



Let's Talk About Time: Tips & Tools to Help Kids Build Their Executive Function Muscle

Leslie Josel

Interviewed by Dr. Laura Markham

Laura Markham (00:04):

This summit is brought to you with love by Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids. Welcome. Hello, I'm Dr. Laura Markham, founder of Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids and organizer of this summit, Nurturing Hearts, Nurturing Minds, the Neuroscience of Peaceful Parenting. My guest today is Leslie Josel, an award-winning coach for neurodivergent students and their parents. She's the founder of Order Out of Chaos and the award-winning author of three books, including *How To Do It Now Because It's Not Going Away*. She writes the Dear ADHD Family Coach column for ADDitude Magazine, the premier magazine for adults and kids with ADHD. And for the last eight years, she's been named one of the top 20 time management experts in the world by Global Gurus. Today, we're talking about how supporting kids to learn to manage time actually changes their brains and develops executive function capacity. So Leslie, we are talking today about time.

Leslie Josel (01:12):

Let's chat about time.

Laura Markham (01:14):

I would love to know from you what time has to do with executive function.

Leslie Josel ([01:21](#)):

Oh, well, I don't want to say it's everything to do with it because I think it is equal billing. I think that's a good way of putting it. It is equal billing. I think what's important to know about time when it comes to executive functions, and I know this is not an executive functioning session so I want to keep it short, but what I find very fascinating about executive functioning skills is that some are very, very visual, very visible to they are like disorganization, even focus, we can see whether or not a student is not on task and not on track. And then, there are those that are invisible, and I tend to find that time tends to be a little invisible to those who, meaning if someone is looking at someone, they don't realize that they might be time blind or having trouble with time.

Leslie Josel ([02:11](#)):

What I like to tell people is that believe it or not, time is considered a disorganization. When we think of organization or disorganization, we think of our stuff, we think of space and stuff. We do not know where we sit in time. If we do not know how long something has taken us to do, how much time has passed or how much time we have, that's actually a disorganization. It makes us feel unmoored. It makes us feel unsteady. I want you to think of being on a boat and not being able to see any horizon. Where am I? So there's that very internal, almost an internal dysregulation when we feel time blind or that we have no future awareness. So that is to me, because self-regulation is all executive functioning. We know that. That executive functioning is not about being hyper-focused or impulsive, it's all about self-regulation. So think about it, if you do not know where you sit in time, how self-regulated can you be?

Laura Markham ([03:20](#)):

So Leslie, you are telling me that we need to feel grounded in time in order to function well?

Leslie Josel ([03:29](#)):

100%.

Laura Markham ([03:29](#)):

And in order to self-regulate?

Leslie Josel ([03:32](#)):

Well, I also think a lot of it is that we think about time as being invisible. So that in and of itself makes us sometimes feel like, well, we're not grounded, but yet I don't believe that and maybe some people are going to think I'm nuts. I actually think time is very visible or that it's not. Time is very three-dimensional, because think about it, time has a beginning, time has a middle, time has a past, it has a beginning and an end. So to your point about feeling grounded, what we need to be really doing is taking time from making it from invisible to visible, making it something that we can actually see even things that we can touch. So that's my, for lack of a better way of saying it, my spiel when it comes to talking about time is taking something that's invisible and making it very visible, making it concrete, making it external.

Laura Markham ([04:27](#)):

So I want to know how we do that for kids, but maybe we should even talk about how we do it for ourselves.

Leslie Josel ([04:33](#)):

Yeah, well, I don't know where they're different.

Laura Markham ([04:34](#)):

Because most people listening are like, "Well, but wait a minute, I know it's 10:00 AM but what does that mean to make it visible?"

Leslie Josel ([04:40](#)):

And I don't think they're different. I don't think it's different whether you are a... I mean, I think how you teach time is different if you are a child versus an adult. As a child, obviously our capacity to understand what we call future awareness or what comes next or a week from now, a month from now, obviously it's difficult if we're 8 versus 38. So I think that's where the difference is. But time is time no matter how old we are.

