00:05.74
Sasha Long
Hello?

00:18.56
Sasha Long
Hi, Patty. Thank you so much for joining me.

00:20.97
Patty Laushman
Oh, thank you Sasha for having me.

00:23.55
Sasha Long
I am excited to have you on because this is a little bit of a different perspective than we normally take, but I think a really valuable one. Patty does a lot of amazing work supporting ah autistic adults and their parents and caregivers. And I think a lot of these strategies not only will apply to school-age students, but I really think it's important to start thinking about the transition to adulthood you know as young as the preschool years. and As I tell parents, it comes up faster than they think.

00:49.02
Patty Laushman
Absolutely. yeah

00:50.80
Sasha Long
So can you talk to me a little bit about the work you do that with parents who describe their adult as stuck? I think a lot of what I've personally seen from, you know, family members and former clients and students is school is this amazing supportive system where you have a team and you have all these people till you're 21. And then at 21, you're just like.

01:12.34
Sasha Long
off on your own. What does that stuckness look like after you know ah ah an adult becomes officially an adult? And how can parents and caregivers support this?

01:23.49
Patty Laushman
Yeah, absolutely. So I would say a lot of my clients end up coming to me when they're about 18 because they graduate high school and they've had, like you said, that really supportive ecosystem around them. And then they...

01:39.95

Patty Laushman
turn 18 and it's like okay good luck go be an adult and whether they start college or

01:47.28
Patty Laushman
start a part-time job or a full-time job or whatever, there is suddenly a lack of structure around them. And in a lot of cases... they reach this point where they can't make that developmental leap from what was expected before to this new stage they're in. and And if they're deeply masked or... struggling with mental health challenges, a lot of times they end up in burnout and just completely shutting down. So what that looks like from a parent perspective is they're no longer moving forward in life. A lot of times they will spend most of their time in their bedroom, their sleep schedules get flipped, they're up all night sleeping all day, and they're not...

02:34.53
Patty Laushman
taking action to move forward on either further education or some sort of job or career.

02:42.72
Sasha Long
I so, I mean, I see. see that happening with many young adults regardless of you know diagnosis and disability absolutely

02:46.68
Patty Laushman
Right!

02:50.05
Sasha Long
what can I mean, thinking about our high school teachers and even our you know junior high transition teachers. What are ways that... educators could support for that transition and maybe even like cue parents in that that's coming and could feel more drastic than they're prepared for.

03:05.97
Patty Laushman
I have no idea Sasha.

03:07.37
Sasha Long
ah

03:09.21
Patty Laushman
I have literally never thought about it from that perspective.

03:08.73
Sasha Long
cetera

03:13.79
Patty Laushman
I am.

03:13.76
Sasha Long
No, that just popped in my head I was like, I'm always thinking

03:15.85
Patty Laushman
Strictly coming from the parent perspective, I was a high school teacher very briefly.

03:19.42
Sasha Long
Yeah.

03:19.68
Patty Laushman
I taught accelerated chemistry at Columbine High School for one whole semester. um But I... honest to God, based on my teaching experience at a high school, I don't think there's anything teachers can actually do.

03:34.10
Patty Laushman
They're too busy drowning.

03:35.94
Sasha Long
that's That's a really fair point. I mean, and maybe even just... for parents and caregivers. hearing this, like the awareness of like, I know that there could be challenges coming up in early adulthood, but like.

03:49.83
Sasha Long
having the conversations, like listening to this, hearing about what that next stage could be, could be the first step in in supporting parents and caregivers there.

03:59.10
Patty Laushman
Yeah, absolutely. You know, I do have a childhood friend. I've known her since I was seven years old, and she is actually her high school's

autism. Teacher.

04:09.56
Patty Laushman
So they have one teacher who's dedicated to all the autistic students in the high school, and she has talked to me about her work. and What her work looks like is she meets with her students.

04:22.00
Patty Laushman
Twice a day, they check in in the morning, they check in at the end of the day, and then she is providing very individualized support throughout the day. So, for example, she was telling me recently about a student who is afraid of swimming. He's afraid of getting in the water. and we worked together to create a plan for how he could start just

04:44.88
Patty Laushman
putting his feet in the water on day one. And then the second day he gets in and his feet touch the bottom, but he doesn't get his head wet. And we created this graduated process for him to. meet the academic requirements of that PE unit and He's totally rocking it. He totally did it. He totally passed.

05:06.11
Patty Laushman
But... That school has a dedicated autism teacher. If you're a general classroom teacher, like I was a chemistry teacher. That level of individual support is just not possible. You are as a classroom teacher trying to individualize your academic lessons to go.

