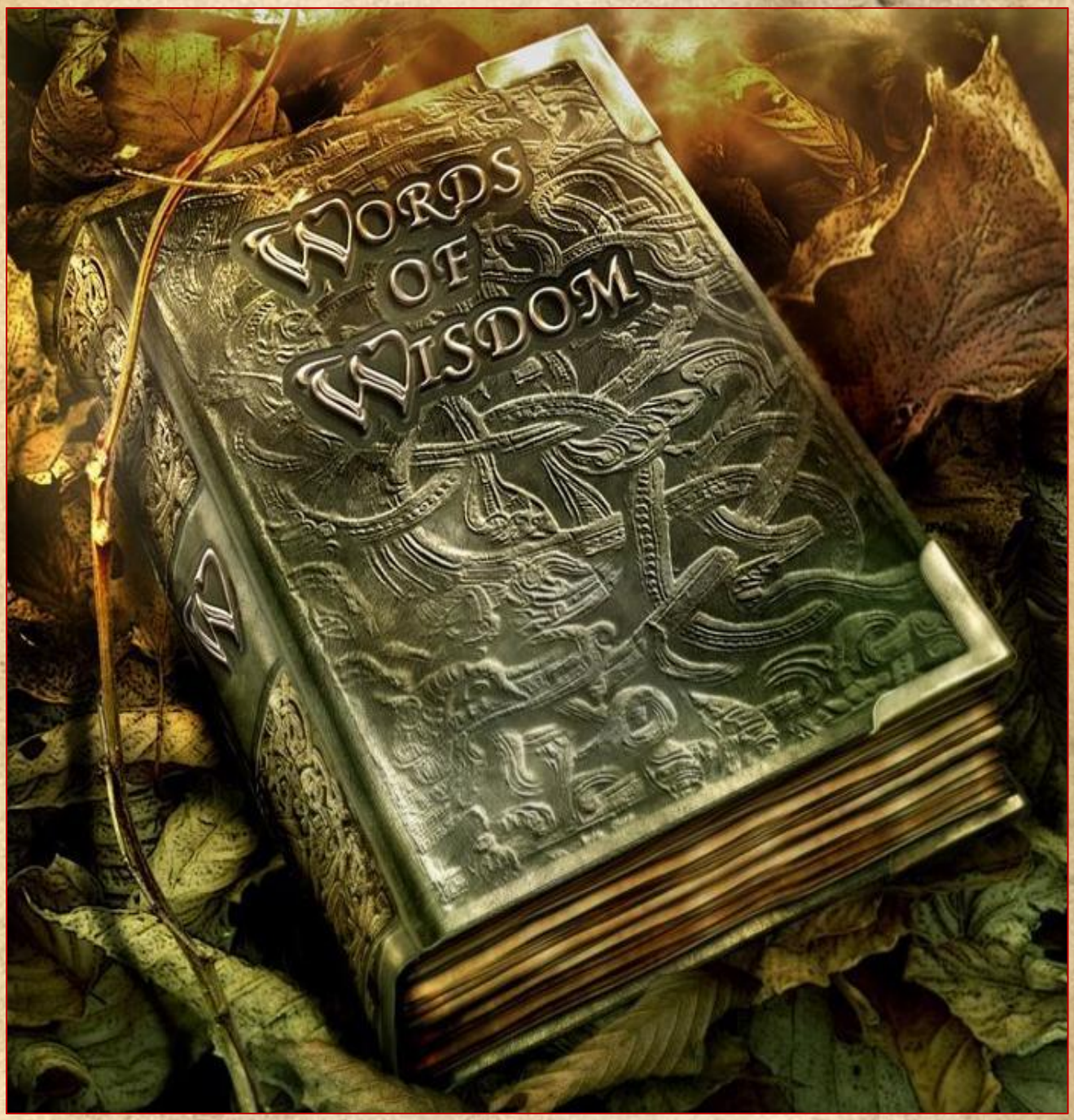


Bully-Proofing Your Child

With Jill Hope

Part of the Life Skills For Kids Program

By Margaret Ashley

Empowerment Education
The Natural Learning Centre
www.TheNaturalLearningCentre.com

Empowerment Education

Teaching Kids Life Skills Ensuring Success In School & Out

Produced By
Margaret Ashley

How To Teach Kids Skills We Were Never Taught… But Should Have Been!

Empowering Adults To Empower The Next Generation.

Author: Margaret Ashley
Publisher: The Natural Learning Centre

Follow Us On Facebook And Twitter

Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/NaturalLearningCentre?ref=hl

Twitter:

https://twitter.com/experiential_ed

Follow Me on Twitter

Other Titles In This Series:

Overcoming Learning Challenges

Anat Baniel – Moving Kids Beyond Perceived Limits, Turning The Learning Switch On
Dean Larson – Re-Igniting The Love of Learning In Struggling Students
Dr. Charlotte Reznick – Tapping Into The Power of Imagination
Dr. Darren Weissman – Changing Fear & Pain Into Courage & Inspiration
Bryan Post – Overcoming Challenging Behaviours and Lying
Kathryn Kvols – Redirecting Children's Negative Misbehaviour
Julie Matthews – Nourishing Hope for ADHD/Autism
Wendy Hart – Curing Procrastination

Reducing Stress & Increasing Student Performance

Steve G Jones – Increasing Focus and Concentration for Better Results
Laura Silva – Awakening The Genius In Your Child
Brad Yates – Getting Rid of The Yuckies, All Those Negativities That Hinder Learning
Jeff Goelitz – Heart Based Learning & Stress Free Test Taking
Bobbi DePorter – Character Building & Quantum Learning Made Quick & Easy
Patrick McMillan – The Science of Creating Happy Kids
Laura L. Brown – How Gender Impacts Learning
Mark Romero – Using Music Proven By NASA To Create Stress Free Safe Learning Environments

Student Empowerment

John Jacobson – Empower Kids for Better Results While They Text, Watch TV or Game
Debbi Dachinger – No Fail Power Goal Setting To Make Dreams Reality
Jill Hope – Bully-Proofing Your Child
Kent Healy – Cool Life Skills Not Taught In School
Dr. Bruce Lipton – How Beliefs Impact Our Bodies & Results
Dr. Joe Rubino – Increasing Self-Esteem in Kids To Succeed In School & Out
Lisa Nichols – Positive Communication For Improved Relationships (Getting Kids To Talk To You)
Sharon Lechter – Teaching Financial Literacy

Share What You Learn

LISTEN, READ & LEARN

BECOME EMPOWERED

EMPOWER OTHERS BY SHARING

As you go through, this material you may think of someone who could benefit from the information.

