

## Episode 7: Instead of Schooling with Michael Maser & Caprice Thorsen

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Caprice: Welcome to humans rising where we raise your awareness of who you truly are so that you can live a grateful, playful, and joyful life. I am Caprice Thorson and with me today is a good friend and a former colleague and kind of partner in crime in self directed education, Michael Maser. Michael co-founded a very, very exciting high school program in Vancouver with Brent Cameron and was also the co-founder of the SelfDesign Learning Community with Brent and Kathleen Forsythe. Thank you so much for joining me Michael. He is also the author of an amazing book called *Learn Your Way*. So today, we're going to turn the tables a little bit, and Michael is actually going to interview me about my book *Instead of Schooling*. So welcome Michael.

Michael: Pleasure to be here Caprice. Yeah it's a delight to join you. You're in South Carolina. I'm in British Columbia Canada, and we're a long ways apart, but we're very very closely aligned in a lot of ways, particularly how we think about education and learning.

Caprice: Absolutely! It's been a pleasure to work with you over the years. So, here we find ourselves in 2020.

Michael: Well, it's a joyous activity to read your book. So I'll take over the microphone now, if you don't mind. And as you say, we're turning the tables here. This is your podcast and as an author myself and longtime alt educator, I suppose I just thought it would be really important to interview you and hear about some of the processes and really the important insights that one goes through in writing a book. Or coming to you know a moment of deep insight.

And off the top, I want to say congratulations to you for your book *Instead of Schooling*. I think you really hit it out of the park. I read the book completely - downloaded it from kindle and really found it to be a page turner. You have a lot to say about education, about learning, about the foibles of mass schooling. You share many experiences of being a homeschooling mum, a very supportive homeschooling mum to your daughters Sage and Kayli. And you help marshal just a basket of resources that many many people will value. And of course, this is a really incredible time right now that we're all going through seven months into the COVID-19 pandemic with a concentrated focus on education. I thought it would be really timely to discuss your book. To Publish Your Book and discuss it. And so I got a couple of questions I'd like to tee up with you if you're ready to answer a few.

Caprice: Yes I am.

Michael: Okay. I'm curious to know about the genesis of your book *Instead of Schooling: Educating for Creativity, Resilience, & Happiness*. Can you share a few insights as to how you came up with the idea of writing this book and what impelled you to put your butt in a chair for

so many days and get to it?

Caprice: Well, I actually started writing this book a little over three years ago. And when I first started writing it, it was just a scathing indictment of, as you said, mass factory schooling. So maybe the first part was just my venting and sharing my experience of you know trying to start the two charter schools for SelfDesign and how impossible it was to inject innovation into the system. And then my daughter Kayli wanted to try public school for seventh grade and she was my first interview for this podcast. We called it Why Kids Hate School. But as I kept talking to parents, I realized that every parent is really trying to make the best choices for their children. And unfortunately, most parents think that the only option for education is school - whether that's public school or private school, and they don't have the distinction between schooling and learning.

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Caprice: So I really changed my focus to say what book can I write that would be the most useful to parents who really don't understand the difference between learning and schooling. And so by changing that focus, I really tried to... I mean there still is the history of schooling which I think will shock many people. But I wanted to make it extremely practical, useful, hopeful, and positive.

Michael: That comes through in the book and you balanced your critique of schooling with so many really remarkable and inspiring insights into, particularly into, your experience with your daughters. What were some of the experiences that you've had as a home schooling mom that really gave you pause? I mean I know you. And you, like me, we were both schooled in the system. And yet we both chose to home school our daughters. In fact, I'm so interested in what were some of the things you observed in your kids that gave you the impetus to home school?

Caprice: Well just that they love learning and love life. They are so awake and I wanted to preserve their wholeness and their love of learning. Even though I was a really successful student (I ended up getting my MBA in finance from Carnegie Mellon), It was at a great personal cost to me. Through the process of schooling, I really forgot who I was. I didn't know what I was passionate about, and I actually went through the entire schooling process thinking that I was this analytic right brained person. Only to be awakened by SelfDesign to the fact that I'm actually a right brain thinker - you know thinking in patterns. And it makes sense. You know my undergraduate was anthropology.

Caprice: So I think as I saw my daughters grow, I could see that they had this innate wisdom. That they already had everything inside of them to be the perfect version of themselves. And it wasn't about filling them with information. It was about being a guide and giving them the space and the guidance. You know it's not just leaving them to their own devices because it's a big world and they don't know what options are available. But my goal was always that they would

discover who they were, discover what they love, and be able to build a life from the inside out. And like every step we took just just reaffirmed that that was the right path for us.