Leslie Josel ([05:12](#)):

So what do I mean? So what I always tell people, this is like my party line, I have two party lines, I should say. Number one is you cannot be expected to manage your time if you cannot see it. And I think as parents, and listen, I need to say this, I am a parent, granted I'm an older parent, my kids are flown and grown, but I'm not here to disparage parents in any way. Anyone here who's viewing this is an amazing parent because they're spending time with us today. So that, I need to say that. But what I think as parents, we just assume that if we just tell our kids something, that they will

understand it and grasp it. And when it comes to time, that's not true. I don't think that's true in anything, but I feel in time, even more so. Your child or you needs to see time to be able to manage it.

Leslie Josel ([06:01](#)):

How do we do that? We need to be taking time, making it external so we can therefore internalize it. What do I mean by that? What I mean is any way that you can make time three-dimensional by using calendars, clocks, timers, watches, even a phone as an adult, all of those things, academic planners or regular planners, it doesn't have to be academic. Anything that is visible is external. So by making time external, what happens almost by osmosis is we start to internalize it. If we say, and I want you to guys to know that I actually walk my walk, there is my favorite time management tool, it's an analog. By seeing analogs everywhere we go, what starts to happen is we internalize time, we see it, we're able to see time move. We're able to see how much time has passed, we're able to see how long something might have taken us. We don't necessarily all the time have to bang ourselves, bang, whoever we're teaching over the head with it. Even having things out that's external allows us to internalize time. Does that make sense?

Laura Markham ([07:18](#)):

Yes. And it really connects to the executive function again, the prefrontal cortex. One of the things the prefrontal cortex is responsible for is planning. You can't plan if you don't have a sense of time as you're saying.

Leslie Josel ([07:32](#)):

If you can't see it, you can't manage it. The other thing that I think is totally to executive functioning is something called future awareness. So here's the bad news and the good news about bad future awareness and I think this is important. And I did not make this up. I always want to give credit where credit is due. Those of us that have ADHD or executive dysfunction, they say, I don't say, they say that they live in two worlds. They live in the now like right now, whatever's happening in the moment. So in my world, it is 9:00 AM and then so that would be if I had executive functioning difficulties or maybe ADHD, that would be me. I would only be able to focus on what is right in front of me.

Leslie Josel ([08:13](#)):

And then, way, way, way over there where we can't see it would be like the not now. And I think most of your parents at home are going, "Yep, that's my kid." And so, that

ability to be able to see tomorrow, depending, again, this is all age-dependent, seeing tomorrow or seeing even after school or a week from now or six months from now is what we call future awareness. And it's not only the ability to see time in the future, it's also able to act on anything that needs to be done. And we know this for kids particularly who might have a paper due in two weeks.

Leslie Josel ([08:49](#)):

Now, here's the good news. So all of you don't come at me. As you get older, the brain actually develops some future awareness, meaning future awareness actually needs coaxing and teaching. But there is brain development that goes on. It's why your 8-year-old maybe can only see till like Friday, but your 18-year-old can see to graduation from high school. Do you know what I'm saying? It does grow, but it's all exactly what you said. It's that time management, it's the awareness, it's the planning, it's the prioritizing, it's all of those executive functions that come into play, particularly with future awareness. And for me, what I try to teach is that it's your time and your tasks have to marry to truly to be able to function in the world. To me, that's the definition of time. It's not just time, it's time and tasks married together.

Laura Markham ([09:53](#)):

So if I am a 9-year-old, 10-year-old and I have a project due in school in a couple of weeks, it would be very hard for me by myself to figure out, okay, I need to get some materials at the art store and I need to do some work, some research on the living conditions in the 1800s, and then I have to write this and then I have to build that. It would be very hard for me to come up with that. So is that what you mean by marrying the tasks to the time?

Leslie Josel ([10:25](#)):

So what it means is that for parents out there, and again not disparaging anybody, I'm going to start on my 36,000 level view and then we're going to come down. So we are very good as parents asking our students, I call them students, I don't call them kids, sorry. It's just what we do at Order Out of Chaos. Most parents say, "What do you have to do today?" Right?

