



Podcast 44: Dr. Isela Garcia And How to Lead With An Open Heart

Episode notes: prekteachandplay.com/podcast44

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: So, I just want to start off having you tell people a little bit about your journey, a little bit about your background. We're going to talk about leadership today. So, I want them to understand why that has become a passion for you. Even though you're like me, multi-passionate, a theme that runs through your work is clearly leadership. So, just tell us a little bit about your journey, what you're up to right now, and then we'll dive into how to be really good leaders.

Isela: Okay. So, that's such a big question.

Kristie: Short amount of time.

Isela: I know. Tell me what. Okay. So, let me just sort of start with, I was born and raised in early childhood education started very, very young and I, really, at the time, didn't realize that I was working, sort of, in the best of the best programs. So, what I learned was developmentally appropriate for children. I have consistently worked as a floating assistant teacher actually and because I was a student at ASU and in Arizona. And I left home, really with the shirt on my back, coming from generational cycles of abuse. It was really sort of my way of coming away from that experience, was sort of moving into that adulthood thinking that,



© All rights reserved.
<http://prekteachandplay.com>

"Okay. I'm going to make my life so different than what I grew up with." That was my full intent.

And I went into... I was always going to be a teacher. I knew that, but I was going to teach high school, but I needed money because I literally left home with the shirt on my back. My mom slowed the car down in front of the dorm. I jumped out and she never came back from me. So, I had to figure out, "Okay, now I had a dorm to stay in," which is a whole different kind of cool story, but I had to figure out, "Okay, how am I going to live?"

I had a scholarship because I come from... I was a recipient of an Upward Bound, which is a program that really focuses on first generation college students. So, I'm one of their success stories. So, I had a scholarship through them and I went to college thinking, "Okay, I'm going to do all of these things and everything's going to be great and I'm going to be different than I was growing up." So, I went to go look for a job and it happened to be within walking distance of the childcare program. And I was like, "Well, children are children," right? I remember I got paid four and a quarter an hour. So, I was hired and I fell in love with little kids. And not only did I fall in love with littles, I worked primarily with kids who had experienced what I had experienced as a child.

And so fast forward many years, I've been a teacher, classroom teacher for at least 10 years, was an administrator for 12 years. I've traveled all over the world as a consultant and I taught in Germany for several years and trained overseas. And in all of my experience, I have worked with kids like myself to some degree that have experienced abuse, abandonment, neglect, domestic violence, all of those things. And so, as a person, what I find very fascinating about that is that I don't believe I chose early childhood education, I believe that it chose me. And I also believe that I had the experiences I had as a child, so I could do this work.

And so, I shapeshifted at some point in the healing process because my own journey was this intent like, "I'm going to make everything different," but what we didn't know at the time is those early experiences really impact, sort of the lens you experienced the world through.



And so, in my work with children who have experienced those big traumatic events and occurrences, or just decisions that were made by the adults who they were with or are with, I learned a lot about myself. And so through my healing process and working with children, I really started to understand or be reflective of initially, be reflective of myself with children, myself in relationships with others like friends and my husband and all of that really started to become real apparent to me. The significance of, the implications of the trauma and how to heal that.

But then you go even further, I really wanted to understand how leadership played a role. Because I was really understanding kiddos who come in with a huge story to tell, right? And I knew how as a classroom teacher to make those connections at that deepest level and to love them through all of the experience. And I thought, "Well, what's the difference with leadership?" And so, that was really my leap and what I really figured out more than anything else is that there is no difference. There was no difference. I paid a lot of money to get a doctorate in leadership, and to figure out that when you truly, truly treat children with the utmost respect from a wholehearted place, where you want to understand and you want to be there in a way that supports their progression, whatever and whatever that looks like for them, it's the exact same thing in a leadership role.

The problem is, is we get what I call static, static gets in the way, because we make assumptions about adults and we have higher tolerances for children to some degree. We have higher tolerance because they're children. I don't know how many times people said to me, "Oh, they're adults. They should know better." Well, if no one ever taught you better, how are you going to know better? Right? And to change the pattern that you have created for your life, it's a very difficult thing to do.

And so, that's kind of how early childhood and leadership sort of merged together for me, but then you unravel that and it really has nothing to do with either of them, it's about who we are in the presence of others.

Kristie: Yeah. So, before you say my favorite phrase again, I got to back up. I'm curious, how did you know that you wanted to be a teacher? Because



we've talked before about a lot of your early experiences. And so, how did you just know that?

