

welcome to empowering
homeschool conversations
your authority in
navigating the world of
homeschooling diverse
learners featuring peggy
ployer from sped homeschool
annie yorty from annie
yorty.com leilani melendez
from living with eve
stephanie buckwalter from
e-larp learning and don
jackson from don jackson
educational consulting and tutoring
with over seventy five years
of combined homeschooling
expertise experiences and
perspectives this group is
eager to share their wealth
of wisdom to empower your
homeschooling journey so
grab your favorite mug
settle in and get ready for

insightful discussions
valuable insights and
practical tips give your
homeschool the power boost
it needs to successfully
educate the unique learners in your home

Hi, everyone,
and welcome to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations.

Today,
we are going to talk about
homeschooling with what you know,
meeting unique needs in an
uncertain journey.

And my guest today is Christine Zell.

Christine is a homeschool mom of four.

wife to her high school sweetheart,

and creator of Rabbit

Trail's homeschool curriculum.

You can often find her with

her nose in a book and a

coffee in her hand.

Christine has embraced the

relaxed atmosphere that has
developed as she has
learned to let go of the small things,
enjoy her children,
and help them create a love of learning.
She enjoys encouraging other
families in their homeschooling journeys,
both through her curriculum
and her homeschooling community.

Welcome, Christine.

Thank you so much for having me.

absolutely I just love what
you're about and love that
um you're just taking one
day at a time and um it's
your life is a message that
we all need to hear and um
and that's a lot what
christine's going to share
in this next hour is just
the process of learning as
she goes about her kids how
to homeschool them and so

um so hang on if you're
you're just um popping on to
the recording,
or if you're joining us live,
just know if you are with
us live watching on Facebook, YouTube, um,
Instagram, that you can put comments,
questions in that feed and
we will see them.

And we'd love to, um,
be able to encourage you and, um,
help you with anything that,
that you may have questions
about as well.

So, um, so yeah, that, um,
it'll kind of get us kicked off here,
but since Christine is
going to talk a lot about her story,
and I know I usually ask a lot of our,
um,
our viewers the first
question is just about you
know why they're passionate

about this topic but I'm
going to have christine
talk about some something
else to get us started just
so that we can understand
our journey and so um so I
would love to know
christine when you first
began homeschooling what
vision do you have had
did you have for teaching your children?

Um,

was there a specific approach you

envisioned or, um,

did you kind of feel like,

I have no idea.

I'm just going to try this out.

You know, some people go month by month.

Yeah, for sure.

So I, I had no idea.

Um,

we had decided when my oldest was about

preschool age,

that homeschooling was what
we wanted to do.

Um, and so, um,

So like we jumped in with
kindergarten and we lived
in California at the time.

My husband was a Marine for twenty years,
so we lived all over the country.

And so they had charter
schools there where you
could homeschool five days a week even,
but they would provide the
curriculum or you could do
like a hybrid type model
where you could go two days
and spend three days at home or whatever.

So we did the five days at
home where they provided
curriculum because I was so
overwhelmed trying to decide.

And it's funny because
there's so much more out
there even now than there was eleven,

twelve years ago.

So they provided it.

very quickly learned that

half the stuff they

provided did not work for us.

But I feel like that's pretty typical.

It is, yes.

Because we were trying to be

very traditional.

I was public schooled.

My husband was public schooled.

Everyone we knew was public

schooled just about.

So I was trying to replicate that.

And so obviously, that didn't work too

rate at first.

Um, and so, you know,

I would trade things in and

get different things.

And then we did learn about

different curriculum that

was very homeschool modeled

and not so much public school modeled.

Um, and so we slowly started, you know,
bringing our own things in
there until finally like a
year and a half later,
we ditched it altogether and did like,
our own thing and not what
they were providing for us
um so yeah I mean it took
me a couple of years to
really get rid of that
traditional method and to
start learning about unit
studies and learning about
just even relaxed
homeschooling and even on
home um unschooling and not
on homeschooling right
schooling and you know all
the different things that
are out there and just really
trying to find what worked
for us in our own homeschool.
Because, you know,

even when you talk to your
best friend or your neighbor or whatever,
what they're doing may not
be what works exactly for you.

So just kind of finding our
own jive and figuring out
how to move away from that
traditional approach and
finding what works for us.

So.

Yeah.

Yeah.

That's such good, good experience for,
to share with others,
because I think we often
think I've got to have all
my ducks in a row before I start.

And this is what I'm going
to do the entire span of my
homeschooling career.

That doesn't

It's not always the case.

You start somewhere.

You just got to start.

And then it morphs and it

changes as you go.

Yeah, so much.

And I always joke when

people ask me about math and I'm like,

I think we've tried like

twelve math curriculum.

Like, don't ask me when it comes to math.

You have a lot of experience, though.

Yeah.

Yes.

And I can say what I like

and don't like and all of that.

So that is good experience for sure.

But I think even next year

for my middle schooler,

I think we're changing to a

different curriculum already, you know,

and I'm already looking at

that for next year.

And so, you know,

you have to keep changing

and evolving as they grow up.

Absolutely.

Yeah.

And I think that that is the overarching theme of our discussion today is you do have to evolve.

You do have to change because in the long run, you're going to discover things that are going to require that change.

So I know in your story that you've been uncovering some puzzle pieces about your kids and some unique learning needs that they have.

How did that start?

Like where did you start observing things and what what started making you question?

Should I change things?

What's going on?

