

013_Episode 13_Interview with Melanie McNally FINAL

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Welcome to Just breed, the podcast focused on transforming the LGBTQ plus conversation and supporting you on your journey with your LGBTQ left Why you are not



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welcome to just breathe parenting your LGBTQ teen. My name is Heather Hester and I am excited to be with you to transform the conversation around loving and raising an LGBTQ child. Wherever you are on this journey, right now, in this moment in time, you are not alone, you are really going to enjoy today's guest. Melanie McNally is a clinical psychologist who works with teens and young adults to help them decrease anxiety. In addition to being super easy to talk to, she has a very cool approach. She utilizes traditional face to face therapy as well as her online platform destination new, which is a really ingenious way to connect with our tech savvy teens. So without further ado, here is today's interview. So I'm very excited to have Melanie with us today. And we have just so many things that I would like to share with everybody about Melanie, but I'm going to kind of let her tell us who she is and how she got to be where she is today because she has a really fun and interesting story that I think a lot of you will connect with and will resonate with you and will pique some interest. So Melanie, would you like to share with us just how you got into this really cool profession and what you're doing?



02:03

Sure. Well, thank you so much for having me, I'm so happy to be here. So I'm a clinical psychologist. And the way I kind of ended up here. So I have a private practice in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. But I also have an online practice for teens and young adults giving them some additional support. And the way that I ended up here is, you know, I grew up in a pretty dysfunctional home. And on top of that, I struggled with pretty bad anxiety throughout my childhood. So I worried about everything, you know, swim meets, softball games, my parents constant fighting, you know, finances, like you name it, I worried about it. And I had a lot of stomach aches, and you know, stomach problems, I felt like irritable and grumpy a lot of the time. And on top of that I was in a family where I was taught, you hold everything inside, you don't share what's going on with anybody. So needless to say, I was kind of a walking ball of stress and anxiety all the time. Well, I went off to college, and I learned about psychology. And at the time, I really wanted to be a high school guidance counselor. But I felt like I needed to get some life experience. First, I didn't want to just go straight through undergrad and grad and you know, and then start working with kids because I thought, how am I going to help them if I've weirdly lived. So off I went to San Francisco, where I gathered enough life experiences to probably fill a few lifetimes met a lot of really amazing people from all different walks of life. And ended up really working on myself I went to therapy, I worked on managing my anxiety, I worked on you know, setting some pretty healthy boundaries within a, you know, toxic family system. And then I decided I was ready to go back to school and went to graduate school first to get my master's in counseling, and then to get my doctorate in clinical psychology. So that's kind of Yeah, my pathway through. And now it's, you know, I specialize in working with teens and young adults. And it's so exciting for me, because I get to help them become the superheroes of their life stories. I get to give them the resources that I wish I would have had when I was younger, I get to be the support for them that I so desperately needed. And it's so cool to watch a client, you know, change their negative self talk, or to develop coping tools. And just to watch them accept themselves like flaws and all to see them kind of step into who they are. And to get to be a part of that journey. And it was a really, really cool thing.



04:54

I love that. That is so cool. That is so so cool. And you've written up up to about



05:00

this. Yeah, so I wrote a novel, it's called counting dragon flies. And it's not necessarily autobio at all biographical, it's just more of there's some, you know, childhood experiences in there, but it's more of a novel. And it's about a girl who's in seventh grade who is in a

really dysfunctional family. And she decides to run away from home to find her eccentric and artsy aunt who lives in the Montana wilderness. And so along the way, she ends up learning about love and friendships and family. But most of all, she discovers her own resilience. And so what I did in the novel is I wanted to incorporate a lot of like therapeutic coping tools that I teen, but I wanted to do it through the story, because I felt like, especially with teens and tweens, they might be more receptive to these tools, when they're not necessarily just coming out the mouth of somebody is that like a story format. So I am also in the process of creating a workbook that will go along with it. And the workbook, actually, is probably going to be ready any day now. And so then there's like, it has all the therapeutic exercises that she kind of learns throughout the way in the story. So there's a workbook that they can use to go along with the book, too.



06:24

Oh, that's so cool. I love that. That is very, very cool. I think I know, at least one of my daughter's if not both would love that. That's just and I think you're right, that is a really good way to communicate coping tools. I think all teens these days, and tweens, adolescents can use coping tools of some sort to some degree, right?