Laura Markham ([10:46](#)):

Yes.

Leslie Josel ([10:47](#)):

Here comes the dark. "What do you have to do? What homework do you have today?" I don't like that. I'm sorry, I'm a New Yorker, I'm very like this. I don't like that because all you're really doing is asking your child to recite a to-do list. What I prefer is when do you have the time? How are you going to make the time? What might also get in your way and how are you going to know that? So that's like how do we as parents teach time. Now again, there's ways to teach time to an 8-year-old, and there's ways to teach time to a 16-year-old. And I know we don't have time for all of that today, but it's that type of questions, that time of parent-led language is what we call it., That really gets the brain to start thinking about time, thinking about prioritization, thinking about planning.

Leslie Josel (11:40):

It's in fact to the point where one of my favorite questions to ask your child is what is your plan? It is my absolute number one favorite question. Now, what I like though is what is your plan? And there needs to be something after that. So even if you have an 8-year-old at home, what is your plan? Let's say you picked your child up from school. What is your plan when we go in the door? What is your plan after dinner? Actually, what you're doing there is you are teaching time, you're teaching what comes next, you're teaching ordination, you are teaching future awareness. All of that is time.

Leslie Josel (12:18):

If you have an older student, you might do something obviously a little more nuanced and obviously a little more complicated. You might say, "I know you have..." Because you mentioned it or we as parents unfortunately know everything our kids are doing. That's a talk for another day. But you might go, "I know you have two tests on Friday and you have soccer practice till 9:00 Thursday night. What's your plan for getting your studying done this week?"

Leslie Josel (12:46):

Now, I know everyone's going to go, "What happens if my kid says, I don't know." I'm okay with the I don't knows. In fact, I think you want the I don't knows because the I don't knows are going to tell you what your child does know, how much they understand about time, how much they understand that it gives you a real insight into what their brains are capable of. And I know that's another whole thing too, but that type of questioning, when are you going to have the time? What is your plan? What may get in your way, is actually questions that help your child better relate to time.

Laura Markham (13:24):

What could get in your way is brilliant.

Leslie Josel (13:27):

Thank you, because we need to see time holistically. It's not just, "Oh, I have a math test. You might have grandma might be coming." And it's not always about school. I really want to say that. Maybe you have a party, maybe you have field hockey practice, maybe grandma's coming for dinner. I mean, I'm just thinking of all the different things that actually may get in your way.

Laura Markham (13:52):

Yeah, so I love giving parents the actual language to use. What else can parents do in setting up their child's environment to help promote time management, understanding and skills and-

Leslie Josel (14:07):

All different things. So here's my number one tip for everybody and it says like old as I am, you need to be hanging analog clocks in every room that your child spends time in. Analogs are back. They are, because this where is mine, this doesn't cut it. This only gives your child one time and that's the present. And until your child can see time move the sweep of time, they're never going to know where they sit in time. They're never going to learn about time. So I want you to hang clocks in their bedroom, in the bathroom, especially the bathroom. And if you have a teen at home and they can't see the clock in the shower, you need to, I'm sorry, but you do. You do. I'm sorry, you do. So we want a clock in the bathroom. We want a clock in the kitchen.

Leslie Josel (14:59):

And what I also love, particularly if you've younger kids and they like things game-like, we know that ADHD brain likes a little bit of a dopamine hit. We want some game-like things going on for our executive functioning challenge kids is I love something called billboard. So let's say for example, your child needs to be out of the bathroom at 7:00 AM to move into the kitchen to get themselves out the door. What I want is you to hang something as pedestrian as this. This is what I was drawing before we came on this morning. So what I love about it is they don't have to think. So I want a picture of what the clock should look like next to the actual analog so your child can actually remember seeing time, can't manage, can't see it. So this gives them a visual cue and clue when this, their analog, looks like this, I'm out. I got to get out.

