

The Parent-Teacher Conference Survival Guide

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SUMMARY

Dr. Becky discusses the complexities of parenting, particularly in relation to children's behavior at school and the pressure parents feel to appear as "good" parents. She shares a personal experience with her son's behavioral struggles and emphasizes the importance of trust, open communication, and collaboration with teachers to support children's development.

- Parents often worry that their children's bad behavior reflects their parenting skills.*
- It's crucial for parents to respond to children's struggles with empathy rather than anxiety about their own image.*
- Building a trusting relationship with children encourages them to seek help rather than hide their issues.*
- Open communication with teachers can lead to better strategies for addressing children's behavioral challenges.*
- The importance of separating a child's identity from their behavior during parent-teacher conferences is highlighted.*
- Parents should approach conversations with teachers as teammates, focusing on collaboration rather than defensiveness.*
- Using curiosity and understanding can help uncover the root causes of a child's behavior, rather than labeling them as "not on task."*
- Dr. Becky encourages parents to trust the process and their ability to support their children through difficult times.*

here's one thing I want to begin with I think a lot of us worry that our kids bad behavior anywhere and especially heightened at school is some reflection of our parenting and then when our kid struggles behaviorally emotionally academically to some degree we're not even responding to their struggle as much as to our need to feel like a good

parent through them having better behavior and then whatever they're struggling with kind of becomes a pawn in our game that we want to prove to everyone we're amazing parents and so we need them to act better on the playground or learn how to read or figure out some peer dynamic in a group situation I think today is going to give you Insight on all of that and you'll learn a little bit more about how things played out in my tricky parent teacher

conference I'm Dr Becky and this is good inside we'll be back back right after [Music] this you know that feeling when you're going a million miles an hour jumping from one thing to the next you're trying to finish an email and then you remember the laundry is still wet and then your kid is shouting about needing poster board for the project due tomorrow your phone won't stop buzzing and oh great you forgot that tonight is parent

teacher conferences sometimes life is just a lot stress doesn't have an on/off switch and we can support our body's natural response to it this is why I love Rituals stress relief featuring Bios Series technology it's designed to work with your body to help manage everyday stress it contains ashwagandha, elenin and saffron which combined can help us feel calmer, happier and less overwhelmed by everyday stress. Ritual uses clinically studied, traceable

ingredients so you know exactly where they come from plus as a Be Corp they're committed to both people and the planet. If you feel like daily stress is taking a toll on your body and mind you might want to give them a try. Get Ritual stress relief and save 25% on your first month at ritual.com. Good inside my younger son came home and ended up sharing a ton of bad behavior he had at school and I'm going to tell

you it was legitimately bad behavior here's what I want to do I want to walk through everything that happened between us while it's still fresh in my mind because I think a lot of us have this model of kind of coming down harshly on our kids or we have to punish them in order to get better behavior but now that I'm just a few days out I see how this whole Arc made such a big difference and I want to talk through

every part where I'm going to end up giving you stuff that's going to make you laugh is going to really relate to the day-to-day in your home and might give you permission to kind of interact with your kid and just a way that feels slightly better to both of you and ends up being more effective. Okay let me jump in so last week at the beginning of the week I said to two of my kids you know

parent teacher conferences are coming up so curious I'm going to hear from your teacher I honestly didn't even think much about it generally to be honest my kids have very good parent teacher conferences well I guess that stuck with my younger one in his head I think that was on a Monday it was on a Thursday I get home from work right away my son pulls me into his room now this is a kid who fashions himself

very independent very strong I come home from work and he's like whatever I don't care he really loves to think about himself as capable and he's not kind of so comfortable with his vulnerability and kind of maybe needing help from other people. Okay that's a little bit of backstory he pulls me in and I can tell he's really upset. He starts crying again with this type of kid very rare we sit in his bed and this is what he says