06:49

Absolutely. And you know, that one of the things because originally I you know, I've had my private practice in Buffalo Grove for almost five years now. And my online business is kind of a shoot off of that. And but the reason why I created it is because I, you know, I was seeing clients face to face, I had a particular client who we've been working together for, I don't know, close to a year, we weren't really getting anywhere at all. And she was always just really guarded, really angry, we weren't able to really connect. And after one particularly awful session, where she just went off on me about how much she hated me and her parents and her life and was never coming back to therapy. Again, she ended up finding me on Instagram. And she damned me, and ended up sharing more about her life in one single deal than she had in all of these previous months of therapy. And I realized that having a screen between us gave her some safety, it made her feel a little less vulnerable. And it made her feel more comfortable sharing. So I started to think of ways that I could connect with teens and young adults in a way that is more, you know, a little more comfortable for them. Or that vulnerability. And you know, but still, I'm able to give them some guidance and some support. So I decided to create the online aspect to my practice of you know, teletherapy and some online programs and private communities and things like that.



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Oh, I love that. That is so cool. How long have you been doing that then?



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So I just went live with it in January. So I spent probably the last four or five months of 2019 kind of, you know, getting everything set up with like our site and how it was going to look and you know, putting, making sure like my liability insurance and all that stuff, you know, our call things, getting everything set up, and so that I would be ready to go January 1. And so I started right now I run a few different virtual groups for teens and young adults. And then I have my teletherapy clients which are the individualized you know, therapy sessions over video. And then starting in the summer, I have these online programs that will run where they're eight weeks in length and where they get a video sent to them each week on a particular topic. And then homework assignments and then I stay in touch with them through like daily texts and private online communities.



09:37

That is very cool. I think that you've probably hit onto something very, very big. I know Connor when we were looking when he moved to New York and we were it's tough to find a therapist and and now New York City, FYI everyone who's trying to do that. We've it's been quite the journey and one of the things that we were really looking for as well. is a psychiatrist to, to prescribe. And I'm also there to even more difficult than finding a therapist and we found somebody who does tele therapy specifically, you know, psychiatry, tele therapy, which I had never heard of before. And that's, it's fantastic. And it's so great for this age group. Because they are so much that's just kind of how their brains work. You know, even with him, you know, we kind of set him free to, to figure out how to find a therapist on his own. And everything was Well, I I texted them. That that's it. I did. Did you call them? No, I didn't call them. I texted him though. Okay. Yeah. So it's just, it's how it's what they know. Right? And different from us. Yeah, it's totally different from us. And even sending you know, an email, like, all of these things are things we have to coach and right. Okay, well, let's try this next, then perhaps try this next. And then yes, you actually do have to follow up. That's also fun. And so I can't wait to hear you know, a year from now we'll have to touch base, because I think this is just gonna be people, kids are gonna love this. And your parents will love it too. Because they, it's lots of great things about it. So



11:27

well done. Very nice.



11:32

So kind of moving on a little bit. As since I brought up Connor, I know that we kind of talked about this a little bit before I press record. And when you had reached out to me that you had listened to the episode with Connor. And we had talked about kind of building on your his his episode for everyone out there who may or may not remember, was his advice on what parents you know, should or should not ask or talk about. And so I know that you had some some additional thoughts that you'd like to share as well, which I can't wait to hear.



12:10

Yeah, I loved that episode so much. That's Yeah, what inspired me to reach out to you because it was, it was so great. And powder was so great to share that with parents, because I think so often, you know, parents don't necessarily get to hear the perspective of a teen or young adult about that. And so it's always helpful, even if it's not their own, just to hear from another teen or young adult, because some of that is definitely going to transfer over. But yeah, the one thing that he said, I know you guys talked about this a little bit, but the one question I'll hear from teens, a lot that their parents will say to them is, Are you sure? And that I would say is the number one thing you don't want to say. And you know, what parents a lot of times is, you know, think of your child who has, you know, who has crushes or develops relationships with a child of the opposite gender? You know, what would you say to that child? And so if you wouldn't say to that child, are you sure? Or is this a phase, then you wouldn't say it to your child who has a crush on the same sex the same gender, you know? And so and that's what happens a lot of times with parents are saying, Are you sure? Or is this, please. And the and those can be damaging if there's not damage control immediately afterwards, you know, and some parents do a really good job of going back later and saying something like, you know, I'm sorry, I said that or, you know, and talking it through a little bit, and that's great. But not all parents will do that kind of damage control. And instead, they will kind of continue that, that mode of thinking. And so that's not helpful. You know, another thing that parents sometimes will do is they'll say something like, you know, you probably won't feel this way in a few months. Or they might accuse like a friend as being a bad influence on their child. And those aren't helpful things. No, yeah. And then another way to do that I hear a lot of is when parents will say something like, Okay, I'm fine with it. But you know, let's not tell these certain

people in our family or these certain neighbors, they don't need to know about this, or you know how your grandfather is, he's really old, he wouldn't be able to handle this. And when parents infer this naive and infer when they stay at this level of secrecy, it's telling that teen or young adult that there's something inherently wrong with this. And that this is something that should be kept a secret? And is that really the message, we want to teach teens and young adults that these are secrets that you have to hide? Because that leads to shame. And shame leads to all kinds of other issues like whether it's substance abuse or anxiety or depression. So those are kind of like the biggest things I think of when I think of like, what not to say,



