



S5E6: Community is Self-Care

Julie Bogart with Jennifer Hunter

Julie: [Theme music plays] One of the unspoken truths of homeschooling is how lonely it gets. You spend all day with small children who don't necessarily have a lot of conversational skill yet. You find yourself bored by teaching phonics *again*. Adding and subtracting doesn't seem that challenging. And even if you have teens, maybe they're in that weird withdraw-from-you-and-only-talk-to-their-friends mode. Or maybe they're just endlessly argumentative while they test out what it feels like to have a contrary opinion. Homeschooling is lonely. We don't have a coffee hour each day in the teacher's lounge. We can't get up and socialize at the water cooler. We might be able to use text messages or Voxer but that isn't the same friends with skin on. You know what I mean? And sometimes, the challenge of getting out the door to do something alone for yourself, in a group, feels like an insurmountable hurdle. Today's conversation is with brave Jennifer Hunter from Canada. And we talk about the challenge of finding like-minded home-educators. Friends! People that we can turn to not only when things are hard, but even just to share trivial bits of nonsense. Camaraderie, friendship. Join me? Let's get started.
[Theme music plays]

Julie: Today I'll be chatting with Jennifer Hunter of Waterloo, Ontario Canada. Jennifer is the mother of four little kids, a girl and three boys. And loves reading aloud, being outside, and doing arts and crafts. She sent us a problem that I think afflicts many of you who are listening in today and I really look forward to talking to her about it. Jennifer, welcome to the program.

Jennifer: Thank you! I'm glad to be here.

Julie: So share with us a little bit why you wrote to me and asked for some help.

Jennifer: My issue that I'm struggling with right now is loneliness at home with my kids. So I have four young kids and well, a lot of the homeschooling stuff is clicking for us, I find that a lot of times through the day, it's just not meeting my needs. I don't know whether it's for friendship or for intellectual stimulation. But a lot of our days just feel long and lonely right now.

Julie: I completely understand that. I think small children in particular can lead us into that sort of wilderness in our adulthood. We go to college or we spend time as a young adult without children and we suddenly see this horizon of possibility in front of us of what it means now to be free of parents, free of school, and then suddenly we have small children and that horizon just collapses [laughs]. Suddenly the most interesting thing in the day is whether you can find the final puzzle piece of an eight puzzle-piece puzzle, right? And so that feels like a very small world and even though you can delight in your children, there can be this sort of maybe homesickness for a person you thought you would be, do you know what I'm talking about? Do you have that feeling?

Jennifer: I definitely do because all along I went to University and to Teacher's College and all along you're talking about big ideas and you're studying for yourself and everything and you're out in the world and then it just isn't there anymore. And I find that even when I talk to other adults right now, you know, they start with the "what do you do?" and I say I'm at home homeschooling my four children and they're kind of done with talking to me.

Julie: Ugh I really, really sympathize. And often, that's followed with "Ugh, I could never do that! My children drive me crazy!" Right? Yes.

Jennifer: Oh totally.

Julie: And so the person that asks that question, a lot of times, even feels like a twinge of guilt. Like they look at you as the super mother that they're not willing to be and so you live this almost imposter syndrome moment, right? Where you're like well I know I'm homeschooling, I

sort of wish I was doing something exciting like your career sounds, or I wish I had more going on but I'm so thrilled to be with my children but now no one cares about it. You know it's like this mixture. You lose your identity a little bit when you choose to stay home with your children. There's a piece of your adulthood that suddenly goes underground and unless people are homeschooling, they don't seem to value it in the way that you might. So I completely understand this. I went through it myself. I hear this from other parents. So before we start attacking this problem because it's common and I first want you to know it's natural. I think it's just a part of the homeschool journey that we all go through. Let's talk about some of the ways you've tried to solve this problem on your own so far.

Jennifer: Yes well actually a couple of years ago, I thought I had things figured out. When my youngest was a baby—it was my third, he was a baby. I started a little preschool art group with three other moms who were all going to homeschool, they didn't send their kids to preschool or kindergarten. And we got together every Friday and we did art together and it was a lot of fun. Kids painted themselves and we just got messy and it was great and you know I really clicked with these other parents. And then fast forward a couple of years now and all of those children are in school. And while I still feel a connection to those moms, they're busy and we don't get together and I don't see anyone. So that's something that I sit here now and I think well I've gotta just get something else like that going, I've gotta find those—you know, another group of people like that. But it's just—it's not happening again. And I feel a lot of sadness over losing that other group.

Julie: That's a big loss, actually. Especially if you imagined that you were all on a similar journey and then they bailed on that journey. So now they are able to be in solidarity with each other around whatever school choice they made, you would be the outlier. You also mentioned that in a lot of cases in Canada where you are, there aren't families with four kids, is that right? The tendency is two children families?

Jennifer: That's completely true. Even within that group, it was two parents have a single child and then one had two children. So even within that group, I find that they're moving on, right? Their children are older. They don't have the toddler and the four year old to drag along places. When we meet other families, sometimes one of my kids will connect with another child who is homeschooled but then we go to do something with that family, we just slow everything down with so many little people. It just—so for example, we met this family with two older boys and so my oldest kind of connected with them but then when we said let's go to the park, you know it was a six and an eight year old who threw on their shoes and ran outside. Whereas I chased down my younger three to go to the park and change the diaper and had to get on everyone's boots and you know, these six and eight year old boys were kind of staring at us saying, "what

are you taking so long for?" Right? Because it takes us so long to go anywhere or do anything. Which—it feels really limiting to me right now.

Julie: Yes! And then you have one other complicating factor in terms of transportation. Want to tell us about that?

Jennifer: We're a single vehicle family. So part of what lets me stay home and homeschool, financially, is that we sticking to that single vehicle. While my husband has a lot of flexibility in his work and in whether we can get it, it does take some advanced planning and it does mean that there are days that we are definitely at home. So we can't just kind of pick up and go places. Not that you can anyway with so many little people but yeah.

Julie: It definitely has an impact. We were a single vehicle family for a number of years and we had, like you, three then four then five—you know [laughs] like that. We just kept having children, who knows how many kids we had when we had one car but it was a lot of children and I remember, I was putting my kids in a gymnastics class—my two older ones. And of course, I had by then four kids and we had no way to get there and so I made friends with one of the moms and she made the comment, "Oh I'd be happy to pick you up" we lived very close to the gym. So she came to pick us up every single week. Well, this was a mom who had a lot of money. We went in their very fancy, massive SUV. And we all piled into the back. And she and I even had some things in common, we both went to prestigious universities in southern California, we were both alumni from the same sorority background. And so I thought, oh we'll have a friendship. But it became very clear to me quickly that our economic differences were going to prevent our friendship. She was going to want to go out and eat, I know you mentioned something about eating. I know for me, we couldn't even afford a Starbucks cup of coffee in those days, so there was no way I could just pick up—even in the evenings, when my husband was home, and take the single car and meet her somewhere because I couldn't literally afford to spend money going out.

