



S5E12: Routines, Chaos, and Big Goals—Oh My!

Julie Bogart with the Homeschool Mamas Group

Julie: [Theme music plays] Hello brave friends. Today is episode 12 of season 5 of [The Brave Writer Podcast](#). I'm Julie Bogart, creator of Brave Writer and host of this podcast. Season 5 has been particularly special to me and apparently to you too. We've read all of your reviews and so far they have given us a resounding high-five about the format and the content. And really, that is thanks to the vulnerability and honesty of our guests. For the last 11 episodes, moms just like you have been on the podcast sharing their truths and asking for support and new ideas. And they've gotten it! And apparently, that advice, that support, those ideas have produced real fruit in their lives. Today's episode is special because we are interviewing a group of six mothers. These are friends who live together in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Their names are Mandy, Gigi, Melissa, Kelly, Julie, and one who wishes to remain anonymous.

These six friends share the joys and struggles of homeschooling together. The questions they asked me are a perfect way to end the season. They ask things like "How do you help a struggling writer or reader?" "How can we support a big, impractical passion?" "What can be done when a child enjoys a co-op for the social reasons but hates all of the assigned work?" And finally, perhaps the most poignant and challenging question of the season, "How can you continue to homeschool when you're recovering from family dysfunction and childhood trauma?" We're going to look at each one of those on today's podcast so I invite you to grab a cup of coffee or tea or lemonade, put your feet up, and let's begin [theme music plays].

Julie: Hey everybody! Thank you for joining from Colorado Springs!

[Group hello]

Julie: Oh my gosh we have an entire group of moms who hang out together, talk about Brave Writer, talk about homeschooling, and are buddies. And when we did our Ask Julie request, they came as a group. My whole team just started laughing. We thought, well now this has got to be fun. Thank you so much you guys for all sitting in one living room, sharing a couch, managing a mic. So fun.

Mandy: Julie thank you so much for having us. We are thrilled. You have made such a difference in all of our homeschools, we're so thankful for your work.

Julie: Well you are more than welcome and I'm really excited about each of the questions. So what we're going to do is sort of like a rapid fire podcast today. Instead of spending an hour on one question, we're going to spend you know 5 or 10 minutes on each one. Feel free to jump in and argue with me or tell me that something doesn't work. Or even, to help me reframe so that we help you the best way we can. And I know everybody who's listening is going to benefit wildly. Your questions are all great, by the way. So, can each one of you just say hello and your name, just so that we get comfortable with your voices.

Mandy: Yes, hello! My name is Mandy Cool.

Gigi: Hi! I'm Gigi Orcillo.

Julie J: Julie Johnson.

Melissa: Melisa Bolton.

Kelly: Kelly Wellitt.

Julie: Perfect! So glad you're all here. Thanks for joining me. So, Mandy. Let's start with you. I have a feeling you were sort of the prime mover around this whole idea, is that right [laughs]?

Mandy: You know what? It was actually Gigi! It was Gigi's idea.

Julie: Oh my gosh, Gigi, thank you so much. Well we're going to start with Mandy and then we'll get to you. And Mandy! Tell me a little bit about your youngest child. You described that child as an "exuberant extrovert".

Mandy: Yes! Little Ian. He's fantastic. He's very athletic. He's very on the go, all the time. He's the friendliest little 7 year old I've ever met. His heart is giant and he's so generous with all of his stuff. He always wants to give away all of his toys to his friends. But I had a hard time getting him to sit still long enough to write. And that's been kind of my big question for you.

Julie: Yeah well what a great one to start with because that's my favorite topic [laughs] and the one I know the most about. So let's just dissect a little bit about what you mean by the word writing.

Mandy: Okay. I knew you were going to do this to me.

Julie: [Laughs] When you say he won't sit down and write, what does that mean to you? What kind of writing are you hoping to see?

Mandy: Well, last year, we did some of the jot it down ideas with him and he was fantastic. He loved narrating the fairy tales, that was one of his favorite things that we did last year.

Julie: Wonderful.

Mandy: When we sit down to do science or history, sometimes I have—I have two older girls who are 11 and 9 and I have them kind of jot down some narrations about what we learned in science or history and I just try to have him do a little of that. An example would be, I had the girls writing maybe a few sentences about Abraham Lincoln and I just wanted him to write his name, Abraham Lincoln, and every letter—it felt like every single letter was just so excruciating for him to actually put the pen to the paper.

Julie: And it might be. One of the things that's true about him is that he's 7. And so he's literally at the very, very, very beginning of his writing life. What do you do to work on handwriting with him? How does he practice his letters?

Mandy: I have one of the *Handwriting Without Tears* books.

Julie: Okay.

Mandy: That he will use every so often and I also have—have you seen the *Draw, Write, Now* books?

Julie: Yes.

Mandy: So he'll sketch a little animal. So that's another thing about him, he loves drawing, which is so interesting to me because he will sit forever and work on one of those YouTube art for kids things drawing circles and shapes and turning them into cute little superheroes. And yet, actual letters, feels a lot harder for him it seems like.

Julie: And so, at this stage, perhaps the best thing for him is to still be drawing. Where there's some freedom, he isn't scrutinized, he doesn't have to think about what direction the letter 'B' goes. My suggestion for him at this stage is that he go to tracing rather than writing. So if you want him to do Abraham Lincoln, you write it first and he traces over it.

You can also give him some incentives. So you can talk to him about, here's a set of colored pens and when you get to the end of writing Abraham Lincoln, then the next time we do writing, you get to pick a different color. You know? Something that sort of incentivizes that effort. Because for him right now, he's rambunctious, he's active, he's really imaginative. Probably has a very creative mind. And so asking him to do something that's sort of logic based and just effort oriented, doesn't have any pay off creatively, is excruciating.

Not only that, you could do [Jot It Down](#) for another whole year and even put off all this handwriting and he'd be fine. The writing life starts at 8, and he's 7, so you're actually a year early. It takes 8-18 to become a fluent writer. He can be working on a handwriting book and tracing things for this whole year. You can still be jotting down his amazing, quirky, thoughts and then you could write those out for him to trace.

You could also have him take those same sentences and use a paint brush with water and have him write as many of the letters as he can on the driveway. You could put butcher paper on the wall and ask him to use a marker and write with his whole arm, instead of these tiny motor muscle experiences. We want to get that big body involved because he's 7! And he doesn't have to quite screw it all in yet the way you want him to as he gets to 8, 9, and 10.

Mandy: Thank you, Julie!

Julie: Will that help? Can you see that helping?

Mandy: That is definitely helping. I feel peace coming into my heart about that. So thank you very much.

Julie: You are so welcome. Good! Well that was fun! I love starting with writing.

[All laugh]

Mandy: Awesome!

Julie: Alright, Gigi! Let's talk to you now. Say hi!

Gigi: Hi! So great to be on here with you. We call you J-B because you're like just a friend in our living room.

Julie: Oh that's so wonderful [laughs]. Oh no that's fantastic. So you are a part-time working mom who struggles with just getting the boxes checked, is that right?

