

Debbie: Hello, Heather and Julie, welcome to the podcast.

Heather: Hi.

Debbie: So, all right, so we're doing kind of a bicoastal record today, which is always exciting. I hope it's sunny in Los Angeles area by the way. Before we get started, could you both take a moment just to introduce yourselves and I'm also just curious how you came to collaborate together, how this relationship as coauthors and working together started.

Julie: Okay well I'm Julie Wright and I'm a marriage and family therapist. And I live in New York City and I have a Mommy and Me program, actually Mommy and Daddy and Me program in Los Angeles that I continue to, to run. And I do sleep consultation work and parent consult work here in New York City. And I'm from, I'm from New York originally, so I've kind of come back home.

Debbie: Okay.

Heather: And I'm Heather Turgeon and I'm here, as you said, on the sunny West Coast and I'm actually from New York as well, but I'm out here. Julie and I met through the Mommy and Me program in Los Angeles. And we have, we've worked with parents on sleep and also communication, setting limits with empathy, for years now together. And we wrote our first book, *The Happy Sleeper* four years ago now. So we see a lot of parents around sleep with baby to school-aged kids. And then more recently our book *Now Say This*, which is the ALP model of communication. So a lot of our clients are also, you know, parents struggling with difficult moments and behaviors and family communication. So our practices are on both coasts, but we also work with parents all over the world, you know, via Skype and that kind of thing.

Debbie: Awesome. Yeah, I wish *The Happy Sleeper* had been around when I was the parent of a young child because sleep is just, I mean, I just imagine your businesses must be booming. This is such an area of pain for so many parents.

Heather: Yeah. Sleep is a real, it's a, it's a real dilemma and it's a real crisis moment for a lot of parents at different ages for different reasons. So yeah, it's a, it's a satisfying line of work because it's very, very fixable. Sleep is natural. So, you know, babies want to sleep and kids want to sleep. So that's good.

Debbie: That's a good start. Yeah. Well that, I feel like that's a whole other episode so we might have to just bring you back on that to talk about sleep. If we have time at the end, we'll touch upon it. But what we were planning to talk about today is your new book you mentioned *Now Say This: The Right Words to Solve Every Parenting Dilemma*. It's a great title. I love the idea of giving parents specific language around how to handle situations cause that's what we, you know, I think so many of us find ourselves in those deer in headlight moments and that's when we make unintentional bad choices.

So as a way to get into it, I wanted to just even just talk about discipline in general. And you talk about that in the beginning of your book. I was looking back through past episodes and we, you know, we've done an episode here or there on positive discipline and we certainly touch upon respectful ways to communicate with kids, but we haven't done like a lot of conversations specifically around different styles of discipline that a lot of parents are engaged in. And that's something that you know a lot about. Would you touch upon some of the more traditional approaches and maybe share what the harmfulness or effectiveness of those approaches might be?

Julie: Well, in a classic sense, you hear about three types of parenting; permissive, which we all know what that means; on the other end of the spectrum it's called authoritarian, which means very strict and stern and rigid; and in the middle it's called authoritative. It's so confusing because it sounds so much like authoritarian, but the authoritative is the middle ground. And that's really our goal with ALP is to help parents be both empathic and effective. So a lot of times when we're talking about this method, people think, oh, you know, an empathic discipline approach that that might sound a little soft, but it's really not. We're, we're just as interested in helping you be effective and hold limits consistently as we are having you be empathic. We just know that not only will your child listen to you better and be more likely to do what you want them to do and what makes maybe your day go easier, but you're going to have a much deeper, more genuine, more meaningful relationship with them over time.

Debbie: So I'm wondering if parents who come to you or come to your work have kind of accidentally gone down a different road? You know, have they established more permissive patterns in their house or are they, and I'm just curious to know what you find, you know, or are they more authoritarian? And, and which is more prevalent in terms of the people who come to you or where do you think most parents net out?

