

Tween Panel

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SUMMARY

Nalani Pearl Hunt, interim CEO of Hand In Hand Parenting, leads a discussion with instructors Madeline Winter and Sorelli Bertrand on the challenges of parenting tweens. They explore the unique difficulties faced by children aged 9-13, emphasizing the impact of hormonal and neurological changes, as well as the overwhelming access to information in today's digital age.

- Tweens experience significant brain development, including pruning of neural pathways, which can lead to emotional upheaval.*
- The digital age presents unique challenges, providing both liberating and overwhelming access to information for tweens.*
- Parents often struggle to connect with tweens due to societal pressures that discourage emotional expression.*
- Special time is crucial for building emotional safety and connection, even as its form evolves with age.*
- Listening partnerships among parents provide essential support and help alleviate feelings of isolation in parenting.*
- Acknowledging one's own childhood experiences can aid parents in understanding and supporting their tweens.*
- Family time should be intentional and focused to foster emotional safety and connection.*
- The importance of community and shared experiences among parents is highlighted as a way to combat feelings of inadequacy.*

Speaker 1: Hi, my name is Nalani Pearl Hunt and I'm the interim CEO of Hand In Hand Parenting. We are so excited to have you here today. As a parent of a 23 year old and three bonus children who are 16 and 9 year old girls and a 7 year old boy, I understand the challenges that parenting brings every day. And I know it's the most important and rewarding role that I have. And I bet it is for all of you too.

Speaker 1: Hand In Hand parenting is here to make it easier. Our tools and support systems help parent and their families thrive. Today we're talking about tweens and I am joined by two of our amazing instructors, Madeline Winter and Sorelli Bertrand. I'm sorry, I'm so bad at names sometimes, so I'm going to bring them on with us right now. Madeline and Sorelli, thank you so much for joining us today. How are you?

Speaker 2: We're good. I'm good.

Speaker 3: Yeah. Thank you for having us.

Speaker 1: Great.

Speaker 3: I'm doing well. Yeah. Good.

Speaker 1: Well, why don't we just start off with a simple question which is what brought you to Hand In Hand and tell us a little bit about your family.

Speaker 2: Do you want to go, Sorelli?

Speaker 3: Sure. Okay. What brought me hand in Hand? Well, to be honest, it was work. Work brought me to Hand In Hand in the position that I was in. The nonprofit that I was working with, they had asked me if I could offer parenting classes. And I had a parenting degree. But because I was a parent myself, I'm a parent of currently a 20 year old, a 14 year old and a 10 year old.

Speaker 3: But back then they were much younger and I personally did not feel that I was doing the best of my abilities. So when they asked me to become a parenting instructor, I was like, why are you asking me? I am struggling here. So I looked into the parenting philosophies out there and discovered some really good ones. But they didn't quite feel that they were addressing a need and that was support.

Speaker 3: And when I came across Hand In Hand parenting and noticed that there was tools, but the focus wasn't necessarily the tools, it was warmth, the connection, that acknowledgement of how rewarding but challenging this journey can be. And that right there was what got me to enroll in the Professionals Intensive and then the instructor course. And before I could talk about these tools, I.

Speaker 3: I knew I had to believe in them. I had to practice them in my family and they radicalized my family. And that's how I came into Hand In Hand.

Speaker 1: That's really special. Thank you for sharing. Madeline, why don't you tell us a little bit about how you came to Hand In Hand?

Speaker 2: Well, I. I was very lucky to be. To meet Patti a long time ago and trained with her long time before I became a parent. And then when I worked with other people's families and when I. When I had my daughter, even though I really understood and believed in the listening tools, what really struck me was that my daughter didn't need to go to a class to learn how to use them.

Speaker 2: And I didn't feel like I really needed to go hunting anywhere else to make sense of what was happening with her and what was happening with me. And I got sort of motivated to start teaching. I think, too, you come across this stuff, and you're using it all the time, and before you know where you are, you're trying to talk to other parents about it. And that sort of got me on the track of becoming an instructor.

Speaker 2: But mostly it was just watching my child and the children around me just making use of this process the way it was described in Hand In Hand and things getting easier. It's very inspiring.

Speaker 1: I think a lot of people who are a lot of our instructors kind of feel the same way that Hand in Hand was very inspiring. It revolutionized their parenting and their families. And, you know, we were just so lucky that we have the two of you to be here with us today and to be a part of our family here at Hand In Hand. I just want to let everyone know that I am listening intently to both Sorelli and Madeline, but I'm looking up and down at our hair, so I am listening.

