

From Fear-filled Conflict to Parenting as a Team

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SUMMARY

Nicole, a former speech therapist and mother of two, shares her journey of transitioning to homeschooling and unschooling while navigating her parenting values. Through her experiences, she has learned the importance of empathy, respect, and understanding her children's needs, while also addressing her own past and intergenerational trauma.

- *Nicole emphasizes the significance of empathy and respect in her parenting approach.*
- *She discusses the challenges of parenting with a focus on knowledge and perfectionism, leading to anxiety and control issues.*
- *Nicole reflects on her childhood experiences and how they influence her parenting style, aiming to avoid repeating patterns of intergenerational trauma.*
- *The concept of reparenting herself emerged as a powerful tool for healing and growth.*
- *Communication with her husband has improved, focusing on shared values and understanding each other's needs.*
- *Nicole highlights the importance of validating children's feelings while also recognizing her own needs as a parent.*
- *The couple has adopted a proactive approach to conflict resolution, fostering a healthier environment for their children.*
- *Overall, Nicole's journey illustrates the complexities of parenting and the importance of connection and understanding in family dynamics.*

[Music] hello and welcome to the your parenting mojo podcast today we are here with nicole who is going to tell us a little bit about her family and some of the changes that she's been making over the last year or so and how that's really affected her and her interactions with her family so welcome nicole i'm so glad you're here thank you jen it's so great to be here

so i wonder if you can maybe just start by telling us a bit about you and your family who who are you where are you who else is with you sure um i'm nicole i live outside of philadelphia and um i guess my past career i was a speech therapist in the school settings and i work mostly in early childhood and preschool and now i am home with my two very spirited and sensitive kiddos i have a four-year-old son and a

six-year-old daughter and i also am supported by my very supportive husband um jack so um yeah we're all here together and i ended up leaving my job because i wanted to be the main influence for my kiddos while they were in their early childhood years since i spent so much time learning about it and working with other people's

families and now we are here and we are homeschooling and unschooling and i feel like the kids are doing really

well considering the circumstances yeah considering it has not been an easy year for anybody by any stretch of the imagination okay awesome so i'm wondering about i i just want to get to know you a little bit more as a person and and the beliefs and the values that really shape you can you can you tell us about that both on a personal level as a person but also as a parent sure um i think so i i definitely have started

identifying with being a very empathetic and sensitive person which i used to think was problematic and maybe one of my weaknesses but i'm thinking that it's driving the things that do make me who i am so i have i have to always uphold i guess respect and justice those are things that when i see them violated i feel it i feel it in my body and it's kind of it's really hard for me to to see those things happening so um

those are definitely big values for me and i guess curiosity is big i think i've always kind of sought to grow more as a person always find out more information when i was working i would be taking courses constantly just because i wanted to know the most i could know about what i was doing and um that's also made me really value science if science can be a value um it is to me

and um you know some of the places i've worked i've been surrounded by some really great clinicians that were always doing research and using evidence-based practices to drive their uh therapy with the kiddos and that inspired me and also i married into a family of phds and researchers and there's just people around me that are always looking for the why and the evidence so to me that is something that i you know hold very close to my

i guess yeah that's one of my big benefits and it seems as though that your values could potentially create problems as you as a for you as a parent what are you doing around the idea of respect where if if you're coming from sort of the mainstream not not a value that's primarily considered important in parenting what was that shift like for you or was it a shift or how did that show up for you as a parent

well i don't think kids are born knowing how to respect their parents um they're just going about and getting their needs met and doing that in whatever way they can and it doesn't show up like respect so is it our job as the parents to teach them respect is this something that we can say you need to do this or is this something that we show to them by you know living it and showing them respect and showing our partners and our

family respect so um yeah it definitely is something that i still think about now and notice if um the kiddos aren't necessarily showing me respect but it's also not my job to teach them how to do it or tell them to do it i know that that's something that will come in time when i treat them with it so yeah yeah and then the other thing he said was you you were talking about science but to me i was thinking it's sort of a

thirst for knowledge as you mentioned as well in your work and um and that that can be paralyzing as a parent where we feel like oh if i just had this one piece of knowledge that everything would click and all of the struggles i'm having with my child wouldn't be struggles anymore does that resonate yes you know when i started out

parenting i didn't really know what i was doing like most parents and i did think that if i read every

