

Co-Regulation is Your Superpower

Presented by Christine A. Chambers

I am so glad that you guys are all here. I am really excited about this topic, co-regulation. It's something that I see a lot of issues, I have a lot of questions in my practice.

I've been a pediatric OT for 32 years. I've been a mom for 27. So even though I got a lot of education, both in my OT degree and my masters in education, I feel like I really learned a lot in working with families and children and through having my own children. The things that work, the things that don't work, the things to do, the things not to do. So I'm hoping to share little bits of that with you tonight.

My goal for you is to have something that you can take with you tonight. Couple of strategies you can use tonight, if the kids are still up tomorrow morning. Just some things that you can start thinking about and using immediately. So that's my goal.

Couple key concepts that I'm hoping to conglomerate in this, just so that you have three things that you sort of remember or hang on to. One, co-regulation actually starts with regulation. And so we're gonna talk a little bit about regulation. And I have a visual that talks about, you have to put your oxygen mask on first, and I'll go over that one. But just kind of remembering that we need to come from a regulated place if we're going to help facilitate the co-regulation with our kids.

Accessing your superpowers, these are nothing you have to go out and get. These are all things you have within you, probably stuff that you have used, but hopefully some other things we can just kind of hone in on to use more of their superpowers.

And then expanding your toolbox. I always talk about our toolbox. I feel like when I went to college, I got a small toolbox of, "here's some things to do when you're out there in the working world." And then, every child that I worked with, I learn new things, I kept adding to my toolbox. And you just wanna kind of keep adding to that toolbox of ideas. Sometimes something that works today doesn't work tomorrow. Kids are always changing. I feel like my kids grew and developed faster than my parenting skills did. So I found a strategy. It worked. I was like, "Yes. I'm there."

And then three months later, that strategy didn't work. They had moved on. They had cognitively moved past that strategy, and so I needed a new strategy. So just having more things in your toolbox. Plus, kids are different every day. What bothers them today sometimes doesn't bother them the next day or is more overwhelming the next day. So having a couple different strategies to try in those situations.

Like Sarah said, you're going to get copy of the slides. At the end of the slides, I added some additional information on more tools. I'm just gonna go for one tool, because we don't have a lot of time tonight. And

some more information on your bucket. I always talk about your sensory bucket, how full is your bucket. That kinda determines both for us as parents or caregivers. But also for the kids, how much you could handle? If your bucket is at the overflow line and the next thing that comes in, you're gonna have a hard time handling it.

Same with your kids. If you're at that just right fill line, something comes in, you're like, "Yeah, I got this. That's not too bad." And you'll handle it. You might not be happy about it, but you'll handle it.

And then also, I have something on, tantrums versus meltdowns. When we see kids get overdone, it's important to try to look at it as, do we think this is a tantrum? Do we think it's more of a behavioral? "I want that toy. I want that cookie." And you know, "I'm going to throw a little fit until I get it." Do we think it's more that? And those tend to be a little more short-lived. They tend to be, if I were to give you that, it probably would stop right there.

And I don't know if you've ever had that. You give something, stops. All the tears stop. That's more of a tantrum, you know. But if it's a full meltdown, more of a sensory overload, they don't even know what they want anymore. They're so overdone. They just don't even know, and so you could give their favorite toy or their favorite movie, they're still upset.

So those are kind of different perspectives to come at, you know, when you're trying to co-regulate. We'll think about those two, but there's more on those towards the end.

So like I said, co-regulation starts with regulation. So regulation is active. It's a process. It's something that is intentional, which is what makes it a little harder. It not just, "Oh, I'm happy and calm and just feeling great all the time." It's more of a, "How do I get back to that? This thing came at me, how do I stay cool? How do I stay calm?" Same for the kids, right? So figuring out how to make that process work for us and then how to help our children through that process.

One of the things that I use when I'm working with kids that helps me to explain regulation is Zones of Regulation. There are many different things. There's Thinkables and Unthinkables. There's five steps or five points of regulation. There's a ton.

