



**Episode #106:**

**Author and Parent Educator Julie King  
on Sibling Dynamics**

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Julie: So if we see it as a statement of needs and we're trying to figure out how to meet everybody's real needs, then we look for ways to solve that as a problem rather than it's a win-lose competition than if I give you more than he gets less sort of thing.

Debbie: Welcome to the Tilt Parenting podcast, a podcast featuring interviews and conversations aimed at inspiring, informing, and supporting parents raising differently wired kids. I'm your host, Debbie Reber, and if you're the parent of more than one child, neurotypical or atypical, this is an episode you are definitely going to want to listen to. I get requests for topics from listeners all the time, which by the way, is great. Please keep them coming, and one of the most common requests is for an episode specifically on sibling relationships. So I found the perfect guest to talk about the sibling dynamic. Parent educator Julie King. Julie co-authored the book, *How to Talk so Little Kids Will Listen: A Survival Guide for Life With Children Ages Two to Seven* alongside Joanna Faber and leads, dynamic lecturer presentations for schools and other parent organizations. Among the workshop she offers is one based on siblings without rivalry, and she brings to her work the perspective of having raised two differently wired and one neurotypical kids for herself. I'm really excited to share this conversation with you and I hope to do more episodes on this topic. If you find there are things regarding the sibling relationships that you want to hear more about, please shoot me an email at [debbie@tiltparenting.com](mailto:debbie@tiltparenting.com).

Before I get to the episode, I wanted to give a shout out to a few new supporters to the podcast. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you to Laurie Grazio and Jennifer Tam for helping me cover the production costs for this show as well as enabling me to get transcripts made for each episode. If you want to join Laurie and Jennifer in supporting this show, you can do so on Patreon. Patreon is an online platform that allows people to make a small monthly contribution to support the work of an artist, or a musician, or in my case, a podcaster. It's super easy to sign up and even a small donation helps. I actually have a lot of people supporting the show at the \$2 a month level and I'm telling you it adds up. To support the show visit [www.patreon.com/tiltparenting](http://www.patreon.com/tiltparenting). That's p a t r e o n.com/tiltparenting or you can find a link on the Tilt Parenting website. Thank you so much for considering and now here is my conversation with Julie.

Debbie: Hey Julie, welcome to the podcast.

Julie: Thank you. It's nice to be here.

Debbie: I'm looking forward to this conversation. This topic we're going to go into today is something I've been getting requests for for a long time for my community and I think there's a lot to talk about, but I'm just looking forward to scratching the surface with you and getting a little deeper into this idea of siblings and how complicated those relationships can be. But before we get into that, I always ask

my guests to introduce themselves. Give us a little bit about your personal background, maybe your family makeup, and also I always like to know people's personal why for the work that they do.

Julie:

Sure. Well, as you know, I wrote the book, *How to Talk so Little Kids Will Listen* with my friend Joanna Faber. She and I met as babies. My family had just moved to the suburbs of New York as had her family. Her mother was pushing her and her brother up the street in the stroller and my mother saw them outside, literally went running outside and invited them in and her mother, Adele, and my mother, Pat, became very good friends and Joanne and I became good friends. At that point, we were just babies, but we went to nursery school together actually all the way through high school together, but while we were in to school, her mother took a parenting workshop with a child psychologist, Haim Ginott, and she and my mother would talk daily about what she was learning and they would experiment on Joanne and me and our siblings. So we were really guinea pigs for this whole approach. And after high school we kind of went our separate ways. She went to college. I ended up going to law school and I practiced law briefly and decided that the way that lawyers approach conflict was really not consistent with my orientation to problem solving and considering people's needs and so when I... sort of condensing my life story here for you. I'm married and my husband and I had three kids and I discovered firsthand that it's kinda hard to do this all the time. This approach that I grew up with and I thought I knew was quite challenging. When my first born Asher was a baby I helped form a mothers group. We used to get together every week and I noticed that the other babies were starting to move around when he was just still sitting.

But I read all those books about child development that said babies develop at different rates, so it really wasn't worried until when he was just over a year. Our pediatrician said, OK, now it's time. You have to go see a neurologist. And the neurologist told me that Asher was quote unquote, very developmentally delayed. By that time I had noticed that it was pretty, pretty obvious that all the other kids his age were walking around and they would toddle around and fall on top of him sometimes and he would shrink away in fear when they came near because he couldn't move. He could this just tiny little sit scoot, but he really couldn't move very much, and I remember being offended when one of the other mothers in the group suggested that I was being a little over protective of him as if it were fault that he wasn't able to move.

