



FREE ONLINE CONFERENCE, OCTOBER 14-18

Coco Stanback

5 Ways to Solve Disconnection

Welcome to Happily Family I'm Cecilia Hilkey, Jason Hilkey and we're delighted today to have Coco Stanback with us. Coco is a certified ADHD coach and certified provider of Dr. Ross Greene's, collaborative and proactive solutions. She trained with Dr. Greene in order to improve her relationship with her two sons who both have ADHD and are now adults along the way she saw that her skills and personal experience could also help others.

She's now been coaching. Parents have high needs children in English and Spanish for 10 years through a private practice heart for kids coaching welcome Coco It's great to have you Coco. Thanks for having me to see you. I wanted to ask you, cause we call we're calling this talk five ways to solve disconnection. I wanted to ask you about one of those ways.

First you talk about in your work radical acceptance. Yeah. What is that? How do we do that as a work? Okay. Well, when I was becoming a coach, when I was doing my training, a lot of the things that I started to learn, I realized how impactful it would be if I started applying it to my parenting. So I had quite a bit of challenges with my boys and there was a lot of disconnection.

And so one of the biggest goals ever in my life was to be like the best mom ever. Right. And I was, I felt like I was failing terribly and I didn't know how to connect. So one of the things that I learned was this like concept of receiving individuals, right? Receiving, and here, we're talking about our children completely as they are.

And one of the concepts that we learn is that everyone is creative, resourceful, and whole, which means there's nothing to fix nothing to change, simply receive and embrace. And so that concept really started to change the way that I started to seeing my children, because most of my parenting until that point was really about fixing and changing. And so I started to,

here's another big word we use pause and start to take into account this beautiful, wonderful human being. Right. And who he was and it, and this concept of receiving them, how they are kind of like a, a gift. Right. And so that's that, that concept of radical acceptance that you're accepting your child exactly. As they are exactly for who you are without the need to fix or change.

So that's, that's the concept behind that. That's just hard, easy. Yeah. It's easy and hard. Like both at the same time. So you're, you were saying this and I thought about how as parents, regardless of how our kids are. I think that early on, especially as a parent, I was constantly just looking at like what the things that need to be,

maybe Not fixed as much as like, what, where do I need to fill in the gaps? Like where are the things that I need to be like teaching and making sure that everything that they're learning and like, so I was constantly looking at what's missing, right? Like, and then it just kind of has, and it kind of grew from that as,

as we had, you know, our kids had various difficulties and then it just certainly became more about me noticing like what's wrong and fixing, and it kind of ballooned into something much more than just, you know, scaffolding and supporting. And so I could see how this would be, how I recognize for myself how challenging this is some and some of it's because of how I maybe view parenting.

And I'm not saying that's the right way to do. That's just kind of like, my journey was like that, but also like there's a part of me. That's like, I want it to be different. Yeah, exactly. Okay. So here's a huge insight that I, that came to me in practicing this in my journey. I realized that party radically accepting my children meant that I needed to radically accept myself and where I was on my journey.

Right. Because I, I do think we come to parenting with a lot of expectations, a lot of presets, like this is how it's supposed to be, right. This is how, you know, the milestones are supposed to hit, right? The experiences we're supposed to have. And for, for those of us who have children who are challenging or have unique needs,

it doesn't work that way for my son's school was not his thing. He just nothing about it. And so one of the presets in my mind was, you know, you go to school, you do well, you, and then you go to high school, then you go to college and all these steps. And I realized on my journey that I needed to get out of the fix and change mode and now honor his journey.

Right honor, where he was at and really embrace that. So there were a lot of milestones that we didn't get to experience, you know, all the things that you, you think about graduation, for example, you know, and I love photos. So graduation photo was a big deal for me. And he's like, I'm not doing that. I can't,

I can't do that. And so again, this radical acceptance of, okay, this is your journey, right? This is what you are needing in the moment and not getting hung up in what I needed in the moment. So little things like that, where you're accepting kind of where they are, you know, and what they do and what they choose.