15:29

That's so good. I mean, every single one of those is so, so good. And I think that, you know, our experience specifically, obviously, you all know that we did ask, Are you sure, which thankfully, you know, we are able to laugh about now, because we did go back pretty quickly and apologize for that. And, and also part of it was really learning, you know, as quickly as we could, but kind of being able to wrap our heads around it and realize, of course, he's sure this is something he's been thinking about for three years, three plus years. And it took so much courage for him to tell us, he's not going to tell us something that he's kind of like, maybe, I think he's sure, they're sure. So yeah, that's for both of us. And to your point, to me, that's a totally different way of looking at it as well. They are sure, they are absolutely sure. And I think for parents as well, whether you're surprised when your child comes out to you, or not, either way, what no matter how it comes to you, it's easy to get wrapped up in your experience of of it, and then make it about yourself and forget that this is so huge for your child. And so to not be aware of what you're saying, even if it's something you're kind of processing through yourself, it's really kind of learning to set those boundaries for yourself of what to say to your child what to express to your child, as you're processing through. For instance, initially, we didn't tell anybody, and part of that was very much Connor LED, you know, who do you want to tell? Who are you comfortable coming out to, and we allowed him to lead it. However, I was very, we are not telling my family. And it was that was on me. That was I couldn't handle it. I it was all it was nothing about Connor. But my message to Connor was right, we're embarrassed. Well, that that's not that was not what we were thinking at all. It was totally me being wrapped up in me and my experience, and how do I handle my family, right. But his the way he felt it the way he took it was, oh, crap, like, my mom's embarrassed. And so there's something to be ashamed of, like you said, that brings up even more shame, they're already experiencing shame. They're already experiencing these plethora of feelings surrounding this. These are mistakes that we we made and that we've worked through. And you know, again, communication and just communication, communication, communication, talking through these things, owning up when you make a mistake, and owning those mistakes,

apologizing sincerely goes a very, very long way. You know, for everybody who's kind of at the beginning of this journey here. My one of my biggest pieces of advice to along these lines would be be very aware of where your child is right now, this is not about you, this is about them. As much as you can be in tune with their feelings and their thoughts and their vulnerabilities. That would be my best advice.



19:05

Yes. And I think just yeah, you hit on two major, major important pieces there, the self awareness on the part of the parent, and then taking ownership for mistakes. So that self awareness of recognizing what like the parents own internal experiences, and keeping that separate from the teen, because that is the completely or the other young adult, because that's a completely separate experience. And we don't want to project that onto them. And we don't want to make that internal experience become their, you know, their experience, right. And so having that self awareness is huge. And then also, like you said, taking accountability. So if you do mess up because you are going to mess up like we're human. It's part of being human. We make mistakes all the time. But when we do make those mistakes, owning up to them and Coming in, there's nothing wrong with going back to your kid and saying, you know what, when I said that to you, when I said, Are you sure? Or when I asked you if it was just a phase, that that wasn't okay, you know, and this is where I was coming from. But the bottom line is, I'm sorry, that was that I understand if you're really upset with me, and I just want you to know that that was a really big mistake on my part.



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That's huge. I mean, that I don't think we realize as parents like, how much that means to our kids.



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Yes. And also how much they're paying attention. You know, they are kids and teens, like they are paying attention to everything that parents are doing and saying, even if they're acting like they're not, even if they're acting like they don't care her, or they think like their parents are dorks or annoying, or whatever, they are paying attention. And sometimes, when parents get, like, really critical, I always remind parents, like when your kid grows up, do you want their inner critic to be in your voice? Because if you keep criticizing them like that, that inner critic, as they, when they're adults, that inner critic, they're going to hear it in your voice. Yeah. And so just to, you know, be mindful of these things,



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that is such a great thing to say, because that is so true. Very, very true. They have been able to catch it now. Right, where they can become aware of it. You know, when you're aware, and you're paying attention, and you're in that present moment trying to be present, then you can stop yourself from doing it. Right and shift that behavior. Is there anything else you would like to share about just this, this wonderful coming out process or advice that you can give to, you know, my audience? Because, obviously, you know, it is it is wide, this process is wide ranging. And people are in all different places of the process. So, I'd love to hear anything else you have to say,