And I think underneath that I was worried that she might be right. You know, and I think that's a common experience for people with kids who are different. And for Asher, It wasn't just his physical development, his sensory system is also different too, so he couldn't tolerate being touched on his legs and his feet, which really didn't bode well for him being able to walk because he couldn't touch his feet to the ground. So we, you know, he went to physical therapy and the therapist gave me a brushing routine that I was supposed to do every two hours, which of course was impossible. So that added to my guilt, right? Like, I couldn't keep that up, but you know, we did that as much as we could. And then I had a second child Roshie, another boy who he looked different to me from the

start, but at that point Asher was still, my first born was still in physical therapy, so I got them back to back appointments.

Julie:

But my second one was different from my first. My first one was floppy, the second one was stiff. Asher, my first was very sensitive. Roshi, didn't cry when he got shot in his, in his thigh. He didn't seem to be as interactive with me in the world. He didn't seem to respond to sound in any usual way. So it was scary and worrisome in a different way. And then we had our third child and I had a daughter, her name is Sherrielle, and at that point I figured, well, if I have a child, I really need to take them to the child development specialists because that's what you do in my family. And I was kind of shocked to find out that she is a typically developing child. So Asher, he had sensory processing disorder, which is actually not a diagnosis when he was little, but, and Roshi was eventually diagnosed with Asperger's, which as you know, is now considered an autism spectrum disorder. And he is also diagnosed with very severe sleep apnea when he was nine, although I'm sure he had it all his life. And I want to mention that I have talked to my kids about talking to you about them and about their diagnoses and they've given me permission to talk about them. Just so you know.

So I started leading workshops, the How to Talk workshops when my oldest Asher was in preschool. And those early groups were for all parents. And eventually, eventually I started leading workshops specifically for parents with kids on the Autism spectrum and for parents of kids with sensory processing disorder. Because I noticed that the skills that I was teaching were just as important or maybe even more important because we parents have atypical kids face challenges that other people don't face. It's even more important for us to know how to deal with frustration and conflicts and setbacks and you know, what they say about kids with autism. If you've met one kid with autism, you've met one kid with Autism.

So as a parent it's very challenging to figure out how your child is experiencing the world and why they're doing what they're doing and what it's reasonable to expect of them. And what I noticed, especially when my kids were younger, is that most of the information and the programs that are set up for these kids, they address the behavioral issues of kids on the spectrum in a way that I would think of as behavior modification, like giving them stickers and rewards and consequences and timeouts, that sort of thing. And to me it seems like these methods don't acknowledge the full humanity of these kids. It's, it's, they're treating them as people to be managed or people to be controlled.

And I'm trying to help people see their child as more than just a problem to be controlled and managed, manipulated, clearly to some extent we all have to manage our children and maybe we all have the ultimate goal that our kids will be well behaved, so life will be pleasant for all of us, but the How to Talk approach encourages people to start by seeing the world through the children's eyes and to imagine what their children are experiencing. If we start with that, then I think it becomes easier to effect their behavior because we're not fighting with them. Where we're not saying to ourselves, this kid won't sit still. I've got



to figure out ways to make them sit still so he doesn't drop food all over the living room. We're saying, this kid doesn't want to sit still. He really needs to move, but what can I do to satisfy him and satisfy my need not to have food all over the living room. And then we look for possible solutions. So I'm not advocating that we be permissive. I'm suggesting that there are more creative ways to meet each other's needs. And we have many stories in the book of parents working with their kids and their kids needs instead of trying to control them.

Debbie: That's great. You know, we just had on the show recently Dr. Barry Prizant have you read his book *Uniquely Human*?

Julie: Oh yes it's terrific.

Debbie: Yeah. So and so in alignment with everything that you're saying to you know that not looking at the behaviors. I mean that's, that's the philosophy of tilt and you know, the guests that I have on, but I just love hearing from so many people, and the work that you're doing and just kind of helping to spread the word that this is a reframe that we as parents really have to make and how we're parenting and viewing our kids behavior. Well that's awesome. And let me just ask you, how old are your kids now?

Julie: Oh yes. So now Asher is 26. He's a, he's a partner in an online marketing company and Roshi, he's 23, he's a computer programmer and my daughter, she's 20, she's a sophomore at Stanford, majoring in American Studies. And I have to say that we've had our share of sibling conflicts when they were little, but now they all get along very well. They call each other just to check-in and they, you know, they give each other advice and support and even like to come home for dinner and have dinner with me and my husband every so often. So I'm at a totally new stage now than I suspect many of your listeners are at.