Gigi: Well, I do. I feel sometimes very distracted because I'm working part-time and it is kind of interspersed throughout my day and I want to be fully present with my kids and I want to do all the fun things that aren't just checking the boxes, like well we did our math today and well we did our science today. I want to also feel free to do all the very rich things and I know that that's something that you have said is the most valuable.

Julie: Yeah so we'll start with that and then you had a really good question about co-ops, too, so I want to talk about both. So the first thing, this notion of richness. We tend to treat those activities like dessert. Like if you eat your vegetables, then you get to have a poetry teatime, right? Like that's kind of how we treat it. And what I like to remind parents is the stuff that you know is rich and valuable, takes real time away from the core curriculum. It absolutely does. You cannot invest a whole week, for example, in producing a fabulous comic strip with your child when they're full into it and still get good math time done. So it's triage. You're sitting in the emergency room, your child comes in, and you are making a decision. What gets my

attention? What is the most important thing for this day, or this week, or this month, or this season? And part of the way we make that judgement call is to look at the global view of what's going on in our homeschool. Have we just been doing one inspired activity after another and we're really kind of behind on the skill-work? Okay then we're going to take a season where we're really devoted to working on some of those skills. Whether it's phonics or mathematic tables or whatever you consider your skill work.

But in most cases, parents, especially ones like you who like checking boxes, you're kind of good at that. You're good at breaking out the books, starting the day after breakfast. Sitting at the table doing your orderly stuff and you keep pushing back the nature journaling. The poetry teatime. The watching a movie and eating popcorn. Because that always feels like it's something you should do after you've eaten your vegetables.

So what I say is just clear out the day from time to time. Just give yourself permission to completely indulge one of those rich experiences and know that the routine of all those other practices will be available to you when it's over. You get to return to it. But it isn't critical to sort of try and get it all done in the same day or even the same week. Sometimes you need to just give yourself over to the things that you know are rich and let the other stuff go temporarily. How does that sound when I say that and have you already tried that?

Gigi: What if you do feel like you're falling behind in skill-work? Because I think my inner struggle is I actually would really prefer to just be doing poetry teatime and nature journaling. That's more my style. I'm a very creative person and that's really what I would like to be doing more of. But I think my insecurity but if I spend too much time doing this then they're going to fall behind in math or they're going to—I'm not going to be able to teach them these other things.

Julie: Fantastic question. So let's ask you how do you know when you're behind? What tells you you're behind?

Gigi: [Laughs] I don't know! My mind, my comparison to other kids that I see. Oh well they're doing multiplication tables. Oh man, we really need to get going.

Julie: Tell me about this fantasy family. Is it a real family?

[All laugh]

Gigi: Oh we have a few fantasy families I look up to. I don't know, I think there are all different styles of homeschooling. There's very academic, there's somewhat of a balance, and then there

are ones that are very much more creative and less skills based. I mean, you have to also have the skills but I think maybe in my mind I look at those other families that are more academic and I think "Oh that's the better way." When in my heart I believe—I believe that the rich stuff is the best way [starts crying].

Julie: Oh, oh.

Gigi: And I don't want to choose. It's just an inner struggle of I don't want my child to struggle when they're in high school. We do do this co-op where they are in classes with other kids their same grade, the same age. So I know in my mind—we're homeschooling! So it doesn't really matter if we're behind in math or we're behind in reading or whatever thing. Except I don't want them to feel—you know, go to school and say "oh my friends are all doing multiplication and I'm not." So in one sense, it's my own insecurity but I also don't want my children to feel insecure about where they are.

Julie: Totally valid. Totally valid, by the way. Everything you're feeling is dead on and we can't just wash it away by saying don't worry. "Don't worry" never works because we worry and if someone doesn't give you a measurable goal, then you live with a vague insecurity.

The biggest problem for homeschool parents is that they want a rich life but they feel pressure to meet an abstract goal called progress, grade levels, scope and sequence, what my neighbor is doing. And instead of looking at their own children and figuring out how I can measure their progress, they have this vague sense of always being behind. So what we want to fix is the vague. It's not about being behind or being ahead or reassuring you that you love your kids so that's okay or being behind is fine. Frankly, I don't like the feeling of being quote unquote behind. If I'm in a group of people and everyone looks like they're reading and I don't know how to read, that's going to feel insecure producing unless I know without a doubt that I'm making progress and I know the progress I'm making is meaningful.

So what we want to do for you and for your kids to help you with the burden that that is. Because look at you! You got emotional about this, this is not something we wash away with Julie reassuring you. This is something we actually have to address. What we do in our coaching community, [The Homeschool Alliance](#), is we do two practices. We write a monthly narrative sketch and then we also keep something I call a Scatterbook. In the Scatterbook we take notes on our children, we make goals, we write lists of books we're reading, we keep educational quotes in front of us. And then once a month, we write a narrative of a full day where we write down everything we did and what the child is learning and we do that every month so that when you're in September, you write one thing and in December, when you're writing again, you can look back and see has there been measurable progress? Can I see improvement, growth, in my child on any given subject area. That's right. And we do it based on growth, not grades. We do it based on observation, not evaluation. Because our goal isn't

necessarily to hit a mark, it's to know that our child is actually developing and we're able to see it and measure it.

Measurement is the hardest thing in homeschool. We have multiple ages, multiple kids. But we don't have a full classroom like 30 4th graders. So we don't know how to compare them meaningfully and so we are always tempted to compare to the family that does the thing we don't do well. So if you're not creative, then the creative family is really attractive. If you're very creative, then the academic family is really attractive. But what we're looking for is can I see that my child went from not handwriting to handwriting, to taking the pencil out of my hand? My child went from knowing how to do addition and subtraction, finally started to break through on multiplication tables. And it's okay to have goals! We want our kids to grow.

So, when we get back then to your notion about let's say poetry teatime and nature journaling but you want to make sure you quote "don't fall behind in math." The place you have to start is: what does math progress look like for this child? And I usually recommend starting by looking in June, pretend like it's June. Right now we're starting the fall of 2018 so pretend it's June 2019. What would you hope your child had accomplished by then?

Gigi: Right.

Julie: And once you have that in place, now, you can sort of examine. Now you can modify that end goal but if you don't have an end goal, it's going to be difficult for you in January to know if you're anywhere near it. So if you think, well, I've looked at scope and sequences for 3rd graders and most of them know their times tables and my daughter, right now, in the fall of 2018 isn't that comfortable with adding, then you have to ask yourself: how do we get there? What does that look like? And you want to collaborate with your child. You want them to have some skin in the game. It can't just be pressure from mother. We've got to look at ways to make that an attractive goal.

I remember when Johannah, my second child, was about 9 or 10. We were working on multiplication and I was on some email list where they talked about making times tables real. So what they said was use seashells—I lived in California—so that was a really easy idea for me. I had toddlers and babies so I gave her a jar of seashells and I said "Do your 2s for times tables using seashells." And then I went and nursed a baby and changed a diaper and I came back and she had done a beautiful job of drawing the shape of the number 2 and then an X and then another number 2 and then the equal sign and then the number 4 in seashells. That was not what I had in mind! I thought she was going to do some regrouping. You know, here's two sets of three, here's two sets of four. And I realized right in that moment, she fundamentally didn't understand times tables but she was really artistic, right? She was good at drawing and handwriting. And so that's when I knew, oh we could even be doing the workbook pages right now and she might even get the 2s right but she didn't understand times tables.

