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Hi friends. Welcome to Episode 202. If you have a child who struggles with learning differences or self esteem, you're in the right place. This week, we're bringing you a Vlog that I recorded back in 2019 we hope you enjoy.

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We're talking a little bit today about learning differences and self esteem. I don't know about you guys, but I have found that our little guy, whose brain works differently than everyone else's in our family, and we know some of the reasons for that, but it doesn't change the fact that it's frustrating. And his self esteem suffers because of our frustration level and his ability to notice the differences between him and his peers. Honestly, no one likes to. And if you do, I would love to talk to you more about that because I'm definitely doing some personal work around this idea of failure, right? But our kids with learning differences really feel like they're failing more often than the average person, and they're always running to catch up to the same aged peers. And our school system especially wants them to do that. It's set up to do that. And we'll talk a little bit more about that in a second. But because they're constantly battling to catch up, that affects self esteem. And it seems to fall lower and lower and lower. So I am certainly not proud to admit it, but I am guilty of contributing to this feeling of failure in our children, specifically our youngest son. His disability is invisible. And so sometimes I just forget, and it's really hard to remember to keep my expectations appropriate. So if you're in that boat, you are not alone. I am right there with you. And I am so frustrated sometimes at having to explain things for the hundred millionth time, or reminding for the hundred millionth time, or just making peace with the fact that he still needs reminders. And besides the struggle at home, a lot of our kids struggle out in public, socially, academically. And as I was just talking about, our school environment, if your children are in, especially a public school, is not set up to foster success and feelings of self esteem, self worth, self confidence. So as parents, it's really hard to watch that struggle. It's hard to watch our kids struggle with shame and low self esteem. I mean, right? We want our kids to be able to walk with their heads held high into the world. We want them to be confident. We want them to feel successful. We want them to know that they are special, and that they can contribute to the world. So I just have four tips I want to share with you today to keep in mind when parenting kids who struggle with learning differences.

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The first one is focus on strength. Now, again, I will be the first to admit that this is not my natural tendency, and I've probably talked here about that before. This is also not what the school system focuses, right? If a student is struggling, they tend to get extra time, extra services in the area, in the weak area. If we were to parallel that to, say, a class of woodland animals, imagine a rabbit having to spend more time in swimming class because he was struggling in that area, right? It kind of seems ridiculous because we all know that rabbits don't swim well and we don't expect them to swim well, right? We expect them to hop and frolic and jump and run through a field, not get in a pond. So why would we want to make our kids put all their extra energy into their weak area? What if we let our kids put all that extra time and energy that they have into an area of strength, into something that they're passionate about, that energizes them? Research actually shows that people who lean into their strengths have higher engagement, better productivity, and of course, that creates better self esteem. So I always encourage parents to read the book Strengths Based Parenting. It was put out by Gallup, and it has these really compelling stories of what is possible when we focus on our strengths. So I will link to that in the description of the video when I'm finished here. Okay?

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So one, focus on strengths. Two, understand that behavior is directly related to brain function. So I know that it's really tempting to see misbehavior as controlling and manipulative, even disrespectful. And sometimes we're tempted to use labels like bad, disobedient, oppositional, defiant, right? I have found that we always do better with our kids when we see behaviors as "can'ts" not "won'ts", when we give our kids the benefit of the doubt. And that allows us as parents to look for a collaborative solution, one that supports our kids, that helps them know that we're on their side, instead of looking for a punishment or a consequence or trying to teach them a lesson, that the best lessons they learn are when they feel supported and loved. So focus on strengths, see behaviors as can'ts not won'ts, basically giving the benefit of the doubt.

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And number three, setting up our students for success. So look for ways to create an environment where your student will thrive. So this might include making sure that their brain is getting the proper nutrition. Their brain already is working harder than most brains, so we don't want to set them either even further back with foods that their body is going to have trouble processing, or that are going to create like inflammation in their bodies and their brains. It might mean building in sensory breaks, being proactive about anti anxiety solutions or solutions to increase focus. It might be a lot of visual reminders about things that they need to remember to do things that are happening in the schedule. It's really hard for them to hold things, especially abstract things, in their brains. So anything that we can make concrete and visual, all the better.

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So focus on strengths. Understand that behavior is related to brain function. So, can't, not won'ts. Be proactive about setting our students up for success. And number four redefine success altogether. So society tells us that independence is success. That our kids will launch and go out into the world. But I'm going to suggest to you today that interdependence is actually healthier and what we should aim for. We are actually meant to be in relationship. There's lots of research that shows that from a faith perspective. I believe that's how God created us. And we need to feel secure in the fact that someone has our backs. All of us need that and our kids need that especially. And we have the privilege of being that person for them. The key is that our students need to be able to ask for help in respectful and appropriate ways. Not that they'll never need our help again. And our job is to have their backs. And that it's not just our job - like I said, it's a privilege. And so mindset has a lot to do with this. As we can change our mindset, then that helps our students change their mindset about their own self confidence and self esteem. So I hope that's helpful. Again, four tips: Focus on strength. Understand behavior is brain function. So seeing behaviors as can'ts not won'ts . Setting our kids up for success and redefining even our complete definition of success.