You know,
all of those questions that a lot
of us have and we don't
quite know exactly if it's
a cue or a clue or if maybe
we're just I know with myself,
I always put the blame on me.
I never really thought about, oh,
maybe it was just the child
until somebody else pointed
something out.

So what is your story with that?

Yeah.

So my first,
my oldest is very average with
his learning.

But even still,

I think even with your very typical child,
you still have struggles.

Yeah.

even with him,
we were trying to follow
different curriculum,

but we'd be getting library books.

And we lived close to a Barnes and Noble,

which had a Starbucks.

And that was like our treats

to go and get like the

little four dollar readers

from Barnes and Noble and

go get a coffee and get him

a cookie or whatever.

Um,

Cause it was like right by

our grocery shopping.

And so that was like,

we've had a great week.

Let's go and get these readers.

Yeah.

But then they'd always get

pushed to the side because

our curriculum dictated

that we had to read this.

And finally, one day I was just like,

we're not enjoying any of

these beautiful books that

we're getting from the library.

We're not enjoying any of

these cool readers we

picked up because your curriculum saying,

no, it's saying to do this other thing.

And I'm sick of it.

You know,

like I just want these beautiful

books to lead the way.

And so that was kind of step

number one for us was going,

we can push this to the

side and we can stop doing

this and we can let these

books lead the way.

Right.

And then with my second,

I noticed probably by like, like,

wasn't quite, quite right.

Um, and it just took many, many, many,

many years to finally

figure out what was going

on with his little ADHD brain.

Um,

and to figure out that even though he
wasn't presenting in a typical way,
that that's absolutely
what's going on with him.

And it's been like,
and this was a recent diagnosis and he's
you know, ten and a half,
eleven years of going,
something's going on, what's going on?

And again, putting that blame on myself.

Maybe I'm not parenting him right.

Maybe it's my fault.

Excuse me.

And

what am I doing wrong?

Why is he throwing these tantrums?

Because it finally hit me at

like six or seven,

these tantrums are no

longer age appropriate.

Like when he's, you know, months, two,

three years old, you're like, oh, well,

he's just throwing tantrums.

He's just a normal toddler.

And so, yeah.

So it struck me one of those

days where he was six or seven,

where I was like,

this isn't normal for this

age to be acting like this anymore.

But since we did move so much,

it was really difficult to

get in somewhere because it was like,

as soon as we had an appointment,

it was time to move.

And then the adjustment period,

I think it would always

take us like a year to get

into a new regular doctor.

Um, just after getting things adjusted.

And so it finally took my

husband retiring and us

settling in one spot for me to go, okay,

I can't wait any longer.

Like we need to, you know,

get this figured out,
especially as puberty is
coming and all the changes
that come with that, that I was just like,
I need answers before
things completely explode.

Um, so,
but kind of the same thing with him was,
um,
you know,
I wanted different pieces of
different curriculum
specifically for language arts.
but how can I use all these
different pieces from this different,
these different curriculums?
Like they don't fit together
because the literature beast worked,
but then I needed hands-on,
but then I also enjoyed the copy work,
but then I also, you know, and, and, and,
and,
and there wasn't one thing that fit that.

And so it was just how, how can I make
this learning because he
thrives learning this way.

How can I move forward and
help him learn in the way
that he thrives in?

And so, yeah.

So then it kind of worked
with both of my older ones to kind of,
okay, let's get those real books.

Let's get all these different pieces and
so that we can move forward
and learn in a way that
we're enjoying too.

Um,

cause I hated that grumbling and I
don't want to do school, you know,
so just finding something that we loved.

Yeah.

Yeah.

There is a lot of give and take and, and,
and yeah, I, I,

I hope that as you're

listening or watching that you realize,

you know, that you,

you had inclinations like

at but what you said is you

didn't get the official

diagnosis till twelve.

And I think we kind of panic when we,

we don't foresee or see

things or get the answers

we need immediately.

But the timing for that will

end up being perfect.

You know, you you acted on what you had.

It may not have been the full diagnosis.

It may not have anything.

But but, you know,

I as I heard you talking, you're like,

I knew that this clicked with them.

So I changed to this, you know, or,

you know,

just the eclectic part of your

homeschooling approach based on that.

Yeah.

We have a little guest.

We have a guest.

So yeah, that's really important.

And just taking those small steps,
trying things out.

I think we kind of get

scared a little bit when we think, oh,

you know,

I've got to switch my entire

approach and just saying, you know,

instead of just taking

those little pieces of, oh, this works.

So I'm just going to stick

that in there amongst all

the other things that are

working or sort of working.

Yeah.

and we'll figure out how to

make it all work together.

So what were those first

steps that you took?

I think it'd be helpful for

our community to know just

as you were starting to see
some of these needs,
how did you start that adjustment period?

I think the biggest thing
was that I finally gave myself permission
to ditch things.

Um,
cause some things like some things were
easier to ditch than others.

Like for me, I just don't like, Oh,
are you showing off?

I just don't like math.

And so ditching math
curriculum and doing
something different was
easy for me because it's
not something that I love.

Um,
where I'm more passionate about history
and language arts is
um and so those were harder
ones especially again
coming from public school I

had in my brain like you
have to have a workbook for
language arts or it doesn't
work yeah and so we need
these worksheets that
explain nouns and verbs or
it's not good enough you
know and so just giving
myself that permission to
ditch the workbooks and
that you don't need that proof
of written work in order to
have proof that your child
is learning has been just so huge.
And even a couple of weeks ago,
my daughter, she's seven.
And we have been going
through literature-based language arts.
And I was just thinking, oh, man,
when was the last time we
reviewed a noun or a verb?
Maybe I do need to find her something.
And then I had to remind myself, no,

we just reviewed this going
over these books last week.

