



Podcast 42: Connections Over Compliance

Episode notes: prekteachandplay.com/podcast42

Welcome to the Pre-K Teach and Play Podcast where solutionaries are reclaiming children's right to learn through play, re-imagining inclusive classrooms and revolutionizing early care and education. Here's your host Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak

Kristie:

Hey everyone. This is Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak and this is episode 42 of the Pre-K Teach and Play Podcast. Today, my guest is [Dr. Lori Desautels](#), an assistant professor at Butler University and passionate researcher, writer, and teacher. Lori's work centers on how to engage children and students through the application of neuroscience as it applies to attachment, regulation, and educator brain states. Really, it's all about teaching children, students, and staff about their neuroanatomy. She also has a new book coming out that we'll talk a bit about, it's called [Connections Over Compliance, Rewiring Our Perceptions of Discipline](#). See, I knew you'd love this one, right? It's so many things already, neuroanatomy, helping people think about the brain state, connections over compliance.

So, you can definitely follow Lori across all types of [social media](#) and on her [website](#). You'll find links to all of those things in the show notes for this episode, which is at prekteachandplay.com/podcast42 and seriously, this is such a powerful episode and it addresses not only many of the issues that we're facing... living through a pandemic, but also provides hope and specific strategies and practical ideas of how we might transition to and reimagine what education will look like in the future. I learned so much, I have pages of notes and in fact, within an hour of recording this episode, I was already sharing what I've learned. Here's a quick example, right at the start of our conversation Lori shared three things the brain just can't take, meaning things that will impact across any age our ability to learn, our ability to thrive.



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So, here's three things that just the brain cannot take. Number one, chronic unpredictability, could we say that maybe during the pandemic before, during and after maybe even we are experiencing chronic unpredictability, check. Second thing the brain just can't take, isolation. Could we do a check again? Third thing the brain just can't take, remember, these are things that can't take if you want to learn, grow, develop, and thrive, is it can't take emotional and physical restraint, check. So, we have to really think about oh my goodness, what is the brain state of our community, our teachers, our children, our families and so, we hope that you find this episode to not only be super informative, but also a little bit inspiring regardless of what your role is whether you're an educational leader, a paraprofessional, a parent, a teacher, a therapist, a mental health provider, social worker, sibling, self advocate.

This is for all humans that can really think more deeply about brain states as a way to make sure that during the pandemic and post the pandemic we're able to thrive. I hope you enjoy!

Kristie: So, hey Lori, welcome to the Pre-K Teach and Play Podcast.

Lori: Thank you Kristie so much, I'm really happy to be here with you today!

Kristie: Yeah, it couldn't be more timely. So, at the time of this recording, we are a few months, I don't know, weeks, days, months they blur together into the COVID-19 pandemic and Lori and I had talked about gathering and then launching, or broadcasting this episode in October 2020, but we decided, maybe, we should just do it right now. So, she has a new book coming out, maybe out by the time you'll be listening to this, it's called Connections Over Compliance, Rewriting Our Perceptions of Discipline, which for any of you that follow me know I'm going to be the first one to buy it, but there is this beautiful phrase that she has an introduction.

So, I'm going to turn it over to her in two seconds because I want you to gain all this amazing insight and strategies that she has, but there was this phrase in the book's intro that just sort of cut my heart and so I wanted to start it and then we're just going to ask her to kind of expand upon that and tell us a bit about her work. So, she has this phrase in the book that talks about rebuilding trust, regaining confidence, returning to a sense of



security and reconnecting to love. So welcome again, Lori and let's just dive in and tell us about all that little alliteration and how it ties to your work and your passion.

Lori:

So, thank you Kristie so much and also it's just so fun to hear a quote from a book that's not yet burst, but it's on its way. I'm really, really happy to do this podcast with you in this time and as you so thoughtfully shared we were going to wait, but this is a time that absolutely no one was prepared for. There's not an expert on this planet that really can tell us what to expect, or how to move through this time. So, I've really been doing, it's very interesting. I completed the book during this last seven, eight weeks. It was almost finished, but I changed a lot because what we now know, for instance in Indiana when this began over 1 million students that are without technology, two thirds of our student population and they are without internet accessibility. Last night, CNN reported that there are over 18 million students across the country that do not have internet or e-learning capabilities at this time.

