand. Wow. And the other, the other advantage, by the way, going back to our communication options, the teaching the sign language alphabet. And we also worked with phonics, you know, assigning sounds to those letters and, That if she wants to go somewhere, she can often, she can't spell the words

yet with sign language or on the boards,

but she can give me the first letter.

Like if she is a person, if she goes A,

I know that's Miss Anita.

And if she gives an A,

I know that's Miss Shannon.

So, and if she does this, you know,

that's the J. J up here is a guy.

J down here is a girl.

And so I know if she's

talking about a brother or

a sister-in-law because one's up here,

one's down here.

proprioceptive has improved

getting in the right place

so it's so there's a huge

advantage so any

communication you work on

with your child is going to

be helpful and you will not

regret it and it also gives

your child multiple options

because if they're they may

be moving forward in their communication skills but they're going to have bad days especially you know when they're like there are days when they are more neurologically disorganized disorganized Whether it's stress or they ate the wrong thing or whatever. We all are. Good point. Then they have a fallback. So you want to give them as many fallback positions as you can. So teach them all the ways to communicate. But I'm sure eventually we'll talk about adulthood. But I just want to talk about teaching them to read right now. So that's my clue is they can. And just spell things for them. And I was actually watching Andrew Putawa. He has a video out on YouTube on spelling.

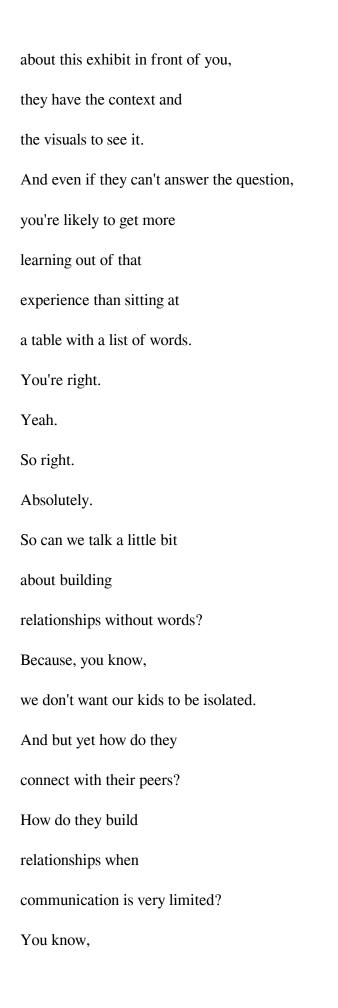
And he was talking about how he was taught to spell. And his mom would spell to him. However, he said, you know, back in the day, back in the early nineteen hundreds before paper was too expensive. They didn't like have workbooks for every kid. You spelled everything orally. You worked orally. And so his mom, having grown up in that generation, you know, was teaching. I don't know if she was that old, but in the early nineteen hundreds, you know, like the mid nineteen hundreds. she just, whenever they were out, you know, drive around the car, she would just spell things. And so I would encourage you to do the same thing. And one thing he said in

this talk that he gave was that you hear it. And if you're spelling it with the, is that, you know, hearing it like a kid can see if a kid is just doing sight words, they're learning kind of the shape of the letter. And if the shape looks wrong, they know it's dispelled. But if it has a similar shape to another word, You can't really tell. Right. So his point was when you also spell it out loud as you're spelling. It reinforces the sequence of the letters in the word. So it's helpful. And I think with this thing I was doing, the early stages of the SOMA method, SOMA RPM, was she was seeing it.

She was hearing it. And she was able to touch it later, like physically touch the piece of paper it was on. So it was bringing in all the senses. And it really, it made a difference. I mean, I didn't know she was reading at a first grade level, but she was just from doing that. That's awesome. So when you were talking about that, as well as Andrew's method, both of those methods also bring those words into context. They don't just, you know, they aren't just these words in a list. Like we often see that how kids learn and they're not associated with how that word is used, what it really means, how it's used with other words. So,

so you're teaching a whole lot more by using those types of methodologies rather when you're out and about or when you're using it with other words and a text. So it just makes them more powerful. And as homeschoolers, we have that ability to teach like that. So that's some awesome advice. Yes, I am a big believer in context-based learning. And the other thing is, because our nonverbal kids can't ask questions, if you're talking about something sitting at a table at home and they don't know what it is and they can't ask what it is, That lesson is partially lost. But if you're out at a

museum and you're talking



that's a really hard question and that's a really hard topic for parents to think about because many times our kids don't have friends because they're nonverbal. It takes a special kind of friend and I found two things. One, if I want her to have peers who are friends, I have to spend time teaching either the parent or the child how to be her friend. But there's no guarantee that the friendship will last or how long it'll last. The younger they are, the easier it is because they're probably, you know, they're not so far behind yet. They're just a little bit behind in most cases. And a lot of cases they're,

they're close enough to

where they can play for short periods,

but the older child will

get bored with the

abilities of your child.

