Marjorie Aunos (00:06):

We all know that parenting is hard. So how do parents with disabilities do it? With creativity. And because we know of the value of interdependence. Come hear about ways experts say we can best empower these families. And let's all learn about how parenting can be done differently. I'm your host Marjorie Aunos, and today my guest is Margaret Spencer. Marg is a longtime friend of mine. She is one of the most beautiful, powerful persons in the world. Marg has worked with parents with intellectual disabilities for decades. First as a frontline worker, nurse, social worker and advocate. And then as a student of Gwynneth. She is the mother behind Amanda, Beth and Lily's grandmother of some sort. She is a senior lecturer at the University of Sydney where she continues doing research in this field. Enjoy. And don't forget, for more information about where to find the full recording and additional resources, check out the show notes.

Marjorie Aunos (01:21):

If there was one memory that I could say of my friend Margaret, Well, actually there's not one, there's just so many. I can't sort of go into that. But I could say that Margaret has been certainly one of my most incredible friends through the last 25 years or so that we've known each other. She's been my cheerleader. She's been, you know, my go-to person when I have questions, when I want to feel inspired, when I need a problem to solve, and when I meet problem, not in personal life, but also in professional life. Um, she's a wealth of, uh, knowledge but wisdom. And I'm really, really happy and excited that you will get to meet her in the next hour. So, Mar, I'm so happy to have you here and, uh, thank you so much for taking the time.

Margaret Spencer (02:16):

Thank you for having me, Marjorie. It's, uh, lovely to be able to have this chat with you.

Marjorie Aunos (02:21):

Yes. So like everybody else, um, we start with the beginning and so I would like to you to tell us what was that beginning for you and how did you end up sort of working in the field of parents and parenting with intellectual disability?

Margaret Spencer (02:41):

Okay. Uh, so my journey and experience with families where parents have intellectual disability goes right back to the mid 1980s. And it was at a time in Australia where, where we had de-institutionalization where the trend was for people with intellectual disability to be living in the community. And I was working in the inner city of Sydney, uh, doing community, um, welfare work and as a nurse. And, um, we had a number of people who had been in either state care, um, who were being referred to us, uh, in terms of supporting them to live in the community. And most of them were living in pretty rundown boarding houses in the inner city of Sydney. There were two groups of people that, uh, introduced me to really the issue of reproductive justice, uh, for women with intellectual disability. And they were older women who spoke about how they ended up in institutional care.

(03:47):

And it often was because they were seen as naughty teenagers, naughty teenagers, being that they showed an interest in boys and they talked about having operations and how after the operation they stayed in the institution. And what I came to realize that they were the products of, of, um, systematic sterilization of women with intellectual disability. The other group of women that I met were women who had been in out of home care. And for those with intellectual disabilities, they never went to foster homes. They were, they grew up in institutional care and group homes. Um, and those younger ones, they, um, they aspired to be parents and a number of them did become parents. And in journeying with them through pregnancy, I then was confronted by what happened after pregnancy, which was the removal of their babies. There was one case that particularly, uh, stood out to me in terms of the injustice of the situation.

(04:48):

And it was a, a woman by the name of Agnes. And, um, she had, uh, she had two children. And in fact, her first order sh was, um, was, uh, about seven years old. And they were, they were a, they were a team. Um, and she had managed to rear, uh, her daughter quite well up until that point. She got involved in a, a new relationship and had, um, and that relationship was with a, um, a person who had some pretty, um, significant trauma from, um, being in a, um, being in a war zone and in, um, East Africa. And, um, and so he had his own, uh, mental health problems and they had a child. And when the child was born, it, um, it really unhinged both him and, and, uh, her and, um, and both children ended up going into care. And, uh, I remember being with her at the court when final orders were being made, when was decided that the child would, her children would stay in permanent care.