Mom okay I need to talk to you I think I've been so excited about vacation coming up this point I'm like oh boy I've had some bad behavior in school and I need your help. Okay just pause and let's take a moment together to almost imagine your kid saying and what I want you to do in the mental image with your kids I want you to pause the moment and remind

yourself something like do nothing say less I have time go slow between us as we pause this movie the thing that really did strike me and maybe I've trained myself to think this way I just I can't remember the last time this kid came to me saying he needed my help it's always like he'd avoid a story or he would say something in a funny way way he was really vulnerable he was clearly desperate for

my help I mean he dragged me into his room I also just happened to love that I'm excited for vacation like he was already kind of coming up with a narrative to explain all this bad behavior I thought very creative A+ on that now what did I have the urge to say before anything else I don't know some version of a lecture bad behavior in school what's wrong with you well tell me what have you been doing oh my

goodness oh my goodness am I going to hear from your teacher so either come down harshly kind of add my own anxiety to clearly his state of discomfort or just rush past any of the details and jump right into a solution I was on my game not always the case but I was on my game and I used what is truly one of my favorite lines to say to anybody when they come to you in a state of

distress I'm so so glad you're talking to me about this okay I'm going to do this a lot I'm going to pause and share my thought process and then get back into the story so my son's seven here's what I know about all kids and I can promise you definitely my seven-year-old because he is you know he has got that rebellious streak whatever happened in school like that is going to be way less serious than the kind of stuff this child is

going to get into in his teenage years I just know it not because I wish for him awful Behavior no but he's not such a people pleaser he's a third kid he loves to kind of try things he doesn't have a lot of fear and either way even if he was a kind of more people pleasing kid all kids can do all things and what I really care about with my kids is that their body and

codes when something bad happens I can go to my mom not when something bad happens I want to run away from my mom hide it from my mom I want them to know my mom is the first person I want to talk to for help not my mom is the last person I hope finds out about this because I'm going to be in trouble now we confuse that with permissiveness if one day my kid I don't

know is like drinking at a young age I'm not going to be like high five I'm so glad you came to talk to me let's take shots to celebrate zero brow okay but if my kid is drinking at an early age you better bet I think I'm going to be more helpful in figuring out what's going on and helping them have better Behavior than they're like I don't know totally irresponsible 16-year-old friend who I'm guessing has zero bits of helpful advice

to help my child get out of a struggle so that's my goal it really is and I know it has a long-term View and it's so different but our kids are encoding patterns of how things feel with us and those patterns and feelings will have more of an impact on what they do when they're older than what we say to them you can talk to me about anything their body's like oh I remember a lot of

things that ended up feeling worse I'm not talking to my parent I'm not going to go against my body's lessons Okay that line I'm so glad you're talking to me about this I really believe it's just one of those lines we need to like put in our back pocket and practice practice to the mirror even when your kid's not there so you have a greater likelihood of saying it I'm so glad you're talking to me about this now I'm going to walk

through it after that I just really like hugged him he was really I think he was looking at me like this like kind of like am I going to get a hug or am I going to get a lecture I I think we can all think about those moments in our childhood we're like what's coming did something bad am I going to get a hug or am I going to get a lecture and so I didn't really say too

many other things I I did I just gave him a hug I'm so glad you're talking to me about this look we're going to hear the details he was kind of like hyperventilating like it's okay I'm here we have time you don't to say anything just let me give you a hug I wanted his body our body encodes movements like I'm so upset I'm nervous I have this thing and what I wanted his body to remember

is there is a possibility of like connection and relative safety in that moment kind of calm down then he started telling me more this is what he said he kind of spilled it all out he's like okay well and really talking to my friends on the rug my teacher hates when I do that I've been talking to my friends on the rug okay CU I've been calling out in

class and he goes and I've been rushing all of my he goes I've been rushing my work he's in first grade so I'm like dying to know what he's been rushing so I said like Reading Writing math and he just goes all of it all of it Mom okay so I just kind of mirrored back okay so it sounds like you've been talking to your friends on the rug you've been calling out in class o and you've been

rushing like all of your work o sounds like a lot of stuff then he added this kicker and today oh my teacher hates when we run in from Recess to try to be first but I just really wanted to be first and I ended up kind of pushing and elbowing this other kid who also wants to be first that also happened today like okay okay so here's all the information now here's what I did again what did I want to say that better all

stop tomorrow that better all stop tomorrow but one of the things I've realized is how much when we set up our kid to go from here to here with anything our kid just get stuck because I know for me if I went to someone and I was like I can't speak any Spanish and they were like well you should be fluent tomorrow I'm like well I'm not even going to start learning Spanish like that's impossible that's so far from

where I am right plus I know my kid he likes to feel in control right and I know if I was like well you better be better tomorrow I just know he's going to hear that voice tomorrow and he's like well how can I feel independent I know I can continue doing all those things like just totally backfires so here's what I said both because I know my kid likes to feel in control but also because I want