Heather: I think we see equal parts of both. Then sometimes it's one person in a couple who's very good at being warm and understanding and, and nurturing and, and has a hard time setting limits and holding limits and feels kind of walked all over. And you know, maybe both in the couple feel that way. And then sometimes we have a person who's incredibly harsh or strict and maybe they have a voice in their head where that comes from, from their own family or whatever it is. We also see a lot of people who feel like they have all the empathy in the world, but they feel walked all over and that makes them sort of swing to the other side and snap back to being overly harsh. That's actually, I'd say that's one of the most common patterns we see is like be the nice guy, be the nice guy and then all of a sudden you just can't take it anymore and you snap to something too harsh and then you feel terrible.

So I think it's not necessarily one or the other. It's often a swinging back and forth that happens within the family system. And you know, both types of people usually feel like something is missing. They feel like either they're missing a connection, they're missing the warmth and connection with their child, then their relationship is suffering or they feel like they're not, you know, a strong

enough parent, a clear enough parent who's really teaching their child how to be in the world and, and guiding them. So both exist and both are, you know, sort of solved or encompassed by ALP.

Julie: And it's also one of the main reasons we wrote the book because we feel like so many parents these days are reading some brilliant work on the importance of empathy. So they have this idea that this is a good thing to do, but they do, like Heather said, get frustrated when they don't know how to hold the limit. And they may then resort to losing it, losing their cool, flipping their lid, whatever you want to call it. So we wanted to give them, we wanted to give them an approach that was easy to remember and easy to practice. And we didn't find anything out there that was this simple to remember and applicable to so many different situations. So that was one of our main goals was to make it really instantly usable.

Debbie: Yeah, I think, I think that's so important because you know, the flipping, flipping your lid, as I was reading through your book, I, you know, my child is 14 and so we're kind of in a different phase. And we've, we haven't figured it all out, but we've, you know, my husband and I have figured out kind of our approach and it's working now. But I can still hear his voice, my husband's voice, doing that 1, 2, you know, like just that countdown, you know, you ask the child to do something and then if they don't do it and then all of a sudden you're threatening with a countdown. And just to remember that that was kind of our default. It was, and it was never the plan, but you just, I think so many parents, especially a lot of my audience, you know, our kids' behavior can be a little bigger and we find ourselves more challenged in certain situations. And so it can be so easy to just reach that limit. And then we just go to that default, whatever it is.

Julie: Yeah. And we, we talk a lot about this in the book, and I would think it would be very relevant to your audience, is this idea of ALP going in multiple directions, including toward yourself. So in a difficult moment, if you feel yourself, you know, the heat rising and the smoke, you know, about to come out your ears, you know, just give yourself some time to, to be empathic toward yourself so that you can have the time to make a chosen response rather than what we call in the book a knee-jerk automatic response in a, in a really difficult moment like that.

Debbie: Well, before we go further, because I do want to ask you that specifically about how parents can learn to better do that specific skill, but can you walk us through the ALP process that you've developed, kind of explain what each of those stands for and, and what that looks like?

Heather: Sure. The, the ALP model is the three step communication model that can really be applied to any difficult moment. The book *Now Say This* is designed for parents of baby to school-aged kids but really ALP can be applicable to any relationship. So the three steps are A: attune, so this is the moment that you, in whatever way works for your child, let your child know that you understand or that you're trying to understand them. This is the step that's often easily forgotten I would say, that, that can be difficult to remember, but it's often the most powerful step. So taking that moment to take them in, let them know you understand. That's the 'A' step. The L step is the limit setting step, which is this is

the moment I'm stating a family agreement. I'm telling you a limit. I'm stating a reality. This is, this is what it is. This is the 'L' step. And the P step is the problem solving step. This is a moment to use some creativity to give your child a couple of choices, to engage their problem solving mind and to move through the dilemma to the other side. So ALP.

Debbie: And tell us more about the A step. Why, why do we need to start there? Why is it so important to lead with empathy?

Julie: Well, we have an interesting question. We like to ask moms and dads, which is when you're having a difficult feeling or emotion or difficult time, what do you most want from the person who's close to you? And the answers we almost always get or you know, the, the theme of the answers that we always get are things like, I want to be heard. I want to be listened to. I want to be taken seriously. I want to be validated. You know, I want the person to really listen to me. And then we say well and what do you sometimes get that you don't like? And then we get answers like, you know, having my feelings dismissed or discounted or judged or overly patronized. Like, well, you shouldn't worry about that. Um, and so then the obvious next step is to say, we all need this. We all need that empathy in that moment.