But it takes a lot of

training and prompting on

the parents part.

And then when they're older,

But it usually ends up happening.

So that's one scenario.

The other thing is your

child's friends will just

be their caregivers and

their older people in their

life who are adult enough

to understand what's going

on and have the willingness

to take the time to get to

know your child and to work

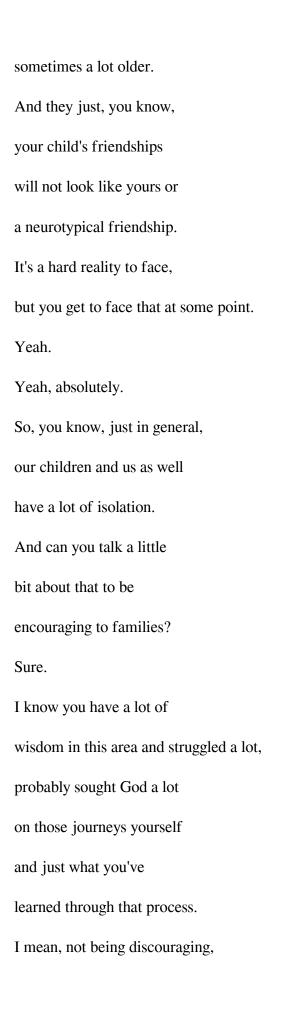
with them and to try to

understand their communication.

Just like any relationship,

it kind of has to be a two-way street. And most kids in general are pretty self-focused. And they can't put themselves in another person's shoes long enough to develop a friendship. I mean, it's just the reality. Right. I mean, they're working on so many things from their own perspective just to be able to be in that type of setting. And so there's so much that they're trying to manage when they're disorganized that they're doing their best just to hold it together. And so it is hard to be other focused when you're like that. And yeah, but when other people understand that,

and like you said, they have to have the willingness to understand and the ability to be outwardly focused and not on themselves. And so that takes maturity too. So it's a lot of things involved with that. But yes, it's not a happy answer because the answer is either you do a lot of work, which you're already doing a lot of work with the kid anyway. It's just like one more thing. Right. So I didn't often go that route, if ever. Other times you just, you know, you just accept the fact that your child's friends are going to usually be older and then your child's age, whatever that is. sometimes a little bit older,



like saying, ah, it's just life. So yeah, your world becomes smaller when you have a special needs child, if you've been in the you know, spend any time on this journey. You already know that. Yeah. So the trick is to accept the smaller world and make it rich because what happened, what often happens and happened to me for a long time was, you know, I felt the isolation and I felt all that stuff, but I didn't fill it up. I just stayed isolated and kind of resented my life for a time and what was going on and, you know, not being able to go out. I couldn't go out for years because of shoes in restaurants. So I didn't go out to eat with the family.

We didn't walk into church together for years. That has recently changed. Yay. She was almost over. And the, and just, you know, the friends, even other, I have this other really close friend and she has a special needs daughter and but her daughter's a little bit more higher functioning. And when I would go visit her, I would kind of resent that she always let her daughter hang around with us, not realizing that, you know, that's the only friends her daughter has kind of. And then when my child is older now and I went to see her. she was experiencing resentment because my

daughter is vocal and was
being disruptive in a restaurant.
I went to go see her recently and,
you know, and she's older than I am.
So she was,
it was stressing her out.
I could tell.
And she was kind of like
wishing I could tell she,
and we're close enough friends.
We can talk about this.
Right.
It was.
So even when you have
friends who have special needs kids,
they're not their,
their kids' problems are
not your problems.
And that could be stressful too.
It's like, you can, you know,
you want people to accept your kid,
but then you don't want to
accept theirs either.

And that's, I mean, That was very, very stressful for me. But really the thing is just to make it. So what I finally decided to do was just to make our lives rich in whatever way I could, whatever scenarios in life she could tolerate. She loves going out. And so my husband, so that I can work on certain nights, he will take her out to our local little, we have like a little downtown area that's kind of built up and it's got some nightlife going on. So there are always people down there and it's and there's a train station and all that. And he takes her there and they walk around. And so she gets to see people. So that enriches her life.

She loves her church friendship club.

So that enriches her life.

So we find things that enrich her life.

And for me,

I actually like doing a lot of
this technology and stuff.

the adapted home education

So having time to work on

site and things and

products that's enriching for me.