You can share this information by providing them with the following link so they can get their copy of this book by sending them to

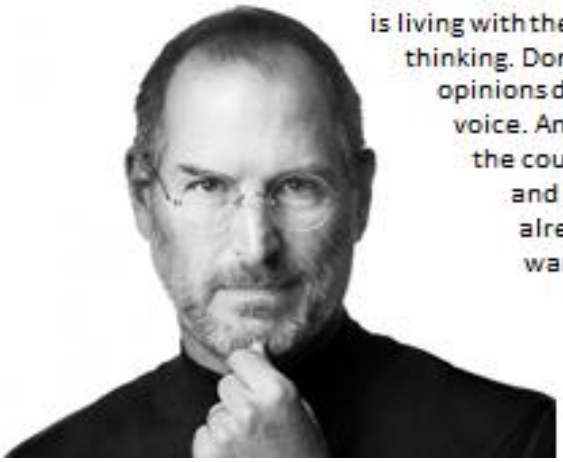
www.TheNaturalLearningCentre.com

Contact:

Info@TheNaturalLearningCentre.com

21st Century Students Are:

- Critical Thinkers
- Self-Directed Digital Learners
- Problem Solvers
- Innovators
- Strong Communicators
- Collaborators
- Win/Win Negotiators
- Confident
- Globally Aware
- Critically Engaged
- Technologically Savvy
- Information & Media Literate
- Financially Literate



"Your time is limited; so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

- Steve Jobs
(Stanford University Commencement 2005)

Message From Margaret

Children are gifts we are entrusted for a time to care for, nurture and provide for on all levels. It is a responsibility that most of us have never been trained to do. To ensure a child receives the best "education" we can is one of the most time intensive and expensive processes we encounter in raising our children.

Every child is a unique BEING unto themselves, with an inner genius waiting to be discovered. Each child has unique strengths, talents, skills, interests, understandings, passions, creativity and learning preferences that make it virtually impossible to design a system that meets every child's needs.

Our society is undergoing a shift in terms of their beliefs and consciousness. Families are choosing to redefine their world and that of their children in a new way, a way that works for the child, the family as a whole and incorporates the core values, beliefs, interests, culture and dynamics of the family unit. These families are choosing to enhance what is available to them through conventional methods and take responsibility for augmenting the areas they feel are not addressed but essential to a child's overall development.

How individuals view the education process is also being redefined and expanded to encompass the child as a whole, their body, mind and spirit. While our school system does the best it can to provide a basic foundation of learning, the world is evolving at such a pace that teachers and schools are hard pressed to meet the needs of each student.

As a parent, I recognized this long before my daughter was old enough to be enrolled in the school system. The challenge was I had no idea how to address what I felt was lacking. I couldn't even put into words what that was. I just knew that in the end I wanted her to be able to life a happy, inspired life of purpose.

Thirteen years ago, I was just your average parent who had been conditioned to think "school" was how you got an "education". Yet each time I thought of putting my daughter into the accepted system, something in me questioned whether I was doing what was right for her.

I just knew I wanted so much more for her than the usual "education"… I wanted her to have opportunities, skill sets and resources that schools couldn't provide due to budgets, time, and other restrictions. So I started exploring options, asking questions, seeking resources and techniques that I felt would work for my child.

I have found that many educators and parents are searching for the same thing I was. They want to keep up with the latest strategies and scientific advances so they can help the children they are entrusted with to learn in ways that work for them while empowering and preparing those children to lead productive and inspired lives, pursuing their dreams.

They are hindered by two key factors, time to do the research about what's new out there and budget restrictions.

As a single parent and having been chair of numerous organizations with limited resources and professional development budgets, I understand all too well these hindering factors.

It is my intention with the Natural Learning Centre to offer the latest in information, scientific research, tools and strategies FREE to those who wish to empower children for success.

This is only possible through the creation of a collaborative and transformational community of caring individuals, educators, experts, corporations and communities working together. A community dedicated to providing children with the Life Skills that will enable them to become happy, successful, empowered heroes in their own lives today and unify them as life-long caring stewards of their communities. These will be the individuals who inspire others tomorrow.

It's a crazy big dream. A dream we are passionate about making a reality. It is my hope you will join us in our mission to empower children worldwide.

We invite you to partner with us to empower the children within your circle of influence.

To find out how to bring the FREE Life Skills program to your schools, community groups and corporations please go to our website at www.theNaturalLearningCentre.com

The Natural Learning Centre

Founded in 2005, the Natural Learning Centre, is a non-profit corporation created to empower individuals within communities of the world to invest in future generations. Our programs serve the children of the world. Our international coalition of caring volunteers and experts provide vision, inspiration, the finest resources and specific strategies needed to empower our heroes of tomorrow.

Our Mission

The Natural Learning Centre's mission is to empower children with life skills that will enable them to become happy, successful, empowered heroes in their own lives today and unify them as life-long caring stewards of their communities tomorrow.

To this end, the Centre partners with experts to provide connection, exceptional resources, products and services designed to empower all.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to create a transformational community that is passionate about empowering children. This community shares awareness of ideas, information and tools designed to help guide students to discover their life purpose, and become the successful, self-confident, inspired, creative and fulfilled individuals they were meant to be.

Our Goals & Objectives:

1.) Give FREE program access to 1,000,000 children and adults;

2.) Build a global transformational community piece by piece and link by link;

3.) Partner with companies and communities worldwide;

4.) Empower every individual to make a difference with the children in their worlds.

Resources & Services

The following are prerequisites for all resources and services offered through the Centre:

1. Information offered is current and aligned with our overall purpose and mission;
2. Empowers educators, parents, community leaders and students with relevant life skills;
3. Material is easy to use, understand, enjoyable and experiential;
4. All learning styles are honored;
5. Provides access to the latest information and scientific research that will aid empowerment & effective learning with ease for success in school and out.

What People Are Saying...

This was an amazing interview. I love Bryan's energy! As a retired elementary educator, I would like to be able to use this to help kids in an after school program. Again, thank you!

- Linda T. Kuzyk

Dr. Weissman is able to communicate a knowledge of Life and Love in ways that we can all identify with. Our children come to us with the "knowing" already there. Raising them up in the environment of The LifeLine Technique can only be the foundation to a life of their dreams. Right on. Dr. D! Give us more! - Mary Marin

I listened to your interview last night. You are a WONDERFUL voice - your points too seldom shared - and uniquely nourishing for outside the box Life Skills activists like me. Still have me smiling this am. What a great gift! So happy you persevered and found your calling to inspire others. Grateful for your Presence this day! – Marlaine Cover

What a great interview and tools I learned today.

Thank you

- Anela Seed

So interesting to know about this technique. Hope will have the opportunity to learn, apply it and benefit children with it.