And in that moment when we feel like the person is really listening to us, the urgency of our emotion immediately deflates because we're not still feeling alone with our feeling, our feeling has landed on another human being and they've taken it in. And that's what we humans need more than anything in our difficult moments. Dan Siegel has a phrase that he, he says, name it to tame it. And it's very healing to start with an empathic step because now your child feels like you're on their side and you're going to help them. You're not there to judge them or jump to a solution. So it's, I mean, we could talk about the A step for this entire interview. It's, it's incredibly powerful. When we listen to our children, they're much more likely to listen to us and they're also much more likely to feel close to us.

Debbie: Yeah, I mean, for us, that empathy piece is something I personally have been working on for a couple of years now, especially in those bigger emotional reaction moments. And I have found it's almost like a magic button, you know, to, to diffuse. It's incredible. And I still don't always remember to do it, but it really is such a powerful thing how quickly it can immediately just shift the energy in whatever's happening with your child.

Heather: Yeah. It's so powerful and I think it's, it's, you know, we have all these voices in our head or these ideas as parents when something comes up that's challenging or our kids are suffering for whatever reason, or they're, they're frustrated, angry, mad, you know, sad, they're being, they're having a difficult moment that it's so hard to pause and let that, let that be, let them, you know, ride that emotional wave so to speak and not want to jump in necessarily and fix it or judge them or hurry them along or um, you know, make it go away. I think that's such an important part of having kids feel understood and like their feelings have a place to go and they can sort of let the wave come and go that way. It's huge

and it's such a connecting moment and it also really makes you more effective in what you say next.

Debbie: Right.

Julie: It also makes you the safe person to come to with their feelings. If you're either judging, dismissing or overly assuaging their feelings, they're getting the message over time that you don't want to hear their big feelings. And this is exactly the opposite of what we want. When our kids grow up and are teenagers and are having much more difficult issues, we really want them to be able to talk to us and know that we're a safe person to talk to about their problems.

Debbie: Hmm. It's so important to remember a lot of our kids, differently wired kids in particular, can be, you know, their emotions, the way it comes out can be a, you know, highly frustrated or easily angered or explosive and those things. And I know that for me, and I hear this from many parents in my community, that a lot of us are uncomfortable with the emotion, right? And I really have a hard time even being around anger. And I think many of us just either we don't want to be with it, we don't want to be around it and therefore we aren't validating it. And, and we may even just be sending the message that this is a bad emotion to have. And of course there are no bad emotions, you know? So that is a really, that's a really tough one. I'm wondering if, you've talked about this pause, do you have any secrets for any like special strategies for parents who find themselves having a hard time taking that moment to separate themselves from their child's emotional response so they can get that distance, so they can give their child the space to, to be in that without us trying to fix it?

Heather: Yeah, I think it's kind of, I think it's a good idea to test out a few and see what works. So for example, I mean the first step is just recognizing a difficult emotion and maybe counting, you know, counting to three. If you're in a safe place and there's nothing urgent going on, that you count to three, count to 10, take a deep breath. Sometimes you might need to say, um, mommy actually needs a timeout for a second. Or I need to take a calm down is what we would call it, and remove yourself if you need to. I like visualizations. So for me it works really well to imagine big emotions as waves and that they sort of come underneath me and that they can sway me, but they're not going to knock me over. So I kind of imagine that a big feeling is like I'm, I'm almost seeing it come towards me and sort of go underneath me and it might, it affects me, but it doesn't knock me over. And I'm, I really have to say to myself, this is not my, you know, it's not my job to make this go away. I'm just here. I'm just here to be with it.

Debbie: I love that wave analogy. Is this something that gets easier with time in your experience? Like the more we practice it, does it become more of our natural place to go?

Heather: Oh, I think absolutely. As much as the ALP step is easy to remember, and you know, it's only three steps. It's not, it sometimes feels like a magic trick, but it's not a magic trick and something that you can just say, oh, I do this now. It's so easy. You know, it's, it's really a mindfulness practice. It really takes time and it takes a lot of kindness toward yourself and a lot of patience and a lot of going

back and saying to your child, you know, can I try that again? Or um, doing, doing some repair when we need to and being very, very aware that this is a quest. We're on a quest. I always think of it as this high mountain peak that's so high that we'll never actually climb all the way up to it. But we're just always taking a few more steps higher toward it.