(05:58):

And, um, the judge was handing down his verdict in the afternoon. And at lunchtime, everyone went off to lunch. And I remember saying to, to Agnes, are you going to lunch. She goes, No, I've, I've, I've gone and I only had money for bread and milk. Then she showed me her paper bag. She had her shopping bag with the bread and milk and she said, I bought those because, uh, I'll need those for my daughter to make her lunch tomorrow for school when she comes home. We went into court and the verdict was handed down that the children were to stay in care until the age of 18. And as she walked out of the, out of the room, out of the courtroom, um, milk just was dripping from her. Her shopping bag. Drop by drop by drop on the stone floor, and she walked up to the child protection workers and the lawyers who'd already gathered outside and were encircled.

(06:57):

And she walked into the circle and she said to them, she said, So when am I getting my children back? And the child protection worker looked over to the lawyers and said, See, that's how retarded she is. And then said to her, "Agnes, look, you're dripping milk everywhere." And the harshness of that response had a visceral reaction in me and made me aware of the injustice that was there. I wasn't surprised by the magistrates, uh, the judges, uh, verdict on, on the children going into care. But I thought, it doesn't have to be this cruel. It really doesn't have to be this cruel, uh, there must be a better way. And I think, I think that, um, that's what, um, spurred my, really consolidated my interest in, in parents with intellectual disabilities. Only recently in the last few weeks I was in court, uh, again, and ironically I was in the same situation where it was a lunch break and the parents were outside.

(08:11):

It was a very wet and rainy day. And where the court is, uh, is a long way away from any fast food, um, uh, takeouts. And the main, the main, um, takeout places are there for the lawyers and the, and the professionals. So they're a little bit more expensive. Um, and it was raining quite heavily outside, and the parents were still sitting inside and everyone was going off to lunch. And, um, I said to them, I said, Um, are you coming for lunch? And they said, Oh, no, it's off. It's off pension week. You know, we've only got enough money, uh, you know, for our fares to get to court. And I said, So you're not having anything to eat? He said, No, we can't afford it here. I was taken back to Agnes and her bread and her milk, and I thought to myself, Why is it that things are so slow to change?

(09:04):

And yeah, so I think in terms of the other part of your question, Marjorie, about what's the future here? I suppose in one sense you can say, you know, I've seen over decades where I haven't sort of see the same thing happening. But I think it comes back to the same issue of our lack of awareness, our lack of recognition of persons with intellectual disabilities as as persons and as people with feelings and with people with aspirations and as sexual beings and our unwillingness to countenance that and to support that. Recently I've also been finishing off a chapter at the moment. It's not one of the articles that I've given you, but it relates to that and just, you know, the idea of going back and looking at the history of eugenics, and when you sort of look at the people that the eugenesists were most concerned about were people who they described as the under classes of society.

(10:06):

So eugenisism really had a, a moral overtone. And, you know, the feeble minded that they talked about, you know, sort of in the 19, in the 1920s and, uh, you know, the famous, you know, court case of Buck versus Bell, where, you know, uh, Justice Wendell said, you know, three decades of imbeciles is enough. You know, I think that that remains today, that there is an element of, you know, this is of control of those that are excluded from society. You know, so I think, you know, the seeing of this issue as a justice issue for me has, is, is the way that we need to look at it. Not about fixing these families up, but about fixing ourselves up as a society in how we treat our most vulnerable. You know, how much we're willing to give a leg up and support to people. How much we're willing to do that when it comes to parents with intellectual disabilities, this little appetite to make resources available to them.

(11:11):

And I think, you know, that, uh, one of the articles that I gave, who was one that, uh, some research that I'm doing at the moment with colleagues here at Sydney University, Vicky (inaudible), Pine Marsh and, and Susan Collins. And what we are looking at is, uh, in Australia, we've, um, in the last, nearly the last decade we've been, we've been rolling out a, um, a disability program called the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It's known as the NDIS. And it, uh, is quite a significant policy reform here in Australia. And it's about being able to provide individualized, um, support package planning and packages to persons with disabilities to achieve their life goals. But within that, you know, parenting is not seen as a life goal. Anything to do with parenting is seen. Well, that's to do with parenting. That's not to do with your disability.