Leslie Josel ([16:00](#)):

So it's a little game-like, and I know I'm really going to date myself. It's like beat the clock. I don't know if anybody remembers that game, that show from 1,000 years ago. So we want that. We want timers if your child doesn't feel anxious about them. Why do we want timers? Because timers hold future time, which allows your child to focus on the present. It takes that working memory and all of that out of their brain. They don't have to remember. We set a timer and that's future time for them. We want things like that.

Leslie Josel ([16:33](#)):

For school, we want, this is one of my favorite things in the world and teachers are using it now too. If your student has a long, let's say project that goes over several weeks or they're studying for finals or something that's not like a one-off, you know what I mean? Things that are assigned to them, a project, a paper, studying for finals. What we want to make sure, now most kids get rubrics. Do this by Monday, do this by Thursday. But I'm going to keep it clean, stuff happens. We want to make sure somewhere in their schedules, on their planners, whatever they're using, their electronic calendars that we have put in something called are you on track days?

Leslie Josel ([17:17](#)):

What that allows your student to do is stop, take stock, know where they sit in time. Time isn't always about minutes. It's also about projects or plan or big time. Am I on track? Have I gotten everything done that I'm supposed to get done up to this point? If not, this is my time to do it. I'm bubble wrapping my time. And if I have done everything, well, I'm throwing a marching band in a parade, good for me and I get a free pass to move on for the day. That is so critical because it's realistic. It's just realistic that nothing is ever going to go the way it's supposed to go. So you have to bubble wrap those types of days, the are you on track days. It's really, really beneficial for your student to be able to stop and take stock to know where they sit in time if they're working on something that requires future awareness.

Laura Markham ([18:20](#)):

It occurs to me that it also helps manage the anxiety. One of the things that goes on when you have a big project is you're anxious about how it's all going to get done and come together at the end. And if you have that time, that's as you say, bubble wrap right there.

Leslie Josel ([18:36](#)):

My word.

Laura Markham (18:37):

That's your job that day is to take stock of it. Even though I'm anxious about it, I look at it and it can settle my anxiety and I see the plan.

Leslie Josel (18:46):

We've hit pause.

Laura Markham (18:47):

Yes.

Leslie Josel (18:48):

We've hit the pause button and I have seen, I've been doing this, I've been coaching students for over 20 years and I will tell you, you hit the nail on the head. What starts out as a small little, oh, I missed one physics assignment, oh, so now I'm going to miss the second one, and next thing I know I've missed now 10. It takes that little snowball from creating into a massive folder. So what we try to do is put pause buttons throughout projects and planning so that we can take stock, we can catch up, and we can minimize the anxiety, which is why I actually think more and more teachers are doing it. Instead of just giving a rubric where I have to write my thesis on Monday and give my five sources on Thursday, they're actually saying, "Okay, next Tuesday is your are you on track day." It actually makes sense. Perfect point. Thank you.

Laura Markham (19:42):

What are the other ideas for parents about how to teach time management skills as a game, because I know you talk about that a lot?

Leslie Josel (19:51):

So all of these things are a little, I think, game-like. I think even having clocks are a little game-like. I think billboarding is game-like. I think using music, this is really, really fun. I think music's good if you have a younger student, I don't know. But I know in my house this is going back 1,000 years, I have a child who has ADHD and executive functioning challenges. What got him moving in the morning was music. My household is a music household. My husband's in the music business. Now, my son is. But we would turn on music and I would be like, "Okay, the song, once the song is over, you need to be in, you need to be at the next thing." And what would happen

is they would equate the length of the music to a task they were doing, which is incredibly game-like.

Leslie Josel ([20:40](#)):

So the other thing we do that I love, and this directly goes to either studying or homework, and this is, so I have to back up. We know that music, using music actually helps the brain to attend, to plan, and initiate. We do. That is research proven, people. It is. It's research.

Laura Markham ([21:02](#)):

It's amazing.

Leslie Josel ([21:04](#)):

In fact, just as an FYI, I get nothing for saying this, there's an amazing company called Brain.fm and they are scientifically proven music. That's what they do. And you can join them, join their site, and you can pick music for studying, music for focus, music for deep thinking. I use it all the time. It is phenomenal. So if you're a student though, but I have my students make playlists, 32 minutes, whatever it is, depending on the age. And what I have them do is when they're sitting down to do homework or studying, they put that playlist on.