So that's the kind of thing I'm talking about. That's what homeschooling is. Homeschooling isn't getting through the book, it's doing the detective to help your child make progress that you

yourself can measure. And if you can measure it, you'll start to feel more comfortable. Does that make sense?

Gigi: It totally does. I love that. And I'm going to start a scatterbook, I think that is just such a fun idea to see how they're progressing. So thank you!

Julie: Fantastic. So then the second part of your question was this charter school that meets one day a week and they love the social work but your kids don't enjoy the writing, is that correct?

Gigi: Yes. So they do IEW and it's not even necessarily the writing—well, sometimes it's the writing and sometimes it's the reading and it's just the fact that I want them to enjoy the things that they're doing—especially reading, I want them to enjoy reading. So up until now, I've kind of not really pushed them to read hard things that they don't really want to read, I've just said "oh you want to read that? Okay, that's great!" As long as it's year appropriate. And so you know they're in this school that now are reading some books that maybe are a little bit above their level or they have the dialects that are a little bit hard for beginning readers to understand. And so it's frustrating and they want to say "I don't really want to read this, can you just read it to me?" And in one sense, I want to just say okay I'll just read it to you and as long as you're getting the information that's great and then they do their little write-up on it.

Or, on the other hand, I want to say well, life isn't just about doing easy things and the things that you want to do. If they were in traditional school they would be given assignments that they didn't always want to do. So I want to also say well sometimes you have to do assignments that you don't want to do, so you need to read it yourself and maybe I'll read one page and they'll read the other page or something like that or I just help them with the harder words or something like that.

Julie: Alright, so let's go back. Did you give birth to any of these kids or are they adopted?

Gigi: I gave birth to all of them.

Julie: Alright, so if you when you were in labor, if your husband had said, "Look, hard things. I mean labor is hard. Everybody's done it. You just need to get in there and have this baby." Would that have worked for you?

[All laugh]

Gigi: [Laughs] It wouldn't have worked for him!

Julie: [Laughs] So I really do not like the way we talk about hard things. Hard things are hard! They're hard. So let's not talk about it like our children owe us effort just because they're going to encounter hard things later. Most of us when we face hard things we're looking for support immediately. We're looking for help, incentives. Somebody to sweeten the deal.

Like when I was training for a marathon, all I could think about was cherry Life Safers and blue Gatorade at the breaks. Like that's how you get through 10 miles. You don't get through 10 miles because somebody says well you know marathoning's hard. You chose this. That doesn't get me there!

What we want to do is talk to our children like okay so you get a social benefit from co-op. This style of writing isn't always what we do at home, it's not even my favorite kind. There might be things we can learn from it. There are books, they're asking you to read. These aren't necessarily the books I would choose or you would choose. What can we do to ease the pain? What can we do to make this less painful for you? How much effort can you give me? Ask them! Help them face the challenge, as opposed to you shaming them into it. Do you see the difference?

And so I love your idea. I think partnership reading's the way to go. I think you read a page, they read a page. And you do that the whole way until they're sick of hearing you read it. I'd make brownies or cookies. I would sweeten the deal. I would make this as un-painful as possible. And in fact, one of the things I recommend about co-ops anyway: you are still the homeschooling parent. So if you don't like an assignment or a book or think one of the writing ideas doesn't work, you get to say you can skip that one. The co-op teacher does not determine the homework. The parent at home does. That's why you homeschool.

Gigi: Alright!

Mandy: Mic drop!

[All laugh]

Julie: [Laughs] Good! Alright Gigi! We're going to move on to Melissa! Melissa can you say hi!

Melissa: Hi! I am here! Hi Julie!

Julie: Hi Melissa! So good to meet you.

Melissa: Good to meet you as well!

Julie: So it sounds like you're trying to handle homeschooling with a pretty big challenge. Want to tell us about it?

Melissa: Well we just had a baby back in January and we love him, he is wonderful. But he's been really hard. So that has just really, really changed our life [laughs], our homeschool life especially.

Julie: Your kids are still little. Can you tell us the ages of all your kids?

Melissa: Yes! My oldest is 8 and then I have an almost 5 year old and then our little guy is 7 months old.

Julie: Yeah and it just keeps being hard, doesn't it? You've got a toddler-ish person, 5 year old little person and a baby. So what have you done to help yourself so far? How are you coping? How are you surviving this season?

Melissa: How am I surviving? Well my husband's wonderful [laughs].

Julie: Oh lucky you! That's awesome.

Melissa: Yes, yes that is huge. We're really Julie just kind of every day just flying by the seat of our pants and trying to get in what we can get in. Lots of cuddles and reading and our kids are playing a ton, which is of course such a gift that they have the time and space to do that. My friends—these girls sitting around me—they're amazing. They have encouraged me and supported me. Kind of like what Gigi was saying, I think I worry about not doing enough, for my big kids because my little one requires so much of my time and attention.

Julie: Okay good.

Melissa: And I want to think well this is just a little phase but really the reality is this could be years [laughs].

Julie: Oh it absolutely could. Especially if you keep having babies! I had five so it went on for a long time where you have people underfoot. One of the things that I first want to say just to reassure you is that you don't have to have a great homeschool to learn. You can have just a pretty good one. You can actually live in this sort of semi-state of chaos and still, learning is going to happen. In fact, you could put away all the workbooks and you could just read books and count things and talk to your 8 year old and that child would probably go up a grade level next year. Here's what's crazy: everything you're trying to teach between 5 and about 11 or 12, before junior high, can be taught in one year of junior high.

Melissa: Thank you for that!

Julie: Not kidding. Now, they may have the sensation like Gigi was talking about of being behind. And we don't want them to feel shame and embarrassment. "My mom just ignored me for eight years, twelve years and said I'll get it when I'm 12, we'll start then." But what I'm saying is there is so much more work associated with teaching during these younger years because they really don't have all of the mental tools yet. In junior high, all of that stuff will come rushing in like a flood because their brains are more developed, they have more experience speaking. They have more experience with language and numbers and all of the features that you want them to learn. So right now, going slow to go fast is totally fine.

Secondly, when I think about your experience of workbooks versus non-workbooks, there is an organization called SCALE—Student Coalition for blah blah blah, I can't even remember what all the letters stand for [laughs] we'll put it in the show notes. But they've done research that shows focused attention in children is age plus one minute. So your 8 year old can only give you nine good minutes at a time. So what I want you to plan for are nine good minutes, once or twice or three times a day.

Melissa: I can do that!

Julie: Yeah! Doesn't that start to free you up so you don't start thinking gosh we didn't do two solid hours at the table because the toddler or the baby get crawling all over me or knocked over the milk?

Melissa: Right! I can do nine minutes.