Isela: I don't know. I was that little kid, I mean literally, my nickname on my mom's side of the family was teacher. That's what they called me. It's all I wanted to do was play school and so nobody wanted to play with me. It's like, who wants to play school, oh my God, all day long?

Kristie: Oh my God, wait until my sister hears this episode. Because my younger sister, I only wanted to play school and I made her play school with me. And now, she's a teacher and she blames me.

Isela: That's awesome. I really-

Kristie: We should've gotten together and fully played school.

Isela: I know. Totally, but we probably would have fought about who was the teacher.

Kristie: But we're co-teachers. I let my sister be a teacher too, but we had pretend kids and you had to do their homework for them and she didn't like doing it over like seven times.

Isela: That's awesome. I would set up stuffed animals and I actually had an uncle who I would force him at my nana's house, I would force him to sit there and play school with me. So yeah, I just knew I wanted to be a teacher and there was never, ever any doubt. My mom wasn't supportive of me being a teacher. I was a bright kid and so I wasn't, at the time when I think we're doing this again, where we're separating kids out and leveling them by class. So, I was in the top class. So, what that meant to my mom was I could be something that was like a doctor or a lawyer or somebody that was going to make a lot of money. That was all she could think about. So, whenever I said I wanted to be a teacher, she knew already, but she wasn't very supportive of it.

Kristie: Okay. And then when you talked about there isn't any difference, I think you got to it, but I want to just state it again. You're just saying that you see a parallel between how we, as teachers, interact with children and how we, as leaders, interact with our adult professional staff. Is that what you're kind of saying or tell us more?



Isela: Let me tell you this. So when I say that, one of the fears that I always get into or think about is, sometimes we have this perception and I know I grew up with this, "Well, you're a child, so I can treat you the way I want to treat you." Right? So, that's not what I mean. I don't mean... It's not in any way where we are looking down at someone.

Kristie: Okay.

Isela: It's when we get to a place, when we truly are openhearted with children and we're really trying to connect with who they are as individuals, and then figure out what's my role in this relationship here. And so often we go in with our own agenda. That we need to kind of put that agenda to the side, or at least put it on the back burner. It's like, yes, I want kids to have these experiences that are going to be important as a part of their educational career. There are things that children should have experiences with. They should have, like, experience with a hand lens, they should have. There are things that I want kids to do and as a teacher I'd come in with those tools or opportunities, but my first and foremost job is to figure out who they really are and what's my role in that relationship with them.

It's the same exact thing with staff or with teachers. When we're in a leadership capacity, our job is to figure out who they are and then figure out what is my role in that relationship. So, what kind of leader do you need? Do you need somebody who's there, a level of accountability and you want to create some goals for yourself? Everybody had goals, but it's like, it looked different for everyone.

Some people needed autonomy. I'm one of those people, leave me alone. I don't want you hovering around me. Let me have creative freedom. And the moment I have creative freedom, I'm going to flourish. Just check in with me occasionally. Other people flounder when there's too much autonomy, they want to feel supported and they need those encouraging words. So, it's the exact same thing when we're looking at truly supporting children and adults. There's no difference in my mind.

Kristie: Yeah. So, now you can say my favorite phrase that you use.

Isela: Who am I in the presence of others? It started with who am I in the presence of children? And to be honest with you, where it started from,



is that I would listen to teachers talk about each other. I would listen to teachers not be inclusive of one another like, "Hurry up. Let's go to happy hour before she gets off work." It was all of this sort of the interrelatedness then in terms of, there's a relationship stuff that gets messy. Right? And I would watch how that happened at the adult level and then I would think, "Isn't that what we're trying to not, like, we want to prevent that from happening in the classroom? We want to teach children to be inclusive. We want to teach children how to say what it is they need and feel. We want children to learn how to listen to one another, so that they can begin to problem solve. We want..."

It was like the same thing that we were trying. And I'm like, "How can we do that if we're acting like this?." That doesn't make any kind of sense to me, especially gossip. It's like you're sitting here talk gossip is like a cancer in programs. And it's like, if we're not able to be really self-reflective about how we talk about people, how we communicate that passive aggressive communication that happens everywhere I go, it's like we don't appreciate when children do that, then we shouldn't be doing it. And so I really, that whole, "Who am I in the presence of children" started from there, but then it was even further like, "Who am I in the presence of others? How am I presenting myself in the world? How do I show up in the world? Right? And what are the implications of that? What am I bringing and what am I projecting out?"