Just because it's not on
paper doesn't mean that
she's not learning.

Like she's able to verbally
tell me what all of these things are.

I don't need her to write
down on a pretty worksheet
that this castle is a place, you know?

Right.

And so, yeah.

So really just,
just giving myself
permission was the biggest thing.

And I think the biggest
hurdle that most families go through is,

Yeah, absolutely.

You bought this.

You spent money on this.

You spent time organizing this.

You have to use it.

We're really...

And I always tell people that are like,
this thing's not working.

I'm like, contact the curriculum company,
because half of them have
really great return policies.

And so contact them,
especially if it is a physical book.

A lot of them will,
even if it's halfway
through the school year,
and you're just like, this isn't working.

See what the return policy
is so you can get that money back,
even if it's a partial refund,
to put towards that next curriculum.
that way you're able to do, you know,
what your kiddos leading
you to need to do.

So, yes.

Yeah, absolutely.

Yes.

It's, um,
curriculum should not be our master,

you know?

Um, and,

but yet people who design curriculum,

you know, like yourself, you, you,

you think out that process,

the learning that, um,

is going to happen.

And it's,

it's good to have that because

for people like me who have

no background in teaching, um,

I relied on curriculum

providers to give me a

scope and sequence because

I wasn't coming up with that on my own.

So I liked that framework to

be able to rely on.

But sometimes you do need to

tweak and change.

And yes, if you're not too...

too much and, you know,

into it and you can return it,

that's great.

Otherwise contact the curriculum company about, you know, do you have supplementary things or what have you seen other people who have had these struggles use in conjunction with your curriculum?

Um,

so there's lots of different options that you have that I think we forget to ask like you are suggesting.

And, um, we just need to make those, those contacts and, and go out and say, this is a need I have.

And a lot of curriculum companies don't even realize that there are ways that they can help you be successful until you let them know that this is sort of working without working.

Yeah.

I love when people contact

me and ask me questions

because we aren't a

traditional curriculum.

So we don't have a pretty

scope and sequence laid out because it is

such a curriculum that you

can very easily tweak.

Um,

and it's written that way as someone

with an ADHD brain for a

child who has ADHD that my,

I don't like even though

scope and sequence, especially in math,

I keep going back to math, math.

It's very like, I need it in math.

I need to see, yes,

this is what we're doing each day.

But in something like

language arts or history,

are you moving your hands

to something in like

language arts and history,

especially coming from a

literature based approach?

yes,

it lays out what books you're going to

read and what topics you're

going to go over,

but you have the freedom to

explore those topics.

And that's what's really

important to me because

then I'm able to sit down and say,

what's important to me that

we're taking out of this?

And that's what we're going to focus on.

And so just having something

that's giving you that

amount of freedom to see what you're,

and what your kids are interested in.

You know, if you're going over,

revolutionary wartime period, my favorites,

Paul Revere.

I want to spend weeks on him.

I want to go to Boston and

go back to his house.

Like I want to make this, you know,
like I want to learn and
read all of the books about Paul Revere,
but I may not care as much
about Thomas Jefferson or something.

And so we're not going to go
to Montpelier and we're, you know,
like the different things.

And so if that's how it is for your kids,
that they're super
interested in one thing,
but not in another.

that you have that freedom
to do that inside of the
curriculum without it
dictating to you on day fourteen,
you must do this page and
you must read this.

Exactly.

Yes.

Yeah.

You lose that spontaneity.

You lose their natural

curiosities that come up
because you all of a sudden turn, nope,
the lesson plan doesn't say this.

And then, you know,
you go on to something else
and you may even return to that topic,
but their curiosity is gone.

Right.

at that point because
they've gone on to other things.

So yes,

I love that your curriculum is
called Rabbit Trails
because that's basically what that is.

Exactly.

And so, yeah, that's great.

As you started making these
changes and you were making
changes based on some of
your kids' preferences or
abilities to learn,
how did that affect the
overall learning in your home?

and did, you know,
with the other students
that may you may not have
seen particular maybe
possible diagnoses with.

But, you know,
it's always interesting when
you've got a mix of kids
and you're teaching
everybody all in one room.

Right.

Most of the time.

How does that work?

So your story about that.

Yeah.

So I think that's what makes

Rabbit Trail so beautiful

is that so I didn't realize

I was making it for my children, right?

Like that was my goal was

I'm writing something for my own home,

but I'm going to share it

with people because if I'm

putting all this effort in,
it makes sense to share it.

I also didn't expect to go
past language arts.

And now we have much more
than language arts,
which is just all of it's God.

Like even the name came to
me at two AM because I was like,
I don't know what to call this thing.

And literally like sat up in
bed at two AM going rabbit
trails through literature.

Like, holy cow, that's such a good name.

Um, like,
so it wasn't even me really titling it.

It was absolutely like divine providence.

Like here's this beautiful name.

Um, yeah.

But it wasn't written for a
special needs child.

Mm-hmm.

It was just simply written

for both of my older kids

because my youngest wasn't

old enough to do that.

Well, at the time, my youngest,

because this guy was not there yet.

I actually launched it while

he was in my belly,

super duper pregnant with him.

So like,

didn't expect that to happen either.

Excuse me.