Julie: That's right. So nine minutes of math. Nine minutes of phonics. Nine minutes of your 8 year old trying to read to you. Right? Do those sort of interspersed throughout the day. Anything that you want more devoted attention to like building fairy twig houses with glue guns, well that has to happen when that baby's asleep. Or on the weekends. Or at night. I like to remind parents that homeschooling is at home so there's no end of the day bell. You've got other hours of the day, you've got weekends. So if something is a big project you want to do with this 8 year old and you cannot handle the baby, that's when your wonderful husband takes over for the other two and you get some one on one time.

Melissa: Okay. Julie thank you so much!

Julie: You're welcome! I hope that works. Kelly, let's move to you!

Kelly: Hi! Thank you so much for letting us come on as a group, it's so much fun.

Julie: This is super fun. I love this version of the podcast. So thanks for doing it! Kelly tell us about your kids.

Kelly: I have two kids, a boy and a girl and they are 8 and 5 right now. They are very imaginative and creative. My son wakes up, he's an 8 year old, with ideas every morning. He has something he wants to build. Right now he's making his own pocket knife out of tin can lids. He handled it [laughs] it's exciting. They both just have so many ideas and things that they want to do. And when he was a little tiny boy and he would come to me, he would want to build a helicopter, I knew he did not want the Pinterest project that you did with a button and some Popsicle sticks. He wanted a helicopter that he could climb in and fly, this was not a craft, this was an engineering project. And I would get so frustrated because I knew that I couldn't help him actually accomplish that thing that I knew he wanted and I don't think I had yes learned in my parenting journey that it's okay to disappoint your kids and I think I'm still working on that. But I couldn't actually help him make a helicopter that flew, but I'm learning that he had so many ideas that we can't, there's no way or even with my help that we could actually accomplish them all in a day, whether we did math or anything else or not! So it's okay to let some of his ideas lie dormant and maybe as an adult he will be building helicopters, I don't know.

Julie: Yeah so one of the things I love to suggest when a child brings you a project that's either messy, inconvenient, dangerous, or too big is to give them part of it—to give them the wish. So he wants to build a helicopter. You live in Colorado Springs, go see helicopters at the Airforce Academy if you can. Go see them. If you have the courage, take a ride in one. If you can get a remote control helicopter, the kind that you buy online, buy one. Start to help him experience a piece of it.

Children want to already know how to do things. They don't know about process. So they'll say something to you like "I want to be a Broadway star," well what they mean is "I want to act." But right now he says he wants to build a helicopter, he wants to either be near helicopters or he wants to near something that flies or he wants to build something, you know? So we want to start giving him opportunities to sort of get adjacent to this big idea and not put it off too long.

For most kids, their curiosity is short-lived. Occasionally they'll lock in and they'll be into helicopters for the rest of their lives, but a lot of kids it's actually a passing curiosity but they express it in this massive language because that's what's the most interesting feature is building the helicopter, not just talking about helicopters. Right?

Kelly: Yeah, that makes sense.

Julie: Yes exactly so your son is one of these very hands-on kids and I know that you mentioned that sometimes there are things that you would love for him to participate in that aren't his idea so then the balance is give him the thing that he wants, give him as much of it as you can handle, give it to him even in a fantasy. "Gosh wouldn't it be amazing if you could build helicopters, tell me more about what you would do if you built one. How would you build one? How would you even go about it?" And help him start verbalizing it and expressing it because you may find the adjacent thing through conversation.

And then the second way, the second thing that I absolutely think is imperative here is less talking from you about what you want him to do and more doing. So for instance, you were talking about doing a salt painting with your kids. Just start doing it. Get up in the morning, make your coffee, get to the table and start doing the painting. No words! If they want to join, they will join. There is nothing more seductive than a parent doing a cool art project without inviting the children [laughs].

Kelly: So what you're telling me is I need to give up some control [laughs].

Julie: [Laughs] oh did we hit on that theme?

Kelly: It'll take some more practice [laughs].

Julie: Absolutely. And the thing of it is: we're all such talkers. I was just having this conversation with my mom the other day and I had been speaking at a conference where I said "Less talking. More action." And my mom came up to me after it was over and she says "Oh my gosh, Julie, I was so that mother. 'Come to this table, I have a fun project for you. Let's do this, it will be fun.'" And you know, there is nothing that turns off a child more than the promise of fun. It's like they want to prove you wrong instantly.

Kelly: Oh that's so true.

Julie: And yet! If an adult is using a hot glue gun or a knife or a power tool, what child doesn't want in on that action? You know! They want the danger, they want the mystery, they want the risk. So if you live these things in front of your child, they are so much more likely to say "Hey what are you doing?" "Hey can I have my own paintbrush? Can I have my own power drill?" You know?

Kelly: And talk me through what happens when I'm doing that and then the child does not choose to engage in something new but instead retreats to the *Redwall* book that is dog-eared and has been read for the 10th time.

Julie: So that sounds awesome to me. I would love your child to read *Redwall* at least 10 times. Tell me how long you think it would be likely that a child wouldn't join you. Would it go on—are you imagining when you say that to me, this child will never join in for the rest of the child's life? Are you worried that the child just won't join in that day? What is your fear?

Kelly: That's a good question.

Julie: How long have you tested this theory, in other words?

Kelly: I could definitely see it happening for at least a day. I don't know—I haven't tested it beyond that because I used to use words and I say "You will come to the table, we're going to do this fun thing."

Julie: So what if we give it a year. Like write this calendar date down and then you live this way for a year and then you can put a reminder on your calendar and then just email me and say whether it worked. I mean I want to give you a lot of time because here's the thing, your child doesn't trust you right now. Your child is about to resist because the child is proving to you he will not be coerced. So as long as he thinks coercion is the goal, he's going to fight you. So we don't know how long this detox period is going to take. But if you live a creative engaged, excited about living life in front of your child with whatever children are willing to participate because they're curious, too, there will be a day—there will be an item—when he no longer thought that you were using this to trick him and he will just find himself joining in. I mean I am confident of that.

Kelly: And I do believe that is true because I have seen—he can be the most delightful, engaged—once—this morning he wanted to make breakfast burritos for everyone, “let me do this for everyone.” So it's not that he is a hermit in his room all the time.

Julie: No.

Kelly: I like to make a wonderful plan that we will all enjoy and sometimes it sounds more fun for him to read so.

Julie: That's right. And right now—is he your oldest by the way?

Kelly: Yes.

Julie: So don't forget, you're both figuring things out. It's his first time being every single age that he is but it's also your first time being with a child that age, every single time. So the tendency is to put too much energy into that oldest child because it's the most interesting, you've already done 4, you've already done 2. So when those kids come along, you have a little more bandwidth for them to not cooperate. These poor oldest children! Oh my gosh, we want their cooperation! Because we're trying to figure them out and if they're not like sitting across the table from me, how will I be able to figure them out?

Give them some space. Let them evolve. He's going to change his mind 100 more times in the next 10 years about what he thinks is the right way to live and how to participate and what he thinks is interesting. And he will come back! Give him a little room to sort of find his own way, take his own initiative. I know you're already doing homeschool with him. He's already learning

how to do this calculations and handwrite and all those things so this extra stuff that you want him to do, let him have the full freedom to be the oldest child. Not as interested.