05:27.09
Patty Laushman
Even beyond that, to provide the level of support an autistic student may need, I just don't think that's realistic.

05:35.39
Sasha Long
You know, I feel like a lot of teachers like and appreciate hearing that because sometimes, yeah, the expectations are unrealistic.

05:41.85
Patty Laushman
Yeah, teachers you're off the hook.

05:43.54
Sasha Long
Yeah.

05:44.59
Patty Laushman
ah

05:45.43
Sasha Long
So going back to that situation you described on you know that. that feeling of stuckness. And as you were explaining it, a few things popped in my head. Is there.

05:56.93
Sasha Long
There's obviously some potential lack of readiness. There could be a lack of skills. There could be a lack of capacity. How can parents tell the difference between what's going on beneath the surface there so they can appropriately support their child?

06:11.74
Patty Laushman
Yeah, that's such a great question because once they become teens or adults, they go into that developmental stage of individuation where they're trying to figure out who they are outside their caregivers. And communication very often shuts down during that phase of development. And so it's really difficult for parents to know what's going on sometimes. So one thing that I teach is to be aware. of all these different things that could be going on and then teaching them how to talk with their child about these things. But what you're what you're mentioning here is there can actually be a lack of skills going on when your child refuses to do something. So for example,

06:57.03
Patty Laushman
When my son first started managing his own medication, so it means calling the pharmacy and ordering the medicine and then going to pick it up and paying for it and then bringing me the receipt so I can reimburse him. um He literally Literally.

07:14.04
Patty Laushman
Did not know how to do that and so we created this gentle on-ramp together where I put the pharmacy on speakerphone I

07:22.67
Patty Laushman
Called them with my son listening. I did all the talking. And then he walked with me through the rest of the process. Then the next time I asked him to do the talking. So we role played the conversation before we made the call. And then he did the talking with the pharmacist. Pretty soon he was ordering his own medicine, picking it up, paying and bringing back the receipt to me. But that was a. process that I

created to teach him that skill. It's called um

07:52.13
Patty Laushman
gradual release of responsibility in the academic literature, but I like to call it I do, we do, you do, because it helps parents understand the process of... teaching these skills over time and providing that scaffolded support throughout the process. So that is a skill. issue, right? There is also...

08:14.26
Patty Laushman
oftentimes challenges to their capacity. So capacity is just simply you know the readiness to apply their skills consistently. Bye.

08:24.83
Patty Laushman
Autistic individuals often struggle with so many hidden challenges that parents and teachers are unaware of. um They may be struggling with burnout. They may be struggling with sensory overload. They may be struggling with executive functioning skills challenges. This is all invisible to the people around them. And all of this.

08:45.63
Patty Laushman
applies a tax. to their bandwidth, which impacts their capacity or their readiness or their ability to consistently apply those skills. Now, if you're not seeing progress on something,

08:59.79
Patty Laushman
you may be seeing a lack of readiness. So readiness is simply a combination of having the skills needed to do the. the work or the task or the demand combined with having the capacity. So if you don't have both of those, the skills plus the capacity, you're lacking readiness.

09:19.00
Patty Laushman
And that can end up looking like stuckness. But if you just treat it like... you know Oh, they're just being defiant. They're just refusing to do the thing. and you start deploying parenting strategies that are designed to overcome that, you very often end up harming the relationship. And then you're... you know you're both taking multiple steps back.

09:41.27
Sasha Long
Oh, I loved how you explained that and kind of broke that down because yeah, you can like, that was a. you can see where that likely happens.

And then, yeah, you're you're getting in a power struggle or damaging rapport and really not solving the problem.

09:54.63
Patty Laushman
Right.

09:55.64
Sasha Long
What role does motivation play in this all? What if we you know maybe do have the skills? But there's a motivation challenge. How can parents misunderstand what motivation looks like oftentimes with teens and adults?

10:08.85
Patty Laushman
Yeah, this is a huge issue for parents of autistic emerging adults. I hear frequently that my kid has no motivation. And it's very, very tricky and very, very complex. So what I teach parents of emerging adults is that typically Your child has goals for their life.

10:32.47
Patty Laushman
and you have goals for their life. But if you spend all your time focusing on getting them to achieve your goals for their life, During a time that they're stuck you are very unlikely.

10:45.88
Patty Laushman
to make progress, right?

10:47.45
Sasha Long
Yes, that's true.

10:48.87
Patty Laushman
If instead you uncover what their goals are for their life, what I tell parents is very often...