Yeah, that was like really terrible timing,

but of course,

perfect timing all at the same time.

But, yeah,

so it actually works really

beautifully for typical children.

And I've even had families

with gifted children and

obviously families like

myself that have children

with a mix of different diagnoses.

And even at the special

needs homeschool conference

or expo that we went to this past summer,

It was really great to talk

to families there because I

wasn't even like I didn't have a booth.

I wasn't exhibiting.

I just did a few sessions.

But it was really cool

because one of them was

just letting people ask me

questions about the

curriculum because I was like,

I don't have to prepare

anything for this.

Like, right.

Yes.

And I can just talk.

And right.

Like,

cause I was trying to keep it like as

low as little work on me as

possible to get back into

the conference circuit.

Cause I was trying to take a
break very unsuccessfully,
but I was trying.

And so it was really
beautiful people asking me
these questions who had
nonverbal children and who
had children on the autism
spectrum and just all these different,
you know,
alphabet soups, if you will,
and children all over the place.

And I was able to very
easily answer their
questions of how it could
work for them because of
the fact that
literature-based curriculum
is just so adaptable.

Because if your child isn't verbal,
that doesn't mean that they
don't hear you reading
these stories and telling

you about these lessons.

They don't have to write

down the copywork.

in order to be successful.

You know,

if they enjoy the crafty parts of

it and that's all that they're doing,

especially like my little

ones before they're old

enough to do like the full

lessons with us,

they're joining in on the

crafty stuff and they may

not do it to the, you know,

where it needs to be,

but they're able to join in

with their siblings while

they're actually getting stuff out of it.

Like all of our history has

an art study with every lesson.

And so he's able to sit

there with the crayons or

colored pencils or paint or whatever.

And he's not making what the
other ones are doing,
but he sees them with the tablet,
with whatever picture pulled up.

Yeah.

And he still, you know,
he still is seeing the
color and seeing what's
going on and being excited
about being a part of it
and listening to the
stories that he does not
grasp whatsoever.

And in some of them he does
like some of the other like
language art stuff.

But right now we're doing World War II,
which is a little heavy for little ones.

So he doesn't know what
we're talking about in World War II.

But he's enjoying the fact
that we're reading a book together.

Yeah.

and that we're doing this
art study and he's sitting
there as his siblings are
doing copy work.

And so, so it really, I,
and it can be for lots of
different literature based
curriculum that, you know,
you can just adapt it so
easily for your family.

Yes, baby.

Yeah, absolutely.

It's yeah.

You just don't even know how
much they're absorbing
because it's amazing
because we taught the same
way with unit studies and, um,
Did a lot of like book
reading as a family.

And it was amazing what those little kids,
you know, my younger ones remembered.

And we had some foster kids, too,

that and they all had
learning challenges and
they would still pick up on
some of the things that I was like,
I thought that was above their head.

Yeah.

And yet they still got it.

So, um, so that's,

that's good to be reminded of.

Cause I think we often will

choose a curriculum where

we think our child will be.

And sometimes mentally

they're beyond what they

can respond with.

And, um,

and they do need to be challenged.

They, they need to go beyond the one,

two threes and ABCs.

I know Stephanie Buckwalter,

my co one of my co-hosts

talked about that a lot.

Um,

Because she's like her
daughter just started
getting really frustrated
because she was
understanding things beyond
the scope of what she was
able to let you know she
was understanding.

And so many of our kids do.

We have to assume
intelligence and intelligence.

and continue to feed them,
feed them good things.

And, and so I love that, you know, you,
you really, that is your approach.

And, and yes, as a, no matter what,
everybody can learn
together so many things and,
and share in those activities.

So that.

Yeah, for sure.

And, and it's such,
it's such a time saver.

Yeah.

Um, as, as a mom, oh no,

I hope I didn't just turn my sound off.

Am I good?

Sorry.

You're good.

Okay, good.

It beeped in my ear.

So I was like, oh no,

I hope I didn't do anything

when I'm watching like

Netflix or whatever.

It pauses the show when I do that.

So I was like,

I don't know what I'll do anyway.

Um,

So, but yeah,

like just the fact that I am

able to teach them together.

It's a time saver as a mom,

which is huge for me

because when I had my second child,

start homeschooling in like kindergarten,

that was a struggle I had too,
was how am I supposed to do
two language arts and two
histories and two science?
Because all of my kids are
very spread out.

There's a four-year difference,
a five-year difference,
and then a three-year
difference between my last two.

So there'll be a little bit
easier as he gets bigger.

But I'm also not sure if his
cognitive abilities will be...
enough to make it a true
three year age gap.

I think it'll be more of a
four or five year cognitive age gap.

Right.

So so they are on very
different levels because
when you're talking four to
five year age gaps,

you wouldn't think that you
can teach out of the same
curriculum where
for most of our subjects we do,
and we're able to still
tailor it and have that time saving.

And so it's so much more
enjoyable as a mom to be
able to sit down with
multiple kids and say, you know,
we're doing this together
and we're learning this together.

So.

Yeah.

Yeah.

That's,

It does.

It saves so much time and I
greatly appreciated being
able to get so many things
done as a group and focus
on the things that they
really needed to do individually,

like math or specific
language arts where they
were learning to read at least.

Right.

But, you know, after that,
you can really do everything together.

And and it does teach it
teaches them how to work together,
teaches them how to
understand each other's differences,
different perspectives.

I mean,

when you have discussions about the
things there,

one child is going to pick
up something totally
different than another child.