– Lucia C. Puga Flores

I have just read Anat Baniel's book Kid's Beyond Limits. It is truly inspirational and is helping me with my work as an educational psychologist and parent coach. Thank you so much for this and the message of the power of movement. It would be great for this message to be more out there in schools! - Linda Mallory

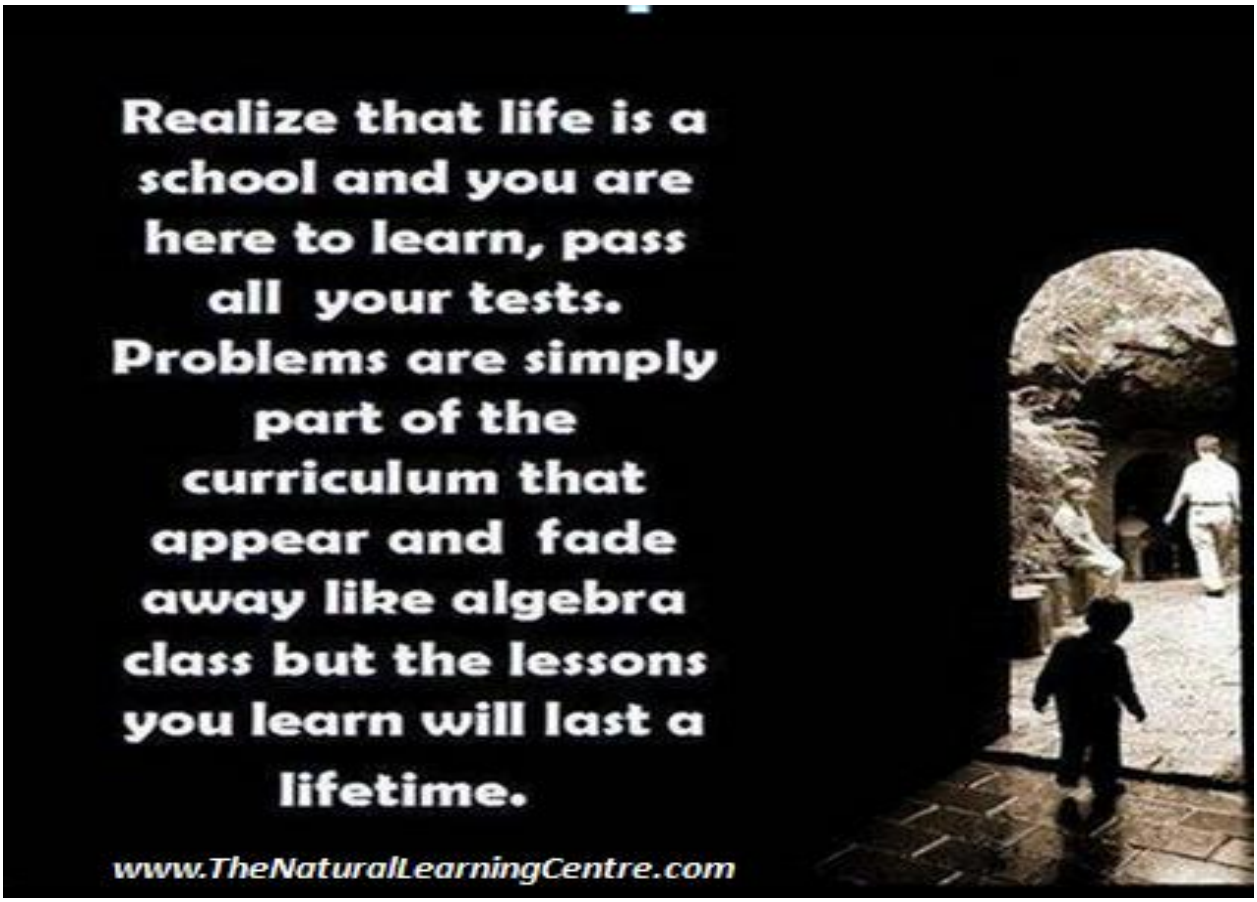
What People Are Saying...

REALLY enjoyed this interview! Wanted it to last another hour or more! Thanks so much, Dean, for sharing with us! I know it was just a smidgen of what you could have shared! Looking forward to talking more and learning more! Love the 'non-judgmental' approach to relationships! What freedom! Thank you so much!

- Lori Westfall Uphoff

I love Wendy Hart. She is kind and patient and is teaching me to be more kind and patient with myself. Thank you for having her Margaret.

- Jen Steele



Bully-Proofing Your Child

With Jill Hope

Margaret: Imagine how different the world would be if every child was equipped with strategies that allowed them to bully proof themselves for life. If they had the inner strength and confidence to stand up and comfortably express themselves without fear of those who've tired to diminish them in any way.

This is what our guest, Jill Hope, will be sharing with us today. Triumphant over a bully at age eight but facing what some might call an even bigger bully in her thirties, infertility, Jill was nearly overcome with despair at a time in her life when most women were creating their families.

That was until she was reminded of the truth that lived deep inside her as an eight-year-old. That truth was about how the power of her thoughts and choices created her reality. Passionate about sharing this remembered truth with others, Jill created I Shine. I Shine offers programs and educational curriculum that facilitates character building, healthy self-esteem and children tapping into the power they already possess to take charge of their circumstances and lead empowered lives.

What I'm most excited about that we'll be talking to Jill about are the specific strategies that will provide children with the inner strength and mindset to feel empowered and bully proof throughout life. Jill, I know our audience is going to get so much out of the information you share with us today. So, welcome to our interview.

Jill: Thank you so much, Margaret. I'm really excited to be here.

Margaret: Jill, to give us a bit of background. I'm curious, what led you to focus your work in this area?

Jill: You know, it was a number of different things. When I was very young I was exposed to some information that made me feel so empowered, I guess is the word I would have to say. I didn't know that word as a child. I remember going and learning this information and just feeling so happy and feeling so strong. You mentioned that I was bullied when I was eight.. But it was no ordinary bully experience.

It was really interesting because there was this boy in our neighborhood, and everybody knew him as the neighborhood bully, Joe. If you rode your bike around the neighborhood you would never go down his street. That was the danger zone.

I was riding my bike to school one day as this eight-year-old child by myself. Going down the street I took a turn, and all of a sudden I heard some commotion behind me growing louder. I looked over my shoulder and here is Joe on his bike with his pack of followers, I guess is what I would call them. They approached me, and Joe rode so very close to me. He didn't say anything to me, but he rode kind of in an act of intimidation, so close that it made me lose control and I fell off my bike.

Here is where I knew that something really important in my life had just happened, because he stopped his bike, got off, came over to me, looked at me and said, "Are you okay?" Bullies do not do that. They don't care. They are trying to get the power.

