

Handing School Challenges in 2020 with Kathy Gordon

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SUMMARY

Kathy Gordon discusses fostering a love of learning in children, particularly those facing challenges in traditional educational settings. Drawing from her experiences as a single adoptive mother and a certified instructor of hand-in-hand parenting, she emphasizes the importance of emotional safety and connection in the learning process, especially during stressful times like homeschooling.

- *Children learn best when they feel safe and connected; stress inhibits learning.*
- *Hand-in-hand parenting offers tools like listening partnerships, special time, and play listening to support emotional well-being.*
- *Creating a playful and humorous family culture can alleviate anxiety around learning and foster cooperation.*
- *Gathering evidence from alternative education models (like unschooling) can help dispel fears of children falling behind.*
- *Emotional projects may arise during stressful times; addressing children's feelings can facilitate learning.*
- *The importance of scheduling connection time throughout the day to enhance children's ability to engage in learning.*
- *A resource package is available to help parents navigate these challenges, including videos, booklets, and community support.*
- *Parents are encouraged to seek emotional support for themselves to better support their children.*

hi there lovely hand-in-hand parents my name is kathy gordon i'm a certified instructor of hand-in-hand parenting i'm coming to you from los angeles where it's hot hot hot and um i'm here to talk to you today about love of learning how to um really support our kids in loving learning um i'm the single adoptive mom of a 16 and a half-year-old son

uh who has struggled with learning all of his school years you know it's interesting because when he was in preschool and kindergarten and um he and even you know before that he was such a curious kid he was a he always asked questions he was always exploring he was always making plans he was always inventing things um and then school happened and um when

he faced with he actually couldn't learn to read and um so uh faced with those learning challenges he got the idea that he was stupid so and this was very um difficult for me because school is like i was a socially backward kid i i had no idea how to make friends i was the one i'm the oldest of seven so i was like an adult kid and i um you know i i i could make conversation with kids i

had no i mean with adults i had no idea how to socialize with my peers so you know i always had my nose in a book and i loved learning i love you know i'm the kid who um uh you know it was a three-page paper and i'd do ten um so this was really challenging for me that my son really struggled with school and struggled with learning so fortunately i found hand in hand and we're kicking off a um

a love of learning um campaign um and we're bringing you some resources so i'm gonna talk more about that in a minute but i just wanted to talk a little bit first about some of our ideas about learning and our approach to learning um and then you know i'll get back to my story with my son and uh uh how we navigated um those learning challenges and particularly his um you know the belief that he that he

was stupid um so what we want to say about learning is based in brain science and what brain science tells us and there's actually some research studies on this is um that um children learn well when they feel safe and connected and um so when the brain is under stress it absolutely cannot learn

um and so um the good news about that is that we have some tools to help you help your children to feel safe and connected so that they can learn now this is a particularly challenging time many of you have been forced into homeschooling um some of you maybe your school is open but only to shut right back down again or they're opening in a hybrid fashion

where your kids are only going part-time and so this is an extremely stressful time for us as parents and we have some ideas around that as well so for those of you who are not familiar with our tools we have four parent-to-child listening tools special time of setting limits stay listening and play listening and then we have a parent-to-parent a support tool called listening

partnership and um one of the things that um some parents have found extremely stressful is you know being this having to do this role of being both parent and teacher um i homeschooled my son for five years and that was always a big struggle of like okay now i'm the teacher now you have to do you know but sort of and there's some sort of idea

that we somehow have to lose our warmth in order to be that um uh that teacher and we're here to tell you that you do not have to lose that warmth at all um we're here to tell you that um things are gonna go better when you are feeling relaxed and playful and you're giving your kids this non-verbal you're communicating this nonverbal message i'm not worried and that's particularly

challenging in this time when we're worried like how are we going to balance everything how are we going to um you know work get chores done and be available to homeschool our kids um and particularly the uncertainty of okay yes we're opening up oh no now we're not we're closing down um so and and and even if you are sending your kids like being worried about their safety so i'm going to start with our