Speaker 1: But I'm also making sure that we get any questions from you, all that you might have about tweens. So I know there's a lot of parents out there that are hitting this kind of tween age range, where I think it's the ages between like, maybe 9, 10 and about 12, 13, where they might in some challenging behaviors. So why don't we just jump in and we'll start off with a question that is, what are some of the new challenges kids face during these kind of tween years?

Speaker 1: And either one of you, and both of you can answer this question?

Speaker 3: No, madam. Okay.

Speaker 2: Well, okay. We can take turns, which we love to do it hand in hand. Everything goes better if you take turns.

Speaker 3: Equal exchange. Yes.

Speaker 2: I think the thing that. That I. That surprised me most as I was approaching this age is that I think it's sort of common knowledge out there that what's happening around this age and into adolescence is Sort of big hormonal changes. And we all remember that and you know, that's how we explain, have tended to explain what's going on with tweens and early adolescence. But in fact, what the brain science is suggesting is that much more important are the huge changes in the brain at this point.

Speaker 2: And there's a sort of massive process of, of pruning unused neural pathways and strengthening the ones that are used. And I've heard this likened. There'll be, you know, some proportion of our audience who don't know what being pregnant is like. But for those of who you who do, it makes sense to me that this is a, this is a process for our young people that says consuming and in deeply internal as being pregnant is.

Speaker 2: So it's like they've got a huge amount going on and it's. And you know, especially at this point, it's going on on the inside. So that's one of the things. Sorelli, do you want to

Speaker 3: thank you for that brain talk? I don't have. I. Let's see. I was having some thoughts about like what is new in contrast to what I remember being a teen, a tween. So I have to back right to when I was growing up.

Speaker 3: And although the hormone thing and the brain thing, it resonates, What I see now is there's so much access to information that can be wonderful and liberating, but also overwhelming and daunting. And I think

that although I went to the library when I was growing up between that age to read and look up things the old fashioned way in person, my kids now, they were exposed to this access of information and I saw that it could be really overwhelming and like it didn't always make sense to them.

Speaker 3: And sometimes I wasn't really sure on what to expand, what to offer support. Navigating this new digital age seemed to be like one of the challenges for our youth and for ourselves because I don't have lived experience as like I have lived experience with my hormones and the confusion of my body changing. But technology, it was different.

Speaker 3: I mean we had see walk Walkmans, like tapes, the radio. Kids don't know what that is. That was my type of introduction to technology back then. This time they have a whole computer with Internet access with if they want to figure out how to build something, they just YouTube it and it's there. So I don't know if that really answers the question, but I feel like that has been the difference that I see the contrast for me with my family.

Speaker 1: You know, I would Agree.

Speaker 3: I think that

Speaker 1: there are definitely new challenges than there were before tweens. You know, I remember what it was like for me as a tween, and it was. I just felt. I felt so isolated because no one, including my parents, I felt understood what was going on. And anytime I would ask a question or act out or, like, act out for attention, it was this big, you know, what is going on? It's like. It's like a little Tasmanian devil.

Speaker 1: That's the way that I felt, that I just had all these emotions. And, you know, I think that that challenge is so different now for our tweens. And the information, the challenges that they have in their own social relationships, all of those things are the things that I know that I was faced with as a parent. And it was so difficult for me when my daughter was.

Speaker 1: Was growing up as a tween that I didn't know exactly what to do. So why do you believe that it's so difficult to parent tweens if you think it's difficult? Because maybe you don't think it is. But, you know, why is it maybe for some parents, a challenge to parent tweens?

Speaker 2: Okay.

Speaker 3: Oh, no, go for it.

Speaker 2: Well, I think it's partly that. That we were just talking about. It's like, I think every generation struggles because they're not doing it the same as we do. And I think sometimes that's that difference between one generation and another. I mean, there's always some differences. Sometimes there's more differences, and sometimes there's not. I think we are tackling a time where there's these massive differences between when we

were young and now. And the.

Speaker 2: Is suggesting that it's like the measures of what. I'm not sure what they are, but people who research the changes through generations are saying that. In fact, what they're saying is that in 2012, when they reckon it's when the smartphone hit 50%, 50% of the population had the smartphone. The indices of. Of, you know, adolescent mental health and wellness, signs that things were wrong went through the Richter scale, went through the roof.

Speaker 2: So we're.

Speaker 3: We're.

Speaker 2: And we're trying to kind of come to terms with that and tackle that. And I think one of the other reasons. So we don't really know how to deal with that, and it's deeply addictive, like, where. It's one of those things. I think sometimes these things come in from outside and they just land in our family, and we never got any choice about whether we wanted them there. And we're Left sort of trying to figure out what to do and the whole sort of screen thing.