And I think we can get really hung up. I can really relate to that. Having, I have my agenda, I have my way of thinking, this is, this is kind of the way it should be going. And this is like the path. And I, you know, like there's a part of me. That's like, I think,

no, that doesn't like, I want to, I want them to have their own path and inside, like, it's really hard for me to let go of this conviction that like, yeah, but you really should go like this path, like you really should like go to high school, graduate high school, go to college, come out of college,

have a job. Like, you know, like that kind of that typical kind of way. I know I don't want that necessarily. I, I know that's not the way it has to be. And yet there's a part of me that's like, so firmly rooted in that. So that really strikes home for me. I, and it's a, that's a lot of work.

That's an ongoing, They did. Yeah. And I think it also goes back to that believing, you know, kids do well, if they can. So they're doing the best they can. And that's that they really are their own unique person. Like they came into this world ready, like this is who they are. And we try so hard to change that.

And, you know, so I think it is a journey. It is a process, but I learned that too through this coaching. And I try to teach that to the parents I work with because it's a, it's a process of letting go of our STEM. Right. That's what it is. That's what it boils down to is that the process of letting go of all the sherds and all the half twos and all that needs to be right.

And then, and I've seen incredible result of allowing my boys to follow their journey. Like it, wasn't my plan for them. It's not what I would've chosen, but it's just very rewarding to see them now as young adults. So I wanted to ask you about this. And so often with speakers, we don't talk about like personal stories, but I think it's important as parents,

for us to hear other people's stories and that there are different ways of doing things, especially for some kids that are kind of outside the box. And you shared about your son and I know your, your boys are both adults. Would you mind like telling a little bit about what his journey looks like from struggling with school, how that kinda got itself worked out and,

and like what that has turned into, would you mind talking about that a little bit? I can share a little about our story. So here's the challenge. He was gifted, right? Tested, gifted, very bright. So you have these expectations on like, gosh, then he's going to do really well in academics. And he, the structure and the setting of school was not his thing,

but he loved computers and he loved programming. So very early on, I found camps where he could do that and honoring that part of the journey and knowing that that was part of his strength. I kept encouraging that, encouraging that we figured out other ways to do school. We did homeschooling for a while. We found a special one-on-one Academy for him.

He did graduate from high school, just not in a typical way, you know, all of that stuff. And now he's using that to create video games of his own. Right. And so he's using that and he's worked

with kids at camp, the same camp he went to, he went back to and teach kids there. And so one of the things that really struck me,

we were home together and he was sharing with his brother and he said, you know, mom, trust me the most. And I was so struck by his perception of how he came to that conclusion. But I think it's this constant walking with him, you know, kind of being attuned to his needs and his likes and dislikes and trusting that what was in him is what needed to come out.

And so for him, it was this whole, you know, computer world. And he spent, you probably spend way too much time on the computer, what most people or parents would say. But I knew that it was heading in a direction. Right. And knew that it was producing any hand skills that he wanted to further use. And so that's a little bit of a story.

I don't know if that helps you, but that process of really letting go, what I thought he needed to do and honoring what he was, I think F is being asking to be, or do. Yeah. I think that's incredibly valuable. Okay. So self-acceptance, I want you to repeat, you had one line like about like kids and that they're whole and complete or something like that.

What they're like three things, resourceful and whole creative, resourceful, and whole, and how with the self-acceptance the radical acceptance that it starts with us radically accepting ourselves. Yeah. Okay. Okay. Awesome. I don't know how to radically accept myself. I kind of mean that seriously. Like, can you, can you say a little bit more about that and what that,

what that looks like, what that means? So that whole idea of radical acceptance is kind of being present, right? So being present in the moment, and as you acknowledge your child and his journey, you start learning things about you. So the more you accept that they are creative, resourceful, and whole, that means they have what they need.

They know what they want. They have a direction in them, right. They have a calling in them. I believe that we all do right. We have. And so if the more you honor that, the more you realize, Oh, I was trying to make, make him do this. And I, that's not my journey. This is his journey.

So accepting that we can get stuck and in the sheds and have to accepting that we're learning. You know, I remember telling my boys, I've never done this before. You know, when they, when they get at certain ages, I'm like, I've never had an 18 year old before. I don't know what I'm doing. You know, I'm learning with you.