Kristie: Maybe what we should do is sidestep for a minute because the word, "leader," gets thrown around a lot. I know I do it. And so, maybe just talk a little bit about when you think of a leader, who are you thinking of? And I know, I am excited, I know what you're going to say a little bit, but go ahead and dance around that, about how it could be a title, but then it's also how we show up.

Isela: Yeah. So there's the obvious, right? Leadership are people who are in leadership positions. And I work with a lot of principals these days and superintendents of schools. Prior to that, I worked with a lot of directors of private organizations. So yeah, it's position, sometimes it's middle management, right? Like, how do I take what upper management says and how do I bring it to the level of support in the classroom, what I call direct practice, direct care. And then I really, in my whole heart, believe that teachers are all leaders or should be leaders in the classroom. And I created this, was like a process or a system, and at the core of it was

teacher leadership and teacher leadership is really those skills that we want. Those optimal skills of just basic communication, being reflective of one another, being an effective listener, which I think is an art that really, we just have lost sight of.

We'd never have learned how to truly listen, how to not come from a judgmental lens because judgment doesn't serve. It's like all of those things that I think make us not only contributing members of society, but also open hearted so that we can serve others. I think that's our role and responsibility as classroom teachers. So in my mind, everyone's a leader in some capacity.

Kristie: And so on that, you may remember the other day when we were working on our transformative talks and you also defined, or kind of started to pivot around the word teacher and feeling like that was limiting. So, while leaders can be expansive, the flip side of that is teachers could be limiting. So, can you recollect that a little bit and talk about what that might mean for us?

Isela: Yeah. I think it's just semantics and how we have adopted words, what they mean to us. It's just like using the term team. I don't like using the word team because teams are about competition, there's a winner and there's a loser. And it might be my relationship with team sports. My husband still plays basketball. I played basketball growing up. It was like, "Yes, we want to work as a team, but there's a loser." And so, I think it's just the semantics and how we've attached our understanding of a word. And for me, I think we're more, the way that... and this is the lens I'm coming through. In the last five years, I've worked in kindergarten through third grade, pretty significantly and there's a role and responsibility of a teacher to teach. It's really tunneled into academics.

And in the early childhood realm, zero to five part of early childhood, because it does run to age eight. We really as teachers were encompassing all areas of development. And when I started working with the teachers of older children, I really recognized that we need to sort of redefine what it means to be a teacher, or we need to kind of create another word for it. Because our job is to be present, fully present, and supportive of the whole child.

Kristie: Yeah. I feel like there's so much that going through this pandemic that I see differently now than even when we talked before. And so that idea



of the leader, how you said, figuring out who your staff or your colleagues are and what's your relationship. Wow. How critical is that? Then it was like, "Oh, all of us are leaders." Wow, how critical is that? And then it's like, I'm not just here to teach you academics. Oh my gosh, how critical is that? And then, you have these barriers to communication and being an effective leader.

And you mentioned two already, like one barrier is judgment, one barrier is gossip. And every time you say something, I can just see it clear or how it's not going to turn out well if we don't get these things figured out. If we don't become better leaders and have stronger relationships and look at wholeness. So, I don't know, there's not really a question in there, but what does that bring to your mind?

Isela: I've been thinking about this a lot lately.

Kristie: Uh-huh, I bet you have.

Isela: Just because, I've been in conversations and listening to other podcasts and conversations that are happening across the nation, whether it's the pandemic or when we're talking about all of the injustices that are. It's like, what is this going to look like when we go back into the classroom? And there's so much debate I think about, are there many conversations? I don't know that debate is the right word, many conversations about the logistics of what it should look like when kids go back to school. And I keep going back to, what's important? What's really important? We need to stop chasing the memory of our experiences and see this as an opportunity to create based on what we know is important.

And everything you've just listed, who we are in the presence of others, our relationships with one another as colleagues, as teachers of young children, what's important about that work? What experiences should children have? That's important. There's so much emphasis, I think now we're having a lot of conversation around social and emotional development just given what's happened in the last few months, but still there's this fear of children are not going to be caught up and that we're going to have to do all of these things to ensure that they're going to hit those benchmarks. And I just wish we could have a different conversation. I wish we could just stop chasing the memory and go, "Okay, what's important right now for children?" In five, 10 years



from now, we're going to go, "Boy, we're really glad we paid attention to that."