Speaker 2: I moderate a Facebook board, and I can't tell you how many times people are on there saying, what do I do about my child? And the screen? And they're inherently addictive. This is not just our fault or our child's fault. It's to do with a whole big thing that sort of just landed its pointy end in our family. So I think that's one thing that makes it hard, but the other thing that I think's happening for our young people is that they're learning.

Speaker 2: You know, children are born knowing how to use the healing process. You can hardly stop a baby from doing it, you know, but. But it's not one that's well understood or encouraged in our soc. And by the time I think kids are 9, 10, 11 and Sorelli, I've got a girl, but you've got boys, so, you know, it. It might come in, I suspect, even sooner for boys, but by the time they're tween, they've internalized this message that they shouldn't use the healing process, that it's not smart to have a good cry or show how you feel.

Speaker 2: And so when we come bowling up to them, you know, in ways that really worked when they were little, and either, you know, our warmth and enthusiasm, the special time, you know, where this one on one playtime, where we have it go the way they want it to go, they would have, they just thought that was a fab thing when they were younger mostly, but it no longer looks that way to them. So when we bowl up to them with warmth, it's like something different happens.

Speaker 2: And I think part of what happens is we try and bring ourselves. We love them so much, you know, but what comes up for them is a whole bunch of feelings when we're around. And that always happened, but by the time they this age, they've spent all day trying to keep that under control. It's like it's on pain of social death that you show those feelings. So I think we're, we're up against this sort of double whammy where they're not

allowed to show the feelings and they, they don't, they don't get the opportunities to let those big feelings out in the, in the same easy way that it often happened when they were younger.

Speaker 2: So that, that makes it much harder for us to know how to approach them. It's like, I think it explains why they get why they're scratchy and why it feels like someone once said to me, you know, you have to understand you're going to bother her, you're going to bother her, she's going to be bothered. You just can't help but bother them. But I think that's why it's because they've got this stuff tightly under control. And you know, there's so often, I mean there's safety sometimes with us and that there are big feelings there.

Speaker 2: Soreli, I don't know if you noticed, that's what happens with boys.

Speaker 3: I think that that is boys and girls, right?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 3: They receive those messages of bottle up the feelings. No matter how hard we're trying at home to model that, we accept that. Yeah, it's natural for everything to occur in your body. And we counter messages on our social media, on our news, on our movies, on our books, at schools. You name every system, Every system basically tells you to not show appropriate feelings like happiness or grace, be peaceful and kind always and not allow for more passionate feelings to come out.

Speaker 3: I think that throughout the spectrum of gender, our kids, our youth get those messages. I have noticed that. And you know, going back a little bit to the cessation of our world, I think that it's so addictive because we have this desire, as you mentioned, babies, youth, the desire to heal.

Speaker 3: And then we're told not to heal. Right. But we're seeking connection, we're seeking warmth, we're seeking to be heard, to be seen to belong. And a lot of times we get that false acceptance and sometimes it's true acceptance but in a different packaging online. And I think that's why it can become so addictive. And for me it has been challenging to connect in real time world with each of my kiddos because it feels competitive, because it attracts them.

Speaker 3: And I think what I have learned and applied the tools is I have learned to apply the tools both online and offline. Right. Right now there's a certain online platform game that kiddos are into and I was really resistant but they managed to convince me to join.

Speaker 2: Now you can't get on.

Speaker 1: You guys in them.

Speaker 3: Yes, yes. And. But it is like a virtual reality and they get to express and use these avatars and I'm

bringing that in here because it is, it's important for us to be aware as parents or else we can lose that disconnect and it becomes really challenging. And it's interesting, there was an article a while back that said that a lot of times, especially boys get kind of sucked into our online world because of that lack of disconnect.

Speaker 3: So we're born with the desire to connect and we can't find that connection outside because our messages are telling us to not connect. We're going to figure out a way to connect even if it creates counterproductive behaviors. At least that has been my experience with that article. I can't remember the name of it, but I'm sure you can find it if you google it. So I have found that and I have seen because I have three kiddos that are in a big span of age differences.

Speaker 3: One, the oldest one, didn't get really hit with the digital wave that Madeline described in 2012. Right. Like his, his tween years were, were before that. So I can relate more to those challenges because they seemed more familiar. It's like I didn't understand, he didn't understand me. We couldn't connect then. My 14 year old, he was around that time period, 2012, when he was going through his twin years and it was those changes in his body, those emotional actions and that messaging that counter for those upsets.