Michael: That's remarkable. You say that because, of course that mirrors one of your most exciting quotes that I found in your book and it was a this. "Your child has everything inside to grow into an amazing adult like the acorn will grow into an oak tree. Your child has the wisdom, resources, intelligence, and gifts to follow their soul's calling out." I was just thrilled to hear that. And you know, when you say things like the soul's calling, I think, Well, you know - how does that tie in with the common narrative about education isn't answering your soul's calling? Isn't it more concerned with your grades and following curriculum? How do you reconcile soul's calling with common educational goals?

Caprice: Well, I really borrowed "soul's calling" from James Hillman who was a renowned psychologist. I think the other part is not just having worked in education for the past seventeen years. But I've been a certified personal professional coach since 2000. And when I first started working as a coach, most of the people that were attracted to me were successful executives. Perhaps, because I came out of the corporate world and my MBA. But they would come to me and say, "You know Caprice, I have played by the rules. I did everything I was told. I am successful. I've got a lot of money, got the title, all the stuff and I feel incredibly empty inside. Please tell me there's more to life than this."

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Caprice So the big lie that school is based on is that you can achieve your way to happiness. And you certainly cannot. Happiness is an inside job. And it comes from you knowing how to make meaning in your life. And that only comes by being in touch with your innate wisdom. So, our schooling system was designed in the 1800s out of fear of human nature and wanting to control humans. And then, in the early 1900s, as the industrial revolution was expanding, they found well, here's this system that's already been set up to control people. Now, we can control them so that they become really docile workers who will show up on time and tolerate these menial, boring jobs. And that's the legacy of schooling. And so I will often ask you know parents - Do you want to train your kid to work in a cubicle? Most, don't.

Michael: I know to help orient me to the history of schooling there's no better scholar to reference than the late John Taylor Gatto from New York City. I got to know John when we were starting Virtual High in Vancouver. He came and visited and I listened to him speak and read his books. If people are keen to learn more about the history the real history of schooling they should consult his *Underground History of American Education* or at the very least *Dumbing Us Down*.

Michael: You touched on happiness there as a really important touchstone. And it's part of your subtitle Educating for Creativity, Resilience, and Happiness. Can you also unpack it? The

importance of creativity and resilience? Why are they on your radar?

Caprice: We are born to create. We are not born to consume. We're creators. If we weren't creators, we'd still be living in caves as humans. And happiness is our natural state of being. Which you can witness by looking at any child before they have you know been conditioned or schooled out of their state of happiness. And resilience is something that we're born with as well. We are born to just bounce back. And you can see that when you see children that just every experience is fresh. They see the world with this all in this wonder. And they're naturally altruistic and cooperative until they're conditioned to think that they have to compete in this artificial academic game. And they are judged by these grades that really, at the end of the day, do not measure anything except their ability to process information. So happiness is so critical because when you are relaxed and you're happy, you can create solutions to whatever comes your way.

Caprice: And when I look at the world that we're living in 2020, we need this younger generation to unleash their creativity. And their innovative solutions. Because us older people created most of these problems they're inheriting. And you know we've got a lot of really, really well schooled people running the show. And, in my opinion, they're not doing the greatest job. We need some fresh insights. We need people to approach these problems from a new perspective.

Michael: Alright, I concur with that as well. What about resilience? What about resilience is a characteristic and an outcome of learning as a young person? I mean, isn't resilience a quality that helps to protect you, defend you, fortify you in the face of adversity? Well, doesn't a high GPA do that?

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Caprice: Actually you know the funny thing is, we need more entrepreneurs in this world. And what do you need to be a good entrepreneur? You need to embrace failure. Not just tolerate failure, but know that you are going to fail and fail and fail until you succeed. And you don't take those failures personally because you know that there is a part of you that is completely unbreakable. You know that you are connected to life. That you're not this separate being that's not connected to life. I also volunteer for our local innovation center as a mentor working with entrepreneurs and trying to get someone to shift from a schooled mindset, where they are punished for wrong answers. To get them to take the risks. To know that they are going to be wrong until they're right and not take that personally is like that's the biggest shift. You have to shift your mindset. And so school has made people so risk averse because they get shamed when they give the wrong answer. You know even I put in my book Jo Boaler who's teaching teachers how to teach math at Stanford says that getting the wrong answers in math is the best way to build more neural connections in your brain. But school is not designed to celebrate mistakes and failures. I think that's doing everyone a great disservice.