Kelly: So do you find that common in oldest children, that there's some lack of interest?

Julie: Sometimes. It's not so much a lack of interest. Your kid is interested!

Kelly: He is, you're right.

Julie: He's one of the most interested kids I've heard about. He's wanting to do big, important things. He didn't want to make a breakfast burrito for himself, he wanted to make it for the whole family. He's incredible! I'd probably put a big butcher paper sheet of paper on the wall, with a marker and just tell him "please make me a list of all of the things that are in your head that you want to do some day so I make sure I don't forget to do them." That's what I'd do with that kid.

Kelly: Okay. Thank you.

Julie: He'll have a list. He's already got a list. He's already clicking through the list and you're over here going "let's add this!" And he's like "But that's not on my list!" [laughs].

Kelly: That sounds great, thank you.

Melissa: Julie we're all in tears from that butcher paper idea, I love it.

Julie: Oh perfect, awesome. Perfect, perfect! Alright so now, let's go to the other Julie. Hello, Julie!

Melissa: Julie v. Julie

[All laugh]

Julie J: Hi!

Julie: And you've got four kids, three of whom are struggling with reading and writing. Can you tell me more about this?

Julie J: Sure. So my kids are all kind of in a clump. They're 6, 7, 8, and 9. And my oldest two, for various reasons have just really struggled with learning to read and then obviously just crosses into spelling and writing. And then I did end up sending one to public school. She has a trauma background and her brain just seems to really thrive in the structure of school.

Julie: Wonderful.

Julie J: And then my 6 year old, he spoke Mandarin for four years so he's still just learning how to speak English. He's very, very bright and so I'm not—I don't think there will be issues down the road with him but we spent all of last year with more of a dyslexic type curriculum and it helped but it was incredibly draining for me and the kids. So I think it's just hard to figure out how to balance that intensity of kids who really want to read but it's a challenge. And then I felt like it took away time from doing the things that make us all feel nurtured and full of life like our read-alouds and some of the things you talked with Gigi about. Nature study and all of that fun stuff that we love.

Julie: So are these adopted children?

Julie J: Sorry, yes. My oldest two I gave birth to. They're both premature. And then the youngest two are adopted.

Julie: So you are dealing with a lot of biological needs. This is not just personality issues or even sort of grade level issues. You're dealing with children who come with a variety of genetic predispositions, language backgrounds, preemies typically take longer with all kinds of things.

So the first thing I want to share with you is a phrase Stephanie Elms shares with us in the Homeschool Alliance all the time and this is the phrase: "There are no educational emergencies." There are no educational emergencies. It takes the time it takes and when you get drained, you need a break. And then you come back and you recommit again. Your children are going to be fine. Maybe they're going to need six years of elementary school or seven years of elementary school and then four years of junior high. Maybe they're going to need time

between high school and college before they go to college. You get to put in the energy it takes. You take the time you need. And you take breaks when you're exhausted and overwhelmed to re-up your energy.

One of the ways to handle that over the course of a week, then, is you may plan for yourself in a five day week, a four day week of that intensity and one day where you literally leave it all out and you only do something wonderful on that day. You take a hike in beautiful Colorado Springs, you go ahead and have your poetry teatime. You watch movies all day. You binge watch one of those children's shows on PBS. You pick something that is a complete—you know, let your hair down. No academic value, just the bonds of family. The love of being together. Building the relationships between these four special children and you let yourself really indulge that day and you put in the hard work just four days a week. I think you need to pace yourself. The thing I wrote down after I read your question was "Slow down, why the rush?"

Julie J: Yeah no that's really good. And I think I have a master's in education and so I always thought that this—well, I didn't plan on homeschooling originally but when I started but I just thought I have this background and my kids are going to thrive and so it really threw me when it's been a hard journey.

Julie: Totally. Well and you took on some big challenges.

Julie J: Yeah I did [laughs]. And it's amazing and I'm blessed everyday by these little people but no that's good advice. It's hard for me because I've been a teacher and I'm learning and it's mostly been through you and through this homeschool group who's around me now to now to not try to do school at home.

Julie: Yes.

Julie J: But that's sometimes hard for me to let that part go because that part's comfortable to me.

Julie: That's true. And the master's in education means too that you're the kind of person who aspires and is self-disciplined. You know, have a very high level of education yourself in these theories and ideas. But the practice of home education where you're at home with your children and you're being both parent and teacher is a different experience than what you were being trained for. So you can use everything you know about learning. Go back to those thoughts, those theories, those educational experts and just apply them in a more—you know, in a slower

pace, with less expectation of it looking like a classroom outcome. But the theories are going to help you, I mean you know about learning. You know what it takes for the lightbulb to go on. Wouldn't you say that's true? Or am I wrong about that?

Julie J: I've been doubting myself a lot but yes, no you're right. And I think even just with kids from trauma backgrounds, I've learned a lot about the brain and I feel like everything I'm hearing you say is right on with adding protein or taking a break—I mean I love all the things that you share and inspire us all to do. I just have to put them into practice.

Julie: Well and give yourself permission to learn how. All of us want to already be good at it. The theme I'm hearing in all these questions so far is "Why am I not already doing it correctly?" You know? "Why is my child not cooperating? Why am I not already understanding how to do this?" But homeschooling is never done. You never get it right. It's always in process because you're dealing with the evolving needs of people who are maturing and growing over time and you're meeting those demands in a fresh way each time you encounter them. Even if you have a system in place! The system never rescues you because somebody is sick to their stomach. Somebody's having a flashback. Somebody made a mistake. Somebody hurt someone's feelings. These derail all of your best plans.

So the best thing we can do is to keep re-engaging around the principles of learning. You know, whether it's short attention spans or a deep dive or having a day off or having these short-term goals. You know, in my book, *The Brave Learner*, I give you some strategies for how to manage these children but it's all in different ways because we never know which strategy is going to be right for which child at which season. So we want to try a lot of approaches.

There's no sort of one time for all time solution for homeschooling. The best that you can do for these four kids—first of all, thrilled that you have a child in school who needs that structure that you can support. Thrilled that you have a child that speaks Mandarin and is growing in English and you tell that that child is bright even without having the fluency of English yet. Those are wonderful. And then for these two biological kids who are preemies who are struggling with reading, the best thing you can do is just be their cheerleader. Give them those repeated one on ones and take breaks—meaningful breaks! You know sometimes they need a whole week off to re-up the energy. I've shared before, my youngest daughter didn't read until she almost turned 10.

Julie J: Yes I remember hearing you say that before and being really encouraged for that moment and then working with my child and freaking out again [laughs].