to set him up for success and I really didn't mean this I said look first of all again I really think I can help you with this and we're not going to work on all of it at once we're just not because we can't go from here to here and it's just too many things so I want you to pick one thing talking on the rug calling out your work recess Behavior I want one thing to work on that's it I really sold

it he goes I want to work on all the things and this was like a little I was like no I just think that's like really too many sweetie I don't want you to have like all the things one thing he like okay I want three things I go what things you know he goes okay I want talking on the rug calling out in class and rushing my work right now here's what's so interesting when we say to our

kids here's what you have to do we separate the conflict we own the part of them that wants to get better and guess what they have to own the other part which is I kind of just want to keep doing what I want to do and I don't care if I get in trouble what's really interesting in this conversation as I look back on it is I owned let's just make really slow progress now let's just do like one tiny thing again when

you split the conflict and you own that part it almost made sense that my son was like no I want to improve across the board and I'm almost like fine right totally shift it so we started with talking on the rug now me being me I still just I always get caught because I feel like I have really good ideas like I really feel like I have really good ideas and just want to share them with my kid even though again

then there's almost a bad split I have the ideas and he has to own the rejection of the ideas but I started with saying I have a good idea why don't you just kind of turn your body away from your two really good friends in the class to which he said mom we sit in a circle like I can't just turn my back away which is interesting I didn't even know that so I just said to him oh I

didn't even know when you're describing where people were sitting that you sit in a circle thank you for telling me that I didn't even know that what what do you think so again I'm kind of giving him ownership and he's like well my teacher you know during quiet time when we're doing quiet reading there's always kids saying my teacher's name trying to get her attention and my teacher does this sign and then he kind of showed me

this sign it was something like this like I think pointer and Pinky up and thumb was kind of holding the other two fingers and the sign was going back and forth and he said maybe I should give that sign to my friends small win big win first of all what a small win he has something to do big win I said to him you're really thinking about how to solve that problem why is that a big win I would love my

kid when they're older and they're struggling to have the self talk of I'm someone who can really think of solutions to my own problem that's way better than thinking my mom always has the best ideas so he said okay and then he said and I've been calling out a lot and I said I wonder I wonder what would help you in that moment not call out now I'm a big fan of mantras right mantras take a moment where something's

hard and they just give us one specific thing to focus on now this was really interesting okay because I said to him I know kind of a mantra that would help me okay and he said well what would help you and I said waiting is hard and I can do it waiting is hard and I can do it and he just said I don't think that's it for me but okay and then what's really really nuts is he said something to me

that I think I shared with him over a year ago and haven't repeated since it goes back to those moments when you think you're delivering a gem and then you think oh that didn't land cuz my kid asked for pretzels but they do take it in and surface it a year later cuz I have a theory about why kids call out at least sometimes and IID shared it with him I think when he was struggling a

little bit a year ago and he said I think what I need to say to myself is I know the answer and it's okay if my friends don't know that I know see we have a sidebar I think that when a kid knows the answer to a question some kids love everyone else to know oh Alex knows the answer Alex is so smart and if I call out everyone knows that I know the answer and if I don't call out people

don't know that I know the answer there's almost like an insecurity there and his self talk was literally a reflection of something I said to him a year ago but he surfaced it so we then did a mini role play we really did I'm going to tell you the whole story I said okay I have an idea how about I'm you and you're the teacher and you ask a question and I am going to kind of like

say the Mantra to myself I'm going to try my Mantra your Mantra See which works better for me he said okay so he said to me who knows what 1+ one is I went like this o o o oh and then I said waiting is hard and I can do it and of course he yelled at me you don't say it out loud mom you're saying it out loud I said oh you're right okay I'm GNA say it

to myself right and I said it to myself and I said say it again but I'm going to try your montra and then I said I actually like the waiting is hard one personally and then he said oo how about now you're the teacher and I'm the student kids will actually Eng engage in this kind of role play if you often reverse it first because now it's not something I'm making my kid do it's kind of play so I said okay so I said

something like again 2 plus two is blank and he raised his hand and he unlike me didn't say it out loud and he said after I don't like the waiting one and maybe really he really does know himself that it's not about waiting for him it's about him needing to build enough confidence to know that it's okay if other people don't know that he knows the answer to everything so we did that and then we got to rushing and rushing