Julie: It's very, very difficult and you will forget over and over again to do the A step. But I think time is your friend. For, for yourself perhaps as a parent, the big reactive emotion that you have will pass, will start to wane over time. So anything you can do, walking, taking a few steps away, counting quietly to yourself, um, letting your child know, make your, your process transparent to them. Say, wow, mommy is starting to feel some big feelings here too. I'm going to just, you know, walk to the other room and come back in a few minutes once I feel a little bit calmer. So I'm, I'm kind of reiterating what Heather just said, but time is your friend. If nobody's about to get hurt or, or be in a dangerous situation, it's a really good tool to just give yourself some time and you can think whatever helps you make that chosen response rather than that, that automatic response.

Debbie: And then if we do, maybe I should say when we do, make a bad choice in that moment, you know, I was just meeting with a bunch of parents the other day and we were talking about this and there is a lot of guilt and shame that I think many of us experience in, you know, after those moments where we, we do lose it, we blow up, or we yell at our kid. So you talk about repairing, can you talk about that?

Heather: So the repair step is, it's so, I think it's so beautiful that it exists because it's such a good reminder to parents that you don't have to get it right the first time and that that's not even a goal. We don't even want to come across as perfect parents who always, you know, are perfectly calm and say the right thing and act correctly. I mean, that would be weird anyway. So being a human being with all of your nuances of how you react, and sometimes it's not the right way or the way that you wish you had reacted, is actually a good opportunity for your child. It's not, you know, not important to be perfect. It's actually kind of can be a connecting moment for you and your child. And it also teaches them that you're not, you're not perfect, you're a human. And that you can have moments of what you would call like a rupture or a, just a moment that you, that, that you aren't in sync, you know, and that you come back together and you repair.

So that's what repair is about. And it's just acknowledging that you didn't say something that you wish you had said or just processing what happens. So just saying if it can be in the moment because you can calm down enough and take a deep breath and go like, oh, wait a minute. Okay, hold on. Sorry, I was getting frustrated. This is what I meant to say. Or even the next day or later that day to say, you know, I was thinking about what happened earlier and I was really frustrated because x, y, z, and then I said this and I think, you know, what were you thinking or feeling at the time? Try to process it and acknowledge what happened. And then it brings you back together in sync. And we always recommend to our clients that they repair instead of brushing it under the rug

and hoping that, you know, it's fine and nobody cares and nobody remembers. Just go back. You can go back at any time to repair.

Debbie: Yeah. And it requires some vulnerability too on the part of the parent. And I imagine that that is hard for some people to, to be in that space.

Julie: Yeah, it's really true. But if you think about what you're modeling for your child when you do that, I mean, they're going to make all kinds of mistakes and we don't want them to feel that they're so vulnerable because they've done such a terrible thing. We want them to feel like making mistakes is normal and it's fine to say, you know, can we talk about that? I'm not sure I did it the way I wished I, I had, you know? And if we do it in that open way, it helps them enormously going forward.

Debbie: Yeah. Just to know that one bad moment doesn't define us and we can repair, make reparations, and move on.

Julie: Yeah, exactly. I think it's an old idea that parents have to be perfect and if they make a mistake, it's, it's shameful. And it's exactly what we're trying to change the dynamic on in our relationship with kids. When they do something that's not what we want them to do, we don't want them to feel shame for it.

Debbie: Right. So you have a really nice graphic in your book, not a graphic, a drawing, that is a picture of an iceberg. And I thought this was so interesting and could you walk us through that iceberg analogy? Cause it's just a nice visual I think for all of us to keep in mind.

Heather: Yeah, we love the iceberg analogy. I think that's one of my husband's drawings, so. So the iceberg, the visual analogy of the iceberg is that if you imagine that what you're struggling with, what you're seeing in front of you is a difficult behavior like hitting or not listening or whining or, or having a tantrum, that's like 10% of what's going on with your child is just what you can see poking its head above the surface of the water. But really our job as parents, and this is part of the attune step, is to go under the iceberg and imagine what is this little person in front of me struggling with, working on, going through, that is leading to this behavior? So it's, it's about shifting your focus from what's immediately in front of you and what you can see to going under the surface and figuring out what they're actually going through as a little person. And it's, I think a really, really important mentality or a sort of lens to see your child's behavior through because it really shifts you from judging or thinking you need to fix something that's at the tip of the iceberg to trying to understand more of what's under the iceberg and that actually, that actually does lead to more transformative change or a more, a deeper change.