(12:03):

And so once again, you know, it's the resources to be, to do, to reach sort of this life goal is, is denied to this group. And I think, you know, until we address why we are so reluctant to resource these families, we're going to continue, you know, we continue to see, you know, the attitudes of, of of those that, you know, encircled, um, outside the court, when Agnes in 1987 came out and said, you know, when am I getting my kids back? We'll still see the, um, the attitudes of that in terms of why would you even say that? What's the point of putting in support?

Marjorie Aunos (12:45):

You certainly, like, you know, in just like a few minutes already took us, you know, whirlwind and through history. So I just wanna unpack a couple of things, um, in what you said. The first thing is that you started when, you know, it wasn't very popular, very known, it was hush hush. We weren't talking about parenting by persons with intellectual disabilities. Um, and you were there to be their support workers. And I think that that has shaped, you know, how your career later on has gone. And what is really interesting to me is how, out of the three articles that you selected for today, you didn't, for example, talk about the first one I read about you, or not about you, but from you, uh, which was on assessment. Yet, you know, a lot of the task or the, a lot of the things that you do in your life is to either do the assessments yourself, and when I say assessment, I'm talking about parenting capacity assessments or you are there to serve, shed a light on what is wrong from those assessments that are being conducted for court, um, and presented in court.

(14:06):

So before we go on, would you like to talk a little bit about sort of assessment and what that means to you and what to you it should look like, basically?

Margaret Spencer (14:16):

Yeah. Yeah. Thanks. Thanks for that. My doctoral, um, research was on how we assess the support needs of parents with intellectual disabilities. And, um, you know, quite interestingly, um, when I was, um, invited by Gwynnyth Llewellyn uh, another, another one of the, um, the founding researchers in this area and leading researchers still in this area to develop this assessment tool. It's something that's set very uncomfortable with me. Um, this idea that we can somehow measure up people, ironically, not ironically, but very appropriately, perhaps in, in fact, uh, my iPhone for this podcast is, is being propped up by my, um, PhD. Um, and the title of my PhD was Beyond Measure, Assessing the Support Needs of Parents with Intellectual Disability. I think the idea of that we can measure something that isn't measurable, I've really spent a lot of time thinking about parenting capacity, parenting capacity assessments, mainly because I've been asked to do them.

(15:29):

I've come to the point, I don't, I actually don't believe there's such a thing as parenting capacity or that can, well, I don't think parenting capacity is a construct that is very helpful. Um, I don't think, I think it's a very individualized way of thinking about parenting. I think that it's, uh, poorly understood. Um, I'm doing some research at the moment where we're looking at, um, access and equity for parents with intellectual disabilities in the children's court here in New South Wales with my colleague Susan Collins. And, um, you know, one of the things that is really clear is while we talk about this thing called parenting capacity, it's very poorly operationalized. People have different views about what it is, you know, is it about being able to do the task of parenting? Is it about, you know, attachment? Is it about decision making? What is it like, what is this thing called parenting, parenting capacity?

(16:26):

And because it's, because it's poorly defined and even more poorly operationalized in terms of assessing it. Um, it depends very much on your assessor in terms of what they think is, is, is is important. But what I've found in terms of all the years that I've worked with parents with intellectual disabilities is, you know, the question is not, their capacity is very much tied to support that they receive. And so my thing is, you know, the question that we should be asking is not about their capacity or that's not the thing that we should be trying to assess, but what we should be trying to assess is, can this family be supported? Can they be supported? What, what is it that they need? And if we, if that support can't be provided, why can't it be provided? What, what's getting in the way of it being provided?