through his work and this was a really fun one together so we were talking about this like what would help you and he wasn't sure and I just said to him remember the tortoise in the hair do you remember the tortoise in the hair and he goes yeah because I know he knows that story I said what is the thing that's kind of the lesson at the end that everyone talks about and he's like oh right they say something and I

was like yeah what is it he's like I don't remember I don't remember I said okay I could give you a clue I'm going to give you the acronym and I said to him s a s wtr made it kind of G me's like oh what does that stand couldn't get I said do you want me to give you the first word goes yeah and I said remember SAS s WT R first s is slow and he lights up so slow and steady

wins the race right but then it became this kind of inside joke where we were saying to each other SAS wtr he like I'm going to say that to myself I'm doing my work okay have this whole conversation I gave him a hug I actually just ended how we began and said again I'm just so glad we're talking about this I'm so glad you came to me next morning I kid you not before we get on the bus he says to me

Mom SAS wtr today right and his sister goes what and he just goes nothing nothing I think it felt all of a sudden kind of like this inside special connection between us and it was it's almost like through that acronym he was saying this was actually a moment of learning that felt good to me I think the word that comes to mind the most to summarize this whole intervention I'm

going to pause because I want you to think if I had one word to summarize this way of intervening which Becky even herself would not do all the time we all get reactive we all need a doover but if there was one word what would it be and there's no right answer okay there no quiz but I'm going to share to you with you the one word that comes to mind for me trust trust that I have a good kid under

whole range of bad behavior trust in myself that I could help figure this out and I think one of the biggest things we lose access to when we're in a moment of panic and parenting is trust in time like I don't need to react a certain way like well you're getting your iPad taken away and I'm like goes no and then in some ways I'm like I trust that this

is going to change because my kids screamed in reaction to my random punishment like we almost trust our kids immediate reaction about a consequence more than we trust how something feels or ourselves or a process or time I have time to figure this out with him I trust that I have skills that I could teach him I trust that I have my own experiences where I

know I have some bad days and weeks and then I can get back on track I trust that and maybe at the core of everything we do here is just I have a good kid who's having a hard time I trust that I think sometimes we need permission to lead with trust instead of control and it feels bold and uncomfortable because most of us in our heart times people led with control not

trust and I think we remember it feeling awful and not helping but it's seared in our body as what's familiar and it's always hard to go against what's familiar and I know for me at various points in my life the thing that's helped me shift to something that's unfamiliar and therefore uncomfortable but a little bit more in line with my values is honestly just have some having someone model it for me seeing it oh

people do that oh that's a possibility and so there's no major lesson here there's nothing you have to do there's no homework I guess my wish for you is just to kind of takeen this story not as a sign of how you have to parent trust me if my son would have caught me on another day it would have been lectures and screaming and power struggles and just I would have been telling you a different story it just

happened to be one of those moments but what I want you to take in is the possibility of one day doing it a different way I want you to take in that you when you were younger deserve to have moments more filled with trust and control and I want you to take in that if this and it feels right and good to you I trust that you'll get there so one last note parent

teacher conferences are coming up yes my son is working on a bunch of stuff and yes it'll be moments that I anticipate a parent teacher conference will be messy and imperfect and the teacher will share some of these behaviors recently I've been on the road spreading the word about my new children's book that's my truck a good inside story about hitting I'm so grateful and excited to be on this book tour connecting with our community in

person and it's also true that being away from home can feel hard this is why I love Airbnb I can find and book a place that feels a little bit more like home away from home somewhere I can come back to at the end of the day and just recharge something else I love about Airbnb is that you can become a host while you're away by offering your home to someone traveling to your town your home might be worth more than you think

find out how much at airbnb.com host then we had the conference and here's one of the things I've really given myself permission to do over the years and I'd say looking back on earlier parent teacher conferences I think I didn't do it I think I had some type of like faking good like I need to prove to this teacher that my kid is perfect and that