And the hardest thing still

for enrichment is my husband and I,

we have downtime and now

we've gotten to where we

can tell my daughter, okay,

you need to entertain

yourself or you need to go

to your room and, you know,

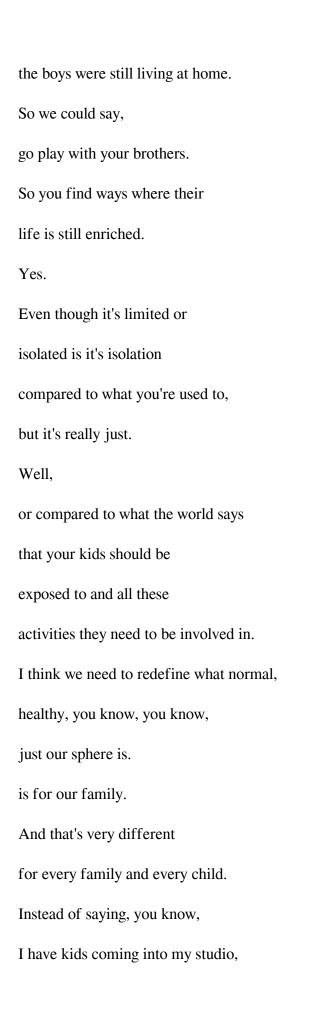
do some things up there for

a while so we can have downtime.

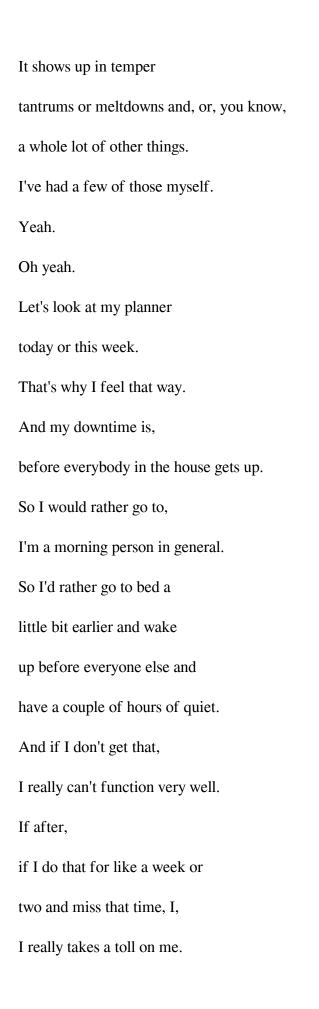
But that wouldn't have been

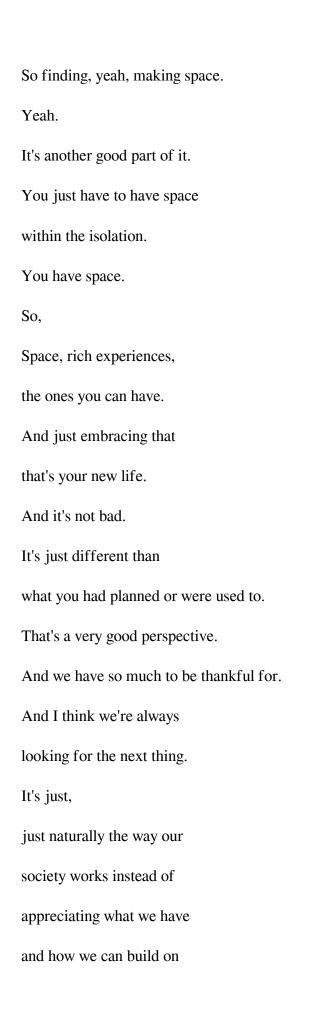
possible in the early days.

But at that point,

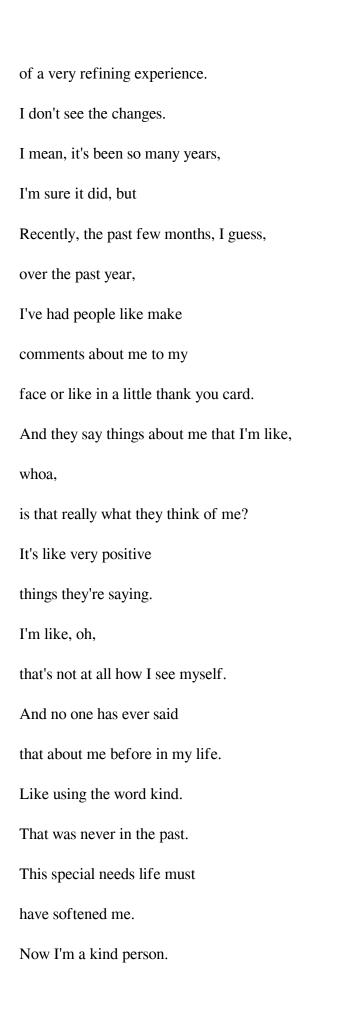


they're involved in an activity every night. And it just makes me overwhelmed thinking about their schedule because then they're in school all day on top of it. And I'm like, When are you home? When do you get to talk as a family? You know, I, and those are things that I think if we have kids that have these struggles, we, we're much more intentional about limiting and creating that, that safe space that is healthy for all of us. Because if we get out of whack with that, it, it shows up instantly. Yeah. it's not something you can say, yeah, you know, we'll pass that on to another day.