Debbie: Yes. But it's actually really inspiring for us to hear from it from parents in the stage that you're at because, you know, it sounds like your kids are all, you know, that they're, they're thriving. And that's really inspiring for us to hear too. I'd say, you know, most of the Tilt community we have kids in at those, um, elementary and middle school years. I think it's kind of the bulk of our audience and it's really hard to see, or even imagine, what this could possibly look like down the road because we're so in the thick of it right now and the heart and stuff. So that's really cool.

Julie: Yeah. Yeah. A friend of mine put me in touch with another mom of a child who had a similar diagnosis, similar profile to my second son when he was much younger and, and her child was older and she was telling me that her son followed a different developmental path in most of the kids his age and you know, she went through many moments wondering will we ever get to a point where he can be more independent, will you know how, how, what will the future look like? And she was trying to paint a picture to me and I remember thinking, well, she just really doesn't know because nobody really knows. And so I know that worry. I know that, you know, we can't help but wonder, you



know, what will the future bring. And I think when I was in the thick of it, I mostly focused on how are we going to get through tomorrow or this afternoon. And my husband was more, you know, he took the role of worrying about the greater future. But you know, it's hard not to think about that when you're raising your kids, especially when they have differences.

Debbie: Yeah, absolutely. Especially when you have a really crappy day. I mean it's, you know, you can be humming along and then suddenly things go downhill quickly and you're questioning everything and spiraling out of control about concerns about the future. So, well I appreciate your perspective and you're sharing that. That's really helpful to hear, not just for the listeners but for me personally. So I went on to talk about siblings and as you know, you and I were discussing before the conversation and as most of my listeners know, I have one child and actually his name is Asher as well - a great name. And so, you know, this is something that we haven't, I don't have personal experience with and you know, I have asked guests who I brought up for various topics to touch upon, sibling issues here or there. But I get a lot of questions from audience members who are just really finding it challenging to balance the needs of their differently wired kids, whether they're both differently wired but in distinct unique ways or if they have one typical child in one neurotypical, you know, and it's complicated. And so as a way to get into that, I know that you have given, and you give, the Siblings Without Rivalry workshops and I'm just kind of curious, maybe we could talk generally about some of the common conflicts that come up with siblings regardless of how they're wired. And then we can hone in on some of the unique circumstances with differently wired kids.

Julie: Well, I think that before we have kids, we have this idealized notion, at least some of us do, those of us who step off the cliff and have a couple more, that the kids will, you know, more or less enjoyed being together and they'll play together and we'll have this wonderful harmonious family. And I think once we have more than one child, what we find is that we don't actually live happily ever after, we live sort of conflictually ever after because everybody has different needs, one wants the window open, then one wants the window shut. This one wants to sing, that one needs quiet. This one wants to sit in your lap, the other one wants to sit in your lap. So I think that conflict is actually sort of a part of life when you're living with a group of people, especially when you have people with such different needs.

I think sometimes we have to change our expectations, not from what am I doing wrong because the kids are fighting, but how do I use this as an opportunity to teach them how to resolve conflict in a peaceable way. I think that's a much more realistic frame for what we're doing. When we have kids, you know, of course when one kid is, if your special needs kid is freaking out. We don't want everybody else to be freaking out too. We don't want the, you know, the sibling to, to start screaming and demanding attention and it would be easier on us, but I think that's unrealistic. I think it's unrealistic to expect that our neurotypical child will accommodate when the, when the special needs kid is having a hard time. Everybody has needs and if we, if we view it from the lens of how do we figure out what everybody's needs are and then how do we find a



solution that works for everybody than. I mean that's really the sort of general frame that I use to look at sibling conflict and resolve the conflict.

Debbie: So, OK, so, so many things are coming up, but I want to ask you a ton of questions but I also don't want to bombard you with all these things. So I guess one of the things, and maybe I don't know if even this is the right order, but this came up as you were answering that maybe when you work with families, are you working with the kids too? Are you bringing them into the process? And I guess I'm wondering how much transparency do you have, especially in a situation where kids are neurotypical verses neurologically atypical, you know, is this something we can just get all out in the open and talk about it in that way? And enlists everyone's cooperation?