I'm a really good parent and I kind of did that by trying to kind of conceal certain things or kind of cross my fingers like I hope they don't bring it up but I think the thing that shifted and relates to my mindset of I have a good kid who's in a hard stage or I have a good kid who has tricky moments or I have a good kid who's not a perfect kid is if I really Embrace that then I want

to unearth some stuff in the parent teacher conference because if I look at the teacher like another coach and we're both kind of coaching the same kid well we want to have the same information and I want to know the things that they're working on with my kids so I can be aware of how that might show up at home and they have to know the stuff I'm aware with my kid at home so they have a filter on when it

might come up at school and so I think I just went in with that kind of let's just have it all out and honestly the first question I got at the parent teacher conference was some version of hey just want to check in with you first how are things going what do you notice and then they actually said anything you've been hearing about related to school my husband and I kind of looked at each other and we kind of you know

had the car ride to talk about our approach and we just put it all out there you know and we actually put it all out there not in a panicked way but kind of with with the same love for my good kid as I had when he told me all of his kind of transgressions kind of said look we'll start out by saying we have heard that it's been like an especially tricky week we know this here's how we

heard about it and actually this conference it it couldn't have been better timing because we want to share some of what we see at home and how we approach it there we'd love to hear a little bit more detail around some of these stories at school and hear what's going on from your perspective and what a great time to come together and brainstorm about how we can all you know help you know my son and I think that

kind of set the tone for a lot of what came next because it was clear we were teammates it was clear there was no kind of avoiding the truth there was no desire from our part we kind of named this intention this intention to work together and unearth things and think about some concrete strategies that we could kind of both do at home and at school to help my son with kind of the core struggle he was having and then we

got into a lot of it and I think you know the other thing that happened in the conference that really stood out which was so helpful for me to hear you know my son has these wonderful teachers is they really did say to us look these are moments like these are moments we see these kind of difficult behaviors this is not who your son is and maybe you know I had you know in my presence two teachers who were also able to

separate identity from being Behavior but I think because we started out as teammates and we reduced defensiveness and I was so open about what I already knew was happening in terms of my kid struggle they didn't have to escalate anything in terms of oh well this is how he always is and you have to take things seriously no one had to establish that because I wasn't trying to hide something I wasn't trying to fake good I wasn't trying to

paint my kid as perfect and so that makes someone else a lot less likely to say yeah your kid's having all these you know issues and your kid's the problem kid because we kind of started out in the same page mentality and so the conference was a fruitful one it was really a great conference now does that mean it was great as in oh my goodness I have a perfect kid no was it great in terms of

oh my goodness that was definitely the easiest conference of the day probably not but I guess how we feel and how we name our feelings has a lot more to do with how we unconsciously Define those feelings than we realize and I think to me when my kids are young I try to Define great as holding my kids identity who they are separate from what they do and then actually almost wanting to hear about some of the things my kids

struggle with when they're younger so I have an opportunity to work on things before the stakes are a lot higher and so by that definition the conference was great although not without its moments that I had to kind of take a deep breath remind myself of that kind of mindset I have a good kid is going through a hard stage um and not without some kind of tricky feelings because of course me too it's just easier to hear your kid is

perfect my favorite kid in the class they never do anything wrong and that is definitely not what the conference was all about okay let's be honest the kids for whom parent teacher conferences are most challenging are kids prone to Defiance stubbornness and kids in general who are just super strong willed yes this is my child I told the story about this is probably why I'm so excited to do a brand new workshop on defiance to give

us a reframe about what's really going on and to come up with a plan for how to move forward in a way that's effective and actually feels better for everyone more about this in the show notes or at goodinside.com so here's a question I get all the time from parents how honest should I be with my kids teacher about the challenges I see at home I think the first thing before answering this question is just figure out what is my

goal of my conversation with my kids teacher I think we could answer this is my goal to help the teacher understand my kid and almost have like a leg up like if my teacher can know things that I already know about my kid and I can share things that maybe have worked or haven't worked or even places we stuck I'm kind of giving the teacher like a fast forward in terms of knowledge is my goal something very different if

my goal and this is why it's helpful to name it because I think when we say it it sounds ridiculous even if it is our unconscious goal is my goal for the teacher to think I have a perfect kid and a perfect family where nothing ever goes wrong well then you have an answer to your question how honest should I be probably not very honest because if you're honest then your kid like any other kid is going to look like a normal

kid who has stuff that they're great at and stuff that they're really working on I guess ask you to try on and maybe it's just for a month I always love the idea of trying to commit to something for a very short term you don't have to try on for your kids whole academic career or being honest with the teacher no no that's a huge commitment I wouldn't ask you to do that but if you tried it on for a month or a week or a