(17:23):

So for me, yeah, I, I think we need to change how we actually think about assessing assessment of parents in general, really. But, but you know, I suppose my focus is parent parents with intellectual disability, because I think for parents with intellectual disability, the, the linchpin, the thing that makes or breaks them as a family being able to stay together is the resources that they have at their disposal and how they can utilize those. And when those resources are not made available, that's when they become unstuck. And so I think our question should really be this question of can parents be supported? Now, interestingly, in terms of my PhD, um, that's what then led me to the idea of this idea of, well then how do we assess support needs? And what became really clear to me in my research was that working out what's needed has to be a collaborative effort.

(18:27):

It needs to be something that we talk a lot today about co-design, but we need to go on a journey with parents in terms of understanding what the support is that they need and they need to come on that journey with us. It's a, it's a, a journey that we do together. And so I think for me it's really about how do you discern what support's gonna work for this particular family with this particular child in this particular context. And the way that you discern that is in a collaborative way with the parents. So it's about being able to walk parents through that and walk through with parents to make decisions. And I, and that's where sort of, that was the end product then of my, of my research was to develop the understanding and planning support guide, which was really a supported, it's really about supported decision making.

(19:20):

What I found quite amazing when we piloted that program, and recently it's been, um, it's been piloted, translated and, and used in, um, in Sweden. And, uh, the thing that, you know, that I found sort of most exciting in that was once parents knew what they needed, how motivated they were to follow through, and the change that you saw, and, you know, it was not rocket science, you know, um, it was just once people actually feel that they're listened to that there's something, yet this is gonna work for me, they will embrace it. So I think oftentimes, you know, we impose stuff onto parents with intellectual disabilities, We expect them to see, see it as relevant as we see it as relevant without sort of spending that time really having those good conversations. I think we are too quick to want to fix families up. And that's part of that is, you know, sort of our neoliberal funding arrangements, which say, you know, you know, we'll put resources in for, you know, a short period of time, but then if you can't stand on your own two feet, well then we're not gonna support you any longer. Well, you know, that's just unrealistic. And you know, it's just, it sets people up to fail.

Marjorie Aunos (20:39):

Yeah. It's unrealistic. And I would say even unfair cuz you know,

Margaret Spencer (20:43):

it's unjust. It's unjust, it's,

Marjorie Aunos (20:45):

You know, realizing that they're, they're persons first, you know, like it's not a label that really defines, um, and your needs, you know, really depends on a whole bunch of different factors including, you know, how your childhood went, including about your, you know, the support that you mentioned, including the environment you live within. Um, and so there's like so many different factors, but it's sort of like we infantalize them or see them as infants, uh, child, children, um, but also sort of only that when they are so much more just like we are all so much more than whatever, you know, could define us. You know, there's more than one way of defining each of us.

Margaret Spencer (21:29):

I think. Um, you know, we've talked about this Marjorie, you know, what is it about parents with intellectual disabilities that, you know, in terms of parents with disabilities, but what is it particularly about parents with intellectual disabilities? And recently, uh, I was involved in a, a podcast series, uh, here in Australia that's, uh, probably available online. It's called, uh, We've Got this, uh, Eliza Hull um, uh, was the, uh, producer of that and I worked with her on that, um, that that series and going back and listening to that, that series. Uh, and subsequently she's put out a book, uh, and looking at the different stories, it's really interesting that of all the parents with disabilities, they all sort of have this thing of people doubt their ability, but for parents with intellectual disability, it's not only doubting their ability, but seeing them as a danger to their children that they're actually dangerous to be around children.

(22:29):

And you know, that comes back to I think that eugenic stuff that parents who are feeble minded are going to somehow screw up their kids. That's what's gonna happen to them. So I think that's really sort of something that sets parents with intellectual disabilities or cognitive disabilities are apart from, say yourself Marjorie as a parent with a physical disability is people might wonder how physically you are going to do the things that you need to do for your child, but they're not gonna be concerned about your ability to hand on wisdom to your child or to help with homework or to do those things. Yet they have that about parents with intellectual disability. So there's this thing of having to rescue these kids.