This is a real easy one. There's tons of information on the internet about this. There's even videos. Anybody seen that *Inside Out* movie? So there's a zones of regulation *Inside Out* video. And so if you go on YouTube and you Google that, or not Google, but if you go on YouTube and you look that up, it'll come up and it shows each of the characters when they were in a different zone. It's a great teaching tool for kids, and there was several of them.

So this is a real easy way to just sort of guide your kids to where are they in regulation and to help you So real quick. Blue is just, "I'm bored. I'm tired. I'm sick. I'm hurt. I'm just sigh." It's kind of me before I have my coffee in the morning. So that's blue.

Green is, "I'm ready to learn. I'm alert. I feel good. I'm content. I'm happy. I'm good."

Yellow is that sort of, "I'm confused, I'm frustrated, I'm sort of overwhelmed." Sometimes the kids, they'll be a little overdone excited. A little too much movement, maybe I'm nervous, maybe I'm annoyed at my brother, that's yellow. But I'm still in control. And if somebody redirects me, I can be redirected pretty easily. I'm still kind of, "All right. I'm a little annoyed, but maybe something silly, a little redirection, I'm back."

Red is that out-of-control feeling. And you can kinda see it in your kid's eyes or other kids' eyes, like even the kids I work with. They're just sort of -- they leave the body and they're just in this, "I'm completely overdone. I'm not even listening to you. I'm mad." It could go to aggression. Some kids will go to aggression, hitting or pushing or kicking. You're angry, you're frustrated. And so that's a zone that we have to certainly try to help and co-regulate them out, but we also wanna preemptively go, "They're in yellow. Before they get to red, I'd like to see if I can calm this down."

So just kind of some different Zones of Regulation that we're gonna talk about. When we talk about the Zones, we talk about ourselves too. I always tell the kids I go through all these zones pretty much every day. There's some moment in my day I'm calm, there's some moment in my day that I'm tired and, you know, just wanna go back and lay down. There's some moment that I'm frustrated, and there's moments where I'm mad, or I'm upset.

I think that the kids don't think we go through these, because as adults, we try our best to stay kind of even keel. And so it's really important that we sort of demonstrate and show them that we're doing it. A lot of times, when I give this to a family, I'm like, "Put this on your fridge. When you're feeling these, say it out loud." You know, because you don't talk it usually, but like, "Oh, I'm really frustrated. I'm in the yellow zone. I'm gonna go sit down for a minute. I'm gonna get a drink of water." So that the kids know we're going through this, and I have a strategy for that. So that's kind of how we do that.

With that in mind, how many people have flown on an airplane? Most people? So you know when you go on the airplane and they go through the whole, "Here's how you put your seat belts on. The mask drops down. If there's a change in cabin pressure, put your mask on first before you put your child's mask on."

When I was thinking of what I wanted people to visualize when I say co-regulation starts with regulation and then starts with yourself, this is what came to mind. They always say put your mask on first, and I thought that's really weird. I wanna save my child. I wanna help my child. I'm gonna put theirs on first, right? And then I'll get mine on. But they have you put it on for a lot of really good reasons. And those same reasons are why we need to kind of look at our regulation when we're trying to do co-regulation with our child.

So in that event when the plane is topsy-turvy and they say the mask, and those masks come down. They're scared. You're scared. They're scared. Everybody's scared. So it's gonna be really hard to, like, wrestle this mask on, right? They're kind of upset, freaking out. You're feeling a little overwhelmed, maybe

short of breath, and so you might have a hard time putting their mask on for them and they're fighting you. So you've got both sides going.

At the same time, we know, in all of our training and all of the research, kids watch adults. They imitate adults. They want a vacuum. They want to sweep the floor. They want to stir the pot. They want all those things. So if we don't have a mask on and they're already nervous, and then we're trying to put this mask on them, they're probably wondering, "Why would we? Why would we put this on?"