So, this has been just hanging in my mind over these last seven weeks and I feel that this pandemic has really shone a light on some of the gaps that we are seeing in education right now. We have children and adolescents that are walking into our classrooms, in schools, and districts and they are not trusting adults. They are coming from high, high adverse childhood experiences, which completely rewires their ability to learn and to face adversity so their stress response systems are reprogrammed, and so, as we move into this pandemic, we know that 20% of our children in this country are experiencing significant ACEs and our nation's new learning disability is anxiety. So, this is really layering what we already are seeing on top of this.

So, I take a deep breath because with your very kind introduction, with those words we are going to have to re-envision and re-imagine education in this time. And even though that feels overwhelming, I think that it is time to really look at how we begin to address the trauma and the pain based behaviors of children who are coming into our schools and districts across the country.

Kristie:

Well, I think there's several things you said in there that can be overwhelming, but are also necessary that we not turn away from it because as you were talking about the inequity around



the internet and technology we can start to peel that back to where you went all the way to they're not even safe, or they don't have trusting relationships, or they don't have the coping strategies to be able to deal with. I mean, I feel challenged, I feel like my ability to move through this world with grace and ease is really being challenged right now and let's talk about it. I'm white, I'm privileged and I don't have children. I'm calling out the - I don't have children because I don't have anyone I have to teach at home while I'm trying to work and I feel on most days that I'm not doing it well.

And I would generally say I'm kind of a put together person, so when I think about the inequity, I think of it on all those levels, the hard, fast internet issue, but all the way to how many children and youth right now aren't in a safe environment, or in a secure attachment. So, let's keep going and it's fine to go back and forth between all of those gaps that are being illuminated, but let's also talk a little bit about your background and how you've been working for a long time well before the pandemic to address those ACEs, those gaps, those needs for secure attachments.

Lori: So, thank you because I got so excited about jumping into our topic that I totally forgot about my background.

Kristie: No, it's okay. They can read about it, right? We'll have it all in the show notes, but I think it's important that people see that you've been doing this work in many different ways for a long time and I don't mean to say that you're an old person. It's like no, it's deep, it's vast, it's extensive, this isn't your first book and your strategies are grounded in research and practice. So yeah, let's go.

Lori: I began teaching children in a self contained classroom with the classification of emotionally disturbed. And that was right out of college, I was in a classroom with almost all boys at the time and this was in late eighties, early nineties. And then as I began to sit beside the students I saw behaviors that felt so inappropriate, so disruptive, so violent and aggressive, but I knew I was missing the mark and I'll go back to that. I knew there was so much more underneath that signal and what that behavior was communicating. So, I went into private practice working with families that had children and adolescents that were experiencing school related behavioral issues and that took me to Methodist hospital in Indianapolis where I worked on the adolescent psychiatric unit and really looked at how we can



bridge those gaps between the psychiatric hospitalization and returning to the school environment in that adolescent time.

And then, I had my three children that was continuing to research and to delve into this and I've been teaching undergrad and graduate students for about 11 years, 12 years I've been in higher ed. And when Butler university offered me the position four years ago, this work really took off, unknowingly, because what happened, I was given a course release by both universities that Butler continued that and I've been in the classroom two days a week, working at the ground level with children every semester and I'm telling you, Kristie, I would have nothing to say on this podcast today, if I were not in the classroom because being in fifth grade, being with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade last year, I am implementing these strategies with my co-teacher and we're seeing great things happen on a Tuesday morning and then we see a shit show on Thursday.

And so, it's happening all over the place. I mean, I wouldn't know that if I were not in that classroom. So, the regulation and the connection strategies that we're implementing, I'm writing about those in all of our books. We are creating a course of study in applied educational neuroscience. We're sharing this with undergraduates and graduates, and trauma and adversity change the story, and they change our perceptual, our hormonal, every system, nervous system, every system in our body changes and therefore we see behaviors escalating, and we see children and adolescents that are carrying in pain, but we misunderstand that pain and we punish that pain adding secondary trauma on top of primary trauma. And that is my passion is to help educators to understand that we must begin to look at not what's wrong with this child, but what has happened to this child and then to take it to a deeper level and ask, "What type of world did this child inherit?" That's where I am right now.

Kristie:

Let's go back to another thing you said, like this is the opportunity to reimagine education. I saw a post the other day that just stopped me in the tracks, a parent had posted a phrase that a teacher had shared and I'm always walking a very fine line between wanting to encourage a revolution in education especially in early care and education and not finding myself on a path where I'm publicly shaming, or criticizing teachers. If nothing else, if there's one lesson to be learned, it's how vital early care and education across the ages, what an important role they play in our community and our societies that we're seeing



that, you don't just go have a classroom and you know how to teach, there is so much to it especially when children bring so much diverseness with them, but this post said that a teacher had said, "Well, we are in the new normal" which I also don't like that phrase.