Marjorie Aunos (23:14):

So let's talk about support. I mean, we've been pretty much talking about that. Um, but two of the, the articles also that you, um, provided talked about sort of those practices that support parenting, um, and in terms of also specialist advocacy. So do you wanna sort of focus a little bit on that, um, and describe what those are and might be?

Margaret Spencer (23:38):

Yeah, I think also we tend to see part of our pessimism or part of our hesitancy about supporting parents with intellectual disabilities as we see it as, oh my God, they would need so much. Whereas really the support that the vast majority of parents with intellectual disabilities need is really sort of not much more than what would be in a well resourced family. And the other thing that we fail to think about is that parenting is developmental. And so, you know, you build on support. So support actually creates, you know, sort of, you support on one thing. People learn from those things, they build up a parenting repertoire. Um, and you know, I don't think that we actually think about that because we don't think about people with intellectual disabilities as being able to learn. Whereas we have now, you know, seven decades of research that actually says, if approached the right way, um, in terms of responding to a person's learning style in the appropriate way parents with intellectual disabilities can learn.

(24:50):

And, you know, they are lifelong learners like the rest of us, but people don't believe that. So they actually think that there's something, it's sort of a bit like they've got no memory, so you'll always be doing the same thing, which is once again, bizarre in terms of why people think that. Um, what they also forget is they forget the agency of children in this, even young babies we're, we are biologically adapted to cue our caregivers in. And um, so, you know, the other thing is that, um, parents and children learn together at how to negotiate things. We fail to take that into account often in terms of when we are thinking about support. We also tend to think about support only in terms of what we as paid workers can provide. And we see it in terms of dollar terms rather than, and in terms of like sort of things that formal services provide.

(25:48):

Whereas I think for the families that I have known that have succeeded, it's really about giving them the opportunities to build circles of support around themselves, you know, and for workers to be sort of looking out for opportunities to enable that community participation and to allow those things that happen in every family's life, which is, you know, sort of to develop, you know, sort of communities of support and be part of communities of support. You know, we, we tend to think about the parents in terms of, you know, just us and the service and the task. I think also, you know, one of the things is people often say parents with intellectual disabilities are not good at learning. Well, they can't learn. And my argument is we are not good at teaching them. I've worked with persons with cognitive disabilities for over 40 years and, um, they surprise me in what they know and can learn and how they go about learning.

(26:51):

I think that's the thing that I find so exciting about working, uh, in this sphere is they never fail to surprise me, particularly when they're motivated with something and understand the importance of something how, um, ingenious they are at getting around the cognitive differences and how they, how they make do. And I think as workers, we fail to see that. I think as workers as say we've got sort of, it's like we've got, um, it's like we've got one tune and we don't know how to, we've got one teaching tune and that's all we play rather than sort of thinking about how we can actually improvise and, and, and, and adapt our tune, our educational tunes around parenting. Um, so I would say, you know, a lot of it has to do with that. We are not that by and large, we are not good at, um, adapting and improvising our educational methods and parenting.

(27:47):

And I think some of that is because also around parent education and in all the areas of community care, um, it's not valued. It's feminized work, it's not valued. And the the bean counters, those that, those that are sort of deciding to see, oh, anyone can go in and do that job. Anyone could go in and help that family get a, a routine going in the morning. Anybody could go in in the afternoon to make sure that the kids are sort of a, a bath. Anyone can do that. Anyone can't do that. It requires a lot of skill to often do the most what can seemingly be very simple tasks. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, I think until, you know, sort of, we actually own that and, and value that. I see that we throw a lot of, I can see a lot of waste of money and I see, you know, we throw money at things. It's sort of like buying, going off and buying sort of disposable things or cheap things and they break down and you just replace them. It's not economical what we're doing.