If we put the mask on first, A, we can take a couple deep breaths and breathe a little calmer; B, we can show them, "Oh, look, it goes on like this." And, "Oh, look, it's an elephant trunk." Or talk like Darth Vader with it on. Okay? And they start to relax. And then they are more willing to put it on. Because if we go into fight, flight or fright, we can't help. And if we pass out because we don't have our oxygen mask on, we can't help either.

So that's why we want to think about where are we in that moment, and it's really hard. I think this is the hardest superpower, is thinking about "where are we,?" and can we find an anchor in ourselves. Because usually, when they're getting upset, we're tired, we're frustrated, we're worried, we're anxious, and we're trying to help our child. So we want to figure out "where are we?" and then how can we calm ourselves and get to that calm spot, so we can co-regulate, so we can share that calmness.

So co-regulation, and this is like, the big textbook definition. It's a little wordy, but I do like it, and we're gonna pull our superpowers out of this. So co-regulation is a variety of responses. One, is a warm calm presence. Again, it's a superpower. This is hard. Right? How do you have a warm, calm presence when they're melting down? When they, you know -- when they've maybe hit you, or hit the brother or sister or whatever. So this is really hard. But I'll give you a couple of strategies for doing that.

Your tone of voice. We need to have our mom or dad voice if there's a safety issue or a, you know, behavioral issue. But we also need to, if we're trying to calm them down first before we get to that behavioral part, we need to look at "what is our tone of voice?" That verbal acknowledgement of distress. I hear you. I see you. Acknowledging that, "Yeah, I see you're mad. I see you're frustrated. I get it, but we're still gonna work together on this."

Modeling behaviors, kids imitate us. So modeling the behaviors, the calmness that we want them to kind of absorb.

And then providing a structured environment that gives us both emotional and physical safety. So having that structure embedded all the time, but then also within that situation.

Like I said, these are gonna be our superpowers. So we're gonna jump right into the first one. So a warm, calming presence. Your posture, is it intimidating? Or is it more of a calm and welcoming? You know, if something's going on and think of yourselves, I like to think of how I feel too. If your boss or whatever, if something's going on, and somebody comes up to you, and they're like, "How does it feel? Oh, really?"

Sorry." I guess you look, and that doesn't feel overly warm and intimidating, but sometimes we're trying to be like, just stop until we come in and we're close, but it's not necessarily this, "Let's work together. Let's you and I regulate. Let's get calmer."

So thinking about "what presence do I want? Do I need to kind of get down on their level? Do I need to look eye to eye," right? That standing above can feel very intimidating. If you have somebody that's already in fight, flight or fright, and then you stand over and intimidate, that's gonna actually add fuel to the fire. So thinking about where you wanna be. I have had two ways to go here.

One way, we always talk about direct eye contact. We want direct eye contact, and it is nice. And sometimes, you wanna get down on their level and you wanna get that eye contact. But sometimes, and I don't know if... For me, this happens. I don't know if it happens for you, but sometimes, you don't want somebody looking you right in the eye when you're really upset. You just kind of are like, "I'm mad. I don't want you right in my face." So being able to see them, I can see all of you over here without looking directly at you. So I can give you some presence, but I'm not staring you down. Again, a little more calming.

Facial tone. Generally, I don't know about you, but I get real tight in my jaw joint. I kinda get that granite face, like, you know? Because you're not... You're upset, you're worried. And so looking at ways to just relax that a little bit.

Breaths. Breathing is so important. One of the things they talk about is more breathe out, then you actually breathe in. Anytime you do yoga, they always talk about that long exhale. There's actual biochemical things that happen in your sympathetic and your parasympathetic nervous system when you take a longer exhale, and then you inhale. And if you think about it, when you get back, you really breathe fast like this. And so you're all inhale with no exhale. So focusing on that exhale thing, we'll talk about some fun ways to do that with their kids. Counting to five. You know? One, two, three, four, five.

Giving them a minute to respond after you said something, giving you a minute to calm before you say the next thing. Finding your own calm space, and this is something you need to think about before, you know, could be something you think you're uptight or whatever. Like, do I get that momentary calm in the moment? What can I think about? What can I do?