Leslie Josel ([21:42](#)):

Now, originally, what we were doing with those playlists, we're using them to help students start, engage, get activated. But what we found is the playlist act as timekeepers. Think about it for a minute. If you are playing the same playlist over and over again, what starts to happen is like, okay, when I hear Dodd, thinking of my music, when you hear the band Dodd, I know I'm about 15 minutes in when I hear the A-vets, sorry, maybe you're going to be like, "What is this? I live in a music house." When I hear the A-vets, I know I'm at the tail end. I know I'm at the 30-minute mark. Music done that way, not only is it, I don't want to say it's game-like, but it's fun, but it also acts as a timekeeper. It helps your child see where they sit in time.

Leslie Josel ([22:37](#)):

So it doesn't always have to be a clock. It doesn't always have to be something as boring maybe as a timer, but that's another way. My other way, and I want you to, this is really fun for young kids is I never ever, ever, ever do anything on the 15 minutes or 10 minutes, I never do that boring ever. If I'm setting a timer, it's for 17 minutes, it's for 33 minutes. Why? Because it's novel. It's engaging. It makes the brain

go, that's a little funny, but that's it. Why is it? But when something is novel, it's interesting, it's not boring, and it gives our brains that little bit of a dopamine hit. Trust me, try that at home. Your kid's going to go, "17 minutes?" Or even if you're saying, "Hey, what time do you want to start homework?" Do something like 4:17 or 4:32. I don't know who wrote the rule that it had to be 4:00 or 4:30. I don't, but there is no rule. So try all those things because they are a little game-like and when something's game-like, we pay attention.

Laura Markham ([23:43](#)):

Those are great ideas. So I know you invented a planner. Why are planners great? And I had a daughter who really, my son was fine using a planner, it was really helpful to him and neither of them struggled. They were not neurodivergent, so it was not so hard. But my daughter absolutely resisted the planner. I don't want to be locked into that. I feel oppressed by the planner. So if you have a kid, why are they good? And if you have a kid to resist them, do you have any tips about that?

Leslie Josel ([24:18](#)):

Yeah, I do. So I need to say just so that everybody is clear, obviously I developed a series of academic planners 12 years ago under a company, under Order Out of Chaos's brand name. I no longer own it and I want to make that clear. So I'm not here to sell you anything. I just need to say that because I've had planner conversations and sometimes people are like, "Okay, she's just here to sell." I'm not, I don't own it. I sold it. I sold that company back in January. But that does not mean that I do not believe in academic planners for students obviously.

Leslie Josel ([24:53](#)):

So here's a little fun fact. I actually developed it because, and I keep my party line, I could not find a way to teach kids time, to show them their time. That's where that whole philosophy of if you can't see it, you can't manage it. And there was not a planner on the market anywhere that actually allowed kids to see their time. Now, I'm not going to go through what our planner looks like, but it's won 10 national awards and I just think it's the best of the best. I don't own it anymore. So I can actually say that. But that was the crux of it for me. It was kids need to see time. They need to marry their tasks, or in other words, and this is not just for students, this is for adults too. You need to marry your tasks, your appointments, whatever homework you have. I'm sorry, your homework and your tasks with your appointments, your time. And so, those planners that have Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday on one side and Thursday, Friday, Saturday, they're just garbage. Sorry, can I say that?

Laura Markham ([25:59](#)):

Yes.

Leslie Josel ([26:00](#)):

Oh, I just did. So they're garbage.

Laura Markham ([26:02](#)):

They don't work.

Leslie Josel ([26:02](#)):

They don't work.

Laura Markham ([26:02](#)):

I think what're saying you believe those don't help.