Debbie: Yeah, I mean, I really like this because you know, you talk about what we see on the outside might be a tantrum or hitting or biting or just this really negative behavior. But then there's so many things that can be underlying that. Maybe they're tired or they're hungry or they're overstimulated and needing something. And this is something I used to think a lot about when we would experience really big behavior. And often, I know I hear this from so many parents, it can

seem like it comes out of nowhere, you know? So we'll just be humming along and then we've got an explosion. We're like, oh my gosh. And we might be connecting it with some little thing that happened that, so it seems like a gross overreaction. And oftentimes, you know, it could be something that happened that morning that was so little, like their favorite thing wasn't ready for breakfast. Or maybe they're the soft shirt that they really wanted to wear, you know, or it just could be the littlest thing. Or something that happened hours earlier that's all been building up to this moment. So I love this idea that we just want to be curious and kind of almost be detectives to try to figure out what might be underlying it so we can address that.

Heather: Yeah. And it's a nice feeling when somebody does that, when you get the feeling that someone's really trying to get beneath the surface. I mean, we sometimes behave in irrational ways as adults, you know, and we don't want that behavior to be what people are reacting to. We want them to be curious, just like you said, about what, what's really going on with us.

Debbie: Right. So talk a little bit about the second step, the setting limits. You have a lot of examples in your book on how to do this language wise and in lots of different kinds of circumstances. And I think this is another tricky one. And I'm just gonna ask you for an example or two of how we might even do it if our child is being really disrespectful to us or maybe they're doing something in a way like that's physically challenging to us or even unsafe, you know, they're directing their anger, frustration at us in a physical way. How do we go about setting limits in a respectful, calm way?

Julie: Oh, that's a good one. Well, we, and we have a whole chapter devoted to physical behaviors and we have a step that comes even before the A step if a physical behavior is happening in that moment, um, and we call it the safety step. And this means that we're going to send a clear message every single time that we're going to stop that physical behavior, either by putting up our hands to block their hands or depending on the age of the child and what they're doing. If it's a baby or a young child, sometimes turning their body around so their legs and arms are facing outward. Sometimes it just means moving your body out of the way. There are lots of different ways to do this depending on what the actual aggressive, they seem like aggressive moments, are like. But the idea is that your child over time very quickly gets this idea that you're stopping it very quickly and you're, you know, without any anger or frustration, you're just getting everybody safe. And you can say things like, let me just make sure I can get everybody safe and then we'll talk. So you do that before you go into the A step.

And jumping ahead to the limit setting step, for things like that limits can be pretty repetitive. You know, we don't hit because it hurts people. We don't push or shove or bite or pull hair because it hurts people. In the limit setting stuff we like to give kids a reason for the limits. You don't have to repeat that every single time, but we over time want to be really teaching them about the world, not just giving them limits. So for things like those, those physical behaviors, sometimes the limits sound a little repetitive and depending on how they land with your child, you might need to give them a broader explanation of what not hurting people means. So it depends on the situation and the child and how they respond

to the limit. Um, but we like that safety step because it kind of gives them that feeling from the get go that you are setting the limit. Even before you kind of circle back to the attune step.

Debbie: One of the things that we've said and it was someone who suggested we use this language was, you know, when you're calm, you know, I'll, I'll be happy to talk with you about this when you're calm and just repeating that over and over again. But I know with some of these kids, I'm just wondering do you have any advice for kids who maybe are more oppositional or they, so so setting a limit might actually escalate things before it deescalates them. Do you have experience working with parents whose kids responded in that way? Kind of took it more as a challenge like okay, I'm going to ramp it up then.