Speaker 3: I am so fortunate to have found hand in hand when I did because that's when I was having real fear about his feelings and I wanted to support the intensity of those fields. But all the messaging was also impacting me, saying I need to raise strong boys. I need to raise a boy who can handle the world. And that was very wrong messaging that I was receiving. But I too was receiving it as a parent.

Speaker 3: So that was challenging. And right now I can't say I have difficulty with my youngest, my 10 year old, who's right in the midst because of the tools that I learned through hand in hand. I feel like this wave of in parenting is much more smoother for me because the tools, because of the playfulness, because of the connection, because of going to my listening partner and getting that port when I'm feeling frustrated.

Speaker 3: Take it out on my kiddo.

Speaker 1: That's actually something that's really interesting. Sorry, Madeline, were you going to say something before you, before I cut you off?

Speaker 3: Go ahead.

Speaker 2: Oh, I was just going to chime in there and say like one of the things that happens to us is that our kids remind us of our own childhoods and half the time we're not aware of that. It's just going on without us even knowing. I think, you know, our brain goes back to find out what we already know and it pulls up information. But if that information is wrapped up in hard feelings, it also pulls up all those hard feelings and, you know, we end up Just getting very reactive.

Speaker 2: And one of the things that I think happened to us certainly happened to me. I'm really struggling at

the moment because, you know, my daughter has resource I couldn't have dreamt of as a young person, you know, And I find myself, why don't you do that? I mean, I had nothing. I had nothing. That's where I go. So I have a listening partnership where I can go and sort of, I don't know, let that out instead of having it sort of be in my face every time I have to interact with her.

Speaker 2: But that can make it that what happened to us. And in particular, I think the way that tweens and teens, that what we think as parents is we need to give them more space. And we do, but we don't need to leave them on their own. And most of us have this sort of what we pull up from our teen years is just really being left alone. And my daughter and I spent the summer working through *Pretty Little Liars*.

Speaker 2: I don't know if any of you have had the misfortune to get binged into that. What was fascinating about it was that it was this picture of how a group of adolescents end up just having themselves to refer to and that they don't have enough information about the world for that to go well. You know, they need more resource. But the adults, you know, some of them were really stupid, but a lot of them were really, you know, we can be stupid, it happens even.

Speaker 2: We can be stupid. But even the well meaning ones often just couldn't, couldn't be still enough, couldn't be in the same space enough without intruding, couldn't just be with their kids. They were always trying to sort of fix something up and they meant really well. But it just left these young people really alone without a place. They can explore what they think in their own mind, but without having to do that on their own. And I think that's what the tools that Han and Han have can really offer us.

Speaker 2: And Sorelli was just talking about it, about the way that while she didn't really feel like it, she got on and got taught, I presume, how to use this video game. Yeah, that's right. I bet you got schooled. I bet they thought it was great.

Speaker 3: They loved it. Oh my God.

Speaker 2: And how dumb you were.

Speaker 3: It's play listening right there.

Speaker 2: It's exactly, you know, it's where we occupy the place where we're not in charge all the time and we figure out ways with our twins and our teens where we can kind of notice what they're interested in and move in alongside them without taking over. And I think Sorelli just described that beautifully. But it's like that's what we need to do, and that's hard for us to do because nobody did it for us.

Speaker 1: You two bring up another really great point. And I think that this is a common challenge that happens too with tweens and you know, quite frankly with teens is that they're faced with adult situations and they don't know how to handle it all throughout the day and adult decisions and they get so bottled up that

when they get to us, they're just, you know, so frustrated or they don't know how to express what's going on. And it takes, you know, us using the tools.

Speaker 1: Whether it's special time. I tend to, when my bonus daughter comes and even my older daughter, what we usually do is we have a snowball fight, like instantly, because usually, like, there's just been adult situations or things that they've had to deal with, and we do a snowball fight and they're cracking up after five minutes. You don't have to do it that long. In fact, most people can't do it that long, but after five minutes, then they're able to, you know, those emotions are kind of there, right there for if we are going to deal with them then or if we're going to deal with them later.

Speaker 1: But they are then kind of relieved that, you know, play listening is done and they have released whatever they need to for the time being. And I think that the challenges that they face, you know, and I don't remember ever facing this, was that they're just faced with a lot more adult decisions without the outlets to do to really help them through that. And that's where I think hand in hand comes in is, you know, during those times that we're with them in that space of connection, they're able to really, to really work through those things.