Kristie: Yeah. That's so powerful for several reasons. First. I love the phrase, stop chasing the memory. And I think if we're really honest with ourselves, that memory is only a good one for some people.

Isela: Right.

Kristie: And if we continue to chase it, then we have not learned some important lessons. Steven Henkel is a young man with autism, but also a doctoral candidate. And he said yesterday that I want to say this as well as he did, so I got to go capture it and put it in the show notes, but he was inviting. So, he was talking to paraprofessionals and he was talking to them about advice that he had for them. And so now, he's a doctoral candidate and he's had paraprofessionals since, I think he said second grade. And he said, "I want you to fill up their album, their photo album. And I want you to think about what will they look back in their yearbook and what will they look back on?" And so, that's what I thought when you were talking about that's what I want is, in five to ten years from now. What will I say about 2020 that was a good memory, or that really was a game changer.

Isela: Yep.

Kristie: Well, how have we been. Yeah. Go ahead.

Isela: I agree 100%. I think when we're looking at it from an educator's perspective, so we can have a conversation about all the stuff that's happening in the homes right now. And I mean, I have fear just because of who I've worked with, kids who have experienced lots of trauma or abuse, and neglect or poverty for that matter. And so that, I go "Right and that was me as a kid too." So, that's where I go right to having concern. So, to set that aside and just recognize because what I would say to teachers all the time when I was an administrator, is that we don't have any power of control on what's happening in someone's home, but the moment the child is in your presence. And now much virtually in most places, when that child is in your presence, what are you going to bring? What experience of you is he going to have?



And so, it's sort of the same thing, whether it's virtual or in person, what can we do to create these memorable and the connections in the brain that I think are super significant around relationships and connection. That's at the core of how we're going to relate to others as adults. So, we have to recognize the importance of our role. But I think that's what we have to start to think about. Everything else is secondary.

Kristie: And so how have you been talking to leaders to help them kind of do this mindset shift to really ask what's really important and not get caught up in just the safety protocols and that, "That's the only thing we're going to do for professional development because if we're safe from biohazard perspective, then we're safe." When we know that a safe harbor is when we have a secure attachment. So, how do we without freaking them out and going "Well, worry about their brains as much as their health." You know what I mean? How have you been kind of helping people?

Isela: I think the challenge is that we have to be willing to get real with our own emotional state of being. So, even when I'm working with administrators, I've been in conversation with many of them recently, they have to... Because I think we put back a leadership role, right? I remember so many times in crisis situations in my school, it's, boom, something happens, I have to step in. It's, you're the captain of the ship. You have to step in and make it work. So, you kick right into the to-do list. You kick right into, I mean, that's what effective leaders do, We got to do this, we got to do this. What else do, let's put these groups together, let's have conversations. But we've got to step back a little bit and really get in our own understanding of where we are in our own emotional state of being.

And the reason why that's important is because it comes through even when we ignore it, or we pretend that it's not there. So our own fears, our trepidation, the uncertainty that we have. We have to start having honest, vulnerable conversations about how we are feeling. And so, I think that I try to encourage that to come out because so much is about the logistics, or so much is about worrying about children's academics. And so, I want us to sort of back up and go, okay, how are you going to address the fear that teachers have, that parents have. Because what happens, and we often don't even recognize it when it's

happening, is that we become triggered by their fear because we have it within us.

So, I think now is the time to not only step into the leadership position in terms of role and responsibility, but also be willing to be vulnerable about the uncertainty and knowing that we don't have all of the answers at this point-

Kristie: I'm going to go right there for a second, Isela, because the other day when I was talking to our mutual friend, Ijuma, she's helping me learn where my work, where I'm upholding the white dominant culture. And one of the things she said to me was that as a leader and because I have a PhD and all these other things that are part of my labels and my privilege. I give answers even when I'm not expected to have an answer. And if I give an answer, people just sort of accept that it's right or good or true or whatever. So, I'm just imagining because there are so many leaders who are also white, or who pass for white, who may have the same struggle, where's that balance between what you were saying about vulnerability and not having answers and having that to-do list and wanting to have answers? Help us a little bit there too.

Isela: I think that's a complex question.

Kristie: It is. So-

Isela: Yeah.

Kristie: You don't have to have an answer.