Michael: Sure. What I reflect on. I'm a certified teacher and retain my certification. I reflect on my

teacher training back in the prehistoric times. But truthfully I don't see and I don't hear about much difference in teacher training these days. You know it's become an old chestnut that you know schools are the only place that your great grandparents would recognize today. So we've changed so many things in our society and yet schools have retained some of their fundamentals that came with their opening in the industrial revolution more than a hundred years ago. It's problematic. We have so much new information today and I can't help thinking- Wow if we were to design a system for people to learn to thrive, especially young people in preparation for the challenges of life you know - Would we choose the schooling system that we have today? What do you think about that?

Caprice: Now, I mean if we design things from scratch, we certainly would not. I think the biggest thing that keeps the schooling system in place. There are two big things. There's a lot. But one is the college admissions requirements that are clearly outdated and drive a lot of the K-12 curriculum. But it's also, as I point out in the book, you know the school system K-12 to higher ed is like a huge money maker. So if you see who is making money in this system, it is mainly the textbook manufacturers and the testing companies. And Ed Tech is stepping in to try to take a big chunk of that. But if you have any concerns about the rising technocracy that we're witnessing then you would pause before you would put your child on any of these innovative EdTech Platforms that are really tracking your child's attention and measuring everything. I mean it's actually quite frightening what they are now capable of doing now. I used to tell my daughters when they were young - It doesn't matter when you learn to read because nobody's going to know how old you were. but now they will with all this EdTech. And that's frightening. I had a good friend who was a gifted and talented teacher and she told me (you know if you believe in those categories of gifted and talented) those kids either learned to read really young or really old - like twelve.

Caprice: So it's an interesting time. I mean we have a really rich opportunity to question everything about schooling. But, we need to understand that there are some powerful interests making a lot of money with the status quo.

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Michael: Yeah, it's as if we all need much better schooling about schooling itself. And we take so much at face value or at an unconscious level. Just assuming that it's the way to go. The right thing to do. You know and you bucked the trend. You chose to support your daughters' learning at home. And that is you know, that's a really significant act to undertake. And then to write a book about it as well. And I'm curious to know what were some of the challenges that you embraced and really you know chewed on as you wrote your book and planned it out and thought and rethought some of the big ideas that you share in your book *Instead of Schooling?*

Caprice: I think the biggest challenge is I just had so many ideas. And how do I string them all together? Because I really wanted to base the book on people understanding that they are designed to learn. That learning does not need to be forced. The reason they think that learning

needs to be forced is because schooling is really just continuous information processing that is extremely irrelevant and dull. So that's why I'm really careful not to make teachers the bad guys. Because they're not, they're stuck in the system as well. But if you're a teacher, and you have to march kids through this boring, irrelevant curriculum, you have to resort to coercion. So I wanted to present that in a way that as I said, it's the system that's bad. It's not the people within the system. As I was guiding my daughters through their self directed education, it was challenging because, even though they weren't in school, they understood that most of society was. And so they would still compare themselves to the kids that were in school with this fear that somehow they weren't going to measure up in life; that they were behind.

Caprice: And so I interviewed Sage I think it's my third episode on this podcast. My daughter Sage will be 18 next month. She went to the local community college and got three 100s and a 92 and she was like, wow, like most of the other kids that are in high school in these classes with me are just like they're asleep, they're not interested in learning anymore. So I think that parents think that, by pressuring their kids to compete and to win this game of schooling that they're doing something good for their kids. And I really wanted to wake them up to know that's very damaging to kids.

Michael: What's the reception like from people that you've shared your ideas with? Not just as an outcome of publishing your book. But I'm sure, as you went along, you would be telling people I'm writing this book. And it's not some cookbook. It's something a lot more significant and profound. What's been the feedback to some of the ideas that you share?

Caprice: Well I think that some of the things really surprise me because you know when - as you and I have been steeped in self directed education for so many years - sometimes it's a surprise to me that people see the world differently. And one mom has two elementary aged boys and she brought me to her house a few weeks ago to talk to a group of moms that were thinking of creating one of these pandemic pods. And the thing that she shared with the group is that one of the things that was most helpful to her is that I said, hey, just design the learning around your kids interests. What are they interested in? And that was like this moment for her that she had never considered. And so with her boys, she was sitting down over summer and just saying, Hey, what are you interested in? What do you want to learn? And they were having so much fun.