At that moment what was fascinating to me is I remembered not once did I ever feel like there was something wrong with me because he bullied me. Many victims of bullies, they take it personally and they feel like there's something wrong. I knew that I had tapped into something that lived inside of me that we all have. If every child could touch that place within them we would have such a different world.

When I went through the infertility, as we go many years in the future, I had to tap back into that strength. I was starting to lose control of everything, my emotions. I was going down a very negative downward spiral. So when I tapped back into that strength and I remembered that experience I thought, "I have to do something with this," because it allowed me to then create a family.

I wanted to bring those skills to other families so they could teach their children this important way to tap in and be who they're really truly meant to be.

Margaret: We know that a healthy level of self-esteem is important. When children grow up with low self-esteem, what does that look like in their lives?

Jill: You know, when children, or anybody, has low self-esteem it always means that they're putting more value on how others view them than on how they view themselves. So they tend to put more value on what someone thinks they should be doing rather than what they really want to be doing. They tend to make decisions that keep them small and safe because they don't think they're worthy of more than that.

We know that the level of one's self-esteem determines the type of job that we choose, the type of partner we decide to be with, the type of friends we hang out with, whether or not we choose to use drugs or engage in other risky behaviors, or even whether or not we attract bullying or negative behavior toward us.

Children who have low self-esteem they might struggle to find friends because they don't think they're good enough. They may develop eating disorders as a way to feel

some sense of control. They may have sleeping problems. They could develop anxiety. They might struggle in school. So these are the types of things we see that are red flags that have us asking what is bringing on this behavior.

Margaret: How do children get low self-esteem? Is it something they're born with or is it something that's picked up over time or is it environmental factors? What exactly causes it?

Jill: Well, here's the thing. Children are born with a very healthy level of self-esteem. Every one of them. If you've ever heard a baby cry because it needed to eat or it was tired, that's what I mean. They do not take no for an answer when they're lacking something that they want.

What happens is over time parents unknowingly and do not mean to do this, but they teach their children to have low self-esteem through how they're conditioned. The way parents do this is they pass on their own limiting beliefs about life. They tell children that they know better than the child does. While on some level we do need to teach our kids how to navigate through the world, a child knows when she's cold, she knows when she has to go to the bathroom and she knows when she's full from eating.

But when we tell them how they need to be, you need to eat more, they start to lose their natural ability to know how they feel, and that's where the self-esteem starts to change and they start to not really trust in their own innate being.

Margaret: So basically they know how to self-regulate, and we inadvertently take that away from them by doing what we think is in their best interest.

Jill: Yes, to a large degree.

Margaret: Bullying is really getting a lot of press these days, and rightly so. Can you share some statistics on the bullying problem?

Jill: What we know is that nearly 77% of students have admitted to experiencing at least one form of bullying, and this is a great increase just over the past decade. While we've seen that bullying incidents peak during the late elementary and middle school years, like grades 4 through 8, children in grades second through fourth also experience significant bullying. In fact, the likelihood of becoming a target of a bully can often begin in second and third grade. But I've seen it as early as kindergarten.

There was a study done by Yale University, and school aged children who are bullied are two to seven times more likely to consider suicide than a child who is not bullied. Bullying can magnify these feelings of depression and anxiety in children who are bullied, which can then lead down that path of potential suicide attempt. We do know

that nearly half of children who are bullied engage in bullying behaviors themselves. Not a lot of good stuff coming from that.

Margaret: No. Let's talk a little bit about self-esteem and bullying here. Is there a correlation between bullying and low self-esteem?

Jill: I believe it's very much correlated, very much related. I feel that whether you're the bully or the victim you're feeling either, and maybe both, a lack of self-esteem, a lack of worthiness, or feeling a lack of power over your life circumstances. So some children choose to act that out. They want to get power. They want to feel powerful. So they act that out in bullying.

Then you've got children who may feel a lack of self-worth. What they do is they freely give up their power. So really bullies and victims of bullies, they're a perfect match for each other. The bullies try to take away the power for themselves because they truly feel powerless in their lives. Then the victims freely give away their power because they don't feel worthy of having it.

The thing about the bullies is that they instinctively know who they can get the power from. I truly believe that if we could help kids to feel their own sense of power and their own sense of worthiness, which all lives on the inside of a person, it has nothing to do with what they have in their outer world, this whole bullying thing would greatly diminish.

Margaret: There seems to be a lot of bullying programs out there and in school, but research shows that they aren't really having much of an impact on the problem. Why do you suppose that is?

Jill: Again, so much of what I believe to be the root cause of all this bullying comes down to the level of self-esteem and empowerment that I mentioned. But I think that many of these programs that are out there, while I believe they're all coming from a very well intended place a lot of the programs I've seen it looks more like they're putting a band aid on the problem. They give you tactics to deal with it after it's happened, what should you do.

That's important to know, but really it's not addressing the root cause, which is helping children to feel empowered and to feel worthy and good about themselves. So we can tell them how to fix the outer circumstances and to deal with the aftermath, but that isn't going to stop it to begin with.

Margaret: You say when a child, or anyone for that matter, owns their own power that they're less likely to be the victim of a bullying situation. What are some ways one can practice owning their own power? What does that look like?

Jill: That's such a great question. Owning your own power is really accepting responsibility for every thought that you think, every feeling that you have and every word that you say and every action that you take. So it's being in total alignment with every decision you make. It's like when someone asks you if you want to do something and you're feeling in your gut, "I don't, but I don't want to hurt that person's feelings." So you say yes. You're not in your power. There are very polite and graceful ways to say no in that situation.

So it's really being in your being and owning what you truly feel. Making your yeses yes, making your no's no. It's also knowing that we do not have power over anyone else. Even as parents, we do know have power over our children. That is not what we're meant to do. It's teaching them and it's helping them make decisions and it's helping them learn about the world, but it's not getting them to conform.

I think a lot of people, at least in my generation that's sort of what parenting was. The kids need to be quiet and they need to conform to our rules. That hasn't necessarily helped people to really flourish out there in the world when they became an adult. So to be able to start owning your own power, really being in alignment with how you're feeling and the decisions that you're making.

There's this client I was coaching. She was gearing up for this encounter that she really feared. One of the things I told her was instead of thinking about how much you fear this or how worried you are, how about imagining in your mind how you would ideally like it to go and how you want to feel when this experience is over. This was a completely foreign concept to her. She had never had the idea that she could choose how she feels.

If you give the way you feel away to circumstances you lose power. It's deciding that I am going to choose how I feel in this situation. So that's one way that you can own your own power. There are many other ways. I could talk about this longer if you like or we can move on. But there are several different ways you can own your own power.