Speaker 1: So my next question is, what is special time? And Sorella, you kind of alluded to it a little bit. What does special time look like with tweens?

Speaker 3: There you go.

Speaker 2: You started already, so why don't you go?

Speaker 3: Well, my 10 year old is still okay with the term special time, but he, since he was very small, he grew up with the tools and he advocates for them. He knows when he needs special time to mentor, he knows he needs to be say, listen up. And so we'll go and do physical offloading and he'll. It was like he can advocate for himself.

Speaker 3: So with him, it still looks. It's very similar to when he was younger. We set time for however much capacity I have, and he's very accepting of what I can give. I can only do 10 minutes. Okay, Mommy. Or he'll advocate. He sees that I'm trying to shortchange him.

Speaker 3: He will say, like, well, how about 15? Okay, I can do 15. So he feels me. He feels me out. The older ones, because they got introduced to the tools a little older, I couldn't really use special time. They gave me the eye roll. They would give me. They would give me that. Yeah, I think that. That the scratchy. The scratchiness would come up.

Speaker 1: I love that.

Speaker 3: Yeah, I love that. Because it's true. It feels scratchy, but it's. But it really isn't. Right. Like, so with

that, with the older ones, I couldn't really call it special time. It would be like, I would just sit next to them, and then I'd be playful or sometimes, I mean, and that was most formal way of doing where we would be playful. I would.

Speaker 3: And then they would start engaging with me. I had to be different with them, or we had to set dates and mom and son dates. And. And I couldn't do it for the way I could do it with my little one, where it was like five, 15, 10 minutes. With them, it had to be longer. Like one hour, two hours. That. That's the difference between, I think, a younger kiddo in going into the tweens to one that was older and was exposed to the tools because we didn't grow up with the tools.

Speaker 3: But with me, they get to choose where I do set parameters because they want to go to a fancy place where I have to dish out,

Speaker 2: well,

Speaker 3: I can't do that. How about we can do this, and we'll give them on doing something different. Special time with the. With my tweens wasn't always as. As engaging in rambuncions as informal play listening. That was my experience.

Speaker 1: Madeline, what's your experience with special time with your daughter?

Speaker 2: Well, it stopped happening in a formal way at some point, and it wasn't. I mean, I think there are many parents who find that the formal proposal of special time at some point, as Saraly said, is eye rolling. I think that's polite. That's the polite response.

Speaker 1: But.

Speaker 2: Say other things.

Speaker 3: So there are remarks,

Speaker 2: but. So somewhere along the line, it dropped off in a formal kind of way. And I think part of it is that she. Developmentally, she needed to negotiate not just what was going to happen. Like, with Special Time, we say, well, we'll do whatever you want to do. She need to negotiate the whole terms. It's like she needed to negotiate when it was going to happen, how long it was going to be and whether it was like there was some way that it.

Speaker 2: I guess partly as I got to be. I mean, I'm still very important, but, You know, as I'm not quite so front and center and I've heard Patty Whitfield talk about, you know, shift from being sort of the main game to being the heat. The heater in the room over adolescence. So by the end of it, it's like they notice if you're not. But you

do make a difference, you know.

Speaker 2: So as I'm shifting from sort of front and center, she's got more going on, you know, she wants to spend time with her friends or whatever. And so what I've had to do, and it's been quite a discipline for me because I'm not a natural player. I think there would have been no play in my house if there hadn't been a timer and I hadn't been able to call it work and give it a name and tick it off after I'd finished.

Speaker 3: So

Speaker 2: this shift to more flexible thing, I've had to watch my own integrity, if that makes sense. It's really easy for me to slip out. And that's one of the great things about naming Special Time is you both know it's happening and you both know what you've committed to, you know, and you're going to be held to it. And I have to be more disciplined about my understanding that on the inside of my head, I'm making the same commitment as I would have been when we called it Special Time.

Speaker 2: And I'll tell you one of the times that's become. I've hung onto it and I've had the luxury of being able to do this, but it's the drive to and from school and she could do more of getting on a bus, But I think there's a kind of. It's a really special time. It's like there's a way, I think, that my attention's not directly on her, which is helpful somehow. That gives them more space. At this age, she gets to choose the music a fair bit of the time.

Speaker 2: I would rather not be listening, but, you know.

Speaker 1: All right, it looks like we might be back halfway. Can you hear me? Ok. Ok, good. So we'll bring Sorella in when we have a chance. We have About, I would say 15 minutes left of our kind of panel here. But we were just talking about using the car as special time, like our rides to school. And one of the things that I do is the same exact thing with my bonus kids is we, you know, their mom and dad kind of have that one up of the connection kind of already being there and automatically there.