And so, I felt those similar limits to what you're talking about. Relying on other people, not having the kind of freedom of budget or transportation to participate in the kinds of social outings that create friendships, especially with people who don't homeschool and don't understand. And I don't know about you, but I was also a chronic breastfeeder [laughs] is how I'll put it. I never used bottles. So if I had anyone under two, they were with me. It wasn't like I was leaving them home. I mean, I could occasionally but I often had you know a baby with me. So these dynamics really do feel prohibitive when you've got a friend who's got an eleven and a nine year old and you're still dragging along a two year old. I fully get it. And the car situation is real.

Jennifer: And it does feel like that if you only have one or two children, that child can get signed up for four different activities. Whereas we're really picking and choosing.

Julie: Truly, truly. That's right. And there is a culture, I know this from my own experience of friends who have kids in the public schools—which I didn't make these friends until my kids were old, they were already through high school and into college—but what I discovered with friends who are in the public school system is that's where they make their friends. They met each other doing volunteer work in the classrooms when their kids were little so they start hanging out in the classroom bringing cupcakes, cutting up art projects, being a hall-monitor, helping out on fieldtrips. And that's how they made their friendships and then they have this life where their kids are away during the day so they might be at work, they might be at home, but then they do these monthly bunco groups. There's a school culture that supports all those friendships.

Homeschoolers have to work so hard [laughs] and part of what you're expressing is the exhaustion of everything being on you. The education, the parenting, the managing a limited budget, the feeling that if you're going to have friends, you have to make a herculean effort in order for that to happen. The feeling that if you do make it happen, the kids still might not even like each other. Or you might hang out with this mom and you've made all this effort to say let's be friends and then you find out she's just not even your kind of person [laughs]. I mean these are awful limits for a homeschooling parent.

Not only that, I think it's incumbent on us to admit that sometimes we are bored, being home all day. There is a lack of mental stimulation. I've shared before on the podcast that I used to just live for the hour when I made dinner. I could put a book on tape and listen to this book while my kids watched PBS because that was the only way during the day I felt like I was getting some input that helped me have thoughts that were interesting to me. Not just me being interested in the thoughts that were interesting to my children.

So this is very real, you're sharing the raw, bottom. So let's talk for a minute about your particular circumstances before I make some general suggestions for us to explore. What are the demographics of the town you're in? Is it a city, is it a small town? How far away is your nearest neighbor? Can you tell me some of that information?

Jennifer: Sure. It's a city. It's about 100,000 people in Waterloo and we're right next to the city of Kitchener which is about twice that, I guess.

Julie: Okay.

Jennifer: I hope I'm not terribly wrong and someone calls me on that.

Julie: [Laughs] good enough!

Jennifer: We live in a subdivision where we're actually in a semi-detached house so our neighbor is attached to us.

Julie: Okay, great!

Jennifer: We live right near a park which is great for my kids but once again it always feels lonely that we are the only ones at the park but we get out to the park every day. We have a street that is getting a little bit older so there aren't really young kids but some houses are going up for sale now so we might see some families start to move in.

Julie: Yeah it'd be great if you could be strategic and get some homeschooling family to move in there [laughs].

Jennifer: I know.

Julie: That is definitely my favorite solution. I had the benefit of living near my best friend who was a homeschooler for a number of years and that definitely works really well but that is not optimal for everyone and not possible. But this is good news! So you're in a reasonably sized city. You're in a part of the town where homes are closer together. It's not like you're stuck in a rural environment where it's a 20 minute drive every time you have to go into town, is that correct?

Jennifer: Nope, nope that's correct.

Julie: Great. That's fantastic! So one of the things that I discovered—so when I lived in California, I had year round sunshine and I happened to have a homeschooling family living on my street. There was one very lovely sort of six or eight month period where there were five homeschooling families on our street, which is bizarre right?

Jennifer: Wow.

Julie: And they were all little kid families and so that was really lucky. But then they all moved out pretty quickly and we ended up having one or two left and then just one. But interesting like you, we were in condos and so there was sort of the after school crowd that would show up and come home and there were kids to play with, but that wasn't always ideal either. Some of those families, I was not comfortable with. Some of those kids bullied my children. Some of those parents didn't care that that was happening. There were parties at night. So sometimes even in our fantasy of wanting things, we will find out that when we're living them, they're not necessarily what we imagined. So I just throw that out there so that parents listening realize that sometimes what you wish for isn't necessarily what you get.

So there is a sort of rhythm to your life when it's just you. But the way that we can maybe enrich the loneliness, I'm thinking of a three-pronged solution. One of them—one of the solutions is going to be distance. One of them hopefully will be local. And then the third one I'm hoping can be collaborative. And we'll look at each one. So let's start with the intellectual life that you crave and this need for not feeling lonely in the homeschool tasks. Let's start with that one. How active are you online? Have you found any friends through your online connections?

Jennifer: No. I joined your [Homeschool Alliance](#) a couple months ago and while I've listened to the materials that are given and I look over stuff [laughs] I have the problem right now is I sit down to maybe type a message and then someone grabs. Someone is fighting, someone needs to eat and I feel like sometimes I try to type the same message three different times and then I just quit because it got interrupted three different times and I can't gather my thoughts around it. So I have a little bit of trouble finding uninterrupted time to sit down and look at things online or to reply to things online. So I would say that often when I go to online things, I'm more just looking or listening to a podcast or listening to a podcast or something.

Julie: Understood. And that can be a challenge. Would you say you're a more extroverted or introverted person naturally? I know you're craving friends so that's separate from extroversion or introversion. What is your temperament type?

Jennifer: Introverted for sure.

Julie: I had a hunch. One of the things that I have noticed about online relationships is extroverts don't spend as much time crafting, they just broadcast [laughs].

Jennifer: Okay.