I heard the "new now", which is fine because it's just temporary. We're in the new normal and you've been here long enough, I'm using tone, I don't know if the teacher had tone. We're now going to have a zero tolerance policy for late submissions of your work because you've all been able to now figure it out and we're going to institute a zero tolerance policy. And I was just like really, zero tolerance policy was never a good policy on any level and now to say that we've figured out the pandemic that we can now institute it, do you see like... so then just talk around that in terms of, like, needing to reimagine education, that's all.

Lori:

Well, so what's happened and this pandemic has really, again, shone another light on the three conditions that the brain can not take and this is what we need to understand as parents, we need to understand this as educators because this is science and especially when we... I'm going to talk about these three conditions, but these affect the developing brain in a much greater way and have a much more impact just because our nervous systems and our brains are developing all the way till late twenties, early thirties. So, this pandemic has created these three conditions and the first one is chronic unpredictable stress, or chronic unpredictability and a human being needs routine, we need structure. We need to have beginnings, we need to have endings, we are wired to make associations and analogies and that's how the brain learns.

It learns through the experiences that we've already had that are stored subconsciously or implicitly, and then we subconsciously compare the experiences and the events that we're having now to those. When there is chronic unpredictability, it leaves us spinning almost in a very fragmented fear state because we need... and it throws us into survival responses and survival brain is a brain that can not think about tonight. It thinks about the moment, it doesn't care about consequences, it doesn't care about stickers, it doesn't care about logic and it doesn't care about rewards because it's functioning in the moment in the minute to survive. And that brain is scanning the environment to make sure everything feels safe and familiar.



The second condition the brain can not take is isolation and that's what's happening right now too. We are socially, we are physically isolated, I think parents and educators overall are just doing a fabulous job trying to keep social connection happening through the airwaves, but it's really, really difficult. The third condition that the brain can not take is emotional and physical restraint, and so when I talk about emotional restraint that is where you feel as if you don't have any control, or choice, or any significant power in the experiences around you, that physical restraints speaks for itself. You feel locked physically, you can't move to go anywhere and I think the adolescent brain probably feels a lot of that right now because that brain is social, I mean that adolescent brain is living within the context of peers, so it will weigh risks and take those risks and probably make some not too good decisions with that.

So, those three conditions are why this pandemic has already added this layer of trauma and I know we'll talk about what... some of the things that we can do that counter these conditions that are the antithesis of these conditions, but it's really difficult because the brain is wired to survive first and survival is what we pay attention to and it's interesting because there was a fabulous article that came out about a couple of weeks ago out of UBC and it was sharing that when we are isolated we become more protective and we downshift into a survival response because people are social beings. Our brains are social organs and when we're isolated we feel stripped of protection. So, everything feels around us more threatening when we're doing it on our own.

And I was thinking about my own mom who is living by herself right now and how she feels to me stressed much of the time. And I was thinking about the energy it takes to mentally and emotionally make sure you're okay and you're protecting at all moments, so that there will be good outcomes and these are subconscious processes. We don't think about these out loud, it's just what we do in a survival brain state. So these are the conditions right now that we're all experiencing and that's why we can wake up in the morning and feel so exhausted. You don't have the energy to go take a walk, you don't have the energy to make your favorite sandwich. All you want to do is lay on the couch or throw yourself across the bed and go back to sleep because mentally and emotionally, we are expending a ton of brain energy just in that survival mode.

Kristie: Well, and will you talk a little bit about that Lori too, especially for younger children and sort of that inter brain relationship that it's not a conscious thing, it's not because you sat down and watch the news or had a conversation, it's this implicit, this unconscious, or this inter brain way of knowing, so that even young children are experiencing even if they don't know it.

Lori: Well, absolutely, and so we are feeling and sensing creatures first. So, when we're born that brainstem develops and we develop from the back to the front and from the inside out. So, I am speaking about the brain in very simplistic terms during this podcast, so forgive me for all those who are listening that I'm really oversimplifying this, but for children this is really good for them to understand the foundation of this. So, when you are upset, or anxious, or worried, or mad, oftentimes in fact, the majority of the times you're sensing and feeling your world around you and the experiences at a nonverbal level and so the language of the brainstem is sensation. So, children and it's true for us too, but for children we can feel tired, goofy, angry. We can feel edgy, we can feel brittle, jumpy, briskly, kids love those words, teary, I'm open, flowing, gooey. These are the words my seventh graders made up, butterfly-ish, goose bumpy-ish.