Julie: Yes, yes, totally. Well here's what's really funny. My youngest daughter is doing some typing work for us. She's a transcriptionist and a linguistics degree and so she had to read the

story I wrote about her in [The Writer's Jungle](#). She was typing it up for me [laughs]. And I said to her, "Just let me know if I lied anywhere in here. Is my memory correct? Is this really what happened?" And she fed back to me that it was what happened. Also she's told me tell the story a lot so it's a mixture of her memory and mine. But one of the things she said that was challenging and I had forgotten this, she was around six other people who were fluent readers from the time she can remember. And so she kept thinking it should happen like magic. You know?

So when kids are around people who are reading all the time, sometimes the effort feels wrong. They're like this can't be right. Nobody else is struggling. You know? So we want to introduce our kids to why struggle is a part of this reading process. What helped in my family was they saw me reading Greek. I was learning Greek at the time. And that sort of flipped the switch for her. She saw me legitimately sounding out words, not pretend sounding out for her. But literally didn't know how to read. And that started to shift her belief system around reading.

So sometimes struggle is also this invisible belief your child has that you have no access to. They'll tell you about it later. But you can kind of fish around. Start looking. What is the belief system by child has that's currently in the way? Like I said, homeschooling is mostly detective work.

Julie J: And then would you say it's okay then—like I feel like even 9 we should be moving more into partnership writing but just to stay in jot it down and let them—

Julie: Definitely.

Julie J: Okay.

Julie: Definitely. In fact, when we're talking—the big step I'm noticing—I've had a lot of conversations lately, it keeps coming up: I think parents maybe are still taking too big a step between *Jot It Down* and *Partnership Writing*. The transition from *Jot It Down* to *Partnership Writing* looks a little bit like this. They trace their own words that you handwrote for them and they do it a word at a time, for a whole week, for a five word sentence. Then you might get to the point where they say a sentence, you hold it in your mind, and dictate it back to them so they're writing their own words but they don't have to remember what they were thinking about writing until they hear you say the word. Then they might write the first word of a sentence and then you write the rest of the sentence. Break the task down even smaller, so that they don't just go from you jotting it down to you saying okay you write one sentence. There are mid-steps that you can introduce in between those two.

Julie J: Okay.

Julie: Is that helpful?

Julie J: That is helpful.

Julie: Okay awesome. Anything else? Because we have one anonymous question that I want to get to but I want to make sure you feel good.

Julie J: I do, thank you so much Julie, I appreciate your advice.

Julie: Awesome. Now thank you ladies for this incredible session so far. So much practical help. But we got one question and the mother asked to remain anonymous and this is a question that I think is a wonderful way to wrap up this podcast because it is a question that is near and dear to the heart of homeschooling but doesn't often get addressed. "How would you recommend staying focused on growing young learners when you yourself are rebuilding emotionally from the ground up? I've been changing my paradigms of what a family and relationships can look like. This mother asks: I feel like I'm constantly playing catch up and then getting hit with the awareness of another major emotional backpack that I need to unpack and trying really hard not to get self-centered and off track in my homeschool in the meantime. It makes me feel like past-trauma rules me out as a mother who even has the capacity to homeschool, like I'm handicapped. I'm building my kids' foundations at the same time as I'm building my own."

So this experience is raw, it's also the most honest question we received this whole season. And I want to address it because this is what I call the invisible education. When you're growing up in a family, there's a family dynamic and culture, for better or worse, that shapes how you see the world. How you understand yourself. And what your expectations are of your future family life. You know, when you get married, you bring with you that whole story from your childhood. Or maybe you don't even get married, you partner up with someone. But when you do, when you decide to build a family with someone else, both of you are bringing this whole story with you and it has invisibly shaped you. You may not even be fully aware of the ways it exerts influence on you until your child acts out in a certain way and you react in anger or blame or shame because there is a part of you that is trying to control the outcome for that child so it will be a different life than your own life.

So one of the things that happens when you start to get this dawning awareness, whether it's through your own reading or yoga or therapy or some other outlet that helps you to sort of examine yourself is that now that energy that you might have used for rearing your children is being redirected and it is exhausting. I remember years ago, a writer I really loved who had a

radio show, he used to say that emotional injury because it's invisible we treat it as though it's not real. Whereas, if you were in a car accident and you got slammed upside down one the other and suddenly you're in the hospital with broken bones and bandages and casts and tubes in your arms, everyone would know immediately that you deserved time to recover. But because emotional injury is invisible, we just keep going as though we're not injured and yet literally, we're in that same kind of I don't know, intensive care situation. Our emotional bodies are just as vulnerable.

So there are a couple things that I want to suggest to families going through that kind of trauma. First of all, go slow to go fast. You get to take time. You do not have to recover all in one step. You can homeschool from the bed, from the injury bed. After I gave birth to my fifth child we did homeschool on my king sized bed for eight weeks. I never left the room. I finally figured it out that after the fourth child, on this fifth baby, I wasn't just going to spring back into action. I was going to fully recover. So we stayed on the bed. I hired a mother's helper to come once a little bit. My brother at the time worked from home so I had a little bit of help that way. But the point is, we did homeschool on the bed.

That's how you want to think about your emotional recovery. What does it look like for homeschool to be on the low-burner? You know? The hot-pad. Not full scale, not turned up. Not all decorated out. How do you just keep the basics going while you pay attention to your inner life?

Secondly, can you dedicate some time to that growth so that you feel like it's not just swamping you out of the clear blue sky? When I was going through my divorce, I had a lot of grief to go through and one of the suggestions my therapist made to me was to schedule that grief. As an emotional kind of person, I did not think that was even possible [laughs]. I was like you can't schedule emotion! She was like Julie, let me let you in on a secret: you can and you will. So the way that we did it was this. She told me I could grieve as many times a day as I thought I needed but I had to schedule it and it had to have a time limit. So at the beginning, I think I did it two or three times for a half hour a day. And so when the feelings hit me when it wasn't those half hours, I had to say to myself "Oh I see that coming but we're scheduled for an appointment at 2:30 in the afternoon so you can't cry right now." Which if you've ever met me, that is crazy. Like I cry at the drop of a hat. So anyway, what happened is, I would schedule this time, let's say 6:30 PM, I'm going to cry between 6:30 and 7:00 PM. And 6:30 would come and I didn't feel like crying. Here's what she told me to do: Sit there until the tears come. Sit there and remind yourself of the moments of the day when you were sad and close your eyes and wait. And invariably, the emotion that had been triggered earlier in the day would rise to greet me and I would grieve by timer. And when the timer rang, I'd wipe my eyes, I'd take a few deep breaths, and I'd go back to my family.

I am urging intentional recovery is all I'm saying. You can use a strategy that works for you. Another one that really worked well for me is when I was feeling a big well of emotion about my childhood or my upbringing, I could close my eyes, imagine a stream, and I would assign an experience or a feeling to a leaf on a branch and then I would imagine it falling off a branch and floating away on the river, on the stream. It's not that this got rid of the problems, I was

reading a lot of books, I was in therapy, I was in recovery. But these were tools that I used to help me in the day to day, when I was still trying to homeschool my kids and deal with a lot of emotion.

It is possible that you will hit a season where you are so swamped that it's time to do something different. For me, that included taking advantage of tutors or part-time enrollment or even full-time enrollment in a school. One of my friends, when she hit a period of adrenal fatigue and some really big challenges in her family of five kids, she put her family in school for two years I think it was, one or two years, and then brought them back home.