Julie: Yeah, I think that most of the time in that case, we see that people are skipping the attune step and that they may need to lean into the attune step a little more. And then I think there's a practice of almost like detachment when you're setting limits that really gives your child a feeling of like, I'll, I'll be here as long as you need me to. Like this is the limit and I'm not super emotional or invested in convincing you of it or like or, or convincing you out of your feelings or anything like that. I'm just, I'm delivering this in a, in a pretty calm way. It's very matter of fact and I totally get what you're struggling with. I can see, you know, you can describe what they're doing. Like I can see your body moving all over. I can tell that this really makes you upset. Um, I understand. And then the, I think it's just important to be a little bit like this is what it is and I, I totally get you, but here is the limit. And because when you get really forceful with your limit or you try to convince them, you know, I think a lot of kids it just engages their natural resistance and it becomes a power struggle.

Debbie: That's so great. I love that detachment. That's such a great, you know, I used to, I wrote this in my book, I used to pretend like I was Jeff Spicoli in fast times at Ridgmont high. Like I just had to be in his head for a little while and be like, hey man, I'm not okay with this. And when you're calm, we can talk, you know? But it can be really hard. I think you're exactly right. Many of us, we set those limits, but we're doing it in a threatening way or our voice is a sending a different message you know, then then what the words actually are. So that's a good reminder to stay as calm and even keeled as possible so we're not escalating the situation ourselves.

Julie: Yeah.

Debbie: So in your chapter on following directions, you have a chapter on listening, following directions and engaging cooperation, which is another big one I think for all kids. But it can be especially challenging for differently wired kids. You suggest that families create a family agreement and I really love this. Could you talk about what that is and how they work in families?

Julie: Yeah, well we love the idea of families coming together to talk about what kind of family they are. I mean the family gathering or family meeting can include things that aren't just around behavior. They can talk about upcoming events and trips and fun things too. But it's, it's a chance for everyone to come together and talk

about the agreements that they are going to have in their family. And of course the parents, you know have a pretty good idea what they want to be on that list. But they're really inviting solutions and ideas from their children, even if you know it's a tiny little two year old who has a silly idea. And what happens is children like to be part of a bigger whole. They like to be seen as capable, they like their ideas to be heard. And this way we're all on the same page and we've talked about it and they also see their parents united over the family agreements.

And in this context it's just a slightly nuanced difference from the word 'rules' in that we're a family, we're unique. You may go to someone else's house and they might not have the same family agreements, but this is how we do things in our family. And we can talk about it, we can talk about why and we can talk about at our next meeting we can talk about how is it working. So it's just a way to come together as a family unit and to feel like, wow, my family's really, we think about things and we do things mindfully and we do things in a way that we have each other's backs.

Debbie: And is there ever an age where it's too young to start that or is this something that we can just really do from the very beginning?

Julie: You know, even if you had a little baby, you could, you can do it. I mean babies have amazing receptive language and and they pick up, they absorb feeling, so it wouldn't be any harm in doing it as early as possible.

Debbie: Yeah, I love that. And I guess it just continues to evolve too then as kids grow up and they have more responsibilities in the house or maybe certain situations spark the need for some additions to the family agreement.

Heather: Yeah, and also if you can give, like my son has taken notes at our family meetings and so at the time that they're able to write, that's a great little job to give somebody in the family. To be the note taker, to really feel like they're part of it.

Debbie: Yeah, that's a good idea, like the secretary. We used to do, um, our family meetings were fuelled by Reese's Pieces. And so that was always, that's how we got everybody together. Everyone got like two Reese's Pieces after they shared something. That was a good motivator. Speaking of motivation, so you recently had a interesting article in the New York Times about rewards and punishments and I really enjoyed reading it. It's something again that comes up a lot in this community in particular. I had Alfie Kohn on the podcast recently and you know, we talked about his work and thoughts regarding rewards and punishments and I also recently had another expert on about ADHD and how so many kids with ADHD actually do need rewards. And I'm just kinda curious, could you share the premise of that article and um, I'm sure you got some interesting feedback from it as well.

Heather: Yeah, we sure did. It's something that people, it really gets people talking. And so the idea is really to not rely on rewards and punishments. Punishments are kind of easier to convince parents away from because they can make kids feel shamed. And usually when you punish somebody or you know, let's say timeout is one of the most common forms of punishment or taking something away and we, we

actually think that calm down time is really useful. So if timeout is, is reshaped or takes on a new face in our book, because we think that taking a moment to calm your body down if you do it with the right intention is super helpful. So timeout versus calm down. But in a punitive way, when you're harsh and punitive, kids don't really learn from punishments. They, you know, human beings don't really learn from punishments.