They speak in sensations because that is the language of how they feel what's happening in their bodies. And so, we have to understand that trauma is not psychological, trauma is how every single one of us is holding these experiences in our body, implicit memory, and so sensations address how we're experiencing it in our body. So, that's why children are not sitting and watching the news, they're not being able to verbalize this and say, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I haven't been at school for six weeks, this feels strange." They just sense it and feel it and that's because they are aligning to their own state dependent functioning their own brain states because we sense the world, then we feel the world and then once we sense and feel safety and connection, we think.

So, we must feel a sense of safety and connection before we can problem solve, be creative, play, have, you know, create a pause in our lives. I mean, all of those things, so that's why we're so edgy and for many of our kids, school was their safe place. That's where they got their meals, that's where they had friendships, that's where there was the adult that they had a very healthy



serve and return touchpoint with, that's where co-regulation happened and it's not there, there is no closure now.

Kristie:

So, we call them revolutionaries, we early childhood revolutionaries, we talk a lot about all of these things that you're saying about early brain development and about co-regulation and have you guys been talking about especially for young children, if I'm the teacher and I'm trying to do teaching virtually, it's often through the parent because we're talking about children who are two, three, four or five years of age, or even early elementary children with more significant disabilities who are going to need parents to help moderate even the mechanism by which we're connecting. So, how do you talk to people about co-regulation?

Lori:

Co-regulation, I'll define it first from my best understanding and how we're sharing it across this framework, but co-regulation is really nonverbal and I want to be very clear about that. This is not, it can be verbal, but it's really creating that interpersonal space between two people that is felt safety, it is a reliable space, it's an emotionally available space, it's a consistent space and it's held as a space where we can feel, sense and speak our hearts and minds in safety and trust. And so for parents, so I'm going to address the second part, I think of what you just talked about and through e-learning many of our children are sitting with their parents through e-learning.

So, one of the best ways that we can share how this might work somewhat successfully is for the parents to be interacting with the teacher too and modeling and learning and doing all of the fun things, or all of the learning activities that their child is doing so that they are actually partnering in an activity together and per young children, and creating some specific lessons right now for pre-K all the way up through for some e-learning activities. Here's an example, a body reflection and we put our hands on our belly. So mom, or dad, or caregiver puts their hand on their belly, or sibling puts their hand on their belly and then we kind of give it a little push and we might rub it a little bit and this is for younger kids, and does it feel squishy? Does it feel soft? Does it feel hard? Does it feel achy? And then we move to our chest.

And we push and we kind of wiggle around a little bit and then we say where do you feel squishy? Where do you feel? And we



use sensory words to help them. So, the caregivers are actually doing this with them, so they're modeling that then there's a co-regulatory practice between the caregivers and the students, if that makes sense. So, the body reflection is, really, we're doing that even with undergraduates because we all hold it in our bodies and it's important to share that.

Kristie: So I feel like I have eight questions at once. So, I'm going to ask you where does it make sense to go from here? Do we need to get a little bit more background about what's going on when people don't feel safe and secure, or should we talk a little bit about some go to strategies? I definitely want to spend a little bit of time about thinking about the re-imagining education and how we can support families and educators as we go to reopen, like the things that we should keep at the top of our mind, but what makes sense before we get to that part.

Lori: So, let's begin with just a little bit about why we feel the way we do very briefly, then let's talk about some of the strategies that are addressing brain and body states that leads into okay, what can we do as we return in whatever way that looks like.

Kristie: Got it. Let's do it.

Lori: So, it's very important to understand that trauma and adversity happen on a continuum and that when we speak of, for instance this pandemic, or in any experience that has occurred in our life, oftentimes it happens too fast and it's too much and it's too soon and that creates body overwhelm, and so I think that's one of the best ways I can describe it, especially for children and adolescents we don't have the words to share what it feels like, but we know when our heart races, we know when our face gets hot, we know when our hands get sweaty, we know when we start to feel pinched, or we start to feel tight or tense, we can describe those sensations. So, it can be a significant trauma, but it can also be an accumulation of little traumas too and we all have a unique fingerprint for how our stress response systems respond to that, so it's different for everybody.

Our brains continue into development until late twenties, or early thirties, but the greatest time of development is in the first 1000 days of life and that's when the brain wires up and creates synapses and connections just at a speed that we can't even comprehend. So, even though you are teaching a fifth grader, or you're working with a senior in high school, those experiences



that landed with that child early on can still be very, very impactful, five years, 10 years, 15 years later. So, it's really important for us to understand that the brain is a historical organ, it is a social organ and it's built from experiences, it's experience dependent and I think as a mom and I do want to share Kristie today, that this is not just about education, this is about me as a mom.