22:05

Yeah, well, you know, in talking like what parents shouldn't say, I just want to touch on what helpful things they can say. And so if, you know, if your child hasn't yet come out for you, you know, some things that you can be prepared to respond with. And so things like, you know, thank you for sharing that with me. Thank you for telling me, thank you for trusting me. Those thank yous can just be enough. And if a parent does want to elaborate, if they do want to add more, they can add more things like, you know, thank you for trusting this with me. Do you want help telling anyone else who's important in your life? Or thank you for trusting me or thank you for sharing this part of your life with me? Do you want to talk about it further? Or, you know, thank you for sharing this with me. I'm not going to bother you with a bunch of questions. But I want you to know, I'm always here to talk. And this leaving it a little more like open, but also kind of like what you said with Connor like letting him lead the way. Like, let your team guide you with what's appropriate and what's not. Some I've had some teams who will tell their parents, they'll say, I don't want grandma and grandpa to know. And if that's coming from the team, that's totally okay. It should not be coming from the parent, because that's where like the shame and all of that comes in. But they have every right to decide who they want to tell and who they don't want to tell. Right? Want like people at school to know or they may not want extended family members to know or maybe you know, grandpa's a huge like racist, homophobic jerk, and they don't want him to know, like they have every right to just to make that decision and it's parent's job to support them in that.



24:01

Yep, absolutely, absolutely. To You know, support them respect that, not question it. And know that it it, it may change down the road and it may not. But this is part of their process. And their process is different than our process.



24:19

You know.



24:21

And and then being okay, is is the priority. So, I love that I love the just the idea of thanking them and just being so grateful because that is such a big thing. I think especially as you know, we move into the as our kids become adolescence. It's such a different stage adolescence and you do become so grateful when they do come to you and share things with you. And so letting them know that you are so grateful for that and kind of verbalizing that back to them. So they it's very much of just positive like yeah, thank Thank you, I'm not going to pepper you with 3000 questions about this, but I'm here. And I think that is such a lovely thing for people to, you know, you don't have to ask a lot of questions, you don't have to be all geared up and ready to go. It's literally Thank you.



25:17

Yeah. And, and meeting them where they're at, because if they're making that, you know, it's like, they're, they're dipping their toe in the water a little bit. And when they share that bit with you, they're seeing how you respond. And if you respond in a negative way, they're not going to want to come back and share anything else with you. But you respond in a way that's very supportive and kind of open ended, you know, was going something like I'm here, if you want to talk, they are much more likely to share things with you not just about this, but about other parts of their life to assure, yeah, and it's like, if you want your team you want your young adult to share with you want to know about their friends who are vaping, and their friends who are starting to have sex, like, you know, you want to know these sayings, because that means they trust you. And they're looking for you for some guidance and support, as opposed to just holding it all inside and not telling you because they feel like you're going to respond in a way that's really judgmental or critical, and just slam that door shot.



26:25

Correct. And I think that's a huge piece, right there is the responding in a way that's judgmental and critical. As parents, we have to be so careful about that. It is we want our children to talk to us, we want them to be open and honest with us. And when they tell us things that maybe shocking, maybe, you know, you need to take some time to process it.

You don't show that to them. That stays locked down. And you have to if you need to stand in front of your bathroom mirror and practice your lockdown face and you're like, that's cool, I've got this, it's all good, then do it because it's worth it. Because your kids are going to tell you a lot of stuff. And then you take it and you process it with your therapist, or your spouse, or your partner, or your best friend or whomever it is not your kid and just support them and just you know, whatever they tell you. That's okay. Great. Got it. This is awesome. I'm here, do you? And then what the other thing I've learned too is? Do you want to hear what I think about this? Or do you want me to just listen, I'm still practicing that one. Sometimes I get carried away. And about halfway through. I'm like, wait, you don't really want to hear what you don't you don't want to know what I think about. I'm shutting it down. I'm just listening, but a lot better. So this is all you know, everybody, this is all just a work in progress. But things that we've learned. And that's such great, great advice from you. And just reminders. Thank you. Oh, my goodness, you guys are so lucky. You're so lucky to have Melanie with us today. And I I feel like you know, some days you need to hear somebody else a professional who's been through this tell you that you're doing an okay job. So, whoa goldstar for all of us.



28:21

There's like anyone who's listening to this podcast is obviously wanting to help their child, they're obviously wanting to provide support, they're trying to educate themselves. And that right there is probably 80% of it, you know, wanting that you can because that shows that you're you're open to receiving it as opposed to the parent who's just like, Nope, I know everything or Nope, this is the way it is in my house. And you can look it or you can get out, right,



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that unwillingness to shift or be open to accepting another perspective. Or, you know, I've been saying this so much over the past six to eight months that my life there's so much more beauty in my life and so much more love in my life that I've been able to because I've been able to shift and, and open my mind so much. And I'm like, gosh, I'm so sad for you know, there's there are people in my life who I know who haven't been able to do this and that makes me sad for them because they are missing out. And so I know this is hard work but it's so worth it and every little tiny bit that you are just even curious, like give yourself credit for being curious. Give yourself you know, a pat on the back for wanting to learn and and figure it out and understand this is it. This is huge. And you know, we're older, so it takes us longer. That's okay. Oh my goodness. So okay, I know we could we could talk, I think all day. So I'm going to keep moving otherwise, we're going to be talking

all day. So one of the things that I loved and actually in your when we were emailing back and forth, you talked about building good mental health habits, and helping the kids in your practice. And just that is one of your goals. Can you talk about that? Because I think that is absolutely so critical for our, you know, all of our adolescents, and even us as adults. And how do we do this, because there's just so much coming at us all the time, that we could all use a little bit of this, right.