And people - once you can free yourself from the pressure to reproduce school at home and can understand that your kids are designed to learn, and they learn best when may choose what they're learning, what they're interested in, I mean this freedom is available to you. So I think that's been one of the most beneficial ideas. And then there was another mom whose son is a junior in high school. He has been in school his whole life and loves animation and aspires to work for Disney.

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He took art classes at his local High School for 9th and 10th Grade and his art teacher was so negative that her son was ready to give up what he loved. And so I looked at her and I said, do you know who else failed school? And she said who? I said Walt Disney. So I think you know if I can share something that's really relevant that kind of opens people, it's so helpful. But people really have to have their own insights into this.

Michael: While parents are very busy, sometimes work in a couple of jobs to make ends meet and who's got time to question - first of all, to really question the common narrative about schooling and then to investigate it? And come to you know a measure of confidence that they can choose a different path and not just you know, incur the skepticism and even the wrath of you know even family members and schooling authorities who some of them may very well be benign as you say. But they still put out some of their own chestnuts like - well you'll never get into university or post secondary education without a high school transcript, and you must follow a curriculum sequentially and grades are really an accurate measure of your intelligence.

Michael: You referenced a few minutes ago that kids can learn things that are fun. Well, isn't fun frivolous?

Caprice: Yeah but don't you see that setting people up for a life of - If, you have to spend the first eighteen years of your life doing things you don't want to do with the kind of loose promise that your future will be better... then you look at our society and you see most adults are living their life that way. You know they're showing up for a job - Gallup polls show how most adults are not engaged at work. You know. So they're just punching the clock, waiting for retirement. Hoping, at some point, all of this will be worth it. So I think that that's a big damaging part of institutionalizing people from a young age.

Michael: Well you sprinkle your book with all kinds of interesting poll results, data trends. And a couple of things that you posted, there are these really failing and poor outcomes in literacy and numeracy linked to years of schooling. Why aren't we better? Why don't we have a deeper understanding of the foibles of schooling? And why is schooling not Addressing these issues? Because those seemed to be the outcomes I recollect from you know from my teen years as well or they have certainly been around a while. Why is it so difficult to implement change in this system?

Caprice: Well. That's a really good question.

Michael: And oracle in nature too. But it seems to me that we need answers and this is a slow ship to change course.

Caprice: Right. Because the last time I checked there was like \$60 billion dollars of philanthropy going to public K-12 education to reform it every year. So it's not a lack of funding. It's that school is doing what it was designed to do. It's a design flaw. It's designed in a way that's completely opposite to the way humans actually learn. So if you're going to go and tinker around

the edges and say, Oh, now it's time for different content standards or different tests, that's not going to do it. You need to scrap the initial design and start again. But as I said, there are monied interests that would prevent that. The teacher's union is one big force that would prevent that as well.

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Michael: Sure. You know I came face to face with that as a student myself. And then, when I went into education and tried to implement change as a young you know bright eyed teacher I bumped right up against that mentally. No you don't do the change. We do the change around here sonny. And so that caused me to step away from conventional schooling and try it on my own. And you know I've never regretted that. And delighted that I offered my daughter a mix, like you, of home learning opportunities and experiences over many years, plus supported her in going to school. But it was very much a choice in which she was enfranchised. And you've done the same with your daughters Sage and Kayli. Why is that self enfranchisement is also really important in the mix?

Caprice: I think you know one of my favorite John Taylor Gatto quotes that I put in my book is where he talks about what education really is. You know if you're truly educated then you're able to take full responsibility for your life. I also had the pleasure and privilege of reading Michael's Master's thesis. And now you're working on your PhD which I hope to read your PhD thesis. But I remember one of the central tenets of your Master's thesis was giving children self agency. And when I look at the world today, I see people living in a condition of learned helplessness which is the opposite of self agency. So the one thing I could say about my daughters is they are awake, they love to learn, and they both have self agency, they're fully responsible for the choices they make, and they're happy. So what else do you want?

Michael: That's right on the money with a quote from your book that goes like this: "I believe that the goal of education is empowered, awakened individuals who use their minds, creativity and energy to co-create a free and fair society and healthy biosphere. That's a really profound statement caprice.

Caprice: Wow. Did I write that?

Michael: Well. I think you use it a few times in there. So it jumped out at me. You pack a lot into that statement. Now a few minutes ago, you mentioned the pandemic and there's no question we're living in a moment globally, like none that I've ever experienced in my lifetime. And I wonder - it's an extremely disruptive moment in education where we're just living right now in August with the plans to return to school after so many interruptions and emergency procedures that shut down schooling in the spring with all kinds of different results in outcomes - ranging from educators absolutely decrying the move to online learning. And some kids and parents going - Oh, we don't. This kinda suits us. We're not doing too badly here. But I wonder, what

would you say and how would you answer the question? Why is your book so important right now?