I think, if I would have parented differently my three children, I would have been a different educator, this is not just about what we do in schools. It's about our homes right now, which is very interesting because this pandemic is our teachers are parenting, our parents are teaching, our administrators are parenting and teaching, we're working and parenting and teaching. We're all just doing it all right now and so we have a collision of roles and responsibilities that is also escalating how we're feeling within ourselves. So, we can talk about some of the strategies and some things that we're doing right now in classrooms, but these are also e-learning strategies. I mean, just some of the things that we can do with our students and we know that feeling calm and feeling regulated is required for any type of learning.

And so, [Dr. Dan Siegel](#) as you know, always shares what you can name you can tame and what is shareable is bearable. So, whether we're teaching in the classroom, or whether we're parenting, I think it's very important to create and be intentional about procedures and routines that build touchpoints. So, you notice a haircut, you notice a new pair of shoes when the child walks in, you validate what a child shares with you, it's called [empathic resonance](#) and it's powerful and it's really just speaking to the feelings and the sensations of that child. And it's using that interpersonal inbetween space, so the power of questions are so important too, after we validate because sometimes our children and our adolescents really don't know what they need, but they just need to know you're there. A lot of times we will share with a child, let me know what you need when you're ready, I'm not going anywhere, I'm right here.

And that's validating. Tell me what you need, we can work this out together. Those are what we're calling touch points and they're very, very important. We are using focused attention practices in our classrooms and at home, and these are practices that integrate breathing and visualization and listening sound, taste. They're using all of our senses to help us focus right in the present moment. So, before we begin a school day during a

morning meeting, as students come in, we might offer a peppermint, we might have a basket of cotton balls just to feel the softness. We might offer unscented and scented hand lotion as they unpack backpacks, I would do this at home too. As they turn in homework, as they get ready for the day, get ready for bell work.

We have regulatory practices that we have on a sensory table, so as students come in, they have been taught how to use these procedures and we're really paying attention to that survival brain state, getting everyone calm and focus so that we can access the prefrontal cortex. Some of the things that we are using too are worry boxes. So if you come in there's some post it notes and if there is something that happened in the hallway, or on the bus, or at home, you can draw a picture of it, you can write it down and you can dot it red, yellow, or green. Red means I want you to throw it away after I write it down. Yellow means I'm not sure what I want you to do with it yet, so hold onto it and green means I want to talk to you about it later. This would be a great thing for parents to have too.

We're creating amygdala first aid stations and amygdala reset areas in our classrooms and one of the things, Kristie, I want to share on this podcast. There's a lot of talk right now about mindfulness and I'm so grateful for it. We talk about Mindful Mondays and we've got calm corners and we've got regulatory classrooms and those are so critical in this time, but I think what we need to think about is using the language of science when we are speaking to our students because first of all, it's empowering to know that I'm not a bad kid and there's nothing wrong with me, this is the way my brain has learned how to fire and therefore wire. And so, we are teaching our students about their neuroanatomy and we're helping them to understand the science.

So, we talk about the amygdala, we talk about the prefrontal cortex, we use those languages and we're moving away from talking about behaviors. I hope when we return in the fall that many of us will begin to focus check-ins and checkouts. I hope we start focusing not on behaviors, but on brain and body states because this is where we get sustainable behavioral changes. When we talk about if I'm functioning in my cortex, have I downshifted to my limbic brain and have I shut down in my brainstem because this has a very nice way of not labeling. It doesn't identify good, bad, right or wrong. We all have brains and

it's very, very empowering again to talk about those. So, morning meetings and procedures and routines and rituals at the beginning, and the end of the day are all about these focused attention practice in getting us calm, but we talk about what's happening in our brain state.

Kristie:

So, I wanted to go back to the sensory rich activities. So, I'm going to put a pin in that as my friend, [Jumaa Jordan](#) would say, so I don't forget I want to come back to that and ask you to unpack it a little bit, but I think what I want to just recap of what you just hit on part of our work in the early care and education revolution is to become more aware of the trauma caused by white dominant culture and white supremacy. And so, what you just hit on in terms of right, or wrong is so much part of the white dominant culture, the labeling and that binary look at things. So, I appreciate this shift of language towards what you call, talked about brain and body states over behavior might be a nice transition for people that have this in their heart to move away from the labels and seeing the behaviors that challenge them, but get even further away from it and therefore away from the impact of the white dominant culture.