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Yeah. And so thinking of like good mental health habits as very similar to physical health habits, you know, so many people are good about flossing their teeth, they're good about exercising, they're good about doing these certain things, taking a multivitamin. But then when it comes to their mental health, they might not do things on a consistent basis to help them feel better. So there is like some crossover, when it comes to physical health and mental health habits, there is a little bit of an overlap. So with exercise, for example, research has shown in this research now has been around for so long, it's old news. But it shows that when people exercise, you know, 45 to 60 minutes a session. And when you do that about four times a week, it has really positive effects, even on clinical depression. So in what we know about it, it's creating neural plasticity within our brains, it's helping with like mood, it helps us with just overall well being. So it's not just good for our physical health, it's good for our mental health as well. So that's like one of the the kind of the crossovers another crossover between physical and mental health habits would be getting enough sleep every night, you know, making sure you know what your limits are, if you know, and everyone's different. Some people, you know, do really well on five hours a night, other people, if they don't get their nine, they're a mess the next day. So you know, like knowing what works for you. And then making sure that you're incorporating that as much as you can, because that's a really good mental health habit. But then just other mental health habits are things like meditation and mindfulness, we know that those are really good for daily well being those are really good for psychological health, we know that expressing gratitude is really good for us. So in that can just be as simple as taking a moment before you eat, to look at the food on your plate. And just to take a moment to appreciate all the colors and the smells, and to appreciate like the farmers who grew it and you know, the whole process of going through like the grocery store and everything and, and just really genuinely feeling that gratitude for it. That's really good for our overall mental health. And then also, journaling is really good. So taking about 10 minutes a day, to write out our thoughts from the day, some people will use it as just kind of like a, you know, like a brain vomit, you know, you just get it all out. And then you you close it and you don't reread it or look back on it. Whereas other people will use it in a more structured way. Some people will do, like a lot of people now are doing future self journaling. It's become very popular lately. But it's actually been around for quite a long time where you

imagine your future self and you take 10 minutes to just write about yourself in the future. It could be five months from now, five years from now. But you write about every aspect of yourself, like your physical health, where you're going to live. Who lives with you? What kind of job will you have? Will you be in school? And you can change it from day to day. So like one day, it could be five months from now, one day you could write about five years from now. But what love that? Yeah, and what research has shown is when people do that future self journaling, it increases feelings of optimism, and it also helps a lot with goal setting. So yeah, so that's like a really great exercise to and then another thing that we know that's really good for mental health is volunteer work. That helps a lot when we focus on helping other people or other causes because it gets us outside of ourselves a little bit and it helps us to feel connected to the bigger picture. I know when the Australian bushfire were going on and I remember waking up on Sunday morning I've been on Instagram and it was just like, awful. And, you know, I found myself just actually crying because seeing all of the animals trying to escape and people, you know, stuck and not knowing where to go. And I was like, Oh, my, I have to do something, I can't just have this feeling because what good is this going to do for me or anyone else? So I immediately worked on like, Where can I donate? You know, and so just made a donation, and then I shared it on Instagram, and where you can donate because I felt like, Okay, you know what that's small, but at least it's something that's better than just sitting here and crying, right, we'll do something for other people, or whether it's on a regular basis, or just in those times of need, that can, that's a really good mental health habit, too. But overall, with all of these habits, you know, like I mentioned in the beginning with our physical health habits, where people will make a point of flossing their teeth every day, that maybe they're not making a point of journaling every day. So one thing that can be really helpful for us is to have kind of, they'll call them anchors. So you go throughout the day, so maybe in the morning, right after you brush your teeth, that's when you take a moment to express gratitude, you know, and then maybe at lunchtime, that's when you practice mindfulness. And then maybe at dinner time, that's when you after dinner, you journal for five minutes, and then before bed, you can attach something else. So by having these anchors throughout the day, you're creating these habits, and you're attaching them to something that you already do. So it makes it more likely that you're going to stick with it and do it on a consistent basis.