Julie: If you're asking me what I do with parents, I work only with the parents. I coach them on how to talk to their kids. We role play with them so that they can practice with people pretending to be kids, but a little bit more, you know, calm and reasonable play acting. So it's a bit easier. But then I send them home to actually try these things out with their kids. But nothing that I am telling them is a secret from their kids. You know, sometimes people say to me, you know, my kid picked it up, picked up the book and started reading the cartoons. Is that OK? I'm like, absolutely. These are tools and strategies that are useful for everybody in all relationships. They're not secrets. And so when you say is there transparency? Kids off and know that their parents are going through a parenting workshop. In fact I've had parents come back to me and say, you know, things were so much better this week. My kids, when I tell them I was going to the parenting workshop and they said, good, go. Yeah, we like that place.

Debbie: So I want to talk about the question I get the most from people with regards to the challenges that they're having in their home. And you mentioned guilt earlier. It's often this sense of guilt that they're differently wired child is kind of taking up so much of the parents time that so much they feel like all of their efforts are going, and resources sometimes it is their financial resources, everything is going towards this one child and the other child is, is typical and so they just aren't requiring as much and maybe that's fine for them, but this sense of guilt is pretty pervasive. Is that something you have experience with and parents who you've worked with and can you speak to that issue?

Julie: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. It is challenging, I think we, we, we have this notion that I should, it should be, I should be trying to be fair with my kids, you know, it's not right that I'm devoting all these resources to one kid and another, and sometimes our kids will say to us, you know, it's not fair. You always know you're always taking him places you don't take me places, you know, you always spending time with him. And it's tempting to say, hey honey, it's not all about you. Your brother has special needs. We really need to know blah, blah, blah. That's how they hear it. You know, what kid is going to honestly respond, oh, I didn't realize. Thanks for explaining it to me. Right? I'm very unlikely. So you don't want to make it sound like the typical kids needs are less important than his siblings because that's a sure formula for them to start hating representing

their sibling. You're better off reframing it as a problem. You know, my problem is I have to help your brother with his exercises and I also want to help you plan your birthday party. Let's see how we can make that happen. You know, when I, when I'm at my best, I don't make it sound like there's a finite amount of love and that the typical kid is being selfish to demand attention or that their needs aren't as important. You know? I don't want them to feel like they should be grateful not to be disabled. It's, you know, it's tempting to want to say these things to kids, but that's just not helpful. It's tempting to say to the typical kid, look, you know, you're lucky you have friends, you can do homework without me. You're independent, but really you're not going to convince a kid that he's the lucky one by telling him he doesn't need your attention. Right?

Julie: So now my goal is not to give my three children equal attention. That would be impossible, you know, regardless of whether they have special needs or not. Frankly, my goal is to give my children the attention they need. So if a child feels like they're not getting enough of your attention, you can avoid accusing them of being greedy. Like, what do you mean I never do anything for you to spend three hours at your soccer game like that. That kind of thing. You know? That's how we think. Yes, but it's not a complaint that's grounded in logic. What they're telling you is, I miss you, I want more of you so we can acknowledge that feeling. You wish we had more time together. I can't do it now, so let's, let's make a plan. When can we do it? You know, and then maybe you could spend time together when daddy's home or your sister's napping or your brothers with a therapist. So if we see it as a statement of needs and we're trying to figure out how to meet everybody's real needs, then then we look for ways to solve that as a problem rather than it's a win-lose competition and if I give you more than he gets less sort of thing.

Debbie: It seems like it gets a situation where that empathy piece is really critical. Like the acknowledgement of the child's feelings is...

Julie: ...that's absolutely critical. If you don't start there, no solution will work. Because you have to start by acknowledging that this is a real feeling that you really wish you had more time with me and you don't like this. And if I try to gloss over that and he's like, oh honey, I'll talk to you later. They feel like, no mommy, you don't get it. I want you now. And even if I can't do it now, if I can say I wish I could do it now I see how, you know, how urgent it feels to you. If I start there, then when I say, well, can we do, I can't do it now. You know, we want to see things from each other's perspectives as we want. We want our typical child to see things from our perspective and understand from our kids perspective. But if we don't start with theirs, with their perspective, they're not going to look at things from our perspective. That's how they learn that skill.

Debbie: This is just so fascinating to me and it's also just hearing you describe this conversation and the way to just show up and not say what's on your mind. You know? Or what you're thinking, but rather really go to their needs and the empathy and all that. It sounds exhausting. I know that I'm very much in this space right now feeling kinda tapped out with having to be uber-present at this particular moment in my parenting journey and empathizing constantly and



acknowledging feeling, you know, and it's exhausting. And first of all, hats off to parents out there who have more than one child. I honestly don't know how you do it and how can parents support themselves when they are having to do - I know that they're not going to do it perfectly all the time, but you know how, how do parents, how can parents restore and recharge and be able to do this in a way that, that works and keeps them sane?