I used to tell them that I'm learning with you. So that kind of acceptance, like, Hey, we're gonna make mistakes. We don't know what we're doing. We don't know what we're doing. You know, I don't think we want, we want to say that, but that's the truth. We're learning with them. And if we can brace that and that journey with them,

then it becomes powerful because you're both learning as you go. Right. Okay. I'll try that. I, I really appreciate that question. I, and I, I felt bad because I kind of like laughed when you said, I

don't know how to Excel. I said it kind of funny. I know, because that is, so that is so much the truth.

I mean, this was our conversation at dinner last night, our, our, one of our daughters was like, do you guys love yourself? I really like, you know, like, I really need to love myself. And she was, she was asking us about that. I'm like, wow, such a great question. Do you love yourself?

And if you do, like, how did you get there? And if you don't, why not? Like, anyway, I just thought it was a really, really we're circling back around to these different themes. Okay. So I want to move on to another, another, a way to solve disconnection. Non-judgment can you talk about that? So it's just like one of the five.

Yeah. It's one of the five. Okay. Yeah. It's very similar. It's, it's, they're all con and all of these are connected. You know, they're all part of, kind of a philosophy of believing and receiving your child is creative, resourceful, and whole. So this non-judgment, again, is looking at their behaviors without labeling right or wrong.

And that's really hard. It's really, really hard. And again, with believing that they're doing the best they can, instead, we want to understand their experience so that we can show kindness and compassion. You know, I'll give you a brief example. One of my boys was very into video games and it was in big battle in our home, which I know is so common.

It's more, I think, more common now than even when it was way back then, but I just would get so upset that it was this constant video gaming, right. Until I dropped into this non-judgment and really looked at seeking, not labeling right or wrong, but really seeking to understand. And eight Lou my mind, when I was able to sit with him and ask him,

tell me what it's like for you. And he shared with me that he struggled a lot. This was my other son, again in school with friends. He just had a really rough time. And he said to me, he goes, mom, you know, my life is so hard. He used different words, nothing around me seems like I fit in nothing around me.

Seems like I can do it. Right. You know, like he, he felt like he wasn't meeting expectations anywhere. And, and he goes, and when I can drop into this world, he goes, I feel happy. I feel successful. I feel like I can enjoy a moment in time and I don't have that anywhere. You know? And so when I understood that it became a whole different approach and reaction and,

you know, way to relate with him, it became more about understanding and engaging with him and all of those things. So that's what I mean. And non-judgment a way to make sure you're stepping out of judgment is to check and see that you're not using labels like lazy disobedient, defiant, unmotivated, you know, these negative labels. That's how I started by saying,

okay, wait a minute. You know, if I'm expecting him as creative, resourceful, and whole, and there's no judgment, then I need to get rid of these labels I'm using. And so that was one of the

big things that I started doing in my own. Not just in my mind, because you're thinking of it, but even in my words,

right. And how I relate it to them. I wonder if you could say a little bit more about that, because I think, I think that it's sometimes so hard to even recognize that we're using labels. So if we, if we're not going to use labels, then could you say a little bit about what we can do? Like, what do you do?

Like how do we avoid using the labels rather than just like, sometimes it's easier for me if I hear what to do rather than what not to do, because I'll just shut up and not, I can't do that for very long, but I was like, I don't know what to say. So I'll just say nothing. And then when I do say something,

I'm like, ah, I screwed up and I said the wrong thing. And so could you say a little bit about that? Yeah. So first recognize, right. If you're using a negative label, like the ones I mentioned, and then you, you step back. So if you're not going to judge right or wrong, you want to find out what's going on.

And, and in my world I use what's getting in their way. Right. So if they're appearing lazy, something is getting in their way. And so if you step into their experience and understand it, then you can solve together what's going on. Right. But if you label a kid and use that over and over and over, they start believing it.