36:48

I love that that's such a great idea. I have read about that recently. And I'm like that is it's brilliant. Because you're like you said, it's these are all things that we do every single day. And it is a great way to build new positive habits, things that you really want to implement in your life. Because it's, it's hard. And it's not that anybody does it want to do things, it's just remembering. So when you do anchor them to these, these things that we do every

single day, it's so helpful, it's so helpful. And and I think to once you start seeing the positive results from them, then, you know, it grows from there, you can attach something to that, right. I know, for me, I started a gratitude practice, spent about two and a half years now is right before Connor went away to California. And you know, at the time, it was other so much just everything was so overwhelming. And a girlfriend had shared a book with me. And I was like, This is such a good idea. And it was it was kind of a gratitude, practice journaling, meditation, you know, everything put into one. But it was such a great way to get me to sit and settle and ground and really focus on what was good, because there were so many things that were just either unknown or scary, or lots of different emotions. And that has been now it's just a part of my daily life. And I feel what I'm when I miss it, I'm like, it feels like something is missing. So it's a, it's a lovely thing to add in. And you will be happy that you did. And especially I think things like the gratitude, practice, and meditating. And all of these things are wonderful. But depending on you know, kind of where you are mentally. These are things that are great for kind of getting you grounded, and, and focused and calmed.



39:02

And these are great for, you know, parents to kind of, like we were talking about earlier where parents have that self awareness. A lot of that self awareness comes from having really good mental health habits, you know, and where we are working on our own mental health. And then we're able to respond in a way that's a little bit healthier. When teens and young adults do something that's, you know, questionable. We're able to, you know, maybe pause or reacting, and we can take a moment to do that. And when we have really good mental health habits, we're in much better mental space to deal with any challenge that comes our way as opposed to somebody who's just completely fried. You know, they're drained, they're stressed all the time. They have nothing left to give. And so when there's a challenge in front of them, they're way more Likely to blow up and respond in a way that is completely inappropriate for the situation, you know, even thinking of people with like road rage, and, you know, it's right when appropriate, and so not a big deal to have someone cut you off, but the way people will respond, it's like, they're probably on, you know, they're, like, their internal tank is empty. They've got nothing, you know, right.



40:24

Exactly. That's such a great example. But it's so funny. It's very true. And it's perhaps a good barometer for, you know where you are, because everybody has those days, right. So if you find yourself, you know, flipping out over something that you wouldn't normally flip

out over, you can say, Okay, I need, I need a moment, I need time. Because being able to pause in a situation is perhaps one of the greatest gifts, ever, and you will be so grateful, when you are able to eat, if you've never been able to do that before, and you do it for the first time, you'll still be giving yourself high fives for sure. Because it just changes the whole dynamic, right? It is quite, quite extraordinary. And thinking to as you were talking about the future self journaling, I love that idea. I've I've never actually thought about it in that way for a very long time there I would do. And it was strictly visualization. I didn't write about it, or didn't often write about it. But visualizing Connor, it a month from now, five months from now a year from now. And like really, it was more like sending all this good energy out to the universe, right? And visualizing. So I could get myself grounded. And I didn't live in a constant state of fear and uncertainty. I love being able to do that, you know, the thought the idea of doing that for yourself. But I think it would work doing that for any loved one, right?



42:01

Absolutely. Yeah. And when you know, future self journaling, you can include, yeah, I can include your family, you know, how you want your life to look with your family and how you want things to be for them. I would just caution, putting too much emphasis on other people, because we don't want it to turn into we don't want to project our dreams onto someone else, you know?



42:25

Correct. Correct. And, and I will go back and say because I just it's funny that you said that when I would have visualized Connor and those practices and in those times, it was my visually, my visualization was specific to he is healthy. He is fulfilled. He is living a life that is fulfilled. So it wasn't specifics like he is living in New York with this job. Right. It was very, it was General, but it was like a you know, I see him healthy. I see him fulfilled. I see him calm. I see, you know, these are the type of things so perhaps, is that kind of what you're thinking? Absolutely. Yeah.



43:05

So yeah, keeping it more general. So yeah, you're not tying like a specific goal of Yeah, vision him is like a, you know, dream for him. You're both gonna be really disappointed. Yes, exactly.



43:20

Exactly. Yes. Thank you. That was a good, that was a good catch there. Oh, my goodness, oh, this is good. Because this kind of goes right into what my next question, what are a few things that we can do as parents to help our kids become their authentic self? Look that we just totally went into that.