book that kind of aligned with my values that i could just figure it out and get the recipe for how to parent and how to get kids that turn out great and um yeah it didn't really work like that tell me more what was what didn't work i think that there was just this fear and anxiety of not getting it right so if i didn't follow the book to the t

that i would somehow screw up the kids and that if my partner didn't follow my instructions he would then screw up our kids so you know it turned into this controlling thing where i was trying to control him i was trying to control the situation i remember shouting to him in the other room during diaper changes and saying you're not letting them know what what you're doing first you're not asking for consent to change the diaper

and just thinking well this is the end of the world and we've already screwed them up so um yeah it was definitely you know it brought out this perfectionist side in me that we just had to get it right and we had to do what the book said and yeah it caused a lot more fear and anxiety than i probably would have liked yeah i can imagine and and i'm wondering if that fear and anxiety ultimately comes from a

place of uh related to intergenerational trauma where the the relationship that you may have had with your parent may have been one that you're sort of looking at and thinking okay in some ways i see that she did the best that she could and in other ways i i want something different how does that show up in your relationship with your kids probably the drive to know more and do better came from knowing that there was this

possibility of intergenerational trauma um i know my mother's upbringing was not so easy for her and she didn't have a lot of support from her mother and you know when my mother had me she was really young and she was a single mom and we didn't have a lot of money she was working two jobs a lot so she showed up for me the best that she could and a lot of times you know she would be

triggered and she would have her big feelings and then i too would have my big feelings so i guess i didn't always feel safe to share my big feelings with her and i didn't want that for my kids i knew that that was an important piece of having a relationship with someone to be able to say hey this isn't working for me or this upset me or i'm just feeling this way and know that that would be received by the other

person in a safe way but i had to be really sensitive around my sensitive mother and make sure that i didn't upset her um because i'd feel really guilty for that because she was doing the best she could and um yeah it was also a bit scary right it's a bit scary when your parents yell at you so i really didn't want that for my kids and if i write all the books then i would be able to just

stop the intergenerational trauma yeah and there's so much more to it than that isn't there yeah so it's a real sense that uh it feel it feels like you're re-parenting yourself and trying to give yourself some of the things that she may have tried to do and just wasn't able to meet your needs wasn't able to see that you were a person who had needs as well at the same time as you're learning how to do this for children as well for your

own children yeah i think so when i joined the membership i thought we'd be getting lots of information and lots of support which we did the right piece of information that would make everything but i didn't expect the reparenting piece i think that was something that well i know it was something that i had never heard of yeah but it was something that caught me by surprise and was really powerful for me

um just to kind of go back and talk to that younger person who i never knew was still in there but she is and just let her know that your feelings are important and you don't have to be scared to voice your feelings and you're safe in all situations and you're doing okay so yeah that piece was i will never forget that honestly and and uh for people who are watching this

was a a module of content in the membership and nicole gainly volunteered to be coached in in front of a small intimate group of people that she knew fairly well by then and and to just kind of go back to what it was like to be that young person who had these needs that weren't met and i mean yeah that gave me the chills as well and and seeing that the shift that happened in you to be able to say

yeah i had needs and and i wasn't asking for the world i i just needed to be heard and for somebody to understand or try try and understand try and empathize with me and to be able to to say that yes those were valid and also okay now now i can start to see how i can do that for my own children as well i mean it's it was it was amazing to see you go through that i felt really

lucky that i had the chance to go through a re-parenting coaching session and so i i actually don't know the answer this question how did you find my work in the first place well i guess someone had given me mona gerber's book when i first started yeah i became a new parent and it was someone that i worked with and i trusted her and i thought okay i'll look at this respectful based parenting being child-led and i really liked it i

thought oh gosh this isn't something that anyone really does um so i really liked exploring that and then i found janet lansbury's work but this um rye parenting um it only takes you to about three years old you know the toddler years and then you know as more complicated topics come up i didn't really know where to look and my three-year-old was asking well at the time she was three now she's six but um where we are before

we are born and where do we go after we die and i didn't feel prepared to answer that at three years old and i'm not religious but i don't want to close the door of religion to my kids with my own beliefs so i started looking for research-based podcasts on death so that is how i found your podcast of course i'm sure that's how most people find it okay so thank you for that one it was

yes yes it helped me too actually two weeks after i did that episode uh my then three-year-old asked do you have a mama and and i was ready to answer that question because i had done that interview so yes i'm glad it helped the two of us and therefore a lot more people as well um and so then you you joined the membership a while after that and i i wonder what was it like to get going