Leslie Josel ([26:03](#)):

All right. I'm a little tough, I'm sorry, they don't work, but that's who I am. I'm sorry, you like me or you don't. They are but they are garbage because the problem is they don't show your kids what else is going to get in their way, where they have the time to do it. It goes back to that question. It's not about what you have to do. Those planners are just glorified to-do lists. It's not about what you have to do, it's when do you have the time to do it? How are you going to plan your time? What else do you have? How are you going to see it? And that great question, what else is going to get in your way? And academic planner allows you to see it holistically. It just does.

Leslie Josel ([26:50](#)):

Now, for the kid that doesn't want to use a planner, and this is from a woman that has sold hundreds of thousands of planners for the last 12 years, you don't force them. You just don't. I am firm believer that kids need to find the tools to work for them. And if you've ever read my book, I worked with a student once who walked around for an entire year writing his assignments on paper towels, on a roll of paper towels.

Leslie Josel ([27:21](#)):

Here's my philosophy, you can't move a kid from A to Z. So if you have a kid that doesn't want to do anything, you're never going to get them to write in a planner. And writing in a planner, remember this, is two steps, it's writing something down and writing it in a planner. So tap into what is working already. Maybe your kid writes on sticky notes, maybe they carry index cards, maybe they're shooting screenshots.

Start there. Start with something they are already doing and move them slowly that way. Do not go to Z if they're only at A. Listen, we coach millions of kids. I developed an academic planner. Not every student uses it and we're okay with that.

Laura Markham (28:06):

So what does it mean when you say seeing done?

Leslie Josel (28:13):

Ah, seeing done. So all you parents out there, I want you to ask your kid if I'm right because I know I'm right. So here's what happens. Now again, I have to say I'm not disparaging teachers, this is absolutely nothing to do with teachers. I work in millions of schools. So here's what happens, particularly if you have a child with executive functioning challenges, we understand that focusing is hard, staying at high level effort is really hard, and then, of course, if we don't know where we sit in time. So now we're sitting in class and we have the trifecta of executive functions like just getting utterly exhausted. So your kid is sitting and he or she or they're going, "Oh my God, oh my God, when is this going to be over? I can't, I can't, I can't. I just can't."

Leslie Josel (28:58):

The first thing they're going to look for is something that's going to anchor them to time. They're looking for a clock. They're looking for something to say, "Oh, only five more minutes?" What that allows your child to do, it's my three Ps. It allows them to pause, "Okay, I have five minutes left." They might wiggle in their chair and watch this. They might pick up a pen, move something just to re-energize and re-engage. I can now picture the end, got to see the end, and now I can pace myself to get there.

Leslie Josel (29:38):

Seeing done, I always say your kid has to see done so that they can start. Because if they don't know what done looks like, they feel unmoored. They don't know where they sit in time. But if I know how much time, remember we're making time visible, we're giving time a beginning, middle, and end. So if I can see to the end that I can pause, picture, and paste to get myself there and I can see done. Trust me, every one of your kids are going to say, "I need to know what the end looks like before I can even start and stay the course."

Leslie Josel (30:14):

It's kind of why we know, again, every kid learns differently, every kid works differently, and I'm a big proponent of that. But if we have students that don't know yet, we will

always advocate for time over task. It's like the parent that goes, "Why don't you go upstairs and get your math homework done before dinner?" That's really hard on a student with executive functioning challenge, who's really time deficient. Well, what does that mean? How long is that going to take me? What does done look like? All of those questions. But if I say, "Why don't you work for 20 minutes." That doesn't mean I'm done, done. I might not be completely done, but I can see 20 minutes. I can picture the end. I have a beginning, middle, and end, and therefore I can pause and pace myself to get there.

Laura Markham (31:05):

And that's time over task?

Leslie Josel (31:07):

That is time over task.

Laura Markham (31:09):

Right. So it's not go finish your math homework, it's spend 20 minutes on it. That's how long it is before dinner.

Leslie Josel (31:16):

Specific, concrete. Listen, you know this. The executive functioning brain, the ADHD brain needs structure, it needs organization, it needs that. So when we use words like later or soon or these very vague, ambiguous terms, just go do it, it's very overwhelming. It's too much decision making for the brain and the brain shuts down. The brain is like goes, "I'm out of here." I'm sorry I'm making this really user-friendly. Maybe it's not as professional, but I think that's what people relate to. But when I give you a time, I don't have a lot to figure out.