our tool of listening partnerships where um it's a pretty easy mechanically in that you're going to get with

another adult you're gonna um one person's gonna listen the other person's gonna share it's a great opportunity the pers to to like dump all those worries um the person who's listening is just gonna hold space for you they're not going to give advice they're not going to refer to anything you say they're just going to hold that space

for you and um and they're just going to hold the thought that you're good everybody you're talking about is good and you're going to figure this out so this is the place where you bring all your worries and you bring like the fact that the you know the the this zoom situation that your school district has set up is just not working for your child you bring the fact that you're you you really can't stand this teacher um uh

you know and it feels you you know you're all of your worries that your child is falling behind you bring all of those lists to listening time so that when you are with your kids you really can communicate this um this nonverbal message of i'm not worried um so um and then the mechanics of it are then you switch the timer goes off uh your partner asks you some silly little detailed question to help you reconnect your cortex and you switch um

so that's our tool of listening partnerships and that if is really gonna help you get through this very uncertain time it's gonna you know all what we've seen is that um and it's not just us it's not just hand in hand there's um lots of organizations that that are working with people just to listen and we see that uh that that there could be a victory of human spirit um when in the

in the worst situations when um people are heard when people are listened to um so we highly recommend that you um uh investigate getting a listening partner um through uh our um large facebook group hand-in-hand parent connect or um our parent club um [Music] which and i can tell you more about the parent club in a bit too so um okay so

so that's the first thing we're going to suggest is that you find somebody to listen to you so that you can offload some of this stress then the next thing this is a this is a a um a real um passion of mine is encouraging parents to do this is that we're going to encourage you to feed your funny whatever that looks like um because so you know so now you're responsible for this you may be responsible for the

school day or if you're not responsible for the school day you know you're still responsible for getting your kids up and out the door on school on time and you're you might have a lot of anxiety about sending them back to school so um one way to get cooperation is to set this tone of playfulness create this culture of laughter in your family and if you were not played with when you were a child or if the

if the um you know the atmosphere the culture of your family is one a very of seriousness this may be a struggle for you so watch some videos of some old uh old-time physical comedians um who made lots of money making fun of themselves dick van dyke the original three stooges lucille ball you know um uh uh pick up larry cohen's book playful parenting oh and and um i said we're gonna there's a resource package for you as

part of this campaign and in that research package is 100 ways to play so we're going to be giving you lots of ideas as well on how you can create this culture of laughter and play laughter is so important because it's um it's connecting and it's the release of tension and you can't hold worry and laughter in your nervous system at the same time so i we highly recommend that you feed your funny and so you can create this culture of

laughter in your family so you get up in the morning you come to wake up your kids and your way you wear your underwear on your head um it's way it's walk backwards day you're gonna every everything you do you have to walk backwards um they ask for the milk and you take uh the pickles out of the refrigerator you can't figure out how the milk turned green so you're creating this culture of lightness and and and laughter in your family and one

of the things that also that that does is it makes it okay to make mistakes um you know you've got a kid who's a resistant who's having struggling with learning and um because you've got this culture of laughter uh because you've made some extra copies of the worksheet they need to do uh so you you play this game where you get to rip up one of the copies you know and you get laughter going um that release of laughter is gonna

um it is gonna release some of the tension that they may have around that i can't i can't i can't i can't um and then the last thing i want to suggest is that you you gather evidence there's a huge fear of kids falling behind i want to recommend that you gather evidence from unschoolers or um there's the sudbury schools there's summer hill that's been around for like 60 or 70 years in in um in england in the uk where

um it was child-led learning and what um those schools discovered all of their evidence showed that um when kids when kids are um in an atmosphere where they're not being forced to learn but um they're you're following their natural curiosity that they actually learn much faster so so we want to dispel this notion of falling behind

and we highly recommend that you that you gather evidence of of kids who you know maybe they didn't learn to read until they were 11 or 12 or 13 and then they went to harvard you know so um that's the that's the other thing i want to i want to recommend um and um [Music] so uh i wanna give you a little um anecdote around learning with my son so um my son uh had difficulty with his