And so when you're talking about it,

they're like, oh, you know,

I didn't think about that or.

you know,

that that's how we learn is

within community and

instead of isolated and
siloed as curriculum,
most curriculums are
written to kind of silo your thinking.

Yeah.

Right.

I love that.

Yeah, absolutely.

So, you know,

as you started creating
resources yourself and

Is there anything that
inspired you even beyond, you know,
as you continue to go,
what continues to inspire, you know,
what you're going to study next?

I think sometimes we feel at a loss.

Well,

I've got to find this curriculum and
there are rabbit trails that take us.

How do you kind of follow that path?

That's, you know,

I don't want to say it a plan.

It's kind of that just that
method of thinking, you know,
is just like I can release this.

I can just go with this.

And then how how do I go about, you know,
like making this educational?

Yeah.

So.

So with language arts,
we've really started
focusing on novel studies
for both elementary and
like upper elementary,
middle school as well.

Because I again,
I'd only planned on doing
language arts and only a
couple of volumes of it.

And like that's all I
expected Rabbit Trails to ever be.

So we now have five volumes
of language arts plus a
preschool and kindergarten.

And I am like,

that is it as far as the

actual volumes go.

But with novel studies, I'm like,

we can literally write

until we die and not cover all the books.

Like there are so many novels out there.

And so we will continue to

crank those out.

And so now it is kind of like, well,

what are my favorite ones?

And we've asked multiple

times to our followers, you know,

what do you want to see?

And so we probably have a

list of like ten books

already that's going to

take us forever to finally

get all of those done.

but really focusing on

finding those great novels

that families typically

read anyway in their homeschool.

And so, you know,
being able to add to that
so that that natural learning can happen.

Because again,
when we're learning about
nouns and verbs or whatever it is,
like it can just happen so naturally.

So if we can throw that into
a novel study so that while
they're already reading
Little House in the Big Woods,
Let's add this extra element
to it so that they're not
having to do this plus this
other workbook or whatever
it is on top of it.

Yeah.

For history,
I've been kind of just
following my own timeline.

That's good.

Yeah.

We are almost done, sort of,

writing our history because

I wanted to get through American history.

I'm talking to someone, baby, OK?

But if you want milk,

you need to go ask Caleb.

He really wants milk.

Oh, um,

so we're almost done with American

history.

And so,

and we also have a few other topics

as well.

Um,

and that was my plan was to get through

these several topics.

And so that's been easy because history is,

you know,

what we typically covering the

topics that we typically

cover in history.

And so that didn't kind of

make that easy of just, okay, well,

what important

parts of this history do we want to cover?

Right.

And so we're almost done

with modern American

history and I'm really excited about it.

And then science,

there's so much to learn in science.

And so,

so much of that has just been led

by my children's interests.

We even did a reptiles and

amphibian unit because my

twelve year old loves

reptiles and wants to be a herpetologist.

And so that was one of our first projects.

science, like nature studies that we did,

because I just wanted to focus on what,

what is he enjoying?

What does he like?

And so most of,

most of our science units

have been because either

myself or one of my writers,

that that's what their kids

want to learn.

And so I'm like, then write it, like,

let's go for it.

Let's put it out.

Because again,

like it only makes sense if

we want this for our family.

other people are going to want it too.

But that has been like,

just being able to help my

family and my few ladies

that I have work with me,

having them be able to help

their families,

like that is our main priority.

And that's really what does keep us going.

Um, and just knowing that if,

if it's blessing us, like we,

we love to just see that

blessing keep on going and to have

those other families just be

able to fall in love with

learning the way that we've been able to.

But yeah,

the ladies that work with me

definitely help keep me

going during those hard

times when business has to

be business and not just

writing and learning and all of that.

They're wonderful.

So they also help keep

everything going when I'm

having to deal with the business,

not fun side of things.

Right.

Yeah, there is all that.

Well,

if you want to take a break and get

him something to drink,

I can fill that time with

some talk about Sped Homeschool.

Okay.

And then I'll pop you back

on the screen when you come back.

Okay.

I was hoping I had texted my
twelve-year-old.

I'm like, he really wants milk.

And he did not come up.

So hopefully.

All right.

So we'll see you in a second.

And yes,

we'll continue the conversation then.

Okay.

So I'm going to give

Christine a little break.

That just happens.

We're homeschool moms.

We have kids.

I remember the days when my

kids were the same way.

So I would love to share

with a lot of you that are

watching just a little bit

about Sped Homeschool.

We've got some amazing things coming up.

And so I want to make sure that...

I let you know about our,

if you haven't visited our new website,

over the summer,

we launched Homeschool Heroes.

And that website is

completely different than

the way that our other one was.

So on our homepage,

you can find a lot of information,

but also up in these little tabs.

toggle down menus.

You can find anything from our groups.

If you have a membership,

you can access the member directory.

You can see what our members

are saying as far as stories.

We have some challenges,

actually a current

challenge we have right now.

I'll click on to that

because our current challenge is if you

create an account, and it can be free,

and put your profile in as

well as a picture,

then you can get a free

two-month membership.

So we'll send that to you as

soon as you create your

profile and update that.

So go on to there and do that.

That's something we have

going through this next month.

So we would love for you to

join our community.

But we have lots of resources.

If you go under any of these

curriculum help, teaching tools,

support strategies,

Thank you.

you'll come to a page that

has all of these different options here.

If you prefer teaching

things like the Charlotte

Mason methodology,

then you can click on that,

executive functioning.