Speaker 1: And so for me, what we do is we made a really thoughtful choice within our family is say, is to say that ride to school is kind of the time that I can have special time. And they don't really know it and we work on that connection there. So I really appreciate you, the fact that you brought that up. So we have a question here that I think we can answer pretty quickly. It just asked April asks, we do family time and dates with our kids.

Speaker 1: Is that the same as special time? And I would say yes, if it was time that was put away. But Madeline, why don't you kind of elaborate on that a little bit more?

Speaker 2: I think we have to be really careful about that. One of the questions that comes up when you, when I do talks and I talk about special time with parents of younger kids is oh well, we do quality time or we read books to each other in the evening or whatever. And it's quite a challenge for people to understand that that's not special time. That special time is a time where we put aside our distractions and we make a commitment to

give our child our full attention for the length of the time that we've committed to.

Speaker 2: And what happens when we do that is that they know how long they've got us. They know how long they've got us. And with that comes emotional safety, which is one of the really big reasons for doing special time is that it builds emotional safety. So when it's more casual and it gets tricky as kids get older, but when it's more casual, the thing is that our kids don't know really how long they've got us. So I think we just have to be careful that the family time and the sort of one on one time isn't just casual.

Speaker 2: It needs to be a little more than that for I think it to get where you want it to get. That said, my observation in my own family is that as things get tighter emotionally for our kids and they, I think they do, it depends a bit. I've had the luxury of having these tools all the way through, so. But despite my best efforts, I think it's harder and harder. It's a harder world out there. That she's having to negotiate and it.

Speaker 2: And sometimes like, one of the things that shifts is how kids show their feelings and how they have upsets. And what I've noticed is that my daughter will often, and Patty Whitfler calls it the spoiled outing. With younger kids, you have a day together where you really, you know, have everything. You do your best to have things go their way, everyone's together, it went really well. And then you get in the car on the way home and somebody gets really upset.

Speaker 2: And it's because the, the time that you've spent together has filled up their cup of connection. And people are always looking for opportunities to get rid of their. Whatever tensions are hanging around. And our kids sort of look at this and think, oh, what can I find to get rid of here? And we'll find a pretext to have a big upset. And it's actually the process working perfectly. It's like you've filled up their cup of connection and then they get to have an upset.

Speaker 2: Well, it's not that different with a preteen or an early teen, but it takes. My sense is it takes longer. It's like that family time has become important for us now in a way that it wasn't like when my daughter was younger. We basically could take turns, really. We didn't do a lot of time together. But it's clear now that that loose time where you're not really preoccupied with stuff. My husband and I are jobbers. We have to be really careful not to spend a lot of time finding jobs to do because it's clear that just hanging, family time, just hanging and being together and enjoying each other is really a key component of having it safe enough for our kids to get to their feelings.

Speaker 2: So I think that family time's great. Have we got Sorelli? Hiya.

Speaker 1: I think, to elaborate on that too, I think that, you know, as Sorelli was talking about it a little bit more, is when we're looking at those teen and the tweens and adolescents is you can't, you might not be able to get away with calling it special time. So if your time with your older kids is a date and it's that specific time put away where they have your direct attention, they know that that's their, their special time to, to be with you and that's their date with you, then that definitely, you know, each family can call it whatever works best.

Speaker 1: You know, my 23 year old calls it special time because she thinks it's hilarious and, you know,

Speaker 3: and mocks Me too.

Speaker 1: Yeah, right. But they love it. Whereas I'm sure, you know, my 16 year old bonus daughter wouldn't say that it was special time, but my 10 year old and my 7 year old, I think the 7 year old calls it something completely different. He just says, you know, can we go upstairs and play? But that means it's just me and him. It's a specific time. He grabs my phone, sets the timer and then you know, we're, we're off to whatever it is.

Speaker 1: It's, it's that specific. That time is timed. They know that they have you, like you were saying, Madeline, emotionally, they know that they have your direct attention and that's what's important for them during that time. Sorella. Yeah, Go for it.

Speaker 3: I wanted to say that and this is a bright spot that I wanted to share because we think a lot that special time is the responsibility of the assigned caretaker, the assigned adult, the parent. But see, oh, I feel, I feel squishy warm feelings thinking about.

Speaker 3: Because my, my 20 year old, he was exposed as an older child to these tools and then he moved up, away and then he came back and in his attempt to reconnect with his siblings, he's like applying special time with each of them and.

Speaker 2: Right.