Isela: Right. Well, no. I think the answer is willing to grapple with the question. So, the answer is, these are things that need to get done and to identify the things that need to get done. And that we can collectively do that. That's the other thing too, is that we don't. Unfortunately, we make assumptions that adults know how to work collaboratively with one another and it's a really poor assumption. I think that we have to, and people, what we do is we create these group norms and we create all these things to ensure blah, blah, blah, but see, your perception. I don't know, like, let's say respect, to respect each other's opinions, your perception of respect and my perception of respect are two different things.

Having an open, honest conversation, sometimes I get very heated up and I look like I'm yelling, but I'm not really yelling, I'm just passionate. And so it's like, we don't take time to really understand one another either by how we communicate even what we think about each other, our reflections of, or our belief systems around problem solving and what that looks like. It's like we have to create not just norms, but we have to create a climate that we can all agree upon that this is what it's going to look like in practice.

Right now, I thought about this a lot. If I was an administrator today, we would have that initial conversation. Let's really talk about what the dynamics of our conversation and how we're going to communicate, how we're going to be reflective. Do we expect to have an answer at the end of today? These are the things that do need answers. Is there anything else that you think needs an answer? Let's kind of create that list and then let's really talk about the things that we all feel really uncertain about and just willing to create an open forum for that.

I think that's always though, I think we have to... Because just to run a program, I'm thinking when I was running a crisis intervention program, there were things that had to get done. No question, had to get done. But there were also things that we needed to collectively build a deeper understanding of, and then come up with what I called the third place. It's like, this is your perspective, this is my perspective. Let's come to a unified perspective.

Kristie: So if you had some advice for these leaders and we already know those are teacher leaders or people that have that as our role, I'll give some things for them to download that you've shared with me in terms of your sandwich, your communications sandwich, and the barriers to be an effective leader and so forth, but if we wanted to really embrace your spirit of who am I in the presence of others, what would your sort of top thing be or top three things be? What would you say to me right now as a building administrator who's going through a big transition?

Isela: The first thing I already mentioned, which is to recognize your own emotional state of being, "This is what I'm feeling. This is where I'm feeling it in my body. This is what I'm experiencing right now."

The second thing is to be openhearted and to me, the opposite of judgmental is being openhearted. And here's the thing is, a lot of folks

don't know how to do this. You think being openhearted means that you're caring about somebody and that's not my definition of it. Let's go to the word, "judgment." When someone says something or does something, we automatically go to a place of judgment. We automatically go to, "How does this relate to me?" I have a situation that I want to share with you about that. We automatically filter it through that lens. And the practice for me for at least the last ten years is to have a conversation with somebody without going through the lens of judgment, of just simply listening and trying to understand. And so, when your brain starts to go, because we do that, our brain wants to go right to it, right?

I'm going to write stuff down, I'm going to, whatever. You got to go, "Let me come back to this person's space, so I can hear what she's trying to say." The hearing what she's trying to say is more than the words that she's saying. When you get really good at being that "openhearted," you also get a deeper understanding of some of the challenges, the undercurrent of what's being said. And so that practice, I will tell you especially today, and I'm not saying not to be super passionate about things. I practiced the process of watching something, whether it's on TV or online, and I practice the process of simply watching it without any emotional trigger or reaction to it. Because when I am in presence with others, trying to be of support to them, my story is not important. What I think and feel is not important in this moment, what's important is that I am listening with my entire heart.

And people know the difference. I mean, there's a, on the receiving end of it. People know when you're truly, truly interested in who they are, what they have to say, what they think and feel. So, that would be open-heartedness.

The next one, I think we do need to support one another in the process of moving forward. There's so many of these that I couldn't say, but the process of moving forward and what I mean by that is that for some of us who grew up in this cycle of generational belief systems, thought systems, things never get better, things are bad, things are scary. When we grow up in these patterns, we sometimes will self-sabotage ourselves, or we go into a new experience and we, after a very short amount of time of trying something, we go right into feeling defeated

because we expect it at a deep level. Sometimes, it's so at a deep subconscious level, we're completely unaware of it.

And we start to give up, or we start to self-sabotage, or we start to think that it's not going to work. "See, I told you. Things never change." When we challenge one another to move forward, we help others be self-reflective of when we start to go in that direction. So, these are asking these questions like, "Okay, what are we really thinking about? What are we scared of? What is it that we think is going to happen?" Let's have these conversations because our plan and the plan can change, but our plan was this. So, let's figure out what might be getting in the way of us moving in this direction.