And then, being aware of heart rate. Your heart rate, but also your child's heart rate. When they get upset, their heart goes so fast. If you've ever held your child, like close to you when they're really at it, their heart is like pounding out of their chest. So finding those ways that we can slow that heart rate down. Slow that breathing down.

Some of the tools for these. The breathing tools are fun, because most of the time, if I've told kids, "take a deep breath." "I don't wanna take a deep breath." You know, "I don't wanna breathe." Which I, you know, if it's an older child, we usually joke and I go, "Well, you're gonna pass out."

But some fun ways to take a deep breath, bubbles. Bubbles are great. Again, you're getting the yellow zone, you're getting upset or you know something's coming up that might be difficult. Getting out the bubbles and taking a deep breath and trying to blow as long as you can to get as many bubbles as you can. Blowing out candles. It might be actual candles, or it might be the five candles you have on your hand. So I always tell the kids, "Smell the birthday cake, blow out the candles." And those, these you have with you all the time. So when you're standing in line with the purchase store, when you're at the mall, this is really handy, they have these as well.

Second, blow through a straw. So we do a lot of games at OT, sucking and blowing through the straw. You can little pom-poms the table and blow them across the table at each other. Again, another great one, when you're in the yellow, "Hey, let's do this pom-pom game." You know, kind of distract away and move over to something. You can pick up Cheerios or little fishy crackers, pick them up, put them in a bowl. So suck on the straw, put them in a bowl. That's always silly.

You can also do... Some of the kids, as they get older, we do, tic tac toe. I've done where I have little squares of x's and o's. You suck it up with a straw, and then you put it down on the spot that you want. So just different ways you can kind of integrate breathing without telling them to just take a breath.

Blowing a whistle, a harmonica, any of those kind of instruments is great. Pinwheels. Pinwheels 50/50, because sometimes they get stuck and then they get mad. But like a whistle or a harmonica, usually works pretty consistently.

Tracing a breathing square or lazy eight. Again, on your hand, you've got a square. Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out. You can be -- they can be sitting on your lap at the doctor's office and be nervous, and they can just be against you, and you can take their finger and or trace on their hand. You don't have tell them to breathe, you just have them against you and you're breathing, and it takes them down a notch.

Facial tone. So again, that tightness in your face. One of the best is doing pufferfish and doing that as the adult. So I'm frustrated. You're frustrated. You're upset. You're whatever. I'm trying to calm myself down and sort of bring that co-regulation to you. So I'm gonna pufferfish. You're gonna relax this, and it's kinda silly. And sometimes it's that one little thing that just takes me like, "Oh, what what is she doing? Why is she doing that?" You know, and if you're not always at red, it can just make that little turn. You're looking for that one thing that just turns the situation.

And then also any kind of lip movements, and you can do that with breathing, you know? You know, and it can be your exhale. And that's how you're finding your calm zone, right? You're doing that longer exhale. That's how you're finding it, and you're also demonstrating it for them. And then getting down on their level.

Tone of voice is so amazingly powerful. I work in the schools, as well as outpatient, and sometimes you hear the teachers yelling above the kids, and other times you hear the teachers just, "Come inside. So if

you can hear me, come get a sticker. If you can hear me, come sit down with me." You know, and because of what, what, and it's amazing how it works. So you can do a soft voice. It can be firm. It can be directive. You know, here's your mix of those. Right? Sometimes it becomes even a whisper. If I think they'll come to me like, "Can you hear me? I would tell you something."

And I was like, "Shoot. I'm so bad. Sorry." And they're like, "What?" And then they're doing it, before they even realize they're doing it. Or if they're not gonna come to me, I'll go up to them and say, "I'll tell you something." And I'll tell them a secret. You're still giving the direction, but you're changing the whole dynamic. And it's really crazy how it works, but it does. I've used it with my own kids, and I use it all the time in the sessions. It just sort of breaks. It's not a 100%, but it does really work nicely.