You know, if you keep saying, Oh, I can't believe you're so lazy. Why are you so lazy? You never do any of that. You're so lazy. They really start believing that and then turn it inward. And that's what we want to avoid. So, so I would say always, you're starting, when you think of a negative label,

you're think you're being, they're being disobedient or defiant, pause and ask yourself. Hmm. If they're doing the best they can, what instead is getting in their way and how can I find out, how can I show empathy and compassion. Right. And then together find a solution for that. So that's what I would say. So it sounds like one of the big things I can do is start being curious,

right? Like that's that's and you gave some nice examples of questions. I could be asking myself about them. I think that's, that's interesting because when I become curious, it does shift me out of that judgment. Right. It's hard to be curious and also be drawing a conclusion at the same time. So I can let go that conclusion, if I'm actually asking questions of myself and maybe even asking questions of them being curious about what they're doing and being curious about what's in their way,

that could shift me out of that. So that's, that's helpful. That's, that's super helpful. That's part of what I try to do sometimes with the videos that our girls be watching. And I just look at it and I'm like, Oh, I'm going into judgment right now. I just, how can I, how can I sit here? And I just have to get curious about it.

I'm like, huh. Well, that's real interesting. I wonder why they're, they're interested in that. I'm wondering why that's something that's passionate for them. Like all of a sudden. Yeah. And that's one of the five is curiosity, right? So it's asking open ended questions. Who, what, where, when and avoiding the why, because why is a fighting word?

You know, when you ask why it puts everybody on a defensive, I don't know if it's ever happened to you at work, or if your boss ever come to you or your partners ever said, why didn't you or why wasn't this? You know, it's like your walls go up. Never happened. Never had, I've never had my boss ask that question.

I've never had my partner. So I know exactly. Yeah. That makes sense. Right. Like, and if I asked my kids that why question then sure. I could see how that's, those are fighting words. That's interesting. I hadn't considered that. Yeah. It's, it's an absolutely a fighting, right. It puts you on the defensive because,

because it implies judgment. We may not mean it that way. We might be genuinely curious, but that word is so loaded. You know, you just, is, it carries that judgment. Like you're already saying, I I'm not happy about this, so why, why did you do it? Right. So who, what, where when instead,

Hmm. I'm gonna have to remove that word out of my, out of my language for awhile. There's some times where I even like say kind of why and code I'll be like, so help me understand what happened with like the milk, getting left out on the counter, which is really like, why did you leave the milk out on the counter?

Yeah. Oh, and tone. I didn't talk about telling, but tone is so important. You know, our tone, how we say things can change everything. So, yeah. So I didn't mean to take us into a third one, but what you were talking about, curiosity as one of the w Ways to solve disconnection, did you want to say anything?

I think that idea exactly what you said, like when you were genuinely curious, there is no judgment and they don't exist in the same space. So that's, that is one of the things that can take you at a judgment is to really step and wonder and ask, you know, would this open-minded like what really could be happening. And again, it's all with this knowledge that they are doing the best they can.

Right. Believing that, that they really want to do well. Like I've never met any kid. Who's come into my office and said, yeah, I really, I really want to be in trouble all the time. Yeah. I really want my mom yelling at me every day. Yeah. I really want to get consequences all the time. That's like my life mission.

Right. Like nobody wants that. So if we can remember that, like they don't want to be messing up. They don't want to be in trouble. So what else is going on? Yeah. Okay. Okay. Can we go to number four? Would that be okay to talk about one of the fourth ones? Yes. Well, and Coco,

you kind of touched on coming up with like a solution that works for both parties. Can you sure. The biggest thing I would share with you in that piece is to see yourself as your child's thinking partner. So you are with them together, right? There's I don't know how you were raised, but I was raised very much. My parents are up here and I'm down here and there's no none of this.

Right. It's just, you do, as you're told and end of story kind of thing. And so I had to, again, this is all I learned in my coaching program and becoming a coach, I just loved these concepts. I'm like, Oh my gosh, I need to apply this with my parenting because these are so profound. And so when I started doing that,

then we are coming to this solution, to this problem together. And we're in this equally, you know, about being open to their ideas, being open to their solutions, being open to their input, to their perspective, and then joining them and becoming their partners. So seeing when you're solving, it is more of a, you have, instead of you have to do what I say,

think I'm right, which can happen in parenting sometimes. And you're like, okay, let's sorry. You know, on the same page with the, you know, and I'm just your partner, we're doing this together, you know, there's no right and wrong all of it and see what works. That's what I would say would collaboration is to really see yourself as a thinking partner.