eyes tracking and his eyes converging properly and and even and so it was very difficult for him to learn to read and even after we did um some daily a daily developmental movement therapy program that healed that that heal decision he still had a lot of anxiety around reading and around learning in general um and um we were homeschooling at the time and so i gave him this assignment to read these these short paragraphs and and underline the

topic sentence or main idea um and he was like i can't i can't i can't i can't and so um you know i'm thinking uh he can't right so i'm you know my mind is reeling of like oh now what therapy do we need and you know how much is it gonna cost and you know and so uh for a couple days i did like a workaround like okay well this this uh this exercise is sort of the same

idea but you don't have to read um and um and um then i got listening time and what i worked on is like my fears around um my son not being able to read i told you that my nose was always in a book and i um and that i uh you know that i love to read that it's always been a passion of mine even an escape of mine and so this idea that my son was not

going to be able to read was really sad i mean i just had a lot of grief around it um uh one of the things also we recommend that you work on a listening time is what school was like for you was it easy for you was it difficult for you you know um uh you can work on like you know what other what you're afraid other parents are going to think about you and teachers are going to

think about you so all those are all great things to work on in listening time so i was working on my grief around my son not being able to read and i really cried hard about it and then um i had this light bulb of moment of like i don't know what his eyes can see i don't know what his brain is processing i do know that he has feelings around it and and those feelings may be getting in

the way of him being able to do this so that afternoon i decided i was going to set a limit of yes sweetie this is the exercise we're doing we're doing this little reading these paragraphs and again you want can't i can't i can't and i i don't know if he i think he had his shirt off or took his shirt off and he started to kind of whip it with me with it you know he was like all

that fear was being focused on me and i grabbed a blanket and i held this blanket up and so now it pretty quickly turned playful where he's whipping me over the blanket trying to whip me beside and under the blanket and he's laughing and so i took the blanket and i kind of wrapped it around his arm that had held the shirt and like pulled him towards me and we bumped and we collapsed on the floor now

we're laughing then he grabbed a pillow and i grabbed the pillow turned into a pillow fight he heaved this big sigh and then he said can i have special time so i said sure we got five minutes so he wanted to throw the football so we went outside threw the football around for five minutes he came in he sat down he did the exercise like that as if there wasn't even any issues and i was blown away

i was like you know see what happened when we got the feelings out so and just for a recap so i got listening time then i set a limit then i was stay listening to his upset then it turned playful so i was play listening and then we did special times that was like all five tools in that one situation um so that so that was our that was one little experience where i really got to see how if you

if if you allow your child to get the feelings out of the way then they actually can learn um so i hope my little uh talk has been helpful um this morning if you have an either this evening wherever you are or uh crack of dawn if you're uh down in the southeast the southern hemisphere um if you have any questions i'm happy to answer questions uh here in the comment section um

and um and i want to tell you a little bit about this campaign we're doing so we have this wonderful package of resources to help your child learn now you may be being bombarded with resources you know every parenting organization out there is we are everyone is so eager to help you um i'm a little biased in that our resources are really going to help you

um have this confidence be able to communicate this message of i'm not worried and you're going to be able to um uh help your child release any tension around learning um and uh and and so that this time forever for you know these ideas that we're giving you are are useful way beyond this pandemic and way beyond this uncertain time so

there's five videos um there's a video on using play there's um one on um using our tools with a resistant learner there's um two videos on coping with overwhelm um one on helping your kids with this whole social distancing that's what a lot of parents are asking us like this social justice thing thing and our answer to that is that you know um using the tools and communicating this nonverbal message if i'm not worried

your kids can thrive even though yes they're absolutely gonna have feelings about me not being able to see their friends they're absolutely gonna be sad be scared um you know and you can by listening to those feelings um you can help them through this time so that's our message about this tough time of having just social distance and maybe not being able to see your friends or not being able to play with them when you actually go to school