Julie: They just spew, they blast. They put things out there just as a placeholder. They risk more because they're not worried about how they'll be perceived, they're more worried about connecting. So they typically online will just throw out ideas, they'll even double back later and say "I didn't mean to say it that way!" there's a little bit more willingness to risk exposure of their flaws. Introverts, who I absolutely adore online, tend to craft their replies. In fact, one of the things I love about the Internet is it's allowed me to get to know introverts deeply because introverts will process, think things over, and when they finally put it all together, it's very thoughtful. It's well-crafted, it's well thought out. They aren't spewing, they aren't overly emotional necessarily. They will share and it will be substantive.

So one of the things I'm thinking we may need to do for you—because online relationships can be so meaty and so meaningful, is find ways to accommodate that need for clarity and space to get some of these thoughts out. So we're going to talk about how to do that in a minute. But I want to ask you this: would it feel satisfying to you if you knew for instance that you had a friend that you could text, or you could use Voxer and leave them voice texts as opposed to having to type something—or if you knew there were two women that you always emailed and were able to just once a day, send a message that says here's what happened today or here's what I read today, how would that feel for you? Do you imagine that would help in any way?

Jennifer: Yes. If they replied. I guess the other thing is that sometimes I sit there feeling like people don't reply as much online. That I'm sitting there waiting on something. Does that make sense?

Julie: It definitely does. So let me just share for you and for anyone listening a little bit of my journey with online relationships because I was homeschooling before the Internet and then as it dawned and then obviously all the way through. And so I have a perspective that I'd like to offer as something to consider. One of the things that I discovered about the online world, the social media world even before it was called that is this: there are two different ways people use the Internet. One is research and information, they go in, they're trying to find out information and so they'll go and they'll participate in a blog or an email list or a discussion board or Instagram now or Voxer or whatever. They're trying to get information to help them solve a problem. So they want to know how to get a stain out of their friend's outfit—their daughter's outfit. And they find out about Oxyclean. They want a really good craft to study geology, they want to know how to do a fieldtrip—and so those do not feel connect-y. What those feel like is sort of a raid of information. You come in, you share your perspective, you ask your question, you move on. And it doesn't always form the bond. What ends up happening in

those contexts is that to stay connected, you have to keep coming up with new problems so that you get to stay in the community, you get to stay membered into the community. And I remember at one point feeling really like you. I was so hungry for meatier conversations and connection and I was so sick of talking about OxyClean and how to help a baby sleep through the night [laughs] and what to do with a terrible two year old. I mean I wanted that information but it didn't feel like it was transcending into relationship. It just felt like we were a clearing house for advice.

So I posted on this one massive homeschool discussion board, is anyone wanting to talk about books they're reading? Movies they're watching? Does anyone want to learn more about how to study art because I do and I have no one to talk to about it and I really don't know how to go about it and I don't want to just get advice. I want to actually find an artist, post their pictures online, and then we all discuss them as adults, whether my kids ever care about art or not. Like this was my craving. I wanted to talk about psychology and history as an adult, not just as a home-educator.

Well, interestingly, on that board, hundreds of people responded. They were saying yes, me too, me too, me too. And so we started our own group and that discussion board—even though we talked about parenting and marriage and occasionally about homeschooling, really became about all the other things. The adult things that we were interested in. Now, it had its flaws. This was early Internet days. We didn't know about trolling, we didn't know about Internet bullying. So we all bullied each other, it was a bloodbath at times, truly. But it also, weirdly, is still today the people I'm the closest to from my whole life. That group of women became this core group that journeyed through my adult life. Even when some stopped homeschooling, even when some changed their belief structures, even lost marriages. There was a sense of knowing each other that was built through this patient online communication.

So, what I would like to offer you to consider is not so much thinking about the Internet as a place to research but possibly forming a bond. And when I first started, I only started with like one or two people. We would email each other, this threesome. And we would pursue—we would read a book and then we would talk about it. In fact, one of the members of my staff, Jeannette, she and I met online and we started an email relationship back in the '90s. And it was one of the most satisfying things of my life because we made this deal. The purpose of this relationship is to help us feel smart, not alone, intellectually stimulated. So maybe, we need to help that happen. And you know, as we're talking I'm thinking that's something we could help happen even in the Alliance. You know?

Jennifer: Yeah that's—an email relationship sounds like it could work for me. Sometimes I would say on the bigger forums of things I feel overwhelmed—

Julie: Totally, totally.

Jennifer: By what's going back and forth. And you're totally right about the introvert thing and having to think it through and sometimes I'll read something and I'll think "Oh I should contribute" but by the time I have my thoughts together to sit down and do it, I think well this has passed, right? This discussion has gone on too long, it doesn't need my voice and so I don't. So a smaller email relationship sounds like a better fit for me.

Julie: Well that's true but I do want to say to you and all the introverts out there: do not be bullied by extrovert speed [laughs] this is a real problem online and I have experienced it enough to know that just because it looks like the extroverts have taken up all the oxygen in the room, the introvert perspective, especially a delayed perspective is often the juiciest. A lot of times what you are devaluing is the thing the conversation needed the most. So I want to issue a charge to you and the other introverts, don't let those extroverts take up the whole space in the room. Don't devalue your voice. Don't say because well the last post was a week ago, I have nothing to say. Speed is an illusion.

The Internet houses conversations for decades is what we're finding out. You can literally reboot a year old conversation on most discussion boards by adding a comment and sometimes that's when it will suddenly be interesting again. So do not—this is Julie now, giving a charge to you and any other introvert listening—please participate. We need your voice. You come from a different perspective, you're more careful, you're more thoughtful. You actually do think before you speak [laughs] I can't always say that I do that. I don't actually know what I'm thinking until I'm typing, so as I'm typing, the thoughts are coming that's why I respond right away because that's how I find my thoughts. But that doesn't always mean that those are the only valuable thoughts, it just means that they were the fastest to the keyboard.

Take your time, feel free—especially in any community I host—you're welcome to pop something back to the top, to add a comment a month later, to say "I've sat with this idea now. I've actually considered it and here's what I have to say." Now, I don't know how many people will respond but I want you to know that that is actually valued in the communities I'm in. So that's just a little side-note. I do think this notion of an email buddy or an email partner. It's awesome. It's a very patient way to work through reading a book, for example. There was a book that was a 500-page sort of history of a certain topic that I was very interested in when I was in the early 2000s, and I found two people willing to read that book with me and we spent a year and half talking about it every day [laughs]. And it was my favorite thing. I'd wake up in the morning and there'd be an email from one of them, right?

Jennifer: Yeah.