Margaret: How old would you suggest children be for us to start teaching them to own their own power?

Jill: A lot of people may disagree with this. I have always spoken to my child as if he was an adult. I mean that's not to say you don't do the little sweet talk with them. I've always trusted that if he doesn't understand now he will learn later. I've always said what I wanted him to really get over time.

What's interesting about that is I don't think we give our kids enough credit when they're young. Our kids are so very wise. When we actually listen to them and we ask them questions about what they think and how they feel, it is amazing what they will

answer. They are amazingly wise. I learn new things from my child every day, and I have been for years.

But what I've noticed is if you start early, so maybe three. I feel you can try at almost any age. They may not understand certain aspects of what you're saying, and there are ways to tweak your words to fit their understanding level. But when they get older they will suddenly surprise you with this great understanding. Then you realize, "Oh my gosh, they were taking it in all the time but just at their level." It's hard to put an age on it, but I say start sooner rather than later.

Margaret: I couldn't agree with you more, because I know I did that exact type of process with my daughter. People would look at me like I was nuts and say to me, "You realize she doesn't understand what you're talking about." I'd be like, "Well, how do you know she doesn't understand?" So I completely get what you're saying there.

What tips do you have for kids who have been bullied?

Jill: When a child has been bullied it's really important to help that child see the truth about the situation by separating the bullying behavior from how they feel about themselves. I sometimes like to use a garbage metaphor when I'm explaining this to people, because if someone bullies it's always, always about them and it's never about you. When people hurt you they're acting out their own wounds or they're putting another down so that they can feel better about themselves in their lives. Or like I said earlier, so that they can feel they're powerful.

It's kind of like they have this big bag of garbage that they're carrying around, if you can envision that. When they do or say something to hurt your child it's like they're taking that big old bag of garbage and handing it over to your child. If your child takes it the bully feels better. He or she feels lighter because you've just taken their load of garbage.

But it's not their garbage, it's not your child's garbage. It does not belong to your child. It only belongs to your child if she accepts it. She has the power to choose whether or not she accepts the garbage that someone throws at her.

You've probably heard of the book *The Four Agreements*. You might remember, if you've read that, that the second agreement is to never take anything personally. Meaning that just because someone may have said or done something that your child could take as a mean act against her, it can't affect her unless she decides to agree with what was said or done.

Parents can really help their kids to not take a situation like this personally by asking them, "Is what they did or said the truth about you? Does that garbage really belong to you?" If you let your child sit with that answer, likely they're going to realize, "No. That

is not the truth about me." It may be how the other person feels about her. But she doesn't have to agree with it because it's not the truth about her. The truth really is that no one knows your child better than she knows herself.

Margaret: That's true.

Jill: Yeah. When she realizes that the act done to her is really a result of some internal pain or insecurity that that perpetrator is feeling, their own garbage so to speak, and in no way the truth about her, it's easier for her to accept what they say as the truth about her as not a truth about her and just not take it personally.

Margaret: It's interesting that you bring that up because I think if all children knew that bullying was about an internal processing of that person's pain then we might have more understanding and compassion for each other, and the kids would be able to relate better to each other knowing that it's not about them. It's about that particular person has a challenge that they're trying to deal with as opposed to making someone else feel bad.

Jill: Yes, yes. Absolutely.

Margaret: Girls seem to have a more difficult time getting past being bullied and can struggle for years with the repercussions of it. Why do you suppose that is and what can we do to ensure it doesn't happen?

Jill: This is such an obvious statement, but girls are so different from boys. Yes, so obvious. I think it's probably a combination of our conditioning about what girls are supposed to be. Then we've got the media providing this certain image of girls and what girls are like. So girls start to pick that up. I've watched girl behavior. I experienced it myself, and then I've watched it. I volunteer a lot in school and I've watched this behavior. I have not figured out why a girl takes it on to such a much deeper level, and I am a girl and I can't figure it out.

So it's really important, with girls in particular, I mean with all children of course but with girls in particular, to really have open communication and conversations about how they're feeling, about their friends and about situations they're going to be in. If you can empower your girl to be comfortable in who she is much of the issues out there go away.

But here's the other thing that's really, really important for parents to hear today is that we, women, moms, we experience the girl stuff growing up. So here is one reason actually why I could say why this continues to perpetuate, the girl stuff never goes away from generation to generation, because we had our own issues growing up. We either had good or bad experiences or somewhere in between. We as parents now are

projecting our beliefs onto our girls without knowing that we're doing it. Most of the time it's unconscious.

I was working with a parent over the summer. She had her child in this lovely private school, and her daughter was 12 or 13 at the time. There was one bully in particular who was really giving her a hard time, and this was the true girl that we hear about. But none of the other girls in the class were supporting her daughter. Everybody was against her and that's how she felt.

So I had a conversation with this mom, and it was so telling to me. She was ready to pull the child out of this school and I said, "Let me ask you, when you were growing up what was your experience with girls at school?" She's like, "Oh, it was fine. It was fine."

Then she stopped. She didn't even remember in that moment that she had had a big problem. She's like, "Wait a minute. That's right, I did not like girls at school. Girls didn't like me. I didn't have friends growing up. I didn't have a very good high school experience. I said, "Well, that makes a lot of sense now that your daughter is experiencing similar things."

So she had this big light bulb moment. What ended up ensuing over the summer was that after she had this big aha and I gave her a couple tools to use for herself and for her daughter, her daughter by the end of the summer, not only was not being bullied, she was best friends with the bully. They ended up hanging out together the entire summer.

At the start of the school year her daughter actually said to her mom, my client, she said, "Mom, I've realized why I didn't get along with the girls last year." Her mother was like, "Well tell me." She said, "Because I was not being nice to them." But see her perception had been that they weren't being nice to her. Suddenly everything opened up when the mom had this realization.

So I think what happens is we are projecting a lot of our subconscious beliefs onto our kids, and they're just mirroring what's in our subconscious that needs to be looked at.

Margaret: Right. I think we do that with a lot of things where we inadvertently pass on our experiences to our children and how to deal with that may not be in their best interest.

Really realizing that we're doing a disservice to our children. So thank you for bringing that to our attention.

Jill: Sure.

Margaret: Jill, you've mentioned that when kids feel empowered they're less likely to be bullied. What are some tools that we can implement to create a sense of empowerment in kids?

Jill: There's really three things that I advocate as being the three most important pieces. The first is to provide choices for kids. When anyone has a choice, right, when we have choices we feel more powerful. There's something about being able to make a choice, having that freedom, that is empowering.

When we're told what to do and you don't have a choice about it, it's very disempowering to your energy. We are not meant to boss our children around. We're meant to teach them how to make healthy choices that feel right to them, and only they can really know what's right for them.