Speaker 3: Yeah, that's amazing because he will say, well I figured I can offer some special time with. And he'll say his older brother, I mean his younger brother. And then I noticed that he does that also with the little one and it's like, well, special time, mom. And I just think it's awesome. And I had to share that because it's not just me or my co parent becomes a practice, a cultural family practice when there's multiple people around and it's like, wow.

Speaker 3: Because special time is also really rewarding for the, the person offering it. I think we sometimes forget how I had a challenge in implementing it and practicing it. But I always noticed that after I was done with special time, I think it was more of a gift to me as much or less, I don't know, gift to my child because my endorphin would be up, my oxytocin would be up, my delight capacity would be up.

Speaker 3: So I just wanted to share.

Speaker 1: You know, it's so funny that you say that because I had a really hard time when I started special time too. And now I just, I am so excited whenever we do it and I always have to like encourage them for more time. I'm like, you only want to do five minutes, you don't want to do like eight minutes I'm not there, but. Surprise,

Speaker 3: you get, yes. That's awesome. I strive to be there.

Speaker 1: So why don't we end with this question? I think this is a really great one because I know that I was. And not to. To put this on any. My feelings on anyone else, but I know that for me, going into the tweens when my daughter was growing up, that I was, like, really fearful because that was such a. Such an important age in establishing a really great foundation for their older years. So what can a parent do to prepare as their child turns into a tween?

Speaker 2: I think it's really. I think at any point in parenting, it's really important. And this is something people often ask. Can I. We haven't talked about what listening partnerships are, but very briefly there, where we have an agreed time with another adult, where we take turns listening to one another and we establish that it's completely confidential. And we don't. We listen without passing judgment or making comment or intruding to tell our own story. And I couldn't have got by as a parent without that.

Speaker 2: It's been my absolute pressure relief valve. It's been the place where I can work out what's really going on. And people often ask, can I do this? Can I do this with my parenting partner? You know, and it's like, that can be a little tricky. I taught mine to do it, but. But. But it has its moments. And one thing we have figured out to do is every week we listen to each other. And I think it works best when you're doing it with your partner, when there's.

Speaker 2: There's some structure. And the structure we use is, what was it like for you when you were this age? And we've been doing that together every week, just five, ten minutes each. And it's really interesting what it pulls up. It's a way of getting us to put our attention on our lives that the way they were then, without sort of telling someone that's what they need to do. And it works because that stuff's in our face all the time.

Speaker 2: We may not be aware of it, but it's there, sitting there, and we get really confused about the difference between our story and our child's story. And so that's a long way of saying what I think is really useful. And what I decided to do, which part of why I started to lead parents of older kids was because I. I unlike parenting, where I had. I was like being run over with a bus. I had no idea what was going to happen.

Speaker 2: And you couldn't have told me, you know, I don't know that you could have told me. Like, if you're not there, you just don't have a map to make sense of it. But I could tell something was coming with adolescence, and so I started listening to other parents talk about their adolescent years and. And talking about my own. And I've been on this project for about a couple of years now of just, you know, telling the story of my adolescence from.

Speaker 2: From sort of. And I never want to do it. I never want to do it. Like, I think. I think it's like I get it out of here as fast as I can, was my attitude. I'm never looking back. But actually it's really useful to go back and. And sometimes there's sort of hard things there, and sometimes there's some tears and some difficulties stories, but sometimes just remembering stuff and somehow bringing my attention now back to that time where there was so little attention.

Speaker 2: It's been really interesting and I would recommend it to anyone. So I think, you know, especially at this age, because we got left so alone. But just generally it's always useful to tell the story of what it was like for you when you were that age, and interesting stuff pops up.

Speaker 1: Sorelli, what do you think people can do to prepare for tweens?

Speaker 3: I think it's. Now what I know. Now what I know it was through listening partnerships as described. For me, it was accepting that I didn't need to fix it. I. Letting go of this notion that I had to fix it, that I had to fix the troubles, the hurts, the feels, the challenges that I had to have an answer like that, you know, that I don't know where that messaging came from.

Speaker 3: Obviously it was from like core childhood observances, but. But letting go, I. When I felt like I don't know if it's permission, and perhaps there was permission to let go of fixing things, and then acknowledging that I was enough for my child. I am the perfect parent, And there's no shame in it.

Speaker 3: Having that acknowledged and having that permission to go after that, because it takes a lot of courage to go after that in this society was really, really helpful. And I wouldn't have been able to get there without listening partnerships, without having another human being allow the space for warmth and connection to occur. It was through that warmth and connection that I was able to be gentle as I revisited and made sense of my youth, my adolescence, my tweens, my childhood.