Your tone. We all know tone of voice. If you, and again, Sarah was talking about this is mostly for younger kids- but if you have those pre-teens, teens, tone of voice becomes a big deal. You get a lot of tone of voice from them. But, you know, it's back and forth. So using your common voice, bringing your tone down low, even if it's coming back at you in a different way, just continue putting back out there that calm tone voice. "I hear what you're saying. You still can't have the car." You know, so just using that tone of voice, that tone, again, these are superpowers for a reason because cause it's not easy. It's not easy when you're tired and frustrated, and it's not easy when they're outside. But if you can sneak these in, it can give you that turning point.

The amount of words. When I worked for the county, I was able to co-treat with speech therapists, and they were constantly saying, "less words, less words." Just say the couple words, the one or two words of what you want them to do, you know, instead of, "Don't put your feet on there. It's all right." "Feet down. Nice hands. Calm body." So really just using those keywords, because the more words we use, they can't process all of it. The more we're in fight or flight, the less we can process language. Doesn't matter if your child is fully verbal or not. If you are overdone, you're not gonna hear everything the person said. And then you might even only hear the end words.

"Don't hit." Maybe I only heard "hit." Maybe, you know, so really nice feet, calm hands, maybe even taking their hands. If a hand's coming at you. Grabbing the hand. "Nice hands." Feet are come in. "Gentle feet." Comfy, inside voice. Two words. Say it once, count to five.

The other thing that the speech therapist taught me was, it takes time to process language, and it takes even more time if you're upset. So if we're like, "Quiet feet, quiet feet, quiet feet, quiet feet." Every time you say it, they start the process over of hearing your words. "Quiet feet." Count to five.

Choice of words. We've talked a little bit about it before, but you come in and missed trash, trying to switch it around both for you and for them. Okay. So you guys had a really good time, and there's toys everywhere. So instead of one of us saying, "Oh, I guess you had a good time. Let's clean this up together. Do you want to put away the cars and trucks, or should I put the cars or trucks away?" Pick two different things. Help them get started. Give them choices. So trying to turn the stage on, like, what I

really wanna say is, "Oh my god, I told you we needed this picked up before we left. But can you turn that around?"

They're running all over, but they really wanted a snack. "When you sit down, you can have a snack." Letting them know that they have a choice. "You can have a snack whenever you want me." And you're just sitting over here. Again, whispering, tell them a secret in terms of their tone of voice, counting, and giving them time to process their information.

Also, when I worked for the county, I had the opportunity to work some amazing music therapists, and they taught me transition songs. I am not a good singer, but I can tell you transition songs work like the pied piper. You start singing what you want them to do. And it's amazing, what you get. You know, you're trying to put on shoes. They're fighting you with the shoes. "Time to put your shoes on, shoes on, shoes on. Time to put your shoes on, then we go." And you just keep singing it, and all of a sudden, the shoes are on. It's really weird.

You can sing any tune you like, you just change the words, sometimes you put your coat on, any of those. Anything, any child song that you feel would be a good rhythm for you. You know, we're transitioning a lot of times in our office. We start in a big room, and then we go to a small room. "We are walking, we are walking, we are walking down the hall. First, our right foot, then our left foot, we are walking down the hall." Again, I don't have a great voice, but it works. So anything you can sing, I think it surprises them. I think music is very encouraging, and so I think it just sort of changes that tied for them, and then using your first dance instead of a don't.

Verbal acknowledgement of distress. I think this is a really important one as well. Sometimes hard to do as well. Keep the words simple. Keep them short. "I see you. I see you're mad. I see your frustration. I hear you're mad." When they're screaming, "I hear it. Do you need my help?" Right?

There's been a lot of research and literature out there about talking about that. I think the first thing we tend to say is, "You're okay. You're okay." But if you're really mad, I guess they think about it. Again, for me, like, if I'm really mad, somebody I'm meeting just said something and it really offended me, I don't know that I want somebody coming up and touching my shoulder and go, "You're okay." I'm like, "No, I'm not. I'm mad." Right? Or if I'm really sad, something happened and somebody hurt my feelings, or something happened and I'm sad, and somebody's like, "You're okay." No, I'm sad. I'd rather have you say, "I see you're sad. I'm sorry you're sad. How can I help?"