So, just that, I wanted to say that. I was just listening to a conversation this morning from an occupational therapist and my friend, [Alyssa Blask Campbell](#), from Seed and Sew and they were talking about three types of activities, the sensory to get you ready, the brain engaged to do the task and then have time for rest and recovery. So, when you were mentioning that there might be these sensory and if we think about families of young children in homes. What might be some things that they could do that would be a sensory rich activity, or just drop back to the examples you already gave and say how that is a sensory because I think, sometimes, people think what do we mean by sensory integration, or sensory rich? And you mentioned that several times. So, can you just kind of circle back to that for us.

Lori:

What we're using with St. Mary's Early Childhood Center, which is a three, four, and five year olds and then also in our public schools right now across Indianapolis and across the state are focusing on, so you can call them sensory, rich activities, but we're looking at rhythm, we're looking at breath, we're looking at movement touch and pressure and we're also looking at nonverbal communication. So, there are some very simple things we can do, whether you're teaching, whether you're parenting and one of the things that is sensory related is monitoring my



tone of voice and watching my posture, my facial expression and my gestures because what we know is that behavior management is a very incorrect term, people don't manage other people and it's never about the child, it is always about the adult, whether I'm a parent, or whether I'm a teacher, behavior management is not about my children, it is about me.

So, sensory regulatory practices focus on my brain state first. I want to be very clear about that today, before I go into specific strategies because I think that's where we begin and that's why the care of my own brain and body state is the best thing I can give to my children. When my children see me taking three deep breaths, when they see me standing up and taking three deep breaths and maybe going over and running in place for 10 seconds or doing 10 jumping jacks, or when I take my hand lotion and I close my eyes and I give myself a nice hand massage for 10 seconds, I'm modeling the behaviors that I want to see, I'm modeling the experiences that I want my children to partake in. So, that's the very first thing that I want to share that's really critical. It is about the adult, it's not about the child.

Art and drawing are so healing to brain architecture because again, we are feeling and sensing creatures before we think, so anytime we can draw a sensation, or we can color, or we can fill something with lines and shape and color, or Play-Doh, or clay, it takes it out of the brain and body and puts it in a container that's safe and out here, so it doesn't feel so scary because it's inside. So I want to share, these are some of the questions that we're sharing with them and I can share these with you and I can write these up for the audience too, but I love these because this really addresses how we're all experiencing how children are experiencing this pandemic right now. So the first one is can you draw two pictures, or images that pop into your mind when you think of COVID or the pandemic?

So, what color would they be? What shapes are they? Are they... is it a straight line? Is it a squiggly line? Is it a picture? Is it a circle? What do you see when you think of this pandemic or COVID? The second one is what are two ways this pandemic has affected you or your family? So, you can draw these pictures, you can write about it, you can journal about it, you can talk about it in that interpersonal, in between space, and then the third one is how does our world feel different to you right now than it did eight weeks ago or three months ago? And so, we encourage our students to draw the differences, what does the world look like

now? And then, what did the world look like three months ago? Or a couple of months ago, we cannot see this invisible virus, but if you could, what does it remind you of?

What are its colors, its lines, it's images. If you could help create a better world as we go through this pandemic together, what is one change or a couple of changes you would like to help create or see? And again, we can reword these and we can kind of play with these and imagine, but the point is we're giving our children an opportunity to use some autonomy, to use their voice and to really share how they're experiencing it through art, or through journaling, or through just talking about it, because sometimes we just avoid it.

Kristie: Yeah and I'm thinking for even younger children there might be some movements-

Lori: Absolutely.

Kristie: Of what it looks like, or what it sounds like that we could even incorporate into it, or if they wanted to role play with a puppet they could ask the puppet to do things.

Lori: Absolutely, and that's one of the things. So, when we work with three, four, and five year olds, we begin with regulatory strategies that use movement and breath, and use emotional freedom technique which is tapping, and so we bring in animals. So, we roll in the mud, in the water, like pigs do to get that vestibular, that proprioceptive sense that you know, where our body feels in space, right now we tap, we have a fun fact about every animal and I'll be happy to send these for anybody who would like these for the podcast. But we know that, if again, I've said this before, if a child does not feel felt and they don't feel safe, they don't learn. So, our procedures and routines and transitions for all of our children, we begin the day and we end the day and we use focused attention practices, or brain intervals, or brain aligned bell work with a variety of sensory and connection strategies for each of those age groups.

Kristie: Just noticing the time Lori, my goodness.

Lori: I know.