Marjorie Aunos (28:57):

Yeah. You're definitely sort of unpacking again, sort of a lot of different things. You know, you mentioned earlier sort of culture, uh, you touched upon sort of this concept of ableism and how we sort of view parenting and how we define it, and also how we define sort of support, you know, in mentioning sort of how we see support as being this, you know, formal thing that must exist, a contract between two people when support exists in many different ways.

Margaret Spencer (29:26):

Yeah. We stayed as a, we often treat it as a transactional thing. Support is transactional, whereas supporter is often is relational.

Marjorie Aunos (29:35):

Yeah, that's a really good way of putting it. So anyways, I, we could continue and especially you and I could continue, uh, until the the wee hours of, uh, of the night for me and, and all day for you. But I'm just going to change gear a little bit and sort of focus more in terms of the future. So within a few sort of minutes, what would you sort of see us needing to do as a community that would be helpful for parents, families, the field? Um, so I'll let you sort of decide where you wanna go with this. This is a very large question. Any insight would be great.

Margaret Spencer (30:15):

Yeah, it's interesting Marjorie because I've been looking at, of course, same as in Canada, or Australia, you know, our First nations, our record of, of dealing with First Nations families and is atrocious. And, um, and we both have, you know, in terms of child protection and our First Nation families have been very poorly, poorly served and treated. And I'm looking at some of the sort of, um, the trends happening here in Australia around, for example, we've got Aboriginal Placement Principles basically in shrine now in our Act as you know, um, principles around how services should be engaging with First Nations families. Um, I think there's something to be learned from that in the area of disability. I think, um, I've started to coin the term that we need to become "disability informed". We're all very, very aware of having cultural competence. We also, in terms of trauma, we were all tr need to be trauma informed.

(31:18):

Well, my thing is we need to be disability informed as a society. I think there needs to be a lot more work done in terms of talking about disability informed practice and that disability informed track practice needs to really address the social disablement. And I think so I think that's a, that's a real start. I think that's something that has to happen. I don't think anything is else is going to, I don't think there's gonna be major shifts in what's provided until there's a critical mass of people who are talking about being disability informed practitioners across law, across health, across human services, across education. So we need to have people who are quite willing to say, I'm a disability informed practitioner, just as they're quite willing to say, Oh, I'm a trauma informed practitioner. I'm, you know, I'm culturally competent that it's something that you would have on your CV that you're disability informed.

(32:15):

Now I know all of those can be lip service, but I think that needs to be something that needs to be very much part of professional training because I think until people start to think differently, they go to those entrenched assumptions. So my first thing would be there needs to be a focus on across educational programs, vocational programs, and in universities, particularly around disability informed practice. I think we need to be rolling out much more money in terms of public campaigns around just like, you know, like public health campaigns around disability awareness. I think, you know, we need to be, um, showing a different face of, of, um, families. And when we present parents families where a parent has a, has a disability, we don't present them as being at risk or a danger. We, we show that how it can happen. And, um, I know that we haven't talked about today, but we might talk about in another podcast just about sort of my own, um, uh, involvement as a, as a support person to a family with disabilities and how we've presented that in the media.

(33:28):

So I think that's really important. I think the other thing that's really important, I think that we have to, that while we've got siloed services, I think, uh, sectors, I think that's problematic not only just for parents with intellectual disabilities, but for all people with disabilities. Um, you know, I think that's sort of, for example, one of the, the big issues for, for families where a parent has an intellectual disability is their environment. So where they're placed, you know, they need to be able to access affordable, safe housing in enriched communities that are disability aware, that are disability friendly. Uh, so it's not just about putting a roof over their head in a house in a, in a housing estate, but in the right housing estate in the right housing and that that people actually consider that. Um, I think that makes all the difference.