in there and and how did you get started with it yeah i was really excited actually to speak with you because i had listened to probably 80 podcasts in yours at the time and i thought oh my gosh she's you know i think it's the introduction of the podcast where you see research-based practices when you don't have to read all the books and i thought yes that's what i need i don't want to read the books and i like research so

um yeah so to be able to just kind of get your input on some of the issues that were coming up again and again for us as a family was really exciting but then the community piece of things were i was talking to other like-minded parents parents with similar values um getting their advice and hearing their solutions which really resonated because they were taking this approach to parenting that was really cool and i

didn't expect that piece so that was kind of energizing to keep going and to show up and keep participating and all the modules so yeah i really like that um yeah were you in other parenting communities already online or anything like that i guess informally so i had done a lot of the rye parenting facebook groups yeah and there was something different there i mean i'm curious about what was different that you weren't getting in those groups

it's not really a very focused approach so i think because i'm goal-oriented um it's kind of nice to focus on one area and work on it and put it into practice because with podcasts it's great information but then putting it into your life doesn't always go so smoothly yeah that's a fairly consistent theme that i hear from parents is that yeah the podcast gives you the information but then what do you do with it so i i'm

curious were you kind of excited by the possibility or were you kind of scared or anxious or what was what was going on as you were making that decision um i mean i have to say there was a timing element to joining the membership too because i had gotten an email about the new cohort starting during the first like few weeks of lockdown and i'm just thinking yes i am home with my children and i'm not really sure what's going to

happen when we're all together all the time and you know i can be a little bit controlling and yeah um and i don't want to be i need something else um you know a lot of the wry parenting principles talk about validating feelings and i think there's just a lot of yes you must validate the feelings and you must be the brave fearless leader and show up for your kids um but that just wasn't working with our

kids all the time because their feelings are really big and yes yes you're angry yes you're sad yes you you know whatever it is and it just it can drain you and he's my my youngest has really big feelings so um they kind of blindsided you they can come out of nowhere so you're never really like expecting them and um you know if you just keep validating feelings without anything else i just started to detach from him and i

felt really guilty about it because i couldn't figure out what to do i thought i was doing what the books said and yeah i was really missing that piece and so what shifted then what did you start to see differently gosh i guess it was it was probably with myself and controlling um i noticed that by validating him i was still trying to change him i was still trying to have an outcome that was you know of my

working and i think he could sense that you know yes i'm validating you now stop crying right i i remember very distinctly that conversation where that that specific thing shifted for you the idea that we can validate emotions and and also have a goal of okay if i validate you're supposed to stop doing it now right that's that's not supposed to happen but you're not stopping you didn't stop yeah so just being able

to hold space for him now and not try and change what's happening with him i think it's like the most unconditional thing you can really do for your kids to really just see their experience and say i'm here for you and you know what are you needing in that moment and kind of like this needs peace that we weren't ever understanding from whatever we were doing before this but saying okay what are you needing can i

help you with that need and that has been a really big shift for us and also that our needs are important so i actually need a break before i do this i'm just going to step over here take some breaths and then i'm going to be ready to show up for you in this moment um yeah it's so complex it's so complex because relationships are complex right yeah we're so used to thinking of our children as

simple things and press button a and thing b will happen and we press button and we're jamming our finger down on button a and thing b isn't happening what's wrong with me when actually that's not how we are in relationship with anyone else in our lives so why would it be the case for our children right yeah and and so i'm i'm curious then is there a specific example that you can think through of uh a way that this has happened

recently where you can see oh yeah a year ago i would have you know i would have handled this very differently and because of the work that i have been doing that i now uh in this specific example showed up very differently and that that is consistent with my values is there something along those lines that's happened recently that you can think of i'm thinking of something that happened this morning ah okay so my husband is working from home which

is really nice and i think it's made us all a lot closer um but my son has become very attached to him and really just wants daddy a lot of the time and in the mornings they wake up first and they go downstairs and my daughter and i sleep in a little bit later but then when i come downstairs he knows that daddy's probably going to work and i have to say goodbye to daddy so when i

went down he was angry with me and he was you know saying things like i want to throw all my animals at you and hurt you and make you go away so um before me before all this would have probably taken that really personally and just said oh yeah you know i hear you you're angry you're angry but kind of acknowledging that oh you really love daddy you miss daddy and when mommy comes down