what we've already, what we already got. And, um, yeah, it's, it's very counter-cultural, but it's actually how God asks us to live. Um, he asks us to be thankful, to worry about today. Tomorrow has worries of its own. And, um, and, I know you're probably the same way as me. I homeschooled for nineteen years and I know that those years changed me because I was forced to change in who I was, how I thought about things, how I perceived my children, how we interacted, all of that. But coming out. it was much better on the end than I ever expected it to be, especially on how I have changed and how God has just used that to be kind



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Yes.
Yes.
Well, it's the fruit of the spirit.
So, yes,
you're exhibiting the fruit and and,
you know, it really does.
This lifestyle pushes us to
be closer to the vine, you know,
and and to be pruned, pruned greatly.
And yet you bear, you bear more fruit.
I mean,
it's so in line with how God works and,
um, and it's beautiful,
but it is very difficult.
It's, it's a hard, hard path to take.
And I just want to thank you for, you know,
just opening up your life,
sharing from your experience and,
and giving parents a lot of
hope and some very
practical applications to,
especially how to teach because, um,
Like we talked at the beginning,
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this can be very frustrating, very scary, and one of something you just want to run away from. But hopefully not now. That's right. You can do it. You can do it. Yes, exactly. Do you have any closing advice for parents as we wrap up? Well, the thing I would say is just like reading, writing, and arithmetic are considered core skills for academics. communication is a core skill for life. And so do take the time. set aside some of those other things if you have to, because here we are, my daughter's, you know, late teens, and she's still not able to communicate her thoughts with people.

But I remember one time when she was about six years old, when we, it was when we got the iPad and I said, we're going to teach you how to communicate. And she came over and her little six year old body, grabbed my knees and gave me the biggest, tightest squeeze for the longest time that you could ever imagine. So I know that she wants to communicate and she has for a very long time. So don't think that communication shouldn't be part of your homeschool. It should, it should be primary. It should be right up there with reading, writing, arithmetic. And it doesn't matter what the state says about that for practical. The one thing is this is,

why did people go to school

to train them for being productive society life after high school along the way, you know, you get all the character, character building and all these other things. Yeah. So that's why communication is so key in the homeschool years, because you're trying to prepare your child for adulthood. So use the community, any communication method that your child can do, start with that, but work towards one where your child can openly communicate, with other people to the best of their ability. One thing I didn't talk about was like eye gaze technology. So even if your child can't point at things or can't type or spell or write, you know,

using eye gaze technology, there are all kinds of things to do. And I'm happy to answer any questions. You know, you can email me, Stephanie at adaptedhomeed.com. And I'll, you know, I'm happy to talk to you and help you or answer questions. Yeah, and your website link will also be in our show notes. So if you want to connect with Stephanie and her resources, you can go to adaptedhomead.com and find those two. Just click on the link. It's a little easier than trying to figure out how that's spelled. So, yes. Well, thank you so much, Stephanie. This has been just another amazing interview. And so Stephanie is also a

co-host here on Empowering Homeschool Conversations. She's popping in and out often and don't know what's coming up next. I know next week we're going to be talking about managing parenting overload. I pre-recorded that a while ago, just on your own nervous system, mom and dad, and how to take care of that and maybe help with the calm in your house. starting with you. So, so yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Yes. Something I needed a whole lot. So you'll hear about that story a little bit too. So I just want to thank you all for joining us on this

powerful conversation on

empowering homeschool conversations.

I hope today's episode gave

you not only some practical ideas,

but also the encouragement

to know you're not alone.

If you're feeling

overwhelmed or unsure about

how to teach your unique learner,

especially if your child is nonverbal,

help is available you can

visit stephanie's website

at adaptedhomeed.com and

also invite you to visit

spedhomeschool.com where

you can find access to

experienced consultants who

can walk with you step by

step diagnostic tests and

learning tools to help you

understand your child's

strengths and struggles a

growing library of

resources tailored to homeschoolers with extraordinary needs and most importantly a community of support encouragement and wisdom from parents who have been exactly where you are We believe every child can learn and every parent can teach. You're doing important work and you don't have to do it alone. Until next time, keep homeschooling 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.