Julie: So let's work on finding that for you. As I'm saying these words, are there any people currently in your life that you wish you were closer to that are at email distance?

Jennifer: I don't know. I might have to think about that [laughs].

Julie: Well let's put that down, let's just have a place holder for that. You can brainstorm. We can also talk about it on the Alliance and see if there are any people interested. Perhaps, one of the things you can do is think about what area of interests do I have that would be fun to explore with one other person? And see if there's someone who would be interested in doing that. Now if it's like when I was in a sorority in college and I said I wanted to make friends and then I set up lunch dates and three lunch dates in a row, the girl didn't show, three different girls. You start to feel rejected. The thing that I want to encourage you to consider is this: not everybody has the same needs and sometimes people have a desire that isn't about their needs so they think they want to do it but then a different need takes over and they leave you on the side of the road. So it may take a couple of attempts to find a good match, but let's not give up after one or two tries. Let's see if we can find intellectual partners for you. People who are interested in discussing something other than diapering and home education.

Jennifer: [Laughs] Sounds good.

Julie: The second part of that then is defining for yourself some affinities. What are you curious about, Jennifer? Do you have anything that pops to mind right now?

Jennifer: Right now I'm interested in birds, if that sounds okay.

Julie: Oh yes, no birding is fabulous! Definitely!

Jennifer: I have a birdfeeder out front and we watch the birds at our window. Our table is right by our front window and so we all look at them. And I do talk about it with my kids but I have a bit of an interest in going a bit farther with that and learning about it for me.

Julie: Oh I love that. Now, that definitely could be something that you do locally and this is a perfect transition to that second category, the local. One of the things that when we only had

one car that my husband did for me that was so valuable was on Monday nights when he was home, I took the car and I went to the library for two hours. At that point, I had an interest on working on ym writing career so what I would do is go into this sealed room that was silent—oh my gosh how much did I love that—and I would work on finding places to submit my writing, I would actually work on the writing. There were some times when I literally just slept on the floor. There were other times when I would cry my heart out because there was some painful thing that happened either in our family or with a child or you know whatever it was that was causing me emotion at the time. But I mostly used it work on my writing career and it was this two hour sort of relief that I needed once a week to just not be responsible for children.

Now, at that point I had a friend locally so I wasn't looking for it to satisfy my need for friends but it was a way of escape. And one of the things that I immediately imagine when you said this about birdwatching is: to find a birdwatching community. See if there is a group that you could go birdwatching with. You don't even have to tell them you're a homeschooler. You can just be a birdwatcher. You can go and be a part of a group where you're learning what it means to be a birdwatcher and experience being away from your kids. I know your youngest is almost two?

Jennifer: Yes.

Julie: Does that sound like something that would be appealing to you?

Jennifer: It sounds appealing, I'm not sure if it would happen. I'm still at this phase where you know, it feels like there are so many competing demands on me, right? That it's really hard to take the time. But I think it's worth seeing if I can find such a group anyway.

Julie: Or even if it's not weekly, not monthly, even if you go on one or two experiences a year. For example, there is an Audubon—what they call Christmas Bird Count where the entire North America counts birds on the 26th of December every year. And so one year, I actually did that with my son Liam here in Cincinnati and it was a revelation. I mean I thought I knew how to count birds and then I went with this group and I was like "Oh, okay, that is a whole other level of birding I did not know about." So one of the benefits of even just identifying an interest is staying alert to one-off events because sometimes what you're doing is just holding onto an imagined life-line until you can get there. The anticipation actually helps you get through the months of a drought. So knowing that you have this thing to look forward to. I remember I really got into art so you're into birds, I was into art around the stages that your kids are in. And I decided I wanted to go from Cincinnati to Chicago and visit the Chagall artwork—there's

this beautiful blue-stained glass that they have in the Institute of Art and I knew I wanted to see it. And so I threw up on this group discussion “I’m going to this art museum”—I picked a date—I said “I’m going. Does anyone else want to come?” And one person said yes. Her husband was a pilot and so she knew she could fly to Chicago for free. This was before the Internet had pictures, by the way, so we didn’t know what each other looked like and we didn’t have cell phones yet, they didn’t exist.

So we literally met in a lobby by saying okay I’ll be reading the green book, she’ll be reading the blue book and that’s how we’ll find each other. Like that’s very [laughs] Shop Around the Corner. And we met for that weekend and that was my first experience of being away, without my kids. I missed my daughter’s soccer tournament or soccer game that day. But I knew that was coming and it acted as a life-line for everything else. It gave meaning and purpose to my study of art while I was waiting for it to happen. And it became an act of self-care that later has become a role-model to those same children. My daughter is so about art and self-care, she is not about soccer at all, you know? So that’s what I’m talking about. It doesn’t have to be weekly, but there could be something to look forward to, maybe?

Jennifer: Okay, yeah, that sounds good. That sounds good.

Julie: And within that local sphere, the other thing I was thinking of for you then is collaboration. This is not a problem you can solve alone. Back when I first moved to Ohio, I had the good fortune of joining a co-op for homeschoolers that was already in progress but it was the story of how this co-op developed that really stood out to me. The woman who started is named Barb Drees, good friend of mine. She has four kids. And when they were literally about the ages of your children, maybe even a little bit younger, she said she woke up one morning and said to her husband “there is no way I can do this for ten more years all by myself.” [Laughs] she was already at her wit’s end. And so she threw out a message on the Cincinnati email list for homeschoolers saying “I can’t do this alone. I want to problem solve how to homeschool and have friends not only for my kids but for me.”

So a group of women—it was like ten or fifteen women—came to her house based on this cry and they set up a co-op. A weekly full day where the parents all did the teaching and the kids were all in these little classes. It started small, it grew to about 100 families. But initially, it was just this small group of families, ten, fifteen, twenty, something like that. And they found a place to meet—she had connections at her local church so they used her church—but those kids then were taken care of for one day a week and they were put in these extra-curricular classes. The very first year I think they even did some version of the Wizard of Oz and they put it all together. But here’s what was beautiful about it: every Monday, adult women who homeschool met in the same building *without adding it to the calendar* [laughs]. No food required, no extra driving required, no location to select. It was just every Monday kids and parents are going to

be together, solving the problem of homeschool for a day. I think that model was beautiful. You know, there are a lot of co-ops in the United States now that are very sort of academically rigorous and for me, that sort of misses out of the charm of the co-op experience. Even when my kids were little and we were still in California, we had a co-op with just five families. So we were able to just focus on our people—and we only met once a month. But it gave us this extra-curricular piece that provided joy as opposed to just more work, more burden. What is the homeschool population like in Waterloo?