you know that daddy is probably going to have to say goodbye um you know how many minutes of play would you like with daddy before he has to go to work and just saying you know you would have a few minutes with dad help you and um just kind of going you know this is the need that you have right you really need to connect with daddy before he goes like it's all of a sudden here's mommy and your

time's over so um so they sat down and they played legos together for a few minutes and then when my husband had to go to work he said okay bye daddy mommy come play with me and i okay sure so yeah so it just you know we can just see how his needs are being met and he's okay and maybe it's not daddy doesn't go to work that day like he's asking for but it's saying all right like five minutes

should do the trick and then i'll feel better and more prepared for this so yeah and and wow that's that's such an amazing example because it's so easy to take that personally right the the i don't like you i hate you i'm gonna throw everything at you it feels like it's about us it feels like a rejection of us um and that what am i doing wrong that my child is saying these horrible hurtful things to me maybe they'll say

them to somebody else and i'll be exposed as a terrible parent who has no control over my child and who who's this respectful parenting thing is clearly not working when actually you heard that underlying message which had nothing to do with you as a person it had to do with you as a signal making an entrance into that room and oh i love daddy so much and mama being here now means that time with daddy's over

and yeah you're not trying to change him you're just seeing in yourself where he is and not getting emotionally attached to that and not having your worth as a parent ride on his approval of you or his lack of desire in that moment say oh mommy i love you so much um but to see his need and to help him to meet that need for a few minutes and then transition into your husband also has needs and

and has things to do in the world and and that you can also be there for your son to support him as well wow that's that's an incredible example thank you for sharing that and and yeah so it's it seems like it's been a a real period of growth for you as a person and that this is not about finding the piece of knowledge to make this right but it's about who you are how you show up in the world yeah

i do i feel a lot more confident about everything because not well not because i have the answers but because i just feel like i know how to connect better with my kids or just connect with the situation and i'm not trying to figure it out figure out what to do about it but just how to be there or remind myself how to be there so that we are all kind of working on the same page and

talking to each other yeah and and again you're absolutely right your job is not to provide the answer or even have the answer or even look for the answer but just to be here in relationship with this other person and see their needs as valid as your needs were not seen as valid when you're a child yeah you're doing the work here you're doing yeah yeah and that's all of any of us can do is to to

show up and and to try and do that to the extent that we can get given all of our history and all the things that we're working on and all of the things that still cause us to feel triggered and flooded and to still uh try to give ourselves what we need and be there for our children to truly see them as people yeah and i really liked having that language just to talk about our needs i mean we

posted the list of needs on our fridge so that we just can't really identify what's going on with ourselves especially when we're triggered which still happens and yeah as you know my husband is taking the teaming your triggers workshop right now so he's in touch with some of his unmet needs but um yeah we don't always have the language for that and it's also helping us parent together because he knows i'm not trying to control him

he you know we can talk about this is my unmet need this is what i see happening and then he could say well this is his met need and it's not this attack on each other and each other's parenting but it's okay how do we figure out how to kind of meet in the middle or what can we do here and that's been really helpful for us um as parents and we even started doing check-ins with each other when we're not

triggered to you know how is this parenting thing going for you how is that parenting thing so that we can talk about these things more objectively because it was a really big source of conflict for us and we became very conflict avoidant because of it so nothing was being discussed so this has kind of opened the communication and helped us kind of align with each other and understand each other more wow which which strengthens your own

relationship and also helps your children to see this model for what we do in relationships with other people that yes things happen and we shout at each other and and nothing is perfect all the time and when that happens what happens do we come back and repair do we have a way to share this language around our our needs that aren't being met or is it about you know you you didn't do this and you never do that and

and that itself is is modeling for our own children so i'm curious about how that shift happened because um i i don't know that much about your husband but i do know he's english and i do know a thing or two about english people and not not to you know over generalize or anything but we we tend not to be so open about these kinds of emotional things and sort of sort of a little bit closed off and so i'm

wondering i i that that's not the case for you obviously you're an empath you're a person who feels deeply and and really resonates with other people uh and so if so he he's in this very different space from you and he is now sort of coming into this world of understanding feelings and needs how did that shift even happen to the extent that you can share without compromising his privacy well i think it's really interesting because i mean

his parents will talk openly about how they parented his mother is actually a psychologist and i think she's very in touch with how she tried to parent um and they never really had conflicts in front of their children and that was something that as a sense of pride for them at the time and now um i think they said at one point that they wish they had maybe had more conflict in front of their kids and my husband didn't want to have