Kristie: I could talk to you all day. So, I wanted to say one thing about behavior management and then let's shift gears to the



reopening, the re-entry, we don't know when it'll be. It'll be interesting to look back on this and see, but I think there's some core things that you and I both would want for education regardless of why the change came about. So, the thing I wanted to say about management as you were talking because we're in complete alignment about we don't use that term whenever possible, because you can't even manage your own behaviors let alone someone else's, but when you were speaking, what I thought about was one of the things that humans can feel fear, or feel threat, or not feel safe however you want to say that, is when somebody tries to control them.

So, even if it's something like if you do this you'll get this, or if you don't do that this will happen to you. Our educational system is just full of guilt and manipulation and no brain activities, but it made me think that the more we do that if you do this, you'll get that, or if you don't do this, this will happen to you, that fall under that management, whether it be praise, or threats, or discipline poorly defined, that's actually triggering them to feel unsafe, which is exacerbating the challenging behavior. So, I just made my own little dot there.

Lori: Well, and there's a neurobiological reason for what you just said. And that, we had an eighth grader last year who loved the assistant principal, Nicole, was his touch point. And so, when they created a behavioral plan, behavioral intervention plan so that he could have lunch with her if he could go three days without an in school suspension. When I came back because I'm only there a morning and an afternoon or two mornings a week and when I heard of this I said this will never work, Christian can't do this. He's not able to do this and the reason that those contingency plans do not work is because our students who are having chronic behavioral challenges, which are regulation challenges, which are physiological challenges, are not in the brain state to process anything more and in the moment and so-

Kristie: Just imagine the one thing that gave you a sense of safety and security is now like this dangling carrot and the minute you mess up, you know?

Lori: Yeah. So, it just... and so that's what this book, this new book, addresses this deeply, and we've got to quit talking about consequences. We've got to replace the word consequences with the word experiences and when you do that there's a huge shift in how you look at discipline. Because when you ask what



are the consequences, this behavior is inappropriate, what are the consequences? Well, you could say this behavior is inappropriate, what are the experiences this child needs to learn a better way? What are the experiences not the consequences? What are the experiences that this child needs to feel safe and to feel connected so that this child, or this young man, or young woman will make a different choice?

Kristie: Yeah. Oh, so beautiful. All right. So that's one thing, regardless of how we reopen or what we look like in the future, we can stop using consequences and think more about experiences, but what are some of your dreams? We often close the podcast with saying we live in a really unique time and that's never more the case than right now and as we think about re-imagining education, all the way back to your opening comments about the gaps and the fracture lines that are being illuminated in our system, sort of you can be as hopeful and dream state as you want, or as practical as you want. But, what are the things that you would invite us to make sure [ahttp://revelationsineducation.com/the-book/](http://revelationsineducation.com/the-book/)re part of our reopening?

Lori: So, thank you for that question. First of all, I love that question and I think there are three very specific conditions I would love to see begin to develop and the first one is, I am hoping that schools and districts will place a significant emphasis on social and emotional health up on our return after enduring this pandemic. When we are paying attention to the way a child feels and senses their experiences learning happens and it happens like that because that is how the brain develops. And when we feel safe and connected, there is a portal to the cortex and we have strong memory, we have the ability to regulate, we have problem solving skills, we can be creative and we actually can pull up content that we've learned in the past, it's like where did this come from? And it becomes present.

Kristie: Before we go to the other two because I want to make it super clear when you say that place, significant emphasis, what you don't mean is that we all go out and buy a curriculum that we then implement with fidelity and test students to see if they are achieving a standard of SEL. I'm just guessing Lori, so when we place a significant emphasis, what would that look like in our new dream world of non testing and non-curricular boxes?



Lori: Yeah, so thank you for that. When I talk about a significant emphasis, what I'm talking about is a significant emphasis on the emotional and sensory health of our children in a very natural, organic way and it happens through the framework of understanding brain architecture. This happens through understanding brain development. That's why my hope is as we embrace the emotional needs of our children in this time and understanding how this pandemic has layered upon trauma, that we can begin to move away from talking about behaviors and talk about brain and body states. Because when we do that, we almost, I don't know if this is the right word, we neutralize it and we create a culture where we all are paying attention and working together to understand how we're feeling and sensing the world and it happens through brain state, it doesn't happen through the talk of behavior.

Kristie: Yeah, beautiful. So, place significant emphasis on, and I even love the new one, the second time through about their emotional health and wellbeing. What's number two?

Lori: Number two is my hope is that we will pay attention as administrators and school leaders and districts to staff brain state and body state because that is where the shift happens. When we are attending and attuning to our staff, to our teachers, our instructional assistants, our bus drivers, our custodians, our parents-

Kristie: Our parents.