10:57.55
Patty Laushman
If you look at a list of your goals and you look at a list of their goals, assuming they can articulate their goals, which is another issue entirely, but if you look at those lists, very often there's very good overlap in this in those goals, but what happens is they're in a different order of priority. So what I tell parents is if you consistently focus on their goals over time, Typically your goals for them will be met.

11:24.05
Patty Laushman
And if you focus on their goals, who is not more motivated to stretch themselves and grow and acquire skills and get outside the comfort zone.

11:34.50
Patty Laushman
If it's something that leads to something that you want in your life. So one way to activate that intrinsic motivation is to figure out what their goals are and then support them in achieving those goals for their life.

11:48.14
Patty Laushman
Now, that's not that that can't be 100 % of your time. There are other things that... parents just cannot wait on. I, you know, I cannot wait for my son to take his laundry out of the dryer, right?

11:58.22
Patty Laushman
I need the dryer, right?

11:58.46
Sasha Long
Yes. Yeah.

11:59.74
Patty Laushman
So, so there's those things as well. But in general, if you have an emerging adult who's really, really stuck. duck Your best steps are understanding what is actually going on, what's going on under the hood, what invisible challenges are they experiencing, and then figure out what their goals are for their life and then work toward those things in the context of understanding their challenges.

12:23.90
Sasha Long
That's such a logical way to think about it. Because even for like us, like if someone gave me a goal to work towards that I didn't care about, yeah, I wouldn't have to be motivated to do it. If someone's like run a 5k, I'd be like, I don't want to run a 5k.

12:32.67
Patty Laushman
Right.

12:34.92
Sasha Long
Like, you know, yeah, no, thank you.

12:34.85
Patty Laushman
Yeah. No, thanks. but but

12:36.58
Sasha Long
but Yeah.

12:37.13
Patty Laushman
Thank you, No.

12:38.89
Sasha Long
No, I love thinking that. And that's like, I mean, that makes sense. And you're right. Like if you think about eventually. you know if your goal is like i want my child to get a job there's a lot of like smaller goals likely that a teen or adult has that could eventually get them to a job that they enjoy and like

12:54.13
Patty Laushman
Absolutely.

12:55.53
Sasha Long
Yeah.

12:55.70
Patty Laushman
Absolutely.

12:56.98
Sasha Long
I love that.

12:57.09
Patty Laushman
Yeah.

12:57.50
Sasha Long
Talk to me a little bit about boundaries. I think that's something we think a lot about with parenting with kids. And then as kids become adults and parents obviously are still in the mix, how can we set?

13:10.01
Sasha Long
boundaries in a way that's respectful, that someone is an adult. and

can self-advocate, but also, yeah, the laundry can't be in the dryer for three days because I need to use the dryer.

13:20.61
Patty Laushman
Right, This is. A great question. I have an entire chapter. on it in my book. So I'm gonna try to summarize that.

13:28.67
Sasha Long
ah Broad question.

13:29.86
Patty Laushman
you Yeah, um you just open the door. No, I will try to summarize this in just a minute or two.

13:33.18
Sasha Long
Ha ha.

13:37.00
Patty Laushman
um So first of all, If your autistic emerging adult is stuck, You are probably having a lot of trouble.

13:46.87
Patty Laushman
setting boundaries with them. and the way that i So I have a parenting framework called the SBN parenting frameworks. S stands for support, supporting them in their goals for their life. B stands for boundaries and boundaries are things that parents can start doing or stop doing that support their own mental health and well-being, their energy so that they can continue parenting. But boundaries are really tricky with these kids because oftentimes we try to set a boundary and we get a reaction that was.

14:19.61
Patty Laushman
not expected, or we know if we set a boundary, we're going to get a really negative reaction, and parents become afraid of that. and one of I've spent a lot of time thinking about why this is. And I think with autistic emerging adults or neurodivergent emerging adults in general,

14:38.20
Patty Laushman
Because they're... chronological age and their functional age are often very different, it's really hard to know if when they're resisting doing something, if it's because they literally can't do the

thing or they just won't do it they're just refusing defiantly to do the thing and then

14:57.97
Patty Laushman
Where it becomes more complicated is that due to fluctuations and bandwidth and burnout and mental health challenges, sometimes if they had a skill last week.

15:09.86
Patty Laushman
or last month or last year. Now, suddenly today, they seem. legitimately unable Two. execute that skill. And this is actually a real thing that makes.

15:20.96
Patty Laushman
parenting these emerging adults so very challenging. It's hard to know what's actually going on. But boundaries are critical. critical for the parents' well-being and energy so that they have the energy to continue supporting them in their goals.

15:35.54
Patty Laushman
But they're also... just critical for modeling what a healthy relationship looks like. So when parents don't have boundaries with their kids, their emerging adults, the emerging adult has an expectation that going forward in their life, this is what relationships look like where the other person is just going to completely support me and I can just do whatever I want.