The first step is really finding ways to offer our kids healthy choices. You can start that from a very, very early age with simple choices to make. Then as they grow you make the choices be bigger.

Margaret: That's a really good point. Choice is always good.

Jill: Yeah, choice is wonderful. The second one is – and I'm not sure how many parents actually do this – but the second is really, really important also, which is to give your child the space to solve their own problems. One of my favorite questions to ask kids when they bring a problem to you is to say, "Well, what do you think you should do to solve this problem?" Or, "What could you do that would make you feel better about this?"

We have this tendency as parents to just want to jump in and fix it. When you ask them, and they actually have the space to think about it for themselves and they come up with an answer, first of all they will likely come back very quickly with an answer because they do know at some level in their being what the answer is.

But when they do that and you allow them to do that it builds up their confidence, and then they're more apt to tackle bigger problems more successfully and with greater confidence later on. Giving them that space to solve their own problems is so very important.

Then lastly is to teach your kids the power of their thoughts and their words, and how to own their feelings. Because when children get into the habit of speaking in an empowered way their words will become their beliefs eventually, and beliefs end up

becoming actions. Once they start speaking in an empowered way they'll start to believe that they're empowered and then their actions will flow from there.

So those are the three strategies that I highly recommend in creating that sense of empowerment in our kids.

Margaret: Those are great strategies. You developed a program consisting of seven strategies for creating a foundation for greater confidence and self-esteem in kids. We don't have time to go through all of them, but could you give our listeners a couple of the strategies that you might be willing to share with them?

Jill: Sure. The first one, and in my program it's the first thing we cover, it's part of the first building block, it's so important not to gloss over, it's identifying your core beliefs and making sure that they support a healthy level of self-esteem and empowerment in your child.

Because so often, well almost all the time, when there's a problem and a parent comes to me they tell me, "I've got this problem with my child and please help me fix my child." I am not kidding, more than 95% of the time the solution to the problem is in the parent. It's in the parent's mindset. It's in their belief. So that is the first strategy for really building up that strength in kids is to evaluate your own core beliefs.

Just like the mom that I talked about earlier with the daughter being bullied. When she realized that she had a belief that it's hard to make friends in school and that girls aren't nice, her daughter was acting that out. So it's really important to identify your core beliefs.

One of my favorites is actually, and it sounds so, I don't know, almost cliché, but it's so important, is to incorporate an attitude of gratitude into your daily life. What I mean by that is that every challenge or situation that we find ourselves in there are two ways to look at that. A lot of our tendency is to only see the negative, especially when it seems like it's a bad thing. However, there is always another side.

When you can start training yourself and your kids to look for what the good – there's some good in there somewhere. When you train them to consistently look for the good in your life, the point of your focus being looking for what's good, you start to attract and see more good things in your life. You start to feel powerful as a being when you know that you're thinking in a certain way and it's creating a result. The power of gratitude, I could go on and on about that, but it's an important strategy to bring into your family.

Margaret: I couldn't agree with you on that more. I know I did that with my child from a very early age. Now at 18 there's no situation that gets her down for very long because she can look at it and say, "Okay, what did I learn from this? No matter how bad it is it will get better and there's something to be thankful for here and to teach me and to move on from." So I completely agree with incorporating gratitude because it completely changes their whole mindset on how they look at life in general.

One of the things that you talk about in your program is praise. We generally think of praise as something that builds kids up. But you talk about one type of praise that can actually damage self-esteem. Would you mind sharing with our listeners what type of praise that is?

Jill: Yes, I would love to. We talked about earlier how parents unknowingly teach their child low self-esteem. One of the ways we do that is through how we praise. Parents always praise thinking that they are building up their self-esteem of their child. But there is this type of praise I want to talk about that actually can have a very negative effect. This type of praise is called evaluative praise. It's basically making a judgment about a situation.

So an example of an evaluative praise statement might be, "Oh, you did a great job picking up your toys." And who doesn't' say it like that, right? I think that's how we were told how to praise, right?

Margaret: Yep.

Jill: What's wrong with that type of praise is that we evaluated the job that the child did as being great, and we told them that. Why would that be harmful to self-esteem? What it does is it shows that your worth is gained through the approval and judgment of others. So it starts to make children identify with their actions. Self-worth has nothing to do with your actions. It's how you feel as a being despite what you say or do. You don't want to tie the actions to a child's level of worthiness.

A much better way to praise is called descriptive and appreciative praise. It's saying something like, "Wow, you cleaned your room and I really appreciate that. Thank you so much." Then they have the opportunity to step back and say, "Oh. Wow, my room looks clean now. Wow, I must be a helpful person. My mom thanked me."

They start to make their own conclusions. It's such a subtle shift, us concluding it for them versus them concluding it for themselves. But when they start to conclude things like, "I'm a helpful person," "Wow, I made my room look really nice," then they're building their own self-worth from the inside rather than having to have it told to them and maybe feeling like manipulation.

So really important to catch yourself when you're saying, "Great job on this," or, "Wonderful effort on that." Try to take the judgment piece out of it.

Margaret: Okay, that's a really good piece of advice. I know I do it all the time with the evaluative praise, not realizing that I'm setting her up for low self-esteem there.

The amount of stress that people in our society are under today is astronomical, especially for kids. You advocate making stress and relaxation techniques part of the family routine. Are there particular techniques you recommend?

Jill: There are different things that you can do. You sort of want to follow the rhythm of your family and see what works for you. In my family what has ended up being a beautiful sort of very relaxing process for us is at bedtime we will go through what are we grateful for from today. My son will start being real general like, "My hamster and you…" I'm like, "Well tell me something really specific." So he's gotten in the habit now of looking for the specific things that he feels grateful for.

We do this as he's lying down at night. What's wonderful about that is it allows him to fall asleep in a grateful state of mind so that when he wakes up there's more of a refreshed feeling waking up. So that's one thing I recommend is incorporating this. We talked about gratitude earlier, but it actually can aid in our sleep which helps us to feel better if we get a healthy level of sleep by doing that sort of thing.

There are other things like breathing. It's interesting because a lot of us will say, "Take a deep breath." But one breath isn't necessarily going to do it. I've got this inner wellness curriculum that we're piloting in the school this year. One of the things they have to do is breathing exercises before each of the lessons.

One child, this tough athletic kid, I was talking to them and asking them what aspects of the program they like the best or that they learned about that they didn't know before. He said something so profound. He said, "I learned that," these are his words, "it's way more relaxing to take a lot of breaths than just one or two."