We want to be honest about who we are and our capacities. And when it starts to feel like we are so overwhelmed we can't provide for our children, it's okay to take a break. And then to come back. Even the great Susan Wise Bauer took two years off of homeschooling when she was just sick of it [laughs]. So I share that with you to remember that your well-being, your development as an adult, your growth into the kind of person you want to be matters, it's valuable, will carry you for the long run. And during that season, it's okay if you need it to either take a break or to simply put homeschool on the crockpot mode. Just keep it going but don't worry so much about big magical life because you will heal and then you'll be able to give full-hearted energy, without some of those other dynamics getting in your way.

Melissa: So good. So good.

Julie: Thank you!

Melissa: We're wiping tears in Colorado Springs.

Julie: Well you know the foundation of every homeschool is a sense of emotional wholeness in the family and it's our job as parents to provide that for our kids. If we come from a background that wounded and injured us, we deserve to recover and our kids deserve for us to recover.

We do not want to bring the pain of the past into our children's present. We want to give them the gifts of presence and love, just like we deserved and maybe didn't get. And the way we get there is to become emotionally whole people. It's a journey. It won't all be over in a week. Sometimes it takes several years and I write about this in *The Brave Learner*, it's the whole last section of the book. So I invite those of you listening who want more in-depth treatment of that topic to read that book and maybe form a group like yours where you could go out for dinner and talk about some of these things with each other and really be that support system that you need to let go of those tangles from your backgrounds.

Melissa: We love you so much. This was incredible.

Julie: [Theme music plays] Let's step away for a moment and talk about my new book, *The Brave Learner: Finding everyday magic in homeschool, learning, and life*. My book is published by Tarcher Perrigree, an imprint of Penguin Random-House. It will publish on February 5th, 2019, so if you're listening to this the week of January 28th, 2019, we're just a week away woo! So excited. It is not too late for you to pre-order the book and be eligible for the two pre-order free bonus gifts. Those gifts will come to you via email on the publication date. The first one is a PDF download called "Hard Cases: Q+A with Julie". These are questions I've gotten over the last 19-20 years, from parents who are really struggling to implement some of the properties of natural learning. So if you feel like I haven't addressed your question yet, it's very likely that it is in the PDF download. The second gift is an invitation to the very first book club meeting by webinar. It will be a live webinar but also available on replay and it will be sent to you as an invitation via email on February 5th, so if you want to get in on either of those be sure to pre-order the book.

If you are listening to this podcast after publication, definitely visit thebravelearner.com because we have a download available for people after publication that is special just for you and I'll let you go to the website after publication to discover what that is. It's exciting. So today what I want to share with you is a quote from the very last chapter called: "Reverse the curse: rekindling the magic." Now, the reason I selected this quote today is for very particular reasons: it's tempting to think that we can be perfectionists in our homeschools. That if we just follow the right ideology, the right philosophy, if we implement the practices perfectly, if we take all the advice and never make a mistake, then our homeschools will be successful. But that isn't actually the way it is. We are living in small communities of human beings. What I like to affectionately call "free radicals." We don't have a lot of control. What we have is the capacity to experiment, revise, and adapt.

So if you think about all the questions that we've discussed over the last 12 weeks, this is the philosophy I want you to take with you as you go to implement new strategies in your homeschool. The title of this subheading is: "You only have to get it mostly right." "There's no way to fix every problem in a family or homeschool. Sometimes we hit the ball out of the park. Others, the ball dribbles off the glove and rolls to the outfield, into the weeds. A good enough homeschool and family life means that you are conscious, making choices, acting with good will, open to change and growth. Your children will forgive your mistakes if they know that they can name them and be heard. If they know you're trying. If they feel your earnestness. You can forgive yourself for your failures if you make friends on the journey, find tools for growth, and have reasonable expectations. This book is designed to help with the tools and expectations. Come find me on social media and I'll introduce you to the friends."

And in fact, that is the perfect segue for what I want to share next. We want to celebrate *The Brave Learner* with you and so our team is hosting a fantastic [conference](#) called The Brave Learner. And it will be hosted in Cincinnati, Ohio on July 19th, 2019. That is a Friday. We are going to introduce you to the friends! We are going to enter this journey together for the

coming school year, committed to the principles, ready to put them into practice. I will be sharing new material, related to what I teach in this book. We will have prizes, food, swag, activities, guests on our panel. We're meeting in an outrageously gorgeous environment, the Renaissance Marriott Hotel in downtown Cincinnati. Our team is planning to make this a time of pampering, education and connection. And I want you to be there! If you have found this podcast season valuable, I can't even begin to tell you how much you are going to love this conference. So be sure you visit thebravelearner.com/conference and sign up. Come with a friend, come alone. No matter how you come, I am dedicated to giving you the home-education boost that you need so that your life will start to participate in the transformation that you long for. Trust me when I say it will be a life-changing experience. And just know this, we don't have to throw conferences. We're doing this because we know how meaningful they are for all of you. This is the kind of conference I wish I could've gone to back when I was homeschooling. So I hope you'll join us. We still have seats available. The early bird discount will expire so make sure you sign up soon so that you get the best deal and can book a hotel room while we've still got our special price available. Alright, with all that said, buy the book, sign up for the conference. Let's return now to the podcast where I am going to share with you how it worked out for our six moms in Colorado Springs, Colorado [theme music plays].

Julie: The first person we talked to was Mandy so I would like to review what happened for Mandy. If you recall, she was the one whose son was really struggling putting pen to paper. When we asked her what her number one takeaway from the conversation was: She said that it was to relax and make writing a short and enjoyable experience. Over the past month, she bought florescent gel pens and black paper to do copywork and pulled out the dry erase markers to write spelling words on the window.

She also told the kids "I have to make writing fun because Julie told me to!" [Laughs] her 9 and 11 year old benefited greatly and even the 7 year old. She's learning that any time you add fun to the subject, you add connection. And connection is the very path to education. Her final comment about whether or not the issue improved was that she has relaxed in her expectations of her son and knows he can feel that from her. He has not complained about writing or handwriting for the past several months. And she has seen his focus and concentration increase.

Perhaps my favorite funny comment she made at the end was that her feedback is this: please send more of Julie's wisdom into the world [laughs] so that's very, very sweet. Our next guests Gigi destressed. That's what happened for her after our conversation. Here's what she wrote back to me:

"My biggest takeaway was that as long as we are progressing, we're good! I took the stress out of having to be a certain place in our curriculums by a certain time. I even explained this to my child when she was feeling bad about being quote unquote behind in math. I told her 'As long as we are progressing, we're all good, girl!' And I think the fact that I have less stress makes her less stressed. I didn't realized that my stress about it was really affecting her, too."