day or a single meeting and if you were able to say to yourself the fears I have that this is going to make the teacher look at my kid in an even more negative way what if I just recognize those fears and I kind of put them on a shelf right behind they can sit on that shelf and we'll keep them there for you you can take them back if they're useful but for now just put them to the side because too often

when we don't put our fears to the side they dictate what we do instead of allowing ourselves kind of the freedom to experiment and so what would it look like to be really honest right first of all you can name that this is new for you I would actually do that to a teacher hey in the past I haven't always been honest with teachers about everything my kid is struggling with at home I think I've been nervous about

that I'm really trying to do something new this year because I'm guessing in your seat having more information just helps you show up in a way that's more supportive and I know we're all on team Ryan whatever your kid's name is so I would name that naming in any situation that you're nervous about doing something new helps the other person understand your stumbles right or sometimes you might have a new Tone If you're trying out something new and now

they can say oh this this is the first time Becky has been honest with the teacher so no wonder it's a little awkward and it almost holds you responsible to do the thing you're going to be a lot more honest in a conversation if you started the conversation telling someone you're trying to be honest than if you just try to do it and then you might notice a teacher's gaze or something in their face and you might over interpret it as

oh this teacher all of a sudden hates me or hate my kid and then all of a sudden you might go back in the direction again of those fears but if you've named it up front that's a lot less likely to happen so I guess my answer is instead of just how honest should I be I would say well what am I trying to accomplish what have I tended to do is that working in terms of that goal and

if it's not what would it be like to experiment just one day just one meeting with pushing myself in the direction of honesty and sharing information here's another question that is really really poignant but what do I do if I disagree with the teacher assessment of my child this is so important and my guess is going to happen like often so number one let's just start with a framework again the glasses we wear and you might be

thinking I don't wear glasses but but we all kind of wear glasses we all have glasses that are on at all times and they basically kind of dictate how we interpret things in our ambiguous most things are ambiguous right and so let's just notice those glasses one set of glasses that a lot of us tend to wear and we can get into it maybe later this is something that I would need more time but it kind of comes from

a place where that used to be adaptive in our early years and maybe no longer is and that set of glasses is some version of people are kind of out to get me or people think negatively about me and my family and if you even have that set of glasses on you're more likely to interpret a teacher's negative comments about your child as oh my goodness this teacher hates my child or oh my goodness my kid's going to get kicked out of

school I've had this conversation with so many parents oh my goodness the teacher is telling me that basically my son my daughter doesn't get along with peers and there's no way they're going to get to first grade oh my goodness my kid is behind in Reading I think they're going to get kicked out of the school oh my goodness my kid is having a behavioral issue and they're going to get sent to detention for the rest

of the year and I'll ask questions and those bigger themes weren't said but our mind goes there so quickly if you assumed that teachers feedback about your kid was not about who your kid is or whether they belong in class or whether they're smart or whether they're nice if you just assume that is not what a teacher ever means just as an assumption and instead a teacher is trying to give me very specific advice so we can problem solve together number

one you're just going to be less likely to interpret a teacher's comments as meaning anything so big and Global about your kid and number two you're going to feel more grounded okay so that's number one is just your mindset assume your teammates step two if you notice that the teacher is talking to you in a way that provokes your own defensiveness and in a way this is a shift we're not saying the teacher is talking to me in a

way that is mean about my kid we're actually saying the teacher is talking to me in a way where I notice I'm getting defensive I just want to tell you difference in the first we're really focused on the other person on the second I'm actually really focused on noticing my response because now from that place you're going to be able to communicate a lot more effectively if I interpret the teacher's words as a sign of the teacher just doesn't like my kids

I'm probably going to respond like this that doesn't happen at home at all I don't really know what you're talking about there's really like a distance there's kind of an unconscious way of saying we're not in the same team you don't get my kid you don't get me I don't really like you very much and all of a sudden it gets adversarial If instead I'm aware of whoa I'm noticing I'm getting defensive I'll probably say something like this hey you know we're

in the same team here and can you just say that in a different way because I'm noticing I'm trying to kind of justify the behavior in my head and I know that's not going to be productive or you could just say hey I notice I'm kind of feeling defensive about my kid as we're talking that's not going to be productive so could you say that in another way so we can have just a more effective conversation I know we're both on the