We have two hundred twenty

seven people following that

one right now.

How do I know that?

Because it says it right

here and you can join those people, too.

These are all of the

resources we have that have

Charlotte Mason resources.

So you can get into those

organizations that we have associated.

You can find out more about them.

And then these are the

groups that are associated with that.

And also, if you want to start,

you can click over from the

feed to discussion.

You can start a discussion

on executive functioning

skills and everybody who's

following it will get

information about that.

So you can build some good
conversations right on there.

And that is all with a free
membership on our site.
definitely check it out.

And if you are listening on the podcast,
and that all didn't seem to
make sense because I just
described in the video,
just go to our website,
click under resources, and under,
or on our homepage,
there's curriculum help, teaching tools,
support strategies,
you'll find different topic areas.

And under each of those topic areas,
you can see resources,
members groups organizations
as well as from the feed
you can go over to
discussions and you can
start your own discussion
so some pretty awesome

stuff going on there and so
so check that out now we
have christine coming back
with us welcome back thank you absolutely

So, yes,

kids need their needs fulfilled
and it's good to make sure that happens.

So I get it.

All right.

Well,

we were talking a little bit about
your curriculum and and just, you know,
teaching multiple students, which,
you know, a lot of us we do.

We do when we homeschool,
although there is a growing
trend of people just
homeschooling one child and
sending the rest to school.

I think as people realize
more and more how
homeschooling can be adaptable, um,
they're kind of taking baby

steps into that realm,

usually one child at a time.

Um, so,

but I think the question that's

always in the back of their minds is,

can we make this work for

more than one or can we

bring everybody home?

And, um,

so I love how you answered that

question and, and that, yes, that,

that is possible.

And so, but, um,

So I was thinking of a question before.

And oh, so when I read your bio,

you had talked about, you know,

balancing just a relaxed

homeschooling atmosphere

and being a mom and, you know,

all those things.

And.

How have you seen that morph

throughout your

homeschooling journey and
become more comfortable in, you know,
just the things you're
finding out as you kind of
go along one day at a time,
one week at a time,
one diagnosis at a time?

And, you know,
not be too hard on yourself
about what you didn't know
also in the process.

Yeah.

Yeah.

So so we like I said,
we moved a lot with my
husband being in the Marine Corps.

And so that was something
that was always drilled in
us as military spouses,
especially in the Marine
Corps was called Semper Gumby,
which is always flexible.

And so, yeah.

And you think and you think

of the actual Green Gumby.

that was made of clay and flexible.

Like that's where my mind always goes.

Yeah.

But we literally have to be

flexible because a lot of people are like,

well, we're moving.

Like, how do we homeschool through a move?

And I'm like,

you don't like you take time

off and you school year round.

And so I think just having

the different experiences of

homeschooling in different

States and having to move

in the middle of a school year and even,

um, deployments or my husband going,

like he lived in Japan for a time, um,

without us.

And we were able to go visit him, um,

a couple of times.

So like extended vacation basically.

And so like our life was not normal.

Um, and so it definitely for us,

like it forced me to

to relax and it forced me to be flexible.

Um,

and so as hard as it was to have a not

typical life, um,

I'm always so thankful for

those experiences because it did

force me to relax um because

I'm not like I'm an anxious

person and so like it

doesn't come naturally for

me to be like no it's cool

it's good like everything's

fine um but when it comes

to homeschooling I am kind

of the opposite in that and

so it is funny when um

when I encounter friends who

are still like very to the schedule,

we can't do this because we're behind.

And I'm like, what's behind, you know?

And so,

so it's really like just taught me just,

just to be flexible and to be relaxed.

And I also, you know,

just bringing back that

enjoyment into it that I,

I want to enjoy homeschooling my children.

I'm going to be doing this

for a very long time.

Right.

That we, you know,

we've been doing this for

starting kindergarten.

We've been doing this for

eleven years and my

youngest isn't even

starting kindergarten for

another year and a half now.

So I have a lot more years ahead of me.

And so like I want it to be

that's a lot of time

dedicating my life to

to doing.

I don't want to look back and be like, man,
that was a miserable, you know,
and so like,

I want to look back and enjoy my,
I want to enjoy my every day.

I want to, you know,
be able to dive into these
books with my kids and, um,
and just really enjoying my
time homeschooling them.

So as much as I want them to be happy,
like I deserve to be happy too, you know,
that we all just have.

Yeah.

So if I don't have that
relaxed atmosphere to it, then, you know,
all of my anxiety and all
of that's going to go on top of it.

Like I can be anxious about other things.

I certainly don't need to be
anxious about what we're
doing literally every day
for years and years and years.

So yeah.

So yeah, so just to have that flexibility.

And when things come up to say it's fine,
my kids are learning.

My oldest is going to

basically like a technical high school.

So he's learning a trade.

He's learning to become an electrician.

Yeah.

And we absolutely only did

it just for the electrician part,

but it is fun because he is

taking academic classes as

a part of it as well.

And he's getting straight A's.

And so it's fun to almost

have that proof as a mom to be like,

we did it like we were able

to do this for relaxed homeschool.

And he's getting like,

he has an A in chemistry and algebra too.

And these things that are like big,

scary classes to me anyway.

And, and he's doing just fine, you know?

And so it's kind of just that proof that,

Um,

and I still wish I could do the

academic parts at home

instead of having him do them there,

but him getting all of his

electrician stuff was much

more important.

And so I let him have that.