Laura Markham (31:54):

So it seems that we've talked about more globally here and we know that a kid who is neurotypical is going to, as you pointed out, as they get older, they develop more sense of time, they develop more ability to manage, to imagine the future, to do the planning, all of that. But for any child, the things that you're talking about, for any child, whether they're neurotypical or not, the more the brain does a certain thing over and over again, the more it's in a certain situation like listening to the music and knowing, okay, that's where I am. The more the brain does that, the more you're developing that brain capacity. And that's true for kids no matter where they are.

Leslie Josel ([32:42](#)):

No matter what.

Laura Markham ([32:42](#)):

Typically, you're not. And no matter where you are age-wise. You can give your kids a head start on executive function in a way by having an analog clock from the time they're little.

Leslie Josel ([32:52](#)):

So 100%. Listen, we know that those with executive functioning challenges are again, not mine, this is research driven, but that are usually, we call it executive age. So we have chronological ages. So you might have a 13-year-old at home who's 13 and all their 13-ness. That's what I like to say. They might be 13 academically, athletically, maybe theatrically, even verbally and socially. But if they have any kind of executive functioning challenge, they're going to be about 30. Again, it's not a pure science. So if you have a 13-year-old who's really time-lined or time challenged, they're going to be 9.

Leslie Josel ([33:29](#)):

So we, as parents, number one, I really believe this, we have to meet our child where they live executive function-wise, not chronologically, but executive age. We do. Because how you're going to support and scaffold a 9-year-old is very different than how you're going to support and scaffold a 13-year-old. It just is. And I think a lot of this, a lot of the anxiety parents feel, the confusion, the frustration, even the anger, I mean I'm going to call it what it is, is where that lives. It's that divide. But that doesn't mean the brain doesn't grow. The brain is a muscle. So it needs to be exercised like every other. And we're all really good about exercising every other part of our body.

Leslie Josel ([34:11](#)):

And one of the things that I teach, even when it comes to time, is well, how can we exercise the brain? How can I do that? And I say it's with questions. Your child doesn't have to always know the answer to everything, but you've got to ask them a question because even, it's like, I know this isn't really what we talked about because it's not about time, but I think it brings the point home. This is my favorite thing because I think you're all going to get it. Your child basically looks at you and goes, "I'm tired, I'm hungry, I'm thirsty." And we as parents "answer them." "Oh, you're hungry? I just went to Costco. There's..." And I go, "But your kid didn't ask you anything. Why are you answering them?"

Leslie Josel ([35:00](#)):

That is actually a weak executive function. They need to start formulating questions. Asking questions actually takes executive functioning strength. So stop answering questions when none are asked. If your child is hungry, say, "Is there something you need from me? Is there something you would like?" I'm not being mean. Unless your kid is bleeding or really sick, it can wait a minute. It can wait. If they're just hungry or thirsty, we cannot answer them. And we can ask them the question, is there something you need?

Leslie Josel ([35:36](#)):

It's the same as them opening the freezer and going, "Where are the waffles?" The better answer to that is, where do you think waffles live? That's how we strengthen the brain. That's how we get the executive functioning moving. That's how we get them to formulate, because what we want is those answers to start sticking in that memory of theirs. So the next time they open the freezer and go, "Where's the waffles?" They're hopefully going to remember to your point, oh, they're behind the ice cream. I don't know if that, but I know that has nothing to do with time. But I do think it has to just do overall how we engage the brain and how we help it exercise and grow.

Laura Markham ([36:23](#)):

Well, it's another version of what's your plan. It's like, "Oh, you're hungry."

Leslie Josel ([36:25](#)):

It's another version of what's your plan? I like that.

Laura Markham ([36:27](#)):

What's your plan? Their plan may be for you to make them food, in which case you can engage about whether that's what's going to happen, but at least you then are having them their planning function is kicking in.