I love that concept of thinking partner also had experiences with our own kids or with other kids when we're teaching, getting to a stuck spot with collaboration that the kids couldn't figure out a way to work it out. I couldn't figure out a way that was accessible to them to work it out. Do you have any, any tips for those stuck spots? What I would say,

I usually find when, when we're stuck is that we are dealing with, with Dr. Ross Green's calls, dueling solutions. So typically it's your idea or her idea or whatever, and then you can't seem to bend or flex or change. Right? And so what we want to do instead is we want to dig deeper. So behind every challenge, right?

Or Ansel problem, however you want to call it, there's actually reasons behind it. There's concerns underneath that. And so if you can address the concerns, then you can actually solve it. But when you're stuck with the solutions, it becomes locking horns kind of thing. Right? And so it is, let me give you an example. So typical example,

kids are online, not sticking to their limits, you know, issues, issues, issues, battles, battles, battles. And so a typical solution like locking horns would be, you have to get off, you get two hours. End of story. And kids like, no, I don't want to get off two hours, not enough. And so you're going back and forth,

back and forth. Those are the solutions. Okay. So now we drop down to the concerns. I have seen this over and over. When you ask the kids, you're curious, you're nonjudgmental, you're accepting them as wanting to do well. It turns out for this particular example, this little boy really wanted to connect with a certain friend and his certain friend could only get online at a different time after his limit was done.

And so then the concern you want to address is his need for connection and social connection specifically with this one, a little friend. And so now the solution is not about two hours or not two hours now it's about, okay, how can we help you meet that need of connection and totally changes everything. I don't know if that helps or makes sense.

Yeah. Like going, going a little deeper to figuring out what the unmet needs for people are or the concerns I think you call them concerns. Right. We call them unmet needs in the way that we talk about them often in Happily Family. But yeah, like what's underneath it. Like what, why is it that they're wanting this? Like, what's the,

what's the underlying piece. And then there's all kinds of solutions to meeting that. It's not about the strategy you're talking about. You're locking horns on. It's like, Oh, well, let's see. We have all kinds of ways that you can, we can meet that concern or meet that need. Sorry. I took away from you. I think.

Perfect. That's great. Yeah. Okay. Should we talk about number five or Might as well Cheating. Cause we, you know, we, we already, and we'll give this to everyone as well. Like we kind of already know what the five are. Cause we got your little handout here. So we're kind of going off of that, but we'll make that available for everyone else as well that you gave to Us.

Yeah. So Number five or I guess actually number four on this sheet is focused. So it's the fifth one that we're talking about, but it's number four on the sequence focus. Yes. So talk about focus. What do you mean by It's one of my favorites. So another big concept in, and not just in coaching and you know, thinking world is what you pay attention to grows.

Right? So whatever you're focused on will grow, it's just well-known disc concept. And so I learned a phrase that shine the light on what they're doing. Right. And it was actually one of the first things I started shifting in my parenting, right? Because like, Jason, you mentioned we can get stuck and what's going wrong and what needs to change a lot.

And it can really cause great disconnection because then we're pointing out everything that's wrong or we're pointing out everything that needs to change. Or we're not in a good space because we're frustrated or resentful or whatever it is. And so that can cause us to, you know, to lead to disconnection with our kids. So the idea here is that, that you shine the light on what they're doing.

Right. And you literally spend your energy and your focus on looking for all of the ways and the things that they are doing well. And when we do that, it is amazing what we see, you know,

that's what the first thing I started to when I decided, okay, what are they doing? Right. What is going well? And I actually would write it down,

like for when I first started, I'm like, wow, look at that. He, he woke up without me having to tell him 10 times, or he said, thank you today. You know, after that, I'm like, wow, little things like that, that we take for granted, but that, you know, we don't take time to appreciate.

And so the more I did that, the more I thought, wow, he's, there's so much good that he's doing every day and so much work to make it happen for him. You know, it was hard. And, and so that's the idea of where you focus matters and where you pay your, put your attention matter. So focusing on what they are doing well,

what is going right? And it changes, again, everything, your dynamic, it changes your perspective, just the way you feel about your kids. And it again, honors them and acknowledging them when they aren't doing those things. You know, we all know the five to one rule and we say, we hear, you know, like five positives to one negative.