43:41

I know, that was perfect. So one thing is to live a few things. So the first one is to keep in mind that it's really normal for teens and young adults to like, quote, try on different identities and ideas. It's that's part of adolescence, that's part of being a young adult, you know, our brains aren't fully developed until between the ages of 22 and 25. And even after that, we're still developing our full identity and our personality. So with teens and young adults, especially we want to think that, you know, it's okay for them to try on identities, and then to decide what fits and what doesn't. So, for example, a teen might decide one week that they're a vegan, and they, you know, throw a huge fit, because they're making that you know, they don't want to go to Thanksgiving dinner at their grandmother's house because she's serving the turkey and they finally convinced her to buy a tofurkey and make the mashed potato mashed potatoes vegan and all that stuff. And then the next week, you know, you see a post on Instagram and they're eating like a cheeseburger and instead of you know, calling them out on it, just little Get his like, that's something they tried on, and it didn't work for them. And there's that's not something that needs to be thrown back in their face. Or you don't follow through with anything. You know, because look at you wanted to be a vegan and now this week you're eating the cheeseburger. And parents will do that sometimes they'll throw these things back in their kids faces. Instead of understanding that that's perfectly normal. That's a part of adolescence. That's a part of young adulthood.



45:31

Right? I love that I've that that is so huge and so important and so many ways, because you're right. And I've seen that, you know, I've seen that in my kids friends, but you know, I've seen that in my kids and my, my older three, my my 12 year old isn't quite there yet. But you know, Gracie, who's 14 has tried, Alicia's She is my famous Trier. She tries everything. And we just kind of, you know, alright, let's try that next. She's really stuck with acting for a whole year and I maybe, but maybe not, we don't know, she's 14. That's what she loves right now. So that's great. And, you know, Connor, he has been it has been this awesome, like journey of Bergen to try different hair colors, and we're gonna try piercings

and we're gonna. Alright, you know, let's different clothing styles different? I mean, there's so many different things, these kids try different music, different ways of talking.



46:31

Yeah. Right. Yeah, political opinions, you know, like, normal for kids, you know, to like one, you know, particular political idea or theory, and then maybe a few months, so you completely change to something else. Yeah, that's all part of development.



46:49

Right? Right. That is that that's another really, really big one that this is how they learn, right. And this is, like you said, this is how they learn. Like they try that on and, and see what feels good. Let's see what fits, see what resonates with them. That feels authentic. And they take take each of these pieces. And when they do feel authentic, it sticks. And then they kind of move on to the next thing. And it's so it's like a little puzzle coming together, which could be frustrating if you are wanting a complete picture. But if you're aware of what's going on, you can just let the process unfold and enjoy it. And you know, you can google with your friends who also have teenagers and young adults, and, you know, with your spouse or partner, Mom, whomever and just say, this is so much fun. How great is this? And I don't think our parents enjoyed this the way we're getting to enjoy this. And that makes me sad for them because it's highly entertaining. It's really frustrating to but it's highly entertaining. Yes, so that's that, I love that. That's really good. Thank you, thank you very much anything that, you know, that we can do other than just kind of letting them have their process and just supporting them through that anything else that we could we can that you can think of that we can do?



48:11

Absolutely. So another one is to understand that, you know, it's normal for friendships and friend groups to shift and change. You know, some parents will kind of get really hung up on the idea that friend groups change and that friendships change. You know, before I went back to get my graduate degree, I thought I wanted to be a high school counselor, I shadowed one in school. It took me one day to decide that that was not for me. And the reason was, it was nonstop drama. It was just all about friendships, ending friendships, reuniting it was it didn't matter if it was boys or girls, it was just all it was just drama all day long. mindedness coming to the office with just drama about gossip or these relationships with us. But that the thing is, that's normal. That's okay. And it's really great for parents to just kind of understood, let that kind of happen into what you were saying earlier to when

you mentioned, you know, asking them, Do you want my advice? You know, to do that same thing when they bring up friendship problems, you know, do you want me just to listen? Or are you looking for some advice here? And you know, if they want you just to listen, then that's it. That's all you do. But if they do want some advice, then to offer it in a way that's, you know, a little maybe taking it back a couple of levels and what you might want to say, you know, maybe you want to say a particular friend is like awful and is no good and creating all this extra drama in your life that you don't need. You might want to dial that back a little bit, right because they're just not going to want to share with you about any future problems. And yes, they're just Yeah, they're going to be less likely to share in the future. But another thing too, too, you know, for monitors or for parents to monitor their child's like social media, but to do it in a way where they don't get involved. So for example, to follow them, but to not tell them what they can and cannot post. You want to set rules and limits. So for example, it's really good for parents to say, okay, you're not allowed to post nudes, you know, you're not allowed to bully, you're not allowed to post pictures of other people without their permission. Or if someone tells you, they want you to take a picture of them down, you have to respect that. Absolutely. Like those ground rules going in. But then once they're doing it, let them kind of find themselves a little bit on social media, and try and do it in a way where you're not telling them what, you know, you're not taking full control of their account. Because as somebody who has heard from countless teams, and a whole lot of cheating spouses, it's really easy to hide things online. And oh, yes, it is, parents kind of get in that controlling role. All they're going to do is make their kid find a way to hide it online. And trust me, they are going to out tech savvy, every parent out there, unless you're a parent who works for Apple or Google, you know, chances are your kid knows how to outsmart you on technology. And they're just going to find a way to do it. So you have to kind of it's a delicate line when it comes to social media, you want to watch and see what they're posting. But you don't want to be dictating what they can and cannot do and taking full control of it like that.