15:57.58
Patty Laushman
And so it's really important that parents start to set these boundaries, but they need to be based on understanding their child's individual profile. what their skills are, what their challenges are, what their capacity is.

16:10.32
Patty Laushman
So I know that was like a whole big noodle soup there of...

16:14.76
Sasha Long
No, that was very well said.

16:16.15
Patty Laushman
of Boundaries but

16:16.30
Sasha Long
And I think. And these might be hard. hard to set. Long-term gains, short-term obstacle. That's not really a saying, but like that's what I was thinking as you were explaining this. like A lot of these.

16:28.21
Sasha Long
opportunities and times to set boundaries, it would be easier to not. in the moment.

16:32.27
Patty Laushman
Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. And that ends up creating the cycle where oftentimes when these kids get stuck, it's because they had some sort of dramatic failure, like they failed out of a college or they got fired from a job. and then they you know They may already be home.

16:50.15
Patty Laushman
They may move back home. And now they're totally emotionally dysregulated because they you know feel like they've failed at their goals. And so parents naturally accommodate that emotional dysregulation.

17:02.48
Patty Laushman
And then what happens is the emerging adult's world gets smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller. And they get more and more comfortable with having a world that is smaller and smaller and smaller.

17:12.32
Sasha Long
Yeah.

17:14.95
Patty Laushman
But unless the parent then steps in and starts setting boundaries and then. applying really strategic nudges. So nudges are the third part of my parenting framework, um applying those really strategic. autism informed nudges based on your understanding of their profile and what they're experiencing. um that comfort zone can get really, really, really small. And that's... how they end up staying stuck.

17:41.38
Sasha Long
So talk to me about nudges. What is a nudge? And I kind of, I like that word. It's like feels feels feels softer and nicer than maybe like a prompt or a push. But what is a nudge?

17:50.40
Patty Laushman
Yeah, so... um There is an educator named Zenzinger who came up with this learning model. and what it What it entails is, think of, a but you know, like a... um ah ah a so concentric circles event not a venn diagram but concentric circles so imagine Imagine a circle that represents their their comfort zone.

18:17.64
Patty Laushman
And then the next circle surrounding that bullseye is their learning zone. And then the next circle outside of that is their panic zone. Okay, so.

18:27.68
Sasha Long
Mm hmm.

18:29.42
Patty Laushman
What you want to do, so you have have an emerging adult who is stuck. They're stuck in that comfort zone. right what you need to do is apply either boundaries or these very strategic nudges. to nudge them slightly outside their comfort zone.

18:48.56
Patty Laushman
into their learning zone where they can acquire those skills. They need to grow and become more self-sufficient. and achieve their goals for their life. But it has to be informed.

19:00.90
Patty Laushman
ah Otherwise, you end up risk pushing them into their panic zone. And you know what happens when someone ends up. panicked they're going to work really really hard with great motivation to return back to that comfort zone and what's going to happen next time that parent comes along and tries to push him outside the comfort zone well they're going to work really really hard to stay there so we have to get really strategic about what we do to push them outside that comfort zone with either a boundary or a nudge so a nudge can be

19:29.69
Patty Laushman
um it It depends on how stuck they are. um So a nudge could be something like. Of course I'm struggling to come up with specific examples this morning.

19:39.15

Sasha Long
Yeah. ah

19:41.45
Patty Laushman
um So one of the... one of the

19:45.43
Patty Laushman
big nudges I have ever applied in my household was insisting that my son attend a specific physics camp when he was still in high school. And I knew that he could do it. I knew that he had the skills. I knew he had the capacity. His mental health was great. He was not in a state of burnout. And I knew that if he did this, he was going to come out of that with greater confidence, greater skills, broader experiences that would increase his comfort zone. And so because I knew that my son was capable, I did. I nudged him and said, you need to do this. This is an amazing opportunity. It syncs with your interests.

20:26.70
Patty Laushman
um you're going to get exposed to lots of things you wouldn't otherwise get exposed to and so so i nudged him on that this is a really big one i'm going like nuclear here um there was like a whole process that led up to this point but he did end up going and um It was amazing.

20:35.72
Sasha Long
Yeah. Yeah.

20:45.74
Patty Laushman
It was absolutely amazing. That summer, he just felt more confident. He was out in the neighborhood. He was making friends with other kids in the neighborhood. And the next year when this opportunity came up,

20:58.67
Patty Laushman
He went. voluntarily i told him flat out you do not have to go again um but

21:01.30
Sasha Long
Oh that's great.