I say that, not only for the big things that are happening right now in our world, but also even making significant program changes. We're going to create a new process for this, or we're going to be emotionally responsive to children when they're crying, "Oh, but I have to teach all the other children and I don't have time," to dah, dah, dah, is that, okay? Remember the reason why we're moving in this direction, what's coming up in terms of our perspectives, our fears, our values, our biases that get in the way of reaching that. But we have to hold each other accountable from a place of mutual respect. That we're all in this together. As a leader, when I was an administrator, that level of accountability for me was just as important as it was for the teachers.

And I think finally, my last one is, we have to learn to celebrate each other. And that's another thing. We come from a world of competition and I just did a session recently where I talk a lot about this collaboration and community and all of this, and a teacher asked, "Well, how do you do that when our world is basically competitive?" I mean, you look at social media, you look at even school systems, school systems do children of the month, or you get where you sit is based on your grade, I've seen that in high school classrooms. It's like there's this level of competition that we create as a motivation. And then, we become adults who are looking for the kudo. Who's looking for the affection and the approval and the validation. Well, the thing is, is that...

And then the other side to that is that when somebody gets the kudo and the celebration, we think that it's been taken from us. So, it's like we're not taught how to truly, from an authentic place, celebrate one

another because we're chasing the kudo. And so, we have to start to recognize that the validation and the acknowledgement and all of those things that we've been seeking can never be fulfilled by something outside of yourself. It always has to come from inside, always. I mean, I remember when I got my doctorate. I was like, "Okay, when I get my doctorate, like sunshine and rainbows and everything's going to be this fabulous experience because I have made it. Well, nothing happened. I got up the next day exactly the way I always did.

I mean, I guess maybe more people pay attention to the doctor part of my name, but it's like and nothing really happened. And so that elusive kudo, we have to start to recognize and acknowledge, and this is our work with little kids, but also as an administrator, I think it's important for us to be self-reflective, help one another be self-reflective of who we are, what we have contributed, how we have worked collaboratively. But we have to stop having a need to be validated from the outside.

Having said that because it's a weird fine line, it's a hard thing to understand. We also want to celebrate each other authentically. So, we want to. When someone does something incredible with kids or has made this huge contribution that we are openhearted and we're celebrating, instead of feeling that somehow something was taken from us.

Kristie: I feel like this is just made for me, this little conversation. I think it was all supposed to be about me, I supposed to be listening deeply, but as I listened deeply I'm like, "Oh, I need all of this." So, Isela I want to wrap up our conversation because if not, I'll just keep you all day and I have this phrase that I have been using for this year in 2020 of the recording. And I like to still use it now that we're moving through this pandemic because I think a bit differently every time. So, I'm just going to say a little phrase and then I'll have a question for you. So, the phrase goes like this.

"We live in a time of remarkable change. A time for rethinking how we go about ensuring all children thrive, not only in school, but in life. Daily, we see a greater focus on children's wholeness, the power play and building inclusive classrooms and communities. These changes signal an open opportunity in our work, a time of hope and seeing a real change in early care and education." So, what things do you think that

listeners, I call them revolutionaries, what can they take with them from our conversation today that will serve them in this time of hope and of possibility?

Isela: You know what's interesting is, as you were reading that, I was thinking, "I wonder what I said-"

Kristie: I know.

Isela: The last time we did this, as opposed to what has recently happened occurred in our world. So many things are happening in our world right now. And I have to say what I've been really sitting with more now than ever is the willingness to go so deep within to recognize even, especially when it's hard, especially when it's easier to pretend and what I'm kind of referring to here is that we all have bias and we all have beliefs and values based on our experiences. And I think that we have to be willing to be an effective listener, to really listen to the perspectives of others, including children, especially children. We have to be willing to unpack our beliefs and really sit with them. We also have to be willing to forgive ourselves and others.

And we also, I think, in terms of hope, what's the hope that, I think that if we have the willingness to do this at a very personal level, we create a ripple effect in our relationship with others. It's like we keep coming from a place of doing to children, to others too. We need to change the perspective to doing "with" one another. And when we do it, the only thing we bring is who we are. So, that's the hope. The hope I have is that we're willing to do the work, to go deep, to be honest, and to step forward and look through the lens of love.

Kristie: Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Isela: Thank you!

Kristie: You made me cry last time and you made me cry again, so that's the same as last time. So thank you so much, my friend.

Isela: Thank you.