Jennifer: It's pretty healthy. There are a lot of homeschoolers and there are some co-ops. Last time, I did look into the co-ops in the fall and everything was full already—

Julie: Which may mean there are other families like you who got excluded.

Jennifer: Yes, I get so. But—and a couple times I have put out—like I said, I did start that little art group a few years ago and that was through our online email list here and found a few people but I find now it is—it really is a problem of family size, too, though. I'm running into too many—everyone I run into has one or two children and then it becomes a problem of—I don't know—I'm kind of rambling here, sorry.

Julie: No, you're completely fine. I know that you've tried things so I don't want to exclude the experiences you've had from this conversation at all. One of the things to consider is if you still have that email list or a Facebook group that's for your region, establishing the criteria. So instead of just asking anybody, say "I'm looking to start a group for big families" and allow big families to come into the frame of reference, instead of—you know, "three or more kids" something like that—and "I'm looking to start a group where toddlers are welcome." Like go ahead and really be specific and say "And I'm happy even if it's just one other family. I'm looking for an opportunity to combine children and adults around—" and then make the criteria. I want it to be at least three children, toddlers are welcome. These will be extra-curricular activities, not core subjects and we'll meet once a month or we'll meet twice a month. You know, and I'd like to have a meeting where we brainstorm ideas of where we could host this or what it would look like.

Like in my very first co-op where it was five families, what we did is: we planned what we called a homeschool party every month and we had five families, ten months. So each mother was responsible for two parties in the year and what we did was we had brunch on Saturday mornings [laughs] the mothers. This was what we told our husbands we had to do to plan. So we would have the Saturday morning brunch where we would do the planning and our

discussion and then once a month, a parent would host the party and the fathers would come and so would all the kids. Sometimes they were in evenings, sometimes they were on a Saturday or Sunday. And since it was five families, I was only responsible for two months out of ten but we had ten months of family fun. This is when our kids were literally the ages of your family, actually. Like nine down to zero and I had five kids. So it's possible if you find the right people and you can make it be whatever you want it to be. It doesn't have to be art but it could be. It doesn't have to be homeschool but it could be. It could be a monthly hike. It could be a party. It could simply be that all of you play in a backyard while mothers drink coffee.

Jennifer: [Laughs] that's what I want!

Julie: Right! Right exactly. So if that's actually what you want, then put that in the criteria. "I am looking for a mother to drink coffee at my house who doesn't mind toddlers, who has a lot of kids, who wants to hang out once a month and not have to do anything but chit chat and supervise children who are playing." And start putting your intention in multiple places until you find a match. I think one of the things that's challenging, especially for introverts who are a little perfectionist—am I picking that up maybe?

Jennifer: Yes!

Julie: [Laughs] is the anxiety that you might do it wrong or you might draw the wrong person to you—you have the freedom to experiment. To try something and discard it because it doesn't work. You're not marrying this other person. You're just testing it out. You might even just say that. "I'd like to try it for a couple months and see if it works for me and for you."

Jennifer: Okay. I think that another problem that I often have when I imagine some of these groups and putting it out there is that I want to be inclusive, right? So much of the time I feel kind of like we don't quite fit in or we're not finding our match, so sometimes putting the limits on it feels like I'm not—you know, that I'm going to exclude someone that might want to join but I guess I can see too that it's not so much—maybe there are other people that are feeling left out of these other groups and maybe by putting my specific criteria out there, it actually will include those people more.

Julie: Well here's the thing: you are being exclusive in a way because what you're telling me is, when you're with these families that have the two older kids, you're not feeling comfortable.

Even if they're saying it's fine, it's not making you feel comfortable. So you're not being exclusive as though you are shunning these people or you don't like them or you think they don't deserve the same freedoms and rights that you have. What you're saying is: I have taste in a certain experience. This is what I would like it to be. That's all you're saying. You're saying "I'd like to have a certain experience and I'm hoping somebody who wants a similar experience would join me." You can actually put a disclaimer at the bottom and say, "If you're okay—if you only have one kid and you're okay with my four kids and taking six hours to go anywhere, I welcome you! I just want you to know up front that this is what it's like to hang out with me." You know what I mean? So do it like that.

It doesn't have to be like you're making some kind of an official statement of criteria that everyone has to sign on the dotted line. I don't mean that at all, that can feel very oppressive in the homeschool world. But if you say, "hey I'm looking for someone who's okay with a big family, doesn't mind toddlers taking a long time, who would love to hang out once a month for X experience, please contact me." Well that's very open-ended but it's also specific enough that somebody who doesn't want the experience you're envisioning, they won't sign up.

Jennifer: Right, okay.

Julie: And you know, I think you're at a stage with this youngest son who's just about to turn two that this is a good time for you to try it. You know babies are really hard. Brand new toddlers are really hard. You are at this—the door is just opening to your freedom a little bit so I think by the time the fall comes along, you'll even have more of your feet under you and feel even more able to sort of spearhead something. But just remember: it can be whatever you want it to be. So do not offer to start a 100 person co-op [laughs]. Pick something that is meeting your exact need. And what I'm going to ask you to do—and I think this is a good time to sort of talk about your homework—the thing I want you to do right out of the gate is make a list of your fantasy. Like the bullet list of what your fantasy looks like. What kind of person you hope to be friends with. What kind of family would go with your family. What kind of interests you'd like to share with somebody else. Get very specific and obnoxious because no one is going to read this freewrite. You are not [laughs] rendering a verdict on humanity. You're just saying you know "I prefer Chinese food to Italian." That's what you're doing. You're just making a list of what would make you happy. Just like you picked a father for your children, you didn't say "Well, I don't want to sound exclusive so I'm going to have *all* the fathers." [Laughs] you know?

So feel comfortable making that list and then I want you to think about that list in these three categories. Through social media distance, how we can maybe get that going in a way that just feeds your mind. And then in this local way, where you branch out outside of the homeschool community and you find a place to express the adult that is you, that Awesome Adult. You

know we talk about in Brave Writer Awesome Adulting. Being the person you grew up to be, not only the person who raises children but who else are you? So maybe it's a birding experience once a year or going to a lecture or giving yourself permission to hole up in the library and cry for two hours [laughs] whatever that looks like. And then the third one is to collaborate. Finding a way to share the burden with someone locally who is a homeschooler and taking that risk again, putting yourself out there again and seeing if something could come of it once you're a little more careful with your criteria.