And if you dig a little deeper, you know, Dr. Diamond's talking about like overall. So like it's not just five to one, you know, it could be, you say something negative, there should be something five, but that means throughout the entire day. So if, if we were to log how many negatives we say in a day,

you know, that's going to be a whole lot of positives are supposed to make up for that. Right. So anyway, that's the idea is that we can shift our mindset shift the way we see our kids look for the good, it, it changes our chemistry, our brain chemistry, the way we feel. And so that's the whole idea of focusing on,

you know, what they're doing. Right. So see how it helps them claim the ground that they're, that they're taking, like the progress they're making in helping them also feel like they're making, making the they're making strides and that we recognize it. And that we're, that we, that I think that sometimes kids really innately want to please their parents,

as much as we may not want that as a parent, like all the time, but there's something in aid. I think to that, I don't know if that's true or not, but that's just kind of my sense. And that's the way it's kind of happened with our kids and to have to actually be able to say like, Hey, I see this.

And like, they, they get that sense of like, Oh, Hey, my parents noticed. And so I'm actually doing something that they're pleased, they're pleased about. And so I could see how it helps the kids as well as all of the benefits that helps us. Yeah. And typically when we're raising a challenging child, right. Or a child with special needs,

they hear a lot of negative in their day. You know, I specifically with a lot of families who have kids with ADHD and they are constantly told what they're doing wrong all the time, you know, all

the time because of their challenges, their impulsive, you know, all that, all these things. And they can't focus. And, you know,

they're asked to do everything that they're limited in, in a school setting. And so they're constantly bombarded with, what's not going on for them. And so that's, I think even more important, you know, when our kids, do you have big challenges that it's important to recognize that that makes sense. Yeah. And at least just such a nice foundation for the relationship to be strong.

And for me to not be in fear so that when we go to try to collaborate and solve some of those problems, I'm in a good space and they're in a good space and everything else just seems, it goes a little more easily. Would you agree to that? Absolutely. Yeah. And that whole idea, and you guys know this cause you know me,

but I, I believe that if we have a strong connection, then everything else falls into place. Right. So if we can stay connected to our kids, even through the test stuff, even through the challenges, you know, then that trust is there so that we can solve these challenges together. Right. Because it's, there's that connection there. So yeah.

It all, it all goes together. All of, all of them, Coco, it's so fun talking to you. It's, it's insightful. I mean, I, I got so much out of this conversation myself. I have work that I can go and do now for myself as a parent. I appreciate that. Is there anything else as we're wrapping up here that you want to make sure we touch on,

or do you have a final ask for the audience here? I think I would say just start small, even if you just did one of these, you know, just start small and, and, and believe because I don't know, you know, I'm, I'm guessing some parents are struggling with a connection, but believe that it can change believe that you can create a deep connection with your child with these little steps,

you know, one at a time. And, and that, cause I know it's certain moments, it seemed really impossible. You know, where I was at, it seemed like we're never going to get through this dark spot. And yet with time I saw so much of, of the progress and the change that comes with, you know, focusing on one little thing at a time.

And so that's what I would encourage everyone to do to just one step at a time. Awesome. Let's see if I can remember that. I try to do everything all at once. You, you, you've given us this five ways to solve disconnection. Is there other ways that people can find out more about you and what you have available in line?

Because you have so much, you have so much information, you know, your training as a coach and also your parenting experience. What's the best way for people to find out more about you and about this, this, Okay. So they can find me at heart for kids coaching. It's hard to, and the number four heart for kids, coaching.com.

I will give you that. Download it also is at Hartford, Hartford kids, coaching slash best mom ever is that was our goal. And I will send that to you and I lead parent groups and have one-on-one coaching and love to work with families. Awesome. Thank you, Coco. I'll put a link for that in the speaker notes so people can,

can get to that. And thank you again. Thanks for talking to us. I always enjoy talking with you and thanks for being a part of Happily family and coming and talking to us here. And we'll talk to you again, The future. Thanks for having me. All right. Thanks. Bye-bye.