Julie: Well, that's a big question. And you know, I think the service that you're offering where people can listen to and communicate with each other and share their stories with each other is so valuable. I know that when my kids were little, I think I mentioned that the first group I did was through Asher's preschool. We met for four and a half years weekly, and it really helped me to know that when I went through a period when I felt like I wanted to pull my hair out or scream at my kids, that I could go and talk to these parents who get it and wouldn't judge me, would understand. I remember the very first time that I, you know, I was just furious at Asher for something. I don't remember what it was, but I remember how furious I was and I went to the group. We happened to have a group soon after and we always do a check in and I said, I am so furious with him. I'm ready to put them up for long-term lease. Does anybody want a five year old? And they were, you know, I thought, oh my gosh, they're going to be shocked. They're going to be stunned. They're not gonna want me to be their leader anymore. And in fact, they were all relieved to hear that I had the same feelings that they did and that I got to that point also, and it was really helpful for me to be able to vent with them instead of venting at my five year old. In fact, I was going to tell you a story somewhat along these lines because we all, we all get to that point sometimes when, you know, I would get to a point where I thought I can't figure out what's helpful to say in this moment. I don't even care in this moment.

So when they were, this happened when Asher and Roshi where somewhat older, but, Asher was teasing and tormenting Roshi. He knew just what to say to get, you know, just upsetting Roshi. And I was just furious with him. I couldn't get him to stop and I couldn't figure out what's, you know, like cut-it-out was not going to work. And so I sent him to his room and calmed Roshi down. And I knew I needed to go talk to Asher to find out what was going on. But I also knew that I was in no state to do that. I really just didn't care. So I did what I, what I knew to do when I couldn't handle the situation, which I went to my closet, which I share with my husband. So it's got a lot of clothes in there. And so I can say things that are really horrible and mean and nobody, the kids wouldn't hear me. And I literally went in the closet and started saying to myself, you know, he's just horrible, horrible, you know, how could he do this? You know, how could I have given birth is such a mean kid. He's so nasty. I'm, you know, I'm just furious at him. And then I thought, well, I guess I need to go talk to him and find out what was going on for him. But you know what? I just don't care because he's just being nasty.

I had to do this for a while before I finally calmed down enough and went and talked to him. And then I, then I was able to say, Asher, I know that you can be a really kind sensitive kid. You really, you have good friends and you're nice to



them. It must be something that really made you mad to say those things to your brother and that's all it took. He had a long list of complaints. Every time I go to the ballgame I want to go to batting practice. He says he wants to go and then when it's time to leave he lies down on the floor and he says he's just tired and we miss the whole batting practice and then when we do our family clean up on Sunday, we're all supposed to clean up but he doesn't help and he says he's too tired in this not fair and he like went on and on with this long list and I think he had compiled this list over the course of the year and I didn't argue with him. I didn't try to explain why Roshi did what he did. I just listened and I shouldn't say just because it wasn't easy to hear it all, but wow. No wonder you're so mad at him. He did a lot of things that you really resent and then. Yeah, and let me tell you one more, so you know, eventually I said to Asher, listen Roshi needs to hear it from you, but that's just too long a list for person to be able to hear all at once. So how about we pick one thing to talk to him about and you know, together we planned that he would talk to them about the, the cleanup which was supposed to happen every week and it was predictable that it often would lie down on the floor.

Now this is, this is, he had sleep apnea, but this is before we knew it. So we just know some for some reason he would say he was tired and so we went downstairs and Asher told Roshi how he felt when Roshi didn't help with the cleanup. And Roshi said, you know, he wanted to help but sometimes he really was too tired. So then I asked the question like what can we do? So the cleaner-uppers don't feel resentful and so Roshi doesn't feel forced when he's too tired. And we came up with some chores that Roshi could do when he did have energy because there was always garbage and recycling to take out. So Roshi, he did make sure to tell his brother when he did these chores, he wanted a way to redeem himself.

So, you know, I think it made a difference. It's not that they never had a conflict again, but that level of mean teasing went away and when Asher got upset with Roshi he knew there was a way to talk to him and solve the problem instead of letting it fester. And you know, sort of getting back at him through teasing and he knew that he had a mother who was accepting of his feelings of resentment. So you didn't have just bottled it up for so long.