so we've got a video on that and then um uh patty does a wonderful um uh talk on um separation which that might seem counterintuitive like why are we talking about separation when many of us are having to have our kids home 24 7. well it's interesting there's this there's this interesting piece about fear is that um [Music]

in order to work on fear in order for our kids to work on fear we actually have to be there and present for them and so you may have found during this time when you've been with your kids so much is that there are many more feelings this may be where they're working or bedtime gets more difficult um or there may be some regressions in um in potty training or going to the bathroom um you suddenly your kid becomes a picky

eater and we call these emotional projects so so the ideas that patty's working gives you in this video are about working on any kind of emotional project because all emotional projects are driven by fear we see that most prevalently in any kind of separation um uh and for those of you who are sending your kids back to school you know it could have been that they've been fine going to school but because of the shutdown in the

spring and the fact that they've been home with you all this time now um going to school separation seems hard so that's it's a really valuable uh video that um uh patty uh is offering that we're offering in this package um then we've got a booklet on how how children's emotions work um as i told you um a um a a downloadable pdf on 100 ways to play um and then we've got some great resources just around scheduling

um uh you know everybody's going to find their own way with scheduling one of the things that we want to tell

you is that the most important thing about your scheduling is that you're putting in connection because that is going to help your kid be able to sit in front of zoom that is gonna um or if you're you know help them do the worksheets that are being provided for them that you're printing out for them um so

really building in that connection throughout the day um and you know kind of um what this time is really requiring of us is being the ceo um and of our families and i say that the ceo stands for chief emotional officer of our families so that's what it's really requiring of us of being really mindful about our kids emotional health because again going back to what i said in the beginning

if unless kids feel safe and connected and you know we they they're not gonna be able to learn um so uh and they're gonna be sending you really loud signals that they're not feeling connected um they're gonna dig in their heels they're gonna refuse they're gonna you know throw tantrums they're they're um uh there's gonna be meltdowns so those are signals that your child is not feeling connected and that they can't think

so whatever your schedule looks like we we really encourage that you think of um uh just like the ceo of a business thinks about their their employees and their productivity and like oh do we need more meetings do we need more communication do we need more safety protocol do we need more you know supplies you know that you as the ceo of your family um really look at their look at the connection and the flow of the day

and building in connection and creating that culture of laughter and setting the tone the first thing in the morning creating connection first thing in the morning um and that you as a leader do what all good leaders do which is to get yourself some emotional support so um so we're asking for so that's our whole uh package of resources for you for this love of learning campaign we're asking for a donation of six dollars or more um

your donation will help us support uh parents like you and be able to offer more of these kinds of resources to be able to offer more of uh scholarships to our um our starter class um which uh i teach and um would love to be honored to have any one of you in in my class and um a starter class is our foundational class where you focus on one tool each day so if you like structure for learning

it's a great structure um and um uh you know be able to provide the the the support for parents in our parent connect to facebook group um and uh and um and also um uh we have a scholarship rate right now for our parent club um and because i'm the co-moderator of the parent club

uh i'm gonna just uh toot our harm for a little bit and just tell you that if you join the parent club we are giving you coaching on demand we we love uh lots of questions we want you to post your questions there we have a private facebook group just for our a parent club um every single question gets answered by myself or emily gray murray where is both the instructors who are the co-moderators um it gets answered within a couple

hours uh um you get um a weekly instructional email you get um a weekly support call paddy comes in once a month and does um a q a webinar um and it's just an extraordinary uh support community you know in this

time of uh social distancing or physical distancing you know it can we can feel very isolated and so um we've created the the you know the

parent club can give you the kind of support to get to weather to weather this storm so um so that's um uh our uh um our uh love of learning campaign and a little bit about some of our other resources um we are so honored to support you we hope that um you will reach out and ask us for support because we have uh resources for you we really hope that you will take

advantage of this wonderful love of learning package of resources and we are here for you we are here for you when uh times are hard and we know times are hard right now so um please reach out um we'd love to support you and thanks so much for tuning in today uh we'll see you um on our facebook group in our parent connect facebook group or in the parent club

all right have a great day sweet dreams bye