Jennifer: Okay. It sounds good. It sounds like work but I could do it a little bit at a time.

Julie: You don't even have to do all three. You know my motto about doing one thing, right? So these are options that I'm giving you but what I want you to do is just get alone with yourself and freewrite. You know, you have one car so you really need to talk to your husband about this and just say "you know what, I'm going to need my introvert time and I'm going to need it once a week for the next—" pick a number. You know, three weeks, four weeks, five weeks. And then just journal. You know, freewrite a little bit about these ideas. Which ones sound like futile, Julie's bonkers, she doesn't understand my circumstances—because you know, I'm just guessing. I'm throwing a dart at a board and hoping I'm hitting the bulls-eye. You can decide for yourself—and here's the beauty of just having this conversation: your mind won't quit now. It's going to work unconsciously because you've raised the issue and now you get to be alert to the ways that the issue will get solved. It won't just be you. It won't just be you! It can't happen only by your energy. But now at least you'll be aware of some of the things you long for! Some of the things you might want and maybe now there will be some ways you haven't thought of that will come to the surface.

Jennifer: Part of what I'm afraid of, I think, is in seeing that fantasy on paper and feeling like it isn't going to happen. Or putting it out there and it not happening and then feeling even more let down. Or finding a bird meeting and anticipating and then having it fall apart because someone is sick or—I don't know. Sometimes it just feels like I don't even want to have that fantasy or that idea out there because it might not work out.

Julie: What a fabulous statement. I just want to pause and really hold space for what you just said. Here's what I know, 25 years into adulthood that I hope is helpful to you—30 years in, goodness, I need to be honest about my age here [laughs]. Here's what I know: fantasies don't go away by ignoring them. They grow and they become a voracious appetite for your soul and there will be moment where because you did not at least try again, take some version. The appetite grows so big, it can shipwreck the thing you say you value the most and I've seen it

happen. I will give two examples. I know two women personally in my own life who ran off from their families, this is dramatic, but they literally abandoned their children and their spouses. They could not take homeschooling anymore but they didn't just put their kids in school. They literally left their families.

One of the things that we want to pay attention to is our hungers and hunger is valid and we don't satisfy hunger by ignoring it or by hoping that we don't feel pain. Hunger pains mean that there is a need that actually matters and must be addressed. Now your need is so valid and you took this massive risk to publish your need—you! The introvert! You are so brave [laughs]! You are saying to the Universe, to me, to God if you believe in God, whatever—you are putting into the space "I'm lonely." Loneliness needs to be met. It's as real a hunger as your need for food this morning. So guess what? You have to meet that need. And it's going to happen. I have 100% confidence. Will it look like what your fantasy is? It never does. You got married, didn't you? You had kids, didn't you? You imagine this perfect child and then you get the child you get.

Jennifer: [Laughs] yep!

Julie: But it's always better and worse than you could have possibly imagined. And that's true with friendship, that's true with homeschool co-ops, that's true with the birdwatching group. It's always better and worse than you expected. But it's also real and it will feed you. So take a tiny step in the direction of your dream and you will start to feel a little bit of that gnawing loneliness ease. And you know, if there's something deeper going on here, which of course I'm not a therapist and that's not the point of this show, but if there is a hurt or a violation or some injury—an emotional injury—that's come from putting yourself out there and risking and being mistreated or bullied or abandoned, that will come up in your journaling and in your freewriting. And *that* needs the love and kindness of your best self and in some cases even the support of a professional. And if it comes up, welcome it and thank it for coming up because that is the beginning of your freedom.

Jennifer: Thank you, I wrote down a lot of that so that will give me stuff to mull over.

Julie: Awesome. Yeah and let's take this conversation into the Alliance. You are not alone—this is a common homeschool experience. It is natural to homeschooling and everyone has stories to tell. I mean I have stories to tell of getting kicked out of the groups I loved because I suddenly didn't believe the same things they believed. There is pain associated with entering

into relationships. There's sort of an isolation purity about the fantasy when you're by yourself [laughs].

Jennifer: Yes!

Julie: I have shed thousands of tears over some of my online conflicts with people I love. So let's be honest about that. When you invite relationship, you invite it all. You invite the abundant life of every emotion. So we have to ready for that, too [laughs]. I think you're going to be okay. And I really appreciate you sharing so vulnerably that was awesome.

Jennifer: Thank you! Thank you for talking to me.

Julie: Absolutely. Do you have any final questions or comments before we wind up?

Jennifer: No, no, I think I need some time [laughs]. I think I need my time to sit down and think over all of that but I think there are some good ideas there to start with so I'd like to—yeah.

Julie: Wonderful. That's wonderful! Well I have loved speaking with your Jennifer! Thank you for sharing and we will be in touch in the fall if that's okay with you to check in and see if any of these strategies were useful to you.

Jennifer: Okay thank you, sounds good.

Julie: Thanks Jennifer! [Theme music plays]

Julie: While Jennifer puts herself out there to find friends, let's talk again about my book [*The Brave Learner*](#). Thanks for listening every week while I do this. It's fun for me to get to share these quotes with you and hear your reactions. Today's quote comes from a chapter called "The Pixie Dust of Reasonable Expectations":

The problem with homeschooling as your big bold adult adventure is that homeschool success rests on the cooperation of little maturing people. Homeschooling is not like knitting where you decide which patterns to learn and how to execute them according to your own standards and time table. Home education requires participation from children. Your sense of pride and accomplishment is locked up in how well they receive the education you want them to have. And the reason this is an important part of the journey to acknowledge to yourself is that it's okay for you to have knitting or movies or some other aspect of life that draws your enthusiasm. You get to be a grown up. An awesome adult with your own interests and aptitudes because then those are under your control. I know for me, when I took up running it was transformational. It allowed me to accomplish things that nobody else could take credit for. So if you are in that sort of homeschool despair of loneliness and a need for you to have something that you can quantify that doesn't depend on the cooperation of little maturing people, I encourage you to just get out there and find it.

And as we return now to Jennifer Hunter, I think you'll be inspired by the solutions she found for herself. Not perfect ones, but good enough. Helpful, healthy choices that improve her whole attitude and feeling about being home with her kids. So let's get back to it now.

Julie: Well hello Jennifer!

Jennifer: Hi Julie!

Julie: So glad you're able to join us again. How are you doing?

Jennifer: I'm doing well! It's been quite an adventure.