So acknowledging that "yeah, you're sad." If they come to you, and arms and legs are coming and kicking, and giving yourself a safe space, giving them a safe space. You know, "when you're calm, I can talk to you. When your body is calm, I can talk to you." So you not having them kicking at you, trying to keep a safe space between the two of you. Because that just keeps everything going, and it makes it harder on you, too.

I've got and fought, by both clients, as well as my own kids, a couple of times. Really good under the chin, and it's hard to hold in your own fight, flight or flight when you get clocked a good one. So giving yourself that safe space, giving them that safe space so that you can keep your calm space. And again, using the first dance.

Modeling behaviors. And a lot of what we talked about already has that in them, but really, kids imitate adults. They watch us. They imitate our actions. They imitate our words. Sometimes you'll hear them playing with their toys and some of your comments will come out. So they really do. Even people within the same room do what we call entrain.

If you walk into a room, like, especially one of the... Like a spa or something. I mean, they have the music on, but everybody's talking. You know, and it just kind of takes you down a notch. If you walk into a room and there's just lot of tension and anger, or you or work environment that's kind of hostile and you're like, you can feel it. Even as an outsider, you can feel it. So we do connect to each other. So with that in mind, we know we can co-regulate with others, especially with our children.

So it's a matter of how do we connect with them? Again, modeling that, that breathing, modeling that tone voice, that calm presence. Demonstrating the zone as much as you can. Talk about it. Talk about how you're feeling, talk about what you're gonna do to make yourself feel better, calmer. Modeling with songs, a cleanup song. Make something silly.

A lot of times, I have kids that wanna throw something. "Great. Let's get a laundry basket and throw toys in the laundry basket. Make really loud noise." And I'll start a couple of them, and I go, "Your turn." And all of a sudden, they're finding any toys they can to throw in the laundry basket, and make a loud noise. Fine. We cleaned it up. We got the whole room cleaned up without me saying, "Clean up your toys." Divide up the tasks. "I see all the books are out and all the puzzles are out. Would you like to do books or puzzles?"

At calm times, using stuffed animals or action figures to sort of talk it up. "Boy, I'm really mad. Oh." You know, doing a lot of silly games, role playing, acting it out.

And then the last one, that providing that structured environment that supports their physical and emotional safety, and yours as well.

Visual schedules are amazing with kids. If you think about it for like, in a kids' perspective, we kinda just take them through the day. We try to tell them what's coming. "You know, later today, we're gonna go here. Well, later today as well." "I don't know what that means." You know, but we just kinda slip them through. They don't have a lot of choices. They don't really know what's coming.

So a visual schedule, it could be pictures. So it could be pictures of things or sometimes just even written. Even if they can't read, just talking about, you know, we're gonna brush our teeth, we're gonna eat breakfast, and then we're gonna play outside. And you can just erase it as you go. I use dry eraser boards all the time, just those little ones, and then you can erase it and use it again. Short. No more than

four things. You know, if there's regular things you do, you can have pictures of them. Now that we all our phones, our cameras, we can take pictures just so they know what's coming.

And then embed a choice in there. "What's something you wanna do this morning?" "Well, I wanna, I wanna play with my trains." "Okay. Breakfast, get dressed, trains, and then we're gonna go to the store." So they know it's coming, you can cross off as you go, they know where they are in the morning. You give them another one in the afternoon.