Julie: Good for you Gigi! That's what we wanted to hear. Melissa, the mother of a newborn, had quite a bit to say in reaction after she slowed down. Here's her number one takeaway from our conversation:

"Talking to Julie was like taking a deep breath of fresh air. I didn't realize how much I needed to hear her wise words. My number one takeaway was the age plus one method of getting short but sweet times of focused learning with my 8 year old. Several nine minute chunks of time each day is so doable. I loved what Julie said about how all the learning from 5 to 11 or 12 can be done in one year before Junior High. I feel I like regularly struggle with feelings like I'm not teaching her enough but now I know I am and whatever we're missing with babies in the home, we'll get caught up with when she's a bit older."

Julie: I also really like that Melissa said this:

"Go slow to go fast is a big one. I really love the reminder of looking at my daughter's education in the big scheme of things. Just having seemingly constant conversations throughout the day counts. I remember in a podcast hearing Julie say something to the effect of 'We don't owe the school system something it recognizes as education.' I often have that in mind as we're doing our days. Caring for babies in education, planning for an upcoming vacation is education, playing board games is education, cleaning our home is education. Sigh. I love it. So. Such."

Julie: Wow. I feel like she found words I didn't even remember saying so that is phenomenal. Our next guest was Kelly. She posed the question "What do I do with a kid who wants to control every move of his education?" Here's what we she had to say:

"Julie, you gave me permission to not try to control my kid's every move in regard to their education. I now much more often let my son whether to participate in every single thing we do in our homeschool days. If his sister and I are reading a picture book and he wants to be reading a book upstairs in his room that he is in the middle of, I let him. He most often chooses to be with us, though. I have also implemented your idea of just starting to do cool things and letting my kids gravitate to me or not. Letting go of control in these areas has been very freeing."

Julie: She goes on:

"We have been game-schooling and party-schooling much more this semester so far than ever before. We are seeing so much fruit in not only math and other skills through playing games, but my husband's suggestion that we play a game before bed each night as an incentive to get ready for bed more smoothly and efficiently. It has been a wonderful thing for our family. Our days are ending on a happy note, rather than a grind of trying to coerce the kids into the bedtime routine of teeth brushing."

Julie: Side note from me, how genius a move is that?! I hope all of you will try it. Okay back to Kelly:

“My son and I also used some one-on-one time recently to do a little mini-book club trading my side of the mountain back and forth to read silently and to share thoughts about the book. I feel like we are doing many more things this school year so far to keep the checklist mentality at bay and the relationship alive and well.”

Julie: You know what’s crazy? As I’m reading this and sharing it with you, I am just so aware that we get all the checklists thrown in when we establish connection. I just want to remind you of that. Go for connection and the checklist gets thrown into the bargain. Next up is my namesake, Julie. She’s the one who struggled with her child and some learning disabilities related to reading. Here’s what she had to say:

“My number one takeaway from my conversation with you is to remember that there are no educational emergencies and that things take the time that they take. For my kids and their unique needs, it will look different from other families and that is okay. I’ve stopped pushing them and forcing them to move on to the next reading lesson before they grasp the current concept. If it takes us three days to complete one lesson, that’s okay. Progress is being made just at a slower pace. I started a journal and recorded what each child has learned the previous month and made a few achievable goals for the current month. It’s amazing how writing it down and seeing what we have done encouraged my spirit.”

Julie: Isn’t that true? This is Julie Bogart again popping in to say make notes! Annotate your life and you will start to feel so much more accomplished. Here’s what else Julie had to say:

“Your advice helped my mindset with schooling my children. I get to be their cheerleader. I’ve made a deliberate attempt to make eye contact and engage during our one-on-ones. I’ve strived to find laughter and connection during our reading lessons—even if that means things take longer. I’ve also tried to bridge the gap between Jot It Down! and Partnership Writing. With my 8 year old especially, we are taking turns writing her words. She writes a sentence, I write a sentence. For her homework for co-op, she is telling me the words and I am writing them down and then she uses it as copywork. Her attitude has been great! We also have done spelling words in a salt tray or with fun pens. Anything to sweeten the deal.”

Julie: Her final comment, I think is worth sharing.

“I feel like our issues are the same but my mindset has shifted enough to feel definite improvement. Attitudes of my children are better as my focus is on building bonds and going slowly. Again, that it takes the time that it takes and isn’t an emergency mindset, rather than trying to force progress to catch up to other peers.”

Julie: So when we think about this notion of growth and progress, we stop becoming so worried about pace. Are you noticing that? That’s a consistent theme here. And finally, I want to honor our anonymous guest. It takes a lot of guts to share about personal pain and I appreciate that that guest was willing to come on air with her real voice and tell us her story. Here’s what she had to say in the follow-up:

“My number one takeaway is the validation that my struggle and my question is honest and important. I tried bed-schooling as she mentioned, it only lasted for a little while in the morning but we did get through some actual books. Copywork, say what? Phonograms, that’s right! And enjoyed a good conversation before the monkeys started jumping on the bed. My issue has improved. I don’t see myself as floundering, seasick castaway grasping onto a life-raft anymore. I sense solid, fresh earth under my feet. There’s a flag parked in the dirt next to my ankle. Alone here on my new found mound of conquered ground. Is there anybody out there who’s also walked these truths, dove these depths? I suspect Julie, you are such a person. Those I have found who understand my experience are also those who lead and inspire. When the leading and inspiring works, when the follower can see her progress, when the basics no longer sustain the heart, where to turn then? Further up and further in. Thank you for the anonymous option to make it possible for me to participate.”

Julie: You know, I want to end here with anonymous’ takeaway. The truth is: we all make the most progress when we have friends on the journey. That’s why I am such a fan of groups like this one in Colorado Springs. Where you’re reading a book together. You’re meeting on a regular basis. You’re talking about the issues that are personal to you. You’re brainstorming help. You’re experimenting and floundering together. If there is one thing I want you to know: you are free to experiment. You don’t have to already know how to homeschool or what to do to fix a problem. Your only responsibility is to not stay stuck on the track of perfectionism. You get to make it up for you and you get to revise and change your mind. That’s what we all get to do on this parenting journey and especially with homeschooling [theme music plays].

I hope some of you are going to join us at [The Brave Learner Conference](https://thebravelearner.com/conference) in July. July 19th, it’s a Friday of 2019. You can learn more about that at thebravelearner.com/conference. I would love to introduce you to each other. You know how these six moms are hanging out together in Colorado and building a community of like-minded, homeschooling parents? I want that for you too. Come to the conference, make new friends, set up new pathways between you and other brave learning families and take a risk. Experiment, grow! You get to have the homeschool you want and we get there best in community.

Thank you for joining me this season! I want to thank our podcasting team, The Podcast Masters led by Cody Bois. I am also grateful to Hayden for doing all of our audio editing and to Ben for doing our show notes. To Jeannette, Amy, and Beth for preparing the blog and all of the things that we’ve needed to put this podcast on. Thank you to the guests from this season for sharing their lives with us. And finally, thanks to you for listening. There would be no show without you and your love and support for what we do makes it all worthwhile. So, I can’t wait for my book to come out! We’re going to talk about it, we’re going to enjoy it together, and we are going to grow families and homes that prioritize loving and learning. I’m Julie Bogart, from Brave Writer [theme music plays].

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