So if you can find ways to bring, maybe it's before you sit down for your meal or as you're sitting down for your meal, like, "We're going to stop for a moment." Some people do prayers if you're religious. You could choose to just do a few deep breaths together as a family. That could be very relaxing, it helps the food digest better when we're relaxed. So that's another idea for you is just bringing in some kind of breathing in a fun way in your family.

Margaret: You mentioned that you're bringing this into the schools. We have a lot of teachers and educators that are listeners as well. So these are techniques and strategies that they can actually implement in the school environment to empower children as well. It's not just parents at home that can use all of this incredible information that you're imparting to us.

As adults we know that we're the role models on how our children act. But you also say that we have to think about what our thoughts do and how that's equally important for us to keep in check. Can you explain why to our listeners?

Jill: At some level we are all connected to one another. You know, we hear this, we are all one. But truly, on some energetic level in our minds, there's a higher level of mind there, a consciousness. It makes sense. There's actually scientific proof around this as to why prayer is effective. There have been experiments that prove that prayer does have an impact. The reason why that works is because of this connection we all have in a certain level.

You can be thinking something and never say the words, and it can affect your child. That might sound like a way out statement to some of our listeners, but I'm telling you that I have seen – this is what I do in my work and I help parents bring that awareness into how they're thinking. It is unbelievable to me. I believe it now because I've seen it so many times, how when a parent shifts their thinking the child's situation changes. It has happened too many times for too many families for me to say it's just a fluke. So it's really important to get your thinking in check. First of all to be aware, "What am I thinking?"

Back to that mom again. She didn't even know she was thinking it's hard to make friends for girls. Well, when she realized that and changed the thought, "It doesn't have to be true for my daughter." Boom, the daughter becomes best friends with the bully, realizes it was her not being nice to them.

A lot of times, what will happen is if you become aware of what you're thinking. Let's say your child is having a challenge and so you question yourself, "Well, what am I thinking that might be contributing to that challenge?" And you can hit upon the thought or the belief and you can change it, often you will see the circumstances in your child's life just melt away without ever having to get involved. So that's why it's so important.

Margaret: I think as adults, we tend to forget that children are highly intuitive and pick up what we're feeling and a lot of what we're thinking. Because I know with my daughter, she can take one look at me and I haven't said anything, haven't indicated anything's wrong or anything, and she says, "Well, you just have that look."

So even you're trying not to have "that look", she knows exactly what you're thinking based on your body language and facial expression, or even a blankness of expression is what she calls it sort of thing. So yeah, I think we need to give our kids a little more credit. They pick this stuff up whether we think we're communicating it or not.

Jill: Yes.

Margaret: Jill, as parents we aren't given an instruction manual to raise our kids with, and we make mistakes along the way. In your experience, what are some common mistakes that we inadvertently make that hinder the development of resilience in our kids?

Jill: Well, that's a great question. Again, it's going back to the parent. I will admit that I was going down this path for a while early when my child was first born and a baby. When we make a mistake we need to let it go.

When we carry the guilt of that mistake into our lives and into – it was interesting, not too long ago my son came to me and he asked me a question. There was something he wanted to do. It was a very benign question, but I reacted in a very strong and negative way toward him. I even was surprised myself. I was like, "Where is this coming from?" He got very, very upset because he should be able to feel he can ask me these things without having a response like that. So immediately I said, "Honey, give me a moment. I don't know where that came from and I need to figure this out.

So I stepped back, and I have enough awareness built up now within me and in my consciousness that I can pretty quickly get to the root of things. I realized right then and there that I was responding to him based on a similar situation awhile back that he had asked of me and I said yes and it didn't go so well.

When I realized that it had nothing to do with what he was asking now. It's just that I was coming from this past negative place in my response. So I said to him, "I realized what it was. I was responding to you with this question based on the situation that happened with us before." They're always changing, right, they're growing. He's a different person now than he was back then. I'm a different person. There was nothing wrong with his request.

I said, "now I will respond to you with a different ear. Let's talk about this in a different way now." What's funny about that is just a couple weeks ago, this was maybe a few months later, something came up and he asked me and I said no for whatever reason. He said, "Mom, are you responding from the past or from now?" That was so cute that he sort of put it – so really it's letting go of the past is done. So you need to release that and really be in the present moment with our kids.

Another mistake parents make, and I see this all the time in my work, is not recognizing their role, and their child's role, in creating whatever situation they're in. People love to blame other people for how they're feeling, for what happens to them. But every time we put blame on someone other than ourselves we instantly become a victim. Then we teach our kids that this is how we're supposed to be. We're supposed to blame other people. That puts them in that victim place a well.

So it's really stopping and saying, "Hey, that person said something really mean to my child. But what might I be thinking or doing that could have contributed to that? What might my child have been thinking or doing that could have contributed to that?" When we take responsibility for everything that happens in our lives we actually empower ourselves.

Margaret: Right. I think that also comes down to where if we accept responsibility for how we're feeling that external circumstances and situations really can't impact us the way that it normally would because a lot of people internalize that type of thing. So I completely agree with you that that's a really common mistake that we make in setting ourselves and our kids up to be victims.

We all want to be liked and accepted by our peers. That's especially true of kids, which really comes into play during the teenage years. How do we teach our children to express themselves without fear of what others will say and think, and to actually focus on action that's based on their own desires rather than pleasing others and doing what they think other want them to?

Jill: I really think that the start of that is allowing a child to tap into their own desires. A lot of times we don't allow them to tap into that so they don't know. They lose that ability. It's always there to a certain degree, but they can lose touch with that ability to know what is important to them.

I believe that when kids struggle with friendships, it's because they don't really know who they are. So they're trying to be something they're not. Kids pick that up. It's uncomfortable. Even as an adult, you can tell when you're speaking to another person if they're not comfortable in who they are, and it's not fun to be around. You really want to try to instill in your child, and every parent can do this, is helping them know what's important to them. What their preferences are.

I'll never forget. I was in a bathroom stall. It was a rest area, we were on a driving trip somewhere. In the stall next to me there was a mother yelling at her daughter, "Go to the bathroom." She's like, "I don't have to go." Her mother's like, "We've got a long trip and you've got…." I just thought don't teach the child – I mean she knows. But when you say, "You know what, I don't care what you say. You need to go." And I get that mentality. Yes, I've been on long driving trips and I totally get it. But you're teaching kids to lose touch with those feelings that they all have that tell them what is right for them.

So we need to resist the desire to tell our kids what is right for them as much as possible and give them choices at a very young age, because then they will start to know what is right for them, feel comfortable in who they are. From that very authentic place it will be very easy for them to connect with people that will support them and love them and be friends with them.