We just become shutdown. And the creative problem solving parts of our brain kind of shut down. So that's a little bit easier to convince parents to, to try to avoid. But parents are very, I mean rewards are just a part of our culture I feel like. It's, and it's not that we think that it's a terrible idea to use rewards. We just want to shift people from thinking about, the whole point is not that we're trying to shape behavior, we're not trying to manipulate and shape our kids. We're trying to understand them as human beings and to guide them and to be their partners in learning about the world. So it's not really like we have any problem with specific things that people do. If it's working, then you continue to do it. But having that mentality of my job is not to manipulate and shape behavior. My job is to go under the surface and understand and figure out what developmental skill my child's working on. How can I be their partner and, and help them and be there as their assistant to kind of give them the little boost that they need at every level? So it's not really about the behavior. Rewards and punishments are very much about the behavior.

Debbie: Yeah, I really like that answer. And uh, yeah, it's a tricky one. And you know that taking something away, I think is a default for so many parents because we have, you know, for most kids, for many kids, their currency is their screen time, right? Is their iPads or their devices. And so many parents hold that over them, you know, that this is going to go away unless, you know, when we use that unless language. And I think there's probably a lot of parents who are like, but if I don't have that, what do I have? You know, if, if we're dealing with something tough and you know, sometimes we feel like we just need it to stop or to address it in a way that's quick. And so I think, would you say that we have to remind ourselves that this is a long game that we're in and the more time we can kind of devote to problem solving now as opposed to trying to just do those quick fixes, the better off our kids will be?

Julie: Definitely. And I also think that it's, it's aligned with this idea of helping them develop their internal monitor of right and wrong. So they're ultimately behaving from a level of principle. I've, I understand the reason why this is the right choice to make or I have to do this right now or I can't do this right now rather than just like Heather said, being shaped from the outside in the moment. It's very, it's a very low level of morality to just try to get them to do or not do something in a moment, you know, by offering a reward or punishment. So it's definitely a much more complicated, messy, you know, long haul situation. But we want our children ultimately to behave from an internal moral place.

Debbie: Absolutely. I love that we're raising humans, not well behaved children. So I think we're going to have to talk about sleeping another time. So maybe we can talk about bringing you back on just to discuss sleeping cause I think there's probably a lot of interest in that topic.

- Heather: We could absolutely go on and on forever about sleep.
- Debbie: Yeah. Perfect. Okay. So before we say goodbye, then would you just share where listeners can connect with your work, find your book and maybe where you are on social media?
- Heather: Sure. Our website is thehappysleeper.com and we're on Instagram and Facebook @thehappysleeper. Our books are on Amazon and everywhere and we have, we do consultations with people all over the place for sleep or parenting. So yeah, our website is the best place to reach us.
- Julie: And if you're local to New York or L.A., we'll do in person consults with you, which we love.
- Debbie: Excellent. Okay, well listeners, I will leave links, all those links in the show notes pages so you can easily connect with Heather and Julie. And thank you so much to both of you for this conversation. I learn something from all my guests and this was no exception to that. So thank you. And I actually even just feel calmer in general after talking with you both, so thank you for that.
- Heather: That's wonderful. Thanks for having us.
- Julie: It was really nice. Thank you.

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- [Heather and Julie's website at The Happy Sleeper](#)
- [Now Say This: The Right Words to Solve Every Parenting Dilemma](#) by Heather Turgeon and Julie Wright
- [The Happy Sleeper: The Science-Backed Guide to Helping Your Baby Get a Good Night's Sleep](#) by Heather Turgeon and Julie Wright
- [Dan Siegel](#)
- [Which is Better, Rewards or Punishments? Neither](#) (New York Times)
- [Alfie Kohn on Practicing Unconditional Parenting](#) (podcast episode)
- [Sharon Saline on What Our ADHD Kids Wish We Knew](#) (podcast episode)
- [Heather and Julie on Instagram](#)
- [Heather and Julie on Facebook](#)