Julie: Oh I love hearing that. You know, it's been several months since we've spoken so I would love to just jump right in and ask you: how has it gone in your quest to create a community and a sense of belonging since we last spoke?

Jennifer: It's been interesting [laughs]. There have been a lot of ups and downs and I've realized that I really had to put a lot of effort into this. It isn't something that just happens.

Julie: What a good observation. So true.

Jennifer: And it's just—you know there has been—where I've tried to start something and it just kind of falls flat and then there have also been some things where I do feel like I've made some progress as well as a lot of things where I've just changed my mindset and things felt better.

Julie: Oh, tell me a little about that? What's an example of that?

Jennifer: Well right after I talked to you, I kind of tried to journal a few times about what I was looking for and kind of clarifying that. And I realized that my vision was almost too perfect. You know, I was trying to find a homeschooling mom with the same number of kids as me, same ages, who lived in my neighborhood, who shared a similar parenting style. And you know, I realized that that is maybe asking too much.

Julie: Yeah.

Jennifer: But what I did see is that I had parts of all of that—or most of that—in different people and in different places. So I started to focus a bit more on that—that I might have a—you know, I met a mom down the street. Her kids go to school and there are only two of them, not four like us, but you know, there's no reason I can't go and have a cup of tea with her once in a while on a weekend and be friends with her, too, right?

Julie: Exactly! Yes.

Jennifer: That's a woman in my neighborhood.

Julie: How convenient?

Jennifer: Right, right! Then there were some of my friends who—I mentioned the friends who were going to homeschool and then it fell apart for them and their kids go to school now, but I really missed them and I missed that. One day—I'll tell a story. One day my one friend, her

children are in school and she was part of that group, and she dropped by with some clothes—some hand-me-down clothes for my daughter in the middle of the day and all of my kids are around and she doesn't have her children and she was so apologetic. "Oh I'm so sorry to interrupt you, I won't stay long. I'll just drop these off." And I was the opposite, right? I was like oh an adult! Yay! I get to see an adult in my day, come in! Have a cup of tea, let's sit! And she was kind of hesitant and didn't want to interrupt our day. And then I just—at one point I got honest with her and I just said "I like seeing you in my day with or without children and we need to do it more and I've been kind of lonely and it's great when you stop by."

Julie: Ah!

Jennifer: So since that, she's started coming by once every couple of weeks and I actually put a video for an hour and just sit with her and I try not to feel guilty about that and just say I need the time, too.

Julie: Oh my gosh. That is so wonderful! How did it feel to share that with her? Were you nervous or did it feel natural?

Jennifer: I definitely feel nervous sharing things like that. We all try to look like we have it all together and like we're always busy and full and it can be really hard to share that but I think it works for both of us, right? We're both missing that.

Julie: Yes! Absolutely. Well that's the thing: I just want to put a yellow highlighter over what you just said because sometimes what's missing is one person taking the risk to reveal a need. You know the other person might even have the identical need but she is so worried about interfering with your day or burdening you or maybe even felt a twinge of lingering guilt that she couldn't live up to the idea of homeschooling and so when we have those kinds of undercurrents, it keeps us separate. We can't close the gap and develop a relationship because we're making up stories about the other person in our own minds. "Oh she doesn't like homeschooling, we might not get along anymore." Or "oh she's good at homeschooling, I failed, we won't get along anymore." And yet, the human to human connection was valuable to both of you and I love—I love love love that you gave her permission to interrupt the middle of your day. I just think that's beautiful! Wonderful. Wonderful.

You know, now interestingly, what you've done is—you've given her permission to visit you and she's even taken you up on it, but now your kids look forward to it [laughs] because they know

that mom is going to want to spend time with this friend and they're going to have a pause, a break, an unexpected video treat. So what you're doing is you're showcasing the value of friendship, the fact that we prioritize it, that you need friends, you're not just getting your needs met from your children. And at the same time, they see that there's flexibility in their day, that mom wants them to have a good day. Do you see how that whole dynamic has so many repercussions beyond just your friendship needs?

Jennifer: I do, yes. It's been really good for all of us. It's funny how much that guilt wants to creep in.

Julie: Yes.

Jennifer: But I do—I do really work on letting go of that and just saying, you know? This is just good all around.

Julie: Oh that's—that's awesome. What about the thoughts you're having about personal interests? Did you come across any in your freewriting or just your natural living that you found yourself wanting to follow up?

Jennifer: Well here's the thing again: I was really interested in starting birding so I found a few events and they all ended up getting cancelled for weather or my children getting sick.

Julie: [Laughs] classic.

Jennifer: I thought like is this the universe telling me that this isn't right for me? But you know what what we ended up doing as a family is in the fall—or in the first week of school, when school goes back for the first week, we always try to take a vacation. And I wanted to go to a national park that's about three hours from here and it's really well known for birding and also in the fall for butterfly migration.

Julie: Nice.

Jennifer: Again, I tried to talk myself out of it. You know that it was too much with four little kids and we should just get somewhere closer and somewhere for them and not try to drag them. And then at one point I said you know what? We're going to do it. We're going to go. So we went there and it was great. You know it's not be by myself all the time. I did sneak away—I did go on one walk by myself while we were there for the week and took my binoculars and tried to take that time but at the same time I realized that sometimes I can engage in my interests *with* my children, you know what I mean?

Julie: Yes! Yes.

Jennifer: Instead of always trying to follow their lead, which I do a lot but—and then when we've come back home, too, I've realized that in my day that it doesn't always have to be about doing what they want to do. And that again, it is good modelling to sometimes say I'm going to read this or look at this or do this for myself and have that interest. So, a little bit.

Julie: Well to me, the fact that you took an entire vacation is huge! I mean that is a massive undertaking. That isn't you just sneaking away for an afternoon. And the fact that you designed the vacation around your interest and brought your family along shows that this is a priority in your life. It's a way of saying, "I trust you to support my interests so much that I expect you to have a good vacation." [Laughs] you know what I mean? I expect you to enjoy this vacation that's really designed for my interests. Think of all the times you do that for your children? You show up at their soccer games, you go to their outings, you follow along when they have a birthday party.

So here you are, making your interest a priority, inviting the family along basically and the expecting them to enjoy it. Now, we don't often think that way. We don't think about putting expectations on the other parts of our family to provide us with support. But that's literally what you did! And here's the cool thing: they had a good time. It's not like they went and they were crying and tortured. They got a window of insight into how you tick. Now they aren't going to articulate it that way. Children don't talk that way. But when they are my age, in their 50s [laughs] they're going to look back and say "Oh yeah, my mom was a bird-lover. We went on this one vacation where that was the goal of the vacation." Do you see what I'm saying? It starts to create the narrative in their minds of who you are and what it means for them to support it, to admire it, and to know you. To not only know you as their mother but to know you as a person. So well done! Well done.