21:05.69
Patty Laushman
you know, here's the opportunity if you want it, I don't care either

way. And he chose to go and just felt like a rock star. So that that's a big one. I have other families where

21:15.09
Patty Laushman
So this is kind of another nuclear option. But like I'm thinking of one family in particular, they have an emerging adult. He works part time for the dad's company, um but it's a remote job and he's able to do it from home. But unfortunately, he's doing it from bed. So this young man is just not even he's working, but he's not even getting out of bed and he's never leaving the house. And so the the parents are just like, how is he going to become more self-sufficient? We know he.

21:44.22
Patty Laushman
you know, has the ability. He can get there, but he's just super, super stuck. And so what we're doing right now is we're applying a nudge that sounds like this.

21:55.33
Patty Laushman
Hey. um You're 25 now. We have some different expectations for you. We expect that you will do more than work part time from your bed. And so going forward, we need you. So need is one of the words that we use when we're applying a nudge. We need you to figure out how to do something five hours a week that is.

22:20.04
Patty Laushman
outside your bedroom. And half of those hours need to be outside the house. And then we gave him, we're giving him a menu of options. It can be this, this, or this at home. It can be these options outside the home, but at least half those hours have to be outside the house.

22:35.96
Patty Laushman
and you can absolutely come up with your own ideas. We're totally open to other ideas, but here are some options to get you started with this. So that would be another example of a nudge where someone is very, very stuck. We know he's not struggling with mental health. We know he's not in burnout anymore. He he is definitely recovered from that. but And so now we're applying this nudge very strategically.

22:59.88
Patty Laushman
But we're not throwing him into the deep end of the pool. We're not saying, okay, now you have to go work 20 hours a week outside the house. We're saying... Find something that you want to do five hours a week and half of those hours have to be.

23:11.24
Sasha Long
Yeah, something doable.

23:13.02
Patty Laushman
Outside the house. Yeah.

23:14.87
Sasha Long
I love that example, and I love in this example and the example with your son. You gave the context because the context matters a lot. like and that

23:21.72
Patty Laushman
Absolutely.

23:22.45
Sasha Long
for for another child or maybe your son at a different age saying you have to go to this camp would have been a push into that panic zone.

23:30.12
Patty Laushman
Absolutely. And it would have harmed our relationship. He would have been like, my parents don't understand me.

23:32.72
Sasha Long
Yeah. Yeah.

23:35.34
Patty Laushman
How can they even believe that I can do this. And it would have been traumatic. It would have actually been traumatic for him.

23:40.66
Sasha Long
Yeah.

23:42.83
Patty Laushman
But I knew, I knew his profile. I knew his mental health, his level. I mean, I knew what he was experiencing. based on years of applying my own parenting framework. And I knew he was ready for this.

23:58.75
Sasha Long
Well, and that kind of ties back exactly to what we started talking

about with like skills, capacity and readiness as the parent. you're really the expert on those components of your child.

24:08.77
Sasha Long
And when you take that knowledge combined with, you know, the motivation piece of what are their goals, I think figuring out what the nudge is is easier.

24:14.98
Patty Laushman
Right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And by the way, that physics camp example, it was absolutely 100 % tied to his goals. and i pointed that out when I applied the nudge. I said, you have said you want to go to college you want to work in you know the stem field this is the next step for you. So it was absolutely tied to his goals for his life.

24:40.96
Sasha Long
oh i love that i love how you explain all of this it feels very, like like I said, logical and like it makes sense. And honestly, all these ideas can be used. in grade school and high school as well.

24:51.49
Patty Laushman
Absolutely. I've been doing this with my son since he was about eight.

24:55.46
Sasha Long
Yeah, I love it. yeah A lot of lot of years of of learning on this.

24:59.26
Patty Laushman
Yeah. Yeah.

25:00.39
Sasha Long
So where can people go to learn more about your parenting framework and the other services that you provide?

25:07.04
Patty Laushman
Yeah, absolutely. So the best place is my website. It's thriveautism .com. We have a bunch of freebies on the website. If you just go to thriveautismcoaching .com forward slash freebies. um

25:23.13
Patty Laushman
There's lots of information there. I have a quick reference guide on my parenting framework. I also wrote a book called Parenting for

Independence, Overcoming Failure to Launch in Autistic Emerging Adults. It's available everywhere books are sold. And I took the extra steps to make sure libraries could order it. So your local library can order it if you don't want to buy it.

25:43.10
Sasha Long
amazing thank you so much patty thanks for joining us on the podcast

25:47.12
Patty Laushman
Absolutely. Thank you so much, Sasha for having me. I really appreciate it.