conflicts in front of our children um i think it was really hard too because i before i was doing this work i didn't really know how to have conflict because i avoided conflict with my mother growing up and because i was an only child there wasn't anyone else to really practice on i guess and because i was you know we would blow up at each other there was really no repairs ever um i still have a hard time apologizing

with him not so much the kids the kids i can kind of come back and say oof i did not mean to do that but for my husband i can't so i can see why he wouldn't want to engage in conflict with me at that time and having no real model of healthy conflict in his family life was it was tricky but i think kind of talking about what it means to have a safe and a

healthy conflict and that conflict is not bad it's giving us a chance to talk about what we need and problem solve together if we're not doing that then we're not addressing what's you know bothering us or what's impacting us and um i think through a lot of those conversations just having him understand that conflict can be the source of powerful communication meaningful communication and connection and the kids should see that because then the kids can figure this out too

he does not he gets very triggered when the kids have arguments so you know this is coming across in all areas but yeah it was it's been it's been at least a seven year journey um and longer since we've been together but i think yeah there's something really powerful about coming in with this kind of soft startup and coming from this place of this is my need i actually need you to to try and get on board with this

because i want our kids to be able to have conflict with people and know it's safe and know that the other person isn't going to stop being their friend or stop being their partner because of this conflict so it was important to me that we figured this out for them yeah and so do you now see him uh picking up these ideas related to respectful parenting outside of conflict as well in other areas and how has that shift happened

over time um yeah i think the consent is a huge piece and you know well we try not to say oh we have a girl we have a daughter and we have a son and we need to make sure that the daughter knows this and the son knows that but there's you know this conversation around consent and we weren't brought up learning about ways to or why it's so important to start this from a young age

and you know when i can put it into the terms of you know we have these kids and teaching them about consent from this age will help them you know in this adult situation or this friendship situation they need to know how to do this for themselves and he really does value that he wants them to get to that point so if it means talking about things in a different way in a more respectful way and

um then he's on board with it for sure um yeah yeah often what i see in parents is actually a lot of times they want the same things they just have different ideas about how to get there or or maybe one parent sees i want this thing and life is so hard right now and so this is what i'm doing and and don't see the disconnect between the thing i'm doing right now and where i'm going to end up if i

if i do it that way and that um yeah if if we go in with a uh we did a sharing your parenting mojo episode a long time ago where the parents said that she wrote down a two-page summary of all the things that her family should and shouldn't do around her children which i think was not well received so if we go in with that then yeah it's gonna get the heckles up but you you

mentioned the soft startup conversation which is something that we learned very early on in the membership as to how to um to have a conversation that is not coming from a place of i know the better way and i'm going to convince you of the superior way that i know about but to say what is important to you what are your values around this where do you want to go okay are you may i share with you what's

important to me and and can we see how these two things are actually probably fairly well aligned and if so what do we need to shift in our daily interactions to head towards something that we agree is important um and to to see you on the same page about that and and yeah there are going to be times when we have conflict about it and then that's not the end of the world we can have that conflict and

still be uh still know that we're we're both kind of heading in that that same direction um yeah it's uh so so it almost feels as though um you you don't have a plan because that's not the right word for it it's like not like we're we're putting the right ingredients in and we're stirring it the right way and we're going to put it in the oven at the right temperature and the perfect children are going to come out the other

end but the sense that i'm getting from you is that we know what our values are we know what's important to us and we were not necessarily on the same page about that before and now it feels like we're a team i'm getting a sense of like that we're a team on this yeah yeah for sure um and it feels it feels really empowering to come you know together and say like this is what we're doing to

raise our kids and to also know that when we are not aligned or if we have conflict that it's okay and we can talk about it and um yeah it's a big shift for us because i yeah i still remember those diaper changing conversations it didn't feel good i just didn't really know what else to do so um yeah it's nice to be actually moving in a direction that feels good well thank you so much for coming on the

show and sharing your experience with us it's been such a pleasure to work with you over the last year or so and and get to know you and and to see this this shift that you've been able to make it's it's been really uh amazing to watch so thank you for for trusting me to be part of your journey and i have to thank you as well because without this community and without these resources and the membership

i would not have been in this position and it didn't feel good a year ago and yeah so i'm just really grateful that this exists and that you continue to do this work and show up for all of us yeah thank you and so if anyone is listening or watching this and thinking i want to meet nicole i want to be in the amazing community you can learn more about it at your parentingmojo.com forward slash parenting membership

you