51:58

Absolutely. So well said. And you are absolutely correct, because they will, they will figure out a way to hide to pull the wool over your eyes, they are good, you guys, these these kids are good. They are smart, they are savvy. And especially when they are trying to figure stuff out when they are trying to figure themselves out if they are, you know, in a place where they are not happy or they're not or they're, you know, things are just not good. And it's uncomfortable for them, I would say to you, those are the things you want to look for. Don't try to figure out their social media, pay attention to their behaviors, pay attention to their communication with you. That's how you're going to figure out that there's other stuff going on. All this week, we could do a whole nother show on this for sure. Because there's lots of lots of layers there. And lots I could share just to you know,

kind of give everybody a heads up, but we're going on an hour. So I will say that for another time. It's one of those things where you lay the ground rules, set the boundaries, and then let them explore. Yeah, and and not have her.



53:14

Yeah. And then yeah, and then just one final thing I want to say about helping your teenager, young adult find their authentic self is just too you know, it's really good for parents to make sure that their teen or young adult knows that the parent loves them no matter what. And to make that known on a very consistent basis that no matter what mistakes that they make, or that they may make that the parent is going to always be there and always love them. You know, teens are going to screw up royally, they are going to make huge mistakes and they are not going to learn from them. They are going to do really embarrassing things. And parents are going to want to rip their hair out of their head. But I caution parents to think about what it was like for them when they were a teen or a young adult. And to go back and if they kept old journals. If they kept old photo albums. It's really good to kind of take a little trip down memory lane. I kept my journals for middle and high school and I'm so glad I did because I make a point to review them. Like once a year so because I'm all in every time I'm shocked.



54:33

Are you just horrified because I know I am when I read mine I'm like oh my gosh.



54:39

We're so thankful that social media was not around right. Oh, right. No, the the horrifying. Yes, the outfits and then yeah, the drama and the problems. And you know, it's funny because I have a friend. We were friends in high school and we're still friends now and she was not the best in high school. You know, she Practically didn't graduate. She didn't make very good choices, you know, started drinking when she was probably a sophomore. You know, she, she wasn't the greatest. And now she has a daughter who's in high school. And her expectations and her daughter are so like, out of control, you know, if her daughter brings home like a B plus, it's, you know, like, everything is taken away. There's, like her, this girl's really involved. She's in all kinds of activities and sports. And I was laughing at my friend the other day, cuz I was just like, Oh my gosh, do I need to pull out pictures that I have reviewed? Oh, from high school, to remind you of what you were like, because if you were in high school, at the same time, as your daughter, she would be running circles around you in terms of orderly what she's accomplished, you know, but it's

good for parents to remember what they were like. And if, you know, if you're a parent who never made embarrassing mistakes, who got straight A's who never did anything wrong, then I don't know what to say. Except that, you know, that parent probably missed out on a whole lot of fun. Lenses are, you know, most parents can remember those mistakes. And it's good to remind to let your teen or young adult know, like, I screwed up, I made all kinds of mistakes, I still make them I'm not perfect, I don't expect you to be perfect. And so just to remind them that, you know, you're going to be there for them no matter what



56:34

that is. Absolutely right. And I think that's really the perfect way to kind of culminate this because that is ultimately the most important thing that we can possibly possibly say to our kids, whether they're, you know, on this journey of coming out, or whether they are straight, or you know, anywhere, wherever they are. This is all kids need to know this, this is really, really important. This is the most important possible thing we can do is that they know that they are loved no matter what. And that it is okay for them to mess up. Absolutely want them to mess up.



57:15

Exactly. This is when you want them to fail and to struggle when you're there to guide them and to help you know, pick them up and put them back together. You don't want to have a real struggle to be when they're out on their own for the first time and they have no idea how to cope.



57:32

Right. Right, exactly. That's exactly right. So I hope that everyone enjoyed this interview today with Melanie, is there anything else that you would like to add before? Before we close?



57:48

I don't think so. I think we covered a lot of ground. This was really, really fun conversation.



57:53

We did. Well thank you. Thank you so much for being here. This is where I leave you for today. Thanks so much for joining me. Remember to just breathe. taking a few minutes each day to focus on your breath and calm and send to yourself will give you so much strength and clarity. Especially right now when there's so much uncertainty. Check out today's show notes on my website for the links I mentioned. And please subscribe to and review just spray and share it with anyone needs to know that they are not



58:34

till next time