Margaret: Don't you find, though, that our society has basically been conditioned to do exactly that? To tell our kids when they have to go to the bathroom, when they need to eat, when they need to dress warm, all these types of things. We never actually ask them what their desires are. So it's not really surprising that they have no idea who they are or what they want because we've never asked them. We just tell them.

Jill: You're absolutely right. Because we were conditioned that way so that's what we know and we think it's right. That is one of the main purposes of my business, is to change that old parenting paradigm that "I know better than you do". It's not true. We play a very important role in our kids lives, but it's not to tell them what's right for them. It's us working together as a team with our child to help them recognize what's right for them while keeping them safe.

Margaret: I couldn't agree with you more because I know with my daughter I've always asked her what she wants. The difference between her and her peers in terms of the direction that she's choosing for her life, her confidence in her decisions, is absolutely amazing. Her friends coming to the house, when I ask them, "What do you want?" They have no clue how to answer me because they've never been asked. It's really quite amazing what happens when you give them a choice.

A lot of children aren't particularly cooperative. So what do you suggest we do with children who resist some of the strategies that you recommend in your program?

Jill: It's very true and that happens. I deal with a lot of parents who have tried stuff I've suggested that they can do directly with their kids and they come back to me and say, "She won't do it. She thinks it's weird." So I do hear that and it is common. But the thing that parents need to know, and this is another mission of my business, is that there's so much we can do within our own mindset and thinking that will filter off to our child without them ever having to do anything different.

So if you have a resistant child and we're working on a strategy we don't push. We will not push that child. Instead it's what can you do as a parent, how might you change your thinking.

Here's an example. This parent I was working with, they had a neighborhood function they were going to. Her daughter and the daughter at this house's neighbor, where they were going to, were not getting along to the point where her daughter was stressed out, didn't want to go to this event. The mom was stressed out because she was already having issues with her daughter feeling left out. So she said, "How am I going to deal with this."

So I gave her an affirmation for her daughter to use, which basically focused her mind on the outcome. She wouldn't do it. She's like, "That's dumb, mom. I don't like that. Take it off my mirror. I don't want to see it." The mom was really stressed out.

She was so focused on fear-based thoughts, "What if this happens? What if that happens? I'm stressed. I'm nervous." I said, "What do you want to have happen?" She sat for a minute, she took a few breaths and she thought about how would she ideally like this whole day to go down. We sort of mapped that out, what it would look like.

She came up with this whole scenario in her mind of how it would look and she started to get really excited. So now she's feeling like, "This is what we're going to have happen." Then she went and talked to her daughter in a different way and sort of said, "I know, honey, that you're worried about Saturday and we're going to this event. If you could choose any way to have it turn out how would you want it to turn out?" So immediately her daughter came up with all this fabulous wonderful information, her vision of how she's like it to go down and she started to get excited.

What happened was they went to this event and I got an email right after from the mom and she said, "It went even better than we both pictured it." That's usually what happens. If we can switch from fear to the what got her excited. But I'm pretty sure that the reason the daughter even entertained the idea of "let's talk about how you'd like it to go" is because the mom had already been in that space for a while so it was easier for her to have that conversation with the daughter.

Margaret: Right, absolutely. Life is really busy for most of us and many of us feel that we don't give as much to our kids as we should. Can you share with our audience how we might be able to address that issue a bit?

Jill: We hear about how it's quality of time, not quantity of time. That's true, but I look at quality of time in maybe a different way than other people do, because you could have only ten minutes in your entire day to spend with your child. But if you are truly in that ten minutes with them and only them it can be the most meaningful time of your day and the most meaningful time of your life. Because if you can get rid of all the stuff, all the, "We've got to do this, and tomorrow we're going here and ooh, I forgot to do that thing, I've got to add it back to my list…"

All that stuff that is going on in our minds 24/7, if you can let that go in the little tiny bits of time you have with your child you can connect on such a deeper much more authentic level with them and that's where the magic can happen.

That's where you can have the bond with your child that sustains itself through the teenage years and beyond. Just being in that present place with them when you are with them is so very important. Because they'll call you out. You brought this up, Margaret. They're so much more intuitive that they know when you're not really there with them, and it doesn't feel good to them and it doesn't create a warm loving connection with them.

Margaret: So small amounts of quality time where you're actually present and with them creating that connection is much more valuable than large amounts of superficial time where you're not really paying attention to them and their needs is what I'm hearing you say. Is that correct?

Jill: That's absolutely correct. I've tested that and I've found it to be true because I'm very, very busy. I've done it both ways where I'm not really there with my son and then realizing, "Oops I don't like the path we're going down, so I just need to change." It's amazing what great relationships you can create when you're truly present with them, even in the tiniest bits of time.

Margaret: I think people don't realize that there are opportunities to do that without adding anything to their lives. For instance, so many parents are driving their kids to and from events. If you shut off the radio and just talk you're there for each other. It's not that difficult to do, I don't find, but you just have to be a little more inventive.

Now, we have a lot of teachers in our audience. What one strategy would you recommend to them that would empower students to comfortably express themselves and bully proof their students in the classroom environment?

Jill: This is such a great question, and there are so many things. We're testing them all out in this pilot program and the results are just humbling to me. But here's what I've noticed this year from this pilot, and I would like to share this one. What we've seen with these kids. These kids when they hear they're going to do this program, they call it I Shine, so when they hear they're going to do "I Shine" their faces light up. So I've been interviewing kids and trying to understand how are they perceiving this program and its role in their life.

What I've noticed is that the reason why these kids love it so much – and actually the results are coming in that parents are saying their kids are more self-assured than when the year started. They have better confidence. They have the words to defend themselves in a positive way in an encounter. Just all kinds of positive stuff.

I believe it's because when they start a lesson, they only get these lessons twice a week and they start with a circle time or whatever you want to call it where they sit on the floor, and the teacher just asks them questions about their feelings. Every child's hand goes up – everyone wants to talk about their feelings. In schools you don't really get that chance to talk about how we're feeling about friendships, about sharing, about when someone says they don't want to sit with us in the lunchroom and it makes us feel bad. They don't have the opportunity to talk about it.

So I believe if every teacher could have five minutes, not even every day in the morning but maybe once or twice a week, where you pick a topic like sharing, common school topics, someone not playing with you at recess, someone not doing what you want to do at recess, and they are allowed to share how they feel, they will feel so much more confident expressing themselves. We've seen it. That's what our data is showing.

Margaret: That's a really great tip. Folks, thank you for listening to this interview.

Jill, thank you for taking the time to share your insights and expertise with our listeners.

Jill: Well, thank you so much for having me today here Margaret. I really appreciate it.

Margaret: It was my honor to speak with you today. Folks, that concludes our interview. On behalf of Jill and myself, I wish you an empowered and fabulous day. Take care.