Debbie: Again, there's just so many things that you just touched upon that I think are so important. I mean, you know, just even that giving our kids the space to talk and us listening without, you know, responding, you know, and just being that neutral and holding that space for our kids who just express what they need to express is a really hard. And it takes, I think, a lot of practice.

Julie: I just want to point out the parallel because you had asked me about how we take care of ourselves and when I could, I would talk to other people who would do the same thing for me. And in a pinch I would use my closet, which for me worked, but wasn't speedy, but it was, it worked.

Debbie: Yeah. No, I love that. I was thinking this a room in my closet for me? I don't know if that's the right spot for me, but I do love that. I mean, I tend to call my



sister. My sister is always happy to just hear me really anything I have to say. So yeah, it is important to be able to, to get it out.

And you just talked about, you know, that you use the word resent a number of times and that story and you know, that is something that I know a lot of parents are concerned about is their neurotypical siblings growing up to resent their atypical sibling for any variety of reasons. And so, you know, you just talked about the importance of, you know, sounds like you've facilitated a conversation between them where they could kind of get to the heart of the issue what's really going on here. Do you have any other words of advice or strategies for parents? If they're noticing that one of their child is starting to resent their sibling or just the inequity that they may perceive?

Julie: Well, you know, we touched a little bit on the, on the frame of we don't try to give everybody equally, we try to give everybody according to their needs. I think that's sort of an orientation or life philosophy that I have that I sort of spoke from that place when they would say it's not fair. You know, instead of saying, well it is fair because you've got this and they got back. It's more like, sounds like what you sounds like you really wish that you, you could have what your child has picked. In fact I'm thinking, when my kids were little, my son, so my son Rashid was also missed a lot of school. He was sick a lot and my daughter noticed this and you know, I remember her one day saying it's not fair, you know, he gets, I want to stay home too. How come he gets to stay home? And of course I'm thinking in my mind I don't want her to stay home. She's got school today. She'll be fine at school, you know, like, I can't handle two.

But it's, you know, I knew that that wasn't going to work. I wasn't going to be able to explain to her in a way that was going to get rid of that desire that she had to be able to stay home. So, you know, what I said is it sounds like you wish that you could have more special time with me too, you know, I don't want you to miss school today. Let's think of when you can have special time. You know, how bout, how about tonight? We'll ask daddy to put Rosh bed so I can put you to bed and we can read some books together and we'll have some time together. And that worked for her. You know, I was lucky that worked for her in that moment, you know, again, I think that our first impulse is to try to explain to them why things are the way they are.

And I, and I think sometimes we also get triggered because we feel a little guilty. Like why, you know, why, why is he getting more of my attention that she is like, maybe that's not fair. Maybe you know, but you know, when you have more than one child that they have different needs at different times. There were times when she needs more attention than he did. Even if he, you know, overall probably got, you know, if we did a mathematical formula of how much time, how much of my attention he got more than she did. But you know, in each moment when I'm trying to figure out is who has what needs and, and whose these am I going to meet? How and acknowledging that sometimes, you know, my daughter felt like I want more of your attention and not to deny it. You know, it's very powerful to say, it sounds like you wish you had more of my attention, so much more effective than saying, look honey you know, it can't be



like this. You know if I start by acknowledging the feelings, that gets me very far in maintaining our relationship and helping her deal with what is.

Debbie: Yeah, I mean, it's so powerful when we can remember to do that really in any situation with our kid. And I noticed that with Asher many years ago that the minute I just acknowledged whatever it was, it's like a flipping a switch. Everything changes. Suddenly they're receptive, listening, you know, it can shift their mood instantaneously. So that's a great reminder. One of the things that I was thinking about as you were giving that last answer is, and this goes back to something I brought up in the beginning in terms of transparency, but if you think about a family unit and you know that we're all on the same team here, we're all working together. Is it good for parents to be, you know, really talking openly about their kids and their neurodifferences and I also take it one step further, enlisting their help? Like, is it OK to say, hey, you know, this is a really difficult situation as you know, for your brother or your sister. I'm wondering if you could help by doing this, this or this. Like is that an OK thing to do?

Julie: Reminds me of when Roshie first got his diagnosis, he had, we had all this testing done and we were waiting for the results and he knew exactly what was going on. He was, I think 12 was when he got finally diagnosed with Asperger's. And so I went into his room, I thought I'm going to tell him in private because it's, you know, just for him to know. I took him into his room and I said, you know, we've gotten the results and he had Asperger's. And what that means is that different people learn social thinking in different ways. Some people learn intuitively and some people learn it concretely and explicitly. I said, you were more the explicit learner kind, so that's good for us to know.