(34:23):

I think in fact, you know, if you are putting, if you are strategically, you know, instead of having families placed in areas where, you know, they are around other families that are welcoming, that are are inclusive, um, you know, you're gonna cut down in a lot of services that are going to be needed. We also need to be, um, dropping our expectation that you've gotta be able to do everything a as a parent, uh, and that you've gotta be able to, So our benchmark is that you parent autonomously, I think is, you know, needs to be, that needs to be addressed, You know, so for example, going back to the childcare thing that you actually say, of course we put this child into daycare five days a week because it's gonna enrich this child. It's gonna give this child the socialization instead of going, you know, sort of how come they're getting that over someone else?

(35:16):

Or, you know, when are they gonna be parenting? So that mean spirited, like let's think of this child. What, what are they going to gain by being in this, in this, um, enriched environment? We know things like, you know, Head Start programs in the states, My god, we go back, you know, decades now knowing that giving kids a, uh, enriched early childhood experience sets them up for life. And so I think particularly with these, these families, you know, that is just a given and it shouldn't be something that they should have to feel, they have to be stressed about to get, uh, it should be something that they're rewarded for giving their children. So I think those types of things.

Marjorie Aunos (35:56):

Yeah, there's like, so, so many different things and definitely you're, you're tapping into a lot of them.

Margaret Spencer (36:02):

So I think, I think sometimes we think very micro and we think, oh, well it's about, you know, support workers going in and doing blah, blah, blah blah. But you know, it's about you enrich the environment. You, you provide those opportunities and trust that parents with the vast majority of parents with intellectual disability will run with that and they will do well with that. Of course, there's going to be some that don't, but there's some that's not got to do with intellectual disability. It's gonna be other issues and, you know, people are not always going to succeed. And when they don't succeed, we don't punish them for that. We don't treat them like pariahs, We don't see them as so dangerous to their children that we don't let them see their children unless of course they are. But that's not gonna be because of intellectual disability. That's, you know, that's got to do with much more complex personality traits. So my thing is, as I said, it's about taking a capabilities approach and also just look at the end of the day being a bit kind.

Marjorie Aunos (37:04):

Yeah.

Margaret Spencer (37:05):

Oh my God, just being a bit kind.

Marjorie Aunos (37:08):

Yeah. And being able to, you said it earlier, you know, to critically reflect, uh, and be able to sort of see each of us as part of the problem and part of the solution at the same time. So I'm gonna ask you one last question. In a few sentences, if there was one recommendation that you could give to childcare workers or one thing you would like them to know, what would it be?

Margaret Spencer (37:38):

Okay, I'm going to, I'm going of borrow, I'm gonna borrow someone's, I'm gonna borrow two, two statements that I want, that I think people should remember. The one is from my own granddaughters who have grown up with a mum with intellectual disability. And it's the statement of Lily who says, Don't judge a book by its cover. We're not a perfect family, but we get through it. The other one I wanna borrow is someone who was a wisdom figure for me, uh, in this area and it's {inaudible} who was part of the Wisconsin group in the 1990s who did a lot of work around supporting parents with intellectual disabilities. Pauly said, and I, this has been ingrained on me. Our job is not to find better parents for children. Our job is to protect children from unsafe parenting practices. And so when you go in, of course you can look at a child and go, they might look much better in a situation that you are more comfortable with. But our job is not to find better parents. According to our ableist views, our job is to build the capacity of the parents that they have to protect them from any unsafe practices. If we start from that premise, we'll be less likely to want to rescue. Kids don't want to be rescued. What they want is they just want their family to be okay. So support kids to have, make their families okay.

Marjorie Aunos (39:15):

Thank you for that. I think those are, are two, uh, definitely beautiful quotes. I'm happy to, to say that both Beth and and Lily have, you know, agreed to be on this podcast and to talk to me. So I can't wait for me to have a chat with them. It's gonna be certainly a treat for me and, and I think a treat for, for everybody who's listening. So I wanted to thank you so much for, for your time and for spending and being so gracious upon, you know, your, your wealth of knowledge and wisdom and your experience in sharing that with us. So thank you so much.

Margaret Spencer (39:49):

Thank you Marjorie.

Speaker 4 (39:52):

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