same team here and we want to proceed along that way I'm only able to say that because I'm noticing my urge to be defensive which won't happen if we're obsessed with noticing all the different kind of things that are wrong about a teacher and how they communicated now the last thing I want to say here is it's amazing how conversations with the teacher can go if you really set the stage of being teammates right at the beginning

honestly think about it in a workplace it's very very similar right think about if you're having a little bit of a heated conversation with a manager but from the start one of you says hey before we even start this conversation I just want to establish something we're on the same team we both want the best for then I would name your you know child's name when you start that way it's much harder to get to a place where

things feel incendiary and it's much easier to get to a place where you actually get to the heart of the issue and actually do work together because I really do believe all parents and all teachers they really do internally want what's best for a kid and as long as we can kind of set up a moment in a way that feels kind of on the same team the conversation will probably proceed along that route next question what do I do

when I keep hearing from the school that my kid is not on task what exactly does that mean and how can I talk to a teacher about it okay this is a term that I have to be honest there's something about the term that doesn't quite resonate with me so that's maybe what's going on for you um and at the same time I know this is a very popular kind of school term so let's break it down I think when school

says a kid is not on task they're kind of saying a kid is not going through the flow of activities and all the transitions along the lines of kind of our expectations so for example let's talk about younger kids being on task might mean being able to sit in a circle and not always poke the kid next to you being on task for a slightly older kid might mean my kid is not able to wait in

line and they struggle with any place in line except if they're the line leader older my kid is not on task might mean oh when we ask a kid to be quiet and do some in-class work they tend to get distracted or they don't finish the kind of homework sheet in the allotted time so on task I think kind of means there's a gap between our expectations of where we want a kid to be and the behavior a

child is actually showing now why don't I love this term well I think in general I probably don't love things that judge a kid by an overt Behavior avior because I personally am a lot more interested in okay what is the behavior telling us what is the story underneath what is as a lot of you know one of my most favorite questions what is the MGI what is the most generous interpretation what is the most generous interpretation of a

kid poking a classmate at Circle time or not waiting in line unless they're the line leader or not kind of showing that they're capable of getting through and in class assignment in a quiet way in all of those kind of explorations I wouldn't personally want to talk to a parent about whether a kid is on task or not but I might say hey I'm observing this right so I'm making this up I'm observing that Taran is having a hard

time sitting quietly in the rug one of the things we'd really love to work with Taran on is figuring out how to kind of regulate his desire to be silly and move around and how can we work with him to get that done here's something we're working on at school and hey it would be great to jump on the phone for 5 to 10 minutes cuz we wonder if this is showing up at home as well and we have some

ideas of how you might practice some of this at home that really resonates with me I think what happens for a lot of parents is they get an email just saying Taran isn't on task during Library time because he's always poking the other students and then a parent is kind of left spiraling like oh my goodness I have a bad kid and my kid who can't be quiet during a library time is never going to learn how to XYZ and then oh my

kid is going to get kicked out of out of school and then they see the teacher and they're kind of waiting like this waiting to hear oh sorry your kid can't go to the school anymore when really it's a smaller thing that hopefully doesn't become a bigger thing if we actually get to the root of it and help kids build the skills that they're missing so I guess my one way of moving this forward is if you've received that

message we can help get to the root of it by just leading with curiosity instead of defensiveness how does that sound well it might be writing back hey it sounds like Circle time's a problem it would be great to get on the phone for 10 minutes and figure out what's really happening we both know Taran is a good kid who must be having a hard time and I'm looking forward to talking this through so we could figure out what we

could do at home and at school to help him out right same thing with work right H seems like taran's having a hard time focusing on math for that 8 Minute in-class silent math work project hm I wonder what's getting on his way I hear it's been hard would you be able to set up a brief meeting or can we dig into this more over email together to figure out what's going on is it really the

math is it the focusing is it not getting attention from other kids is it struggling and not knowing how to ask for help let's talk that through together because I feel like if we get to the root of the issue both at home and at school we can work on things to help Taran do better in that moment in the classroom so I think that phrase on task we can really break down what is actually going on and if you don't know

that's okay activate your curiosity remember you have a good kid who's having a hard time and you and the school can really work together as teammates to figure it [Music] out do you want to learn more about how we're celebrating being an inconvenient woman at good inside tap the link and show notes or head to inside.com for [Music]

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