Heavy work. The proprioceptive input, and that's the input from your muscles and kinda goes in that cross your joints, is calming. It actually increases the serotonin in your brain. So lots of doses of heavy work, helping you push, pull, carry. Carry a bag of groceries in, push the laundry basket down the hall, pull brother on a blanket around the house. Any of those kind of things, especially before a time that you know is gonna be in particular, maybe a challenge or a trigger, but also when you see, "Oh, yellow is coming. I see a little yellow here. Let's try to get some of that heavy work." I have a handout that I'm gonna give you later that has a bunch of different activities, Terry LaGuardia and myself had made that years ago. It's part of Connecting for Kids, but it's just got some quick simple ones on there, but they're great to have.

Having sort of a calm, cozy spot. You know, maybe they make it. You know, maybe it's a little tent, maybe it's a blanket and a bean bag and some pillows and stuffies. This is kinda more when you're in the yellow, and it's like, "Okay. We need to take this down. Let's go, wait. Get your favorite book. Get your stuffy. Let's go sit in this spot." But then also having a safe space for them to let it out, right? If they're really having a hard time. If they're in a safe space, you can take a step away and just, you know, get all of that out.

Sometimes we're right in there and we're trying to help them, and we're talking to them and we're trying to be there. It's like, maybe just giving them quiet and two steps away. Knowing that they're safe. Maybe even not making eye contact anymore, just they're there. When they're calm, going back and checking in. I talk a lot about happy and healthy choices. A lot of times, we talk about good and bad choices with kids, but, sort of expanded that to healthy, happy. This is a healthy choice.

You know, "Is throwing a toy at somebody, is hitting somebody, using your mean words, is that a healthy choice? Is throwing your toy a choice that's gonna make you happy?" You throw your toy, it's either gonna break -- or in my house, if you throw your toy and it went in the closet for a day. "So is that gonna make you happy? I see you're mad and you wanna chuck something, but let's find something else."

So think about this choice. "Is it gonna make you happy? Is it a healthy choice?" And then the natural consequences of actions. You know, having something that's immediate and right there, like, "we threw the toy, it's gonna get away for an hour, away till tomorrow." That type of thing, versus a, "you threw the toy, no dessert after dinner. Wait over here, and the other end of the day." Because then sometimes what happens is we're upset here, but then when we get to dinner, we've forgotten about here, and now we're gonna get upset again because now we don't have our dessert. So trying to find those natural consequences that make sense with what happened right then and there.

The redirection, you know, when you're seeing that yellow zone coming, some kids go all the way into red really fast. So, you know, well, there's strategies and there's reasons for that. But if you see that yellow zone, if you see them becoming overdone, can you do a redirect? Be silly, grabbing a book, changing conversation. A lot of times, changing the room. If you're really mad right here, sometimes I do a switch and go and we squish into a pillow somewhere else, or "let's go get a drink of water, let's go." Sometimes you just need to leave the room because it's all spiraling here, and we'll go in the kitchen. And for whatever reason, it takes them down a notch. And then taking a cooldown time, a sensory break. Again, some of those heavy work activity.

So we're almost to the part where we're gonna start discussing some things amongst ourselves. But working together with your kids, right? Thinking of it as working together, discussing and practicing some of the different strategies to do during those happy, calm times. Acting things out, role-playing. Modeling for them. Giving them lots of choices. Adult-chosen choices, but lots of choices.

You don't care what color plate they get, but you can go, "do you want the red plate or blue plate for breakfast?" You don't care what, you know, maybe, "do you want the blue shirt or the red shirt?" As many little choices as they can have in the day, as well as the visual schedule, gives them some sense of control. "We're partners in this. You get some say in your day, but I also have some say in your day. There's certain things we have to do, but then there's certain things you can choose to do."

And then trying to find that time, especially I feel like, with mine being... My two kids being 20 and 27, finding that even if it's two minutes, that just that joyful moment, something. Something fun. It's snuggle, a hug, whatever, finding that time. Because if you're working and you're trying to manage your house, then you're trying to manage one, two, three or five, or however many kids, and all the different things that go on, plus you're tired. You're tapped out. Finding that joyful moment that both of you can think about later. Like, "This little snuggle was so nice. It was one minute, and the rest of the day was chaos, but it was really nice to have that couple of snuggle times." So finding those joyful moments, too.