And it was his very first reaction, was let's go tell Asher. Which was really surprising to me. And so we went upstairs to Asher's room and he told guess what? I have Asperger's and I explained to Asher, you know, at that point I hadn't really had a lot of time to digest it myself frankly. But it was helpful to say to Asher who had kept, who had been saying to me, he just doesn't get it. He just doesn't get it, that you know, now we know that he learns explicitly.

And so not long after that we were home and my daughter was playing with the neighbor girl who lives across the street named Danielle and Danielle's mother. She would typically call me when it was time to send Danielle home for dinner. And I was in the kitchen cooking and my hands were all dirty and the phone rang and it was Daniel's mother and I said, somebody pick up the phone and Roshie said, I'll pick it up. I'll get it. And he went over and he stared at the phone, but he didn't pick it up and we have an answering machine that picks up after four rings but I wanted somebody to get it before I went to the answering machine. So she, so Danielle's mother wouldn't worry.

I said, pick it up, pick it up! It's, you know, it's Danielle's mother. And he just stared at it and didn't pick it up and it rang for two rings and it rang for three rings. It was about to ring for four rings. And so Asher ran over and snatched the phone and answered it and Roshie had a fit. And I remember thinking what, what's going on? And like, you know, here was Asher had rescued me because I



want him to pick up the phone. But Roshi was furious at him and Asher was mad at Roshi because he wasn't picking up the phone. So once we got Danielle's sent home and I washed my hands, you know, I, I realized that Roshi, you were, you were doing some sort of experiment to see if you could pick it up at the last minute before they picked up.

Julie: And do you know what was going on for Roshi, for Asher? Do you know why he answered? And he said No. I told him I would pick it up. I said, your words said I'm going to pick up the phone. Your body language said I'm not picking up the phone. And when people see a conflict between somebody's words and their body language, they always believe the body language more than the words. So that's why he picked it up. And Roshi said, Huh, you know, like this was news to him and you know what? I think it was sort of news to Asher in the sense that he wouldn't have known how to explain it to Roshi. But you know, I was, I was sort of both explaining it to them, but also modeling like this is what it means when you have to learn explicitly. Roshi doesn't pick that stuff up. But once we tell him now he knows now he gets it. I mean of course there can be other situations.

So in terms of talking to kids, I found it very valuable to be able to tell my kids, what does it mean to have Asperger's? What does it mean to have sleep apnea? I would explain that to them to not that they necessarily couldn't know what that feels like, but he was, before he was diagnosed, he was waking up almost once a minute to breathe. Not that he was aware of it, but he. So he was, you know, people say, Oh, I know what it feels like to be tired. I'm like, I don't know that you know what this feels like. This is beyond just like, I'm tired. I don't feel like it. And it was confusing to the others, especially when we didn't know what it was. I believed in my heart that there was something that was making him tired, that he wasn't making it up, but I didn't know. I didn't have the words for it. I didn't know what it was. But once we had the word that, you know, I found that very helpful to be able to say, you know, he gets woken up during the night. It took a long time for the therapy to work. Now he's doing much better, but there was, he was exhausted and so I had to change my expectation of what he could do and so do the others.

Debbie: Wow. That's really intense. I, I didn't realize that kids could suffer from sleep apnea. That's, I can't even imagine how disruptive that would be.

Julie: I had no idea that, that child that young, because what I thought was sleep apnea, something that middle-aged men get when they're overweight, I thought. I have learned that is not the case.

Debbie: Wow. So before we go, I would love to just ask you kind of a general question and it just in terms of all your experience and you've seen in your work and your workshops and any other just general best practices for handling conflict among siblings within families, you know, getting people's needs met or understanding the underlying need sounds like it's, it's right there at the top. But any other tips for people listening have things they could play within their own families?



Julie: Well, I think that when we have conflict between siblings or really conflict between any two people, but our first tendency is to try to solve it so it goes away. You want that? Then he wants that? OK, just take turns you guys. You go first and he'll go and we want to tell them what to do so that the conflict goes away. So one piece of advice, one thing that people can start to notice in themselves is, am I doing that? Am I trying to solve the problem before I acknowledge their feelings? Am I taking away their opportunity to learn what to do when you are in conflict with somebody else? I think that for a kid to learn the process, what do you do when somebody wants one thing, you want another? I think learning what to do is a life skill that is so valuable and it takes a lot of practice.