Jennifer: Thank you! Thank you.

Julie: And that was one. Right? So my experience with art history because that was the thing I was the most interested—going to museums. It incorporated them sometimes, it bored them sometimes. We went to Italy and we went to every museum I wanted to see and every cathedral that had artwork in it and poor Caitrin, eight years old, at the end of that trip said “I don’t care if I never see another painting for the rest of my life.”

Jennifer: [Laughs]

Julie: Like it didn’t have this positive effect on her. However, by the time she was in college, she had reclaimed an interest in art. You know, that was just a big dose for an eight year old. And today, as an adult, she would tell you she loves art. She goes to museums on her own. So sometimes even the big deep dive that seems overwhelming for a child is just them reacting to the big deep dive but they will now understand that it’s a part of the family culture and they will see it as part of their identity if it stays in the column of optional and the mother’s interest, rather than you trying to make them interested because you wish you could be. Do you see the subtle difference?

Jennifer: I do, I do. And it’s definitely starting to play out a bit more in our family. We have a four year old and a two year so of course there was a lot of struggle in it. It wasn’t just that they hiked along happily. But I felt really proud that I took the chance to do the bigger vacation for myself instead of just giving into the feeling of “Oh no we can’t do that, let’s just go somewhere close and don’t try anything.”

Julie: Me too. Yeah no I’m proud of you for that. And did you guys see any butterflies? Were they in migration?

Jennifer: We got lucky and we saw monarchs—at the tip of Point Pelee—the southernmost part of Canada and all kinds of butterflies stayed in the trees. It was amazing.

Julie: Wow! That would be spectacular to see. Can you just name for me where you were? What the name of the state park is? Because we are going to get bombarded with emails asking that question [laughs] otherwise.

Jennifer: It's Point Pelee National Park and it's the southernmost point of Canada—well, Canada on land. I guess there are some islands that are more southern but it's the southernmost tip of Canada.

Julie: Wow! Is it on the east or the west?

Jennifer: It's kind of in the middle.

Julie: In the middle.

Jennifer: It's on Lake Erie.

Julie: Lake Erie! Okay great. Wow! That sounds exceptional. I'll bet you anything, someone listening to this podcast is now going to plan a trip there.

Jennifer: [Laughs] I hope so! It's great.

Julie: Sounds wonderful. Well Jennifer, is there anything else that you wanted to share back after these months have gone by?

Jennifer: You know, I just want to reiterate that it has been challenging at times. I tried to start—I put out an idea on our homeschool group. I kind of asked my kids what they were into and they kind of wanted to do more science and building and I had the idea of starting a STEM-like group and I put that out there and we were all excited and you know what, we got nothing back. Not one.

Julie: [Laughs] oh shoot.

Jennifer: So that was discouraging and I want to share that. And that made me feel kind of down and makes me want to retreat a bit. Now, just last week I started another idea I had was an around the world book club and last we had ten kids here and we read a little book, and we

did a little mapping activity and we did a little bit of baking and it was great. So we tried again and I just want to say that that's how it's been these months. We've gone to a certain event and it doesn't click. But then we try again and it might. So it's going well, it's going better but it's hard and it's ongoing. You know, you have to keep working at it is really what I've learned.

Julie: I really value that honesty. I think it's really important for people to remember that when you're making changes, you're reaching out for community, that it is an ongoing, sort of never-ending process. I do remember clearly feeling like I had it solved when I young kids and a next-door neighbor who was right in there with me—and then she moved! And suddenly we had to do it again. You know? And then we moved! We moved to a completely new state and then my kids changed ages so the kids that we used to play with suddenly weren't as interesting to them.

You know, there's the old saying that when your kids are young, you can make friends with the parent and all the kids get along. As your kids get older, now it's your kids who make the friends and they drag the parent along. And when that transition occurs, it's startling. It's like wait! You used to really like Amy! "Well I never really liked her but now I'm 13 and I can tell you." You know? [Laughs] That happens too.

So what you say about this being a journey and a process—so true. And interesting how you put it out to a group about STEM and no one was interested but they could do a book club. It may turn out over time that starting with something less demanding in terms of intellect will lead you to side conversations with the parents at the easier event and saying "Maybe we could meet one week to do a science experiment?" You know like lower the bar. Make it a little less challenging. Maybe focus it on a book that has a little bit of STEM in it like reading a book like *Carry On Mr. Bowditch* or something like that where you sort of sidle up to it. But I love what you said about process and trying again. Kudos to you! It takes guts. Very good.

Jennifer: [Laughs] thank you!

Julie: Well Jennifer we loved having you as a guest. Thank you for sharing your family life and your story with us. Any final questions you have for me?

Jennifer: No I don't think so. I really appreciate the chance to do this, it was really exciting to talk to you.

Julie: Well I loved talking to you and you have a lovely family. And shout-out to all of our Canadian listeners, it's great to have you be a representative of that northern-America Canada neighbor and we will let you know when this airs. Thank you for joining us today!

Jennifer: Thank you! Julie.

Julie: I'm impressed with Jennifer. It takes guts to reach out and say you have a need. To go ahead a big vacation and expect everybody to cooperate with your agenda. Brava to Jennifer. If you were listening along and thought "I like reading *The Brave Learner*", the book I wrote, you can certainly pre-order now if it's before February 5th 2019, when you're listening. Or you can simply order it and have it shipped to you if it's after that date. Simply go to thebravelearner.com that is our website where all the details about the book are available at all times.

In the meantime, I appreciate you listening, sharing this podcast with friends. Don't forget to leave us a review on iTunes if you haven't already. Thank you to our production team, Podcast Masters, including Ben, Hayden and Cody for their hard work on our behalf. Thanks to Beth, Amy, and Jeannette, the Brave Writer staff that make it possible for this podcast to be shared with all of you. I'd like to thank all of our guests who have opened their hearts and homes to us. And finally, thanks to you for listening. I know it takes some courage to make changes in what you do at home and you have to know, you have my total admiration. I'm rooting for you every day. So go into this next week loving and learning, I'm Julie Bogart from Brave Writer.

How do we help our kids experience the same level of passion/excitement for school subjects that they bring naturally to their personal interests?

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