Lori: Our parents.

Kristie: Our parents.

Lori: We are in this together, every one of us is doing the best we can in every moment and so we have to begin to embrace our... because school is the de facto, school is where families are, school is where teachers are, school is where students are. It must become the community centers in this new paradigm of education. This is about physiological, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing. So, it's got to begin with adult brain and body state, that's my second.

Kristie: I'm so going to wherever you're going to school, but yes, number three, let's do it.



Lori: So number three, brain and body state, and care of adult brain state together and so in a perfect world in my dream world, I see a new lens for discipline, and therefore we need to rewire the way we are disciplining today. And that's therefore the book, because we've got to begin to understand that discipline is never something we do to kids. It's not about the child or the adolescent, it is something that we want to create within them and it begins with me, behaviors begin with the adult brain state and we need to begin to understand the disproportionality and the biases that are happening around our country right now with special education, with children of color, with our socioeconomic disparities. I mean, many of our chronic behavioral challenges in schools, our children either in special ed, black brown, or children that are coming in with significant adverse childhood experiences and probably those three overlaps, so I don't know how we would want to say that.

Kristie: Yeah. The intersection of those just compounds it.

Lori All of those.

Kristie: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And so, let's close with a little bit about the [book](#) (available late 2020) and where people can... I'll put everything in the show notes so people can link to it, they can follow you on social media, but tell us who's the book for, what will they get out of it and then what's the best way to stay connected with you.

Lori So, the book is entitled as you said, [Connections Over Compliance, Rewiring Our Perceptions of Discipline](#), and it will be available this winter January 2021, possibly in the fall, we don't know yet, there may be some early release copies, but it is a book for parents. It's a book for educators, it's a book for mental health practitioners and really anyone who sits beside children and adolescents and youth, whether we're teaching, parenting, leading, it's for all of us and the book really takes a deep dive into where we have been with regard to discipline protocols and procedures, zero tolerance policy, where we are and where we need to go. It really shifts perspectives with children that in adolescents that are coming in to our buildings day after day, after day, carrying in pain and understanding that when we use punitive practices with pain based behavior we are unintentionally retraumatizing and activating stress response systems in the brain and body, we're ready for a new way.



Kristie: When people think... I know you talk a lot about brain development, we'll get some of that in the book as well if we really need to know and be able to talk to children about and use words like amygdala hijack instead of.

Lori: So, there's a whole resource section, it's filled with strategies and practices that we are using with Pre-K through college age, everybody is going to have access to the regulatory, to the connection practices and strategies into the cortex strategies, there are... I have filled this book with very simple yet effective ways that we can really strengthen connection with children and adolescents, create more touch points and then really co-regulate calming and regulating our nervous systems as we sit beside our children.

Kristie: I think you need to tell your publisher to get on it, I think we all need it. And so, if people want to stay in touch with you before the book comes out, are you on social media the most? Which platform, and I'll put your website for sure in the show notes, but where's the best place to kind of get stuff from you regularly?

Lori: My website is revelationsineducation.com and I am on social media everywhere. You can follow me on [Facebook](#), I use [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and I actually post every day, maybe a few times a day, but I post the strategies and the practices that we're using, some of the new research, some of the things that we talked about today, I'll have maybe a great morning and I'll come and say you've got to try this, or maybe this didn't work, but I'd love to share in the moment practices that are happening right now.

Kristie: Beautiful. We'll put links to all of those so people can learn alongside you. So Lori, I can't thank you enough for adding your wisdom and your dreams to the bank of the repository of the early care and education revolution, we're just very grateful for your work and for helping us rethink so many important things during this pandemic and then going forward.

Lori: Thank you Kristie so much! I really appreciate it. Thank you for the opportunity.

Kristie: A few quick things as we wrap up this episode, first, a note of gratitude to my guest for their wisdom, generosity and willingness to support the early care and education revolution so



deeply. Second, do you know about my ECE solutionary membership program? It's a special membership library chock full of hundreds of searchable resources and tools that you can have in hand at the click of a button. Visit prekteachandplay.com/ECE-membership to learn more and become a member today. Lastly, if you were inspired by this episode, if something affirmed your beliefs, or perhaps you discovered a practical tool you can put into practice to help all children thrive in school and in life, then I invite you to share the episode on whatever app you're using, share with someone you feel would benefit, or someone who would be inspired by today's conversation, someone who will make a difference, then be sure to subscribe, so you can stay connected. We have so much gratitude for all that you do fellow revolutionaries, until next time.

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