Um,

cause how cool to like be able to

graduate and be an electrician.

Um,

cause not every state has programs like

that.

Um, but it is, it is kind of just fun, um,

proof for me to be like what we're doing,

taking days off for fun or

vacation or going ice

skating or whatever it is.

Like it's fine to do that.

And that all that learning

is still going to happen.

And, you know, like I said,
not having those workbooks,
the kids are still going to
learn and all of that.

And it's just really fun to have that,
like,

And I know many other people
have that with kids who
have graduated college and all of that,
that they're like, yes,
and they succeeded and did great,
even though we did have
this more relaxed homeschool.

So I'm finally getting to
that stage where I'm able
to see kind of the fruits
of that and be like, we did it.

Like, yay, look at us, you know?

So, yeah.

So it's really fun to kind
of see that other side as he grows,
that it worked and we did great.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Well, you're teaching a lifestyle.

And I don't think a lot of

people realize that is

you're not just teaching

academics within your house.

You're teaching your kids

how to handle difficult things,

how to incorporate rest

time with work time.

Those things you can talk about,

but you're really teaching

them as you show them.

And as you live it.

And do you want your

children to be living

anxious and irritated that, you know,

the lesson plan didn't get done?

You know,

all of these things are bounding on us.

Or do you want them to live with peace?

Do you want them to realize

that there's only so much

stuff you can do in a day?

That it's okay that if our, you know,

schedule took us somewhere else,

it's an adventure.

Yeah.

And yes, I,

all three of mine have graduated and,

you know, I,

my oldest has graduated from

college already,

has a career and my

youngest is in college and, but yeah.

And their success had more

to do with the atmosphere

we built in our home than

it did the things that we taught.

And and so I love that,

that that's what you're you're stressing.

That's what you're focusing on.

And you've got many years, like you said,

to go and that you have that perspective.

Because a lot of people realize afterwards,

oh, man,

I should have done this differently.

And and so it's good to catch that and say,

yeah, what has been done can be redeemed.

But when you realize that

this this is more than just

teaching your kids how to read,

do math and learn their

history and science, it is so much more.

Yeah.

And that's I think, again, like that's

I think that's why I love

learning through books so much too,

is because not only is it

teaching them a good habit,

but it really is teaching

them how to learn for

forever for anything that

they ever want to learn.

Is there already learning

how to take that out of,

out of that literature?

Um,

instead of having a textbook feeding it

to them, they do,

they have to find those

things through the

different books and how to

just naturally learn.

So they're becoming those

lifelong learners and, and that's,

what's really beautiful.

So.

Yeah, absolutely.

Yeah.

So for families on similar journeys,

you know,

discovering unique needs bit by bit,

what advice would you have

to offer as they kind of

try to piece together their

homeschooling path wherever they're at?

So you had mentioned earlier about how,

you know,

I noticed at eighteen months

that something was up with

my kiddo and we did not get

a diagnosis until twelve.

Something that.

really struck my heart this summer.

So when we went to that

homeschooling special needs expo,

I walked in there going

almost kind of frustrated

that I was just like,

how do we not have a diagnosis yet?

How,

how am I supposed to wait still

through all of this?

Um,

and so I left that weekend with a piece

in my heart that just said, just wait and

Yeah.

And don't even do anything

because that was my thing is like,

what is my next step?

What do I need to do as his

mother to advocate and to

push and this and that and the other,

like, where do we need to go?

Who do we need to talk to?

Like all of these things.

And I just felt a piece that said,

you need to stop and you

just need to let me take over.

And so I said, okay, God,

I'm just going to let you take over.

And within a few months we

had a diagnosis and

And it wasn't because of me pushing.

And it wasn't because of me advocating.

And there are certainly

times where we need to do that.

But it was so great to just

connect with other

professionals who knew.

Because all of that is still

new to me and learning

about executive functioning

skills and all of these things.

That's all brand new to me.

But there were people there

that were able to feed me.

And so I felt like I had

those tools to say, okay,

like I can surrender this

because if I'm just using these tools,

we don't need to know

exactly what it is because

I still know what he needs help with.

right so let's just start

with those yeah and just

move forward with that and

so I'm doing that with my

little guy now that we're

pretty sure is both an adhd

and autism diagnosis that

we will find out one of

these days or years or

months or whatever right

but same thing with him

while I'm waiting on our

two-year wait list to see a specialist

Yeah.

What am I waiting for?

Like I can still start and
look up all these different things or,
you know,
go on to sped homeschooling and
have that resource where I
can ask a question on there and say,
who else has dealt with this?

What have you done to help
with this tools that I can
do as a mother and I can do as, as a,
is at home therapist, you know,
like whatever you want to title me.

Absolutely.

And so, and so to just as hard as it is,
because it's so hard,
as hard as it is to wait
and have peace in the waiting, to really,
really try to have that
peace in the waiting,
because the answers usually
come when they are least
expected for one and for
two during the perfect time.

And that there is just so
much that you can do in the
meantime to just gather
information and already start learning.
doing things differently.

You don't need any,
you don't need parents from
the higher ups in your
school to change your curriculum,
to change the atmosphere in the room that,
you know, if there's,
there's something that's
bothering your child's like a light bulb,
but then change it.

Yeah.

So yeah, that's the,
the wonderful things about homeschooling.

Absolutely.

That's amazing advice.

Yes.

It's just do what you know
and what you feel like
needs to be done and just

go from there and have
peace because their stories
are so different.

You know, as your kids get older,
they will diverge.