I mean, that's why even we as adults, we have conflicts that we don't necessarily handle well the first time. I mean we have to learn in our marriages what to do. It's, it's a sort of a lifelong skill that I think we first learn about in our own families. So we can have the mindset with our kids that when there's a conflict, we're not going to just try to resolve it. We're going to help try to help them learn how to resolve conflict, that little switch, you know, that little reframe I think can both be more effective in the moment and help us find solutions that really work for everybody and also teach them such an important life skill that they can take with them for the rest of their lives.

Debbie: Yeah, that's great. I mean, I think you nailed it. You know, when there's behavior we don't like when something's gone, we just want it to stop. Like that's our instinct typically like I want this to stop at whatever means necessary and I think it's so important to, and it does take a lot of time and patience is key, but so important to realize that, yeah, these are great learning opportunities. Conflict isn't a bad thing. It's a part of being human. We're all going to have conflict and this is a great practicing a ground for people to learn those skills.

Julie: And let me add that you can't do this all the time. I mean, the last thing I want to do is add more guilt, right? You know, they're going to be times when you don't have the time. You don't have the energy. You don't have the closet available to calm yourself down before you handle it. Where you're going to say, I'm going to decide who uses a first who's just a second, then somebody is not going to be happy and we're going to talk later about what to do next time and sometimes that's the best you can do. And just acknowledging that I'm to decide and somebody is not going to be happy. So let's see. Even there I'm trying to acknowledge as best I can, what's gonna go on for them because I can't do the whole process.

Debbie: I imagine especially in certain public situations or you know, depending on the age of your kids, you're gonna find parents are going to find themselves in situations where they are in damage control mode or they need to deal with something immediately and the thoughtful conversation can come later and just knowing that that's you do what you need to do sometimes to get through that moment and then you can circle back.



- Julie: And I think it helped me to have thought so much about how to handle different kinds of situations because I've worked with parents for so many years and we have a lot of stories in the book that I think really helped parents sort of think through how would I handle this situation? Did it end well? Ooh, there's a little trick I can keep in the back of my mind if this ever comes up.
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- And I love to encourage parents to share their stories. We invite people to send, you know, if any of your listeners have stories from what they've tried after they listen to this podcast, I would love for them to send me what they've done, what they've said. What you know, how their kid responded because I think that sharing our stories even more than just the general principles is what really helps us when we're in the moment.
- Debbie: Yeah, absolutely. Fantastic. Wow. This has been fascinating for me. And you know, again, not having a -- having an only child, I still, this is all completely relevant to every aspect of my life as a parent and I know it's going to be super valuable to those listeners who have more than one kid and they're really struggling with this kind of stuff. So before we say goodbye, could you tell us the best place for listeners to connect with you and learn more about your work and your books?
- Julie: Sure. we have a facebook page for the book, How to Talk So Little Kids Will Listen. We also have a website, How to Talk So Little Kids Will Listen to and I have a personal website, Julieking.Org, and you can write to me from really any one of those places and I will respond.
- Debbie: Excellent. Well listen Julie, thank you so much for making the time and coming by and sharing this today. Again, super interesting and I know it's going to be incredibly useful and I really appreciate you coming on the show.
- Julie: My pleasure. Thanks for having me.
- Debbie: You've been listening to the Tilt Parenting podcast for the show notes for this episode, including links to Julie's website and all of the resources we discussed. Visit [www.tiltparenting.com/session106](http://www.tiltparenting.com/session106), and here is your friendly weekly reminder to head over to itunes and leave a rating or a review or both if you haven't done so already. There are a lot of parenting podcasts out there and new podcasts are coming out every week, and so having high ratings and a lot of reviews helps keep our podcast very visible, which in turn makes it easier for me to land the big guests, so thank you so much. And one last reminder that if you want to have a sneak peek of my upcoming book *Differently Wired: Raising an Exceptional Child in a Conventional World*, you can download the first chapter and the table of contents over on Tilt Parenting. Just go to the home page and sign up and you'll get the pdf instantly. I hope you like it and thanks again for listening. For more information on Tilt Parenting, visit [www.tiltparenting.com](http://www.tiltparenting.com)



## RESOURCES MENTIONED

- [Julie King's website](#)
- [How to Talk So Little Kids Will Listen: A Survival Guide to Life with Children Ages 2-7](#) by Joanna Faber and Julie King
- [How to Talk So Little Kids Will Listen Facebook Page](#)
- [How to Talk so Little Kids Will Listen](#) (website)
- [Barry Prizant Talks About His Book Uniquely Human](#) (podcast episode)
- [Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism](#) by Dr. Barry Prizant