Speaker 3: That was in allowing myself to just go where. That I was able to make sense of my story in contrast to their story and separate them. Yeah.

Speaker 1: I would say, you know, I would have to agree with the two of you that listening partnerships is probably the most powerful tool that we have for us as parents. And, and that support that. You know, a lot of times parenting is just so isolated and so just so alone. And that's something that our society. I don't know if they did it on purpose, but that's something that, you know, is a of our society. And listening partnerships for me has been just like this floodgate has opened and I, you know, I thought that I was a pretty good parent and man, I, you know, with has just been really key.

Speaker 1: I can't thank the two of you enough for being a part of this great panel and I would love to do it again. I know we have people who are going to have lots of questions. Questions. Those of you who might have been shy to ask questions while we were live, feel free to ask them down below and we can. Our hand in hand staff will take some time to answer them. I do want to take a moment, besides thanking both Sorelli and Madeline to also promote some of the classes that you might have coming up in the near future.

Speaker 1: I don't know if either one of you have a class coming up.

Speaker 3: I don't.

Speaker 2: I have. Well, we have a hand in hand produced the parent rescue squad courses. They're little, they're incredibly good value for money and they're just about to produce one for teens and tweens. Buy it now.

Speaker 1: Right. So it comes out next time go live on February 7th. I think it is it goes out and we have a special course for tweens that are going to be there. But if there are other, we call it our online self guided classes. So if there are other kind of topics that you want to talk about, write them down below. Because we definitely are looking to kind of beef up our online self guided classes.

Speaker 1: We know that it is hard sometimes to do those in person classes. So these self guided classes are kind of our first taste into what it's like to use the hand in hand tools. And then the other thing that we have going on is our parent club that is on Facebook and it is kind of an expansion of our. Our free groups that we have. We have our parent group for young children and then. Madeline, you are children.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I moderate the group for it's parenting by connection for twins and older kids, I think. Or for parents of older kids. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 1: So our parent club is a Paid, a paid group that's 25.99 a month and you get to be with other parents that are going through the difficulties, the challenges, the celebrations of hand in hand tools. You can vent, you can look for listening partnerships. And we have really great moderators. So similar to Madeline, she's in one of our free groups, but also really great moderator. All that stuff is online. Our staff will definitely be down below.

Speaker 2: Can I just add, I've got, I've got a. So hand in hand run starter classes and so it's a six week class with video that runs through all of the tools, the listening tools. And while it's not specifically focused on parents of older kids, I think it's really useful for people to get a really thorough picture of what the approach is. And if you've got older kids, it really helps if you're on a call with someone who's had some experience working with parents of older kids.

Speaker 2: So I have a starter class, so it's sort of about an hour and a bit of video that go for six weeks on each of the sort of listening tools and gives you a picture of the whole approach and then six weeks of instructor led calls. And I also run a support call for parents of older kids and I would really put a plug in for finding yourself somewhere. Like the parent rescue squads are wonderful, but there's something that happens when we get together with a group of other parents.

Speaker 2: I think like you said, Nalani, parenting is set up so isolated and we are encouraged to believe that our struggles and our struggles, we're responsible for them. We're responsible for fixing up the things that, you know, the messes we make and building connection with our kids, but we're not doing. We're encouraged to believe parenting is an individual project, but it's actually not. It's shaped by all this stuff that happens that we have no control over.

Speaker 2: And when you get into a group with other parents, I think there's this really big step happens where

we get to notice that it's actually everyone else is struggling too and we're not the only one. And that perspective, just that perspective makes a huge difference. I think half the problem is the stuff that Sorelli was talking about about deciding that you're a good enough parent and that you've got what it takes.

Speaker 2: And I think it's easier to see that when you, when you're in the company of other parents who are, you know, on the same path. So I'd really encourage people to just anywhere you can get to be with other parents in this process is really

Speaker 1: worth doing well and and I'll plug that a little bit more and just let everyone know that you are good parents. So it's rough. Parenting is hard and parenting happens and we all have rough days and you know today I had to, you know, parenting happened at five minutes before our Facebook live had a put on lipstick and brush my hair. So sometimes it just happens and that and that's okay. So be easy on yourself. Be gentle on yourself.

Speaker 1: It's okay. It's okay. So we, you know, we are here to support parents when parenting it's hard so that we can help build resilient families. So we are so glad all of you are here on this journey with us and we look forward to seeing you all again soon. So thank you again. So really Madeline and thank you to everyone out there. We'll see you soon.

Speaker 2: Thanks.