And and so you just you have
to just go with what what
route God has planned for
them and and be OK with
that and be OK that you
didn't do a perfect job.

You didn't know everything
because you won't and you
didn't teach them
everything because you can't.

And and yet you've done what
you were called to do.

And that was just love them
each day and to teach them what you knew.

So, and how you knew to do it.

So awesome.

Yeah.

So as we are wrapping up,

I'd love for you to begin
to talk about your
curriculum and your website,
rabbit trails, homeschool.com.

And I know we'll put that in
the show feed too.

So if you don't want to have
to copy that down,
just know that the link
will be in the description
for the podcast,
as well as the YouTube
channel and all those things too.

So, yeah.

So tell us about that.

Yeah.

So Rabbit Trails Homeschool,
like I've said,
is a literature based
homeschool curriculum.

We have all subjects except for math.

I don't know if you've heard
me stress that yet,

but I don't like math.

We do not have math.

There's lots of different

places I can refer you to for math.

That is not Rabbit Trails.

We've talked about doing

like a fun supplement where there was,

you know,

books about addition,

subtraction and all that fun stuff.

But we have not gone there

yet and it is not high on my list.

Probably one day, but not today.

So we do have language arts, history,

science, geography.

We do have a writing

membership where you get a

new writing lesson every single month,

which is one of my favorite things.

And it also has a topical

Bible study that's new

every month that goes along with it.

And then we do have a Bible curriculum.

I think that covers... Oh,
and we do lots and lots of holidays too.

We have a holiday bundle
sale going on right now.

So that's super fun to get a
bunch of different holiday lessons.

Excuse me.

But it's all literature based.

There's hands-on activities.

There's copy work.

And then there's just lots
of opportunities for rabbit trails.

So whether it is reading
more books to go along with it,
whether it is doing...

research,

whether it is doing something else,

hands-on, YouTube videos,

whatever it is that we

always give you a list of

ideas to just go further

down that rabbit trail so

that you can go as deep as

your kids want to go or as
shallow as your kids want
to go and just making it
really making it your own.
so that, you know, so that you can,
you can call the shots as,
as the parents and not
necessarily having us call
the shots as the curriculum writers.

So.

Yeah.

Yeah.

That's awesome.

I know a lot of our parents are like,
what if my child gets stuck here?

You know, what do I do?

And so to be able to have
those options and those
ideas already thought up
ahead of time is a huge advantage.

Yeah, for sure.

And I always say like,

I I don't have a degree in

curriculum writing like I
am just a mom who was
inspired to write this um
so anyone could do this but
we've done the work for you
and spent all of the time
um finding all of those
things so that you don't
have to go digging for it
um because I do know
several moms that they they
basically take this
framework and they do it
and I'm like you know what
more power to you
Where I'm like, please save me time,
you know.

And so like my friend who writes history,
thank you that I don't have
to write this and I can
just take her lesson and just do it.

You know what I mean?

And so, yeah.

So because I get that

benefit by having those

those few lessons.

ladies that help me that I

take their lesson and I just do it.

I don't have to write it, you know?

Um, and so, yeah, so I'm,

I'm right along with

everyone who purchases it,

that I'm taking it and we

are going down those rabbit

trails and we are using the

parts that work for us and

not using the parts that

don't work for us and,

and just enjoying it.

Yes.

And that's the,

that's the key is to enjoy it.

You know, you've got to,

you've got to enjoy it.

And you've got to, like you said, it's,

it's a long time.

I homeschooled for nine years.

That's a large chunk of my life.

And so, so yes, you've got,
you've got to figure out a way to make,
bring joy into your house
if that is your calling.

And, and you will, if you,
you settle into that and
you really settle into that piece and,
that, you know, that's your calling,
that's where you're at.

And instead of trying to figure out,
you know,
how to get your own plan figured
out around God's plan and
call for your life,
that makes what makes it worse.

So, well, thank you so much, Christine.

This has been an amazing conversation.

I appreciate all you've had
to share and sharing your
story is most important
because I think a lot of parents,

they feel like they're
alone or that they're the
only one that doesn't know
everything that they need to know.

And that they don't, you know,
just knowing that it's okay
to not know everything and
that things will still work
out and every day can be
joyful and it can be filled
with learning and the love
of learning where you're at.

So, so thank you.

Yeah.

Thank you so much for having me.

I was really,
really excited and looking
forward to talking with you today.

So.

Yeah, this was great.

And make sure to visit

Christine's website.

It's rabbit trails, homeschool.com.

And just thank you for, you know,
pouring into other families,
not just keeping that to yourself.

I'm sure there's lots and
lots of families out there
that are benefiting from
your obedience to do that.

Thank you.

Yeah.

It's,
it's a blessing to just to see the
other families being able
to enjoy it and use it and,
and benefit from it.

So.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Very cool.

Well, next week on the show,
we are going to have a
conversation about unlocking literacy,
empowering kids with
disabilities to read.

And so my expert that I'll
have on has some really good pointers.

If you feel like your child
is even below reading level ever,
she has ways to help you to
build their literacy skills.

So you'll want to join me
for that conversation next week.

So thanks again, Christine.

And thank you all for
joining us here on
Empowering Homeschool Conversations.

We'll see you next time.

Take care and God bless.

Bye, everybody.

This has been Empowering
Homeschool Conversations
provided by Sped Homeschool,
a nonprofit that empowers
families to home educate
diverse learners.

To learn more, visit spedhomeschool.com.

Thank you.