Leslie Josel ([36:41](#)):

100%. That's another... because I feel like I'm giving you a lot of what I call parent-led language and parent-led questions. Another, because we know that our students get very overwhelmed by the overall thing like, "Okay, I have to sit down and do all of this." So I always say, "My job, even as a coach is to underwhelm. That's my job." We talk a lot about overwhelm at Order Out of Chaos, because as the years have gone on, you probably see this too. The buzzwords, they change. There was years ago it

was procrastination, and now we talk about anxiety and overwhelm and emotional regulation and all of that. But the other one that I really like is what do you need to get started? What do you need to do to get started? Started?

Laura Markham (37:31):

I love it. Started.

Leslie Josel (37:32):

Just started. Okay, just started. Because we want member, and you can even ask your kid, we do this and this is a little more for older kids, "Can you tell me what done looks like? What does done look like for you?" That's a great one too. So I know these probably another webinar or another session for another day. But these types of questions, what I also like about them is they're not, I'm going to say they're not nudgy. Do you know what I mean? You're not judging. They're not negative. They're not nudgy. And so, my hope is that when you ask questions like that, you will get a better response than you need to do. I want you to do, you have to do. These kind of questions lend themselves to teaching and dialogue.

Laura Markham (38:25):

And we know when a parent is having a hard time getting their preschool or out of the house in the morning, we know that what helps us for the parent to say to the preschooler, "What do you need to do to get ready to go?" And over time, that kid's going to become very self-sufficient. It's exactly the same thing. So we're really talking about developing executive function.

Leslie Josel (38:46):

Oh, it's all about executive function.

Laura Markham (38:47):

As someone who's situated in time, and the other thing I was struck by listening to you is time is our life. I mean, what is your life except this collection of minutes, what's your plan for what you're going to do with that time? What more important question is there?

Leslie Josel (39:04):

You can tell I love talking about time. I love time because I, and ultimately it's because I think so many of us think it's invisible and I so don't think it is, but I think, look, we know this. Executive functions are life skills. And I know this is not even what

you really asked me to come on and talk about today, but I feel like I need to say it. I get asked all the time about kids getting ready for doesn't have to be college because I don't believe every student should be going to college. I don't. I really don't. I feel every student needs a plan. That's my philosophy. And I feel like coaches and doctors and us, us never ask that student that's graduating from high school, where are you going to college? We always say, what's your plan after graduation? Am I right?

Laura Markham (39:51):

Yes.

Leslie Josel (39:52):

People go, "Oh, my God, I'm so happy you said it that way. It's just how we speak." So this has nothing to do with college, this is just what happens. I feel like the two most important skills you can bring to outside is time management. You have to know time, you have to know where you sit in time. You don't have to know how to prioritize and plan and willpower. That's my, not willpower like R-rated willpower. I don't mean like, okay, I'm not going to have a cocktail. I'm talking about very day-to-day like I'm working on a project and it's due tomorrow and everyone's going to watch Monday Night Football and I can't do that because I need to get my work done.

Leslie Josel (40:34):

Or I'm sitting at my desk maybe at a job or I'm sitting even working on a car. Let's say I'm working in a mechanics building, whatever it is, and I want to grab my phone and go on Snapchat. It's being able to regulate and have some willpower. So I do feel that time is a massive life skill and I think more important than study skills. And I teach study skills all day long, and I say this to parents, stop worrying so much about the study skills and really focus on teaching time.

Laura Markham (41:10):

Yeah. Beautiful. Well this is so nuts and bolts useful to parents and I know they're going to want to find you. So how do parents find you?

Leslie Josel (41:20):

Okay, so we make it super easy for you. So the name of our company is Order Out of Chaos and our website is orderoochaos.com. And from there, you can go everywhere, videos, podcasts, socials, our shop site, our webinars, whatever you need, just go there first.

Laura Markham ([41:40](#)):

Beautiful. Leslie, this was so great and I really appreciate your spending time with us today.

Leslie Josel ([41:47](#)):

Oh, thank you for having me. Oh, great questions. Thank you so much, everyone. I hope you learned something.