Caprice: Well the first thing it will do is - it will change how you view human nature and how we are designed to learn. And so once you understand how humans really learn, and I think I make a pretty strong case that every human learns differently, and having two daughters - my two daughters couldn't be more different in the way that they learn and their interests. But each human is wired differently to learn. And so once you really appreciate how beautiful, how perfect the human design is, you will see how absurd schooling is. And once you see it, you cannot unsee it.

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Michael: With that in mind, you in your book, you reference how it's time to expand our view of learning. And include informal learning, self directed learning, modeling, mentoring, curiosity, connecting to nature, internships and apprenticeships. That's a long list. Can you expand on that? How do people cover all of that? I mean is that what they get in school and how would a parent approach trying to cover that those menu items?

Caprice: Well I also provide a section where I talk about the ages and stages of learning. When a child is young, they learn best through discovery and play. And so there's really not a lot that you need to do for formal schooling. I would say before the age of nine, let them play. You know let them learn to bake cookies. Let them dig in the dirt. Let them build forts. I mean the one thing that is really important is to have a household that values reading. Read to them a lot. Have them see you reading a lot. You know because what little kids do is they are sponges. So they are watching the adults and the older people in their lives to see what they do. And then they mimic it. You know. So if you are on your smartphone all the time they're going to want a device to be on all the time. Because they figure hey, that is a tool of society that I need to master it. If you value healthy eating and plant your own garden and you cook healthy stuff and you get them involved in that, they're going to say, Hey, this is important to do as well. So it's when they're young, realize that there are just these little sponges who love to play, who need to move their bodies, who need to be in nature, and there isn't really a lot of need for direct instruction.

Caprice: And if they have that freedom to explore who they are and what the world is all about, they will come to a point where they want more academics naturally. And they might not want it in every subject because it's unnatural to really divide the world up into subjects. That's not how kids naturally see the world. But my daughter Kayli loved science. When she was 5, she said "I'm a scientist". And she loves books. So we went out and we bought the whole Bashar science series. And she could tell me everything about how the body worked. And I mean, it was just extraordinary. Whereas my daughter sSage loved history and she is profoundly dyslexic; a visual spatial learner. So she watched the Liberty's Kids show and got really into the American revolution. And then she was fascinated with WWII. So we did this unit on WWII with a lot of documentaries. And I mean the stuff she found was so cool. She found this one video of a

Japanese man who had bombed Pearl Harbor and he was talking to about his experience. He saw this ship that he bombed. I mean just amazing stuff that they learned and it was all because they had the freedom to figure out what was meaningful to them, what they wanted to learn. And so they still remember that to this day because they weren't just learning for a test and then forgetting it. I mean as long as you're willing to say, okay this process of self directed learning is messy. It's kind of like inventions. You know there's going to be a lot of false starts and stops. And they'll be madly interested in something and then they will leave it alone and go onto the next thing. You just have to be able to tolerate that level of kind of messiness and uncertainty.

Michael: So, if you're in a shopping cart lineup at your grocery store, and Someone taps you on the shoulder or you overhear a conversation and it's parents. I imagine this conversation's going on many grocery store lineups right as we speak. And people are wondering, parents are wondering... Should I send my child back to school? I think I'm going to apply to keep them home. But where do I start? What would you tell them where? How can they begin to approach this?

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Michael: They just haven't had the long ramp to consider this. But they've got to make some decisions soon and they're just unsure. But you've got their ear for a minute and a half or two minutes. What would you tell them about where they might start and how they might approach this?

Caprice: The first thing that I keep seeing in the media is, Oh, my goodness all of these kids are going to fall behind if we don't have in-person schooling. And so you have to get out of that mentality. There is no falling behind because learning is not a competition. It's been set up to be a competition which leads to the hyper-competitive society that we live in now. But if you can say - look - learning is not competition and your kid has everything that they need to be a successful person in life. And it's not your job to teach them anything. You just need to guide them. So I loved what SelfDesign did with the learning plans. Depending on the age of your child, just sit with them - maybe it's on the floor with a big piece of paper and lots of crayons doing mind maps. Or maybe it's just through conversation, but it's simply: "What are you interested in? What questions do you have about the world? How would you like to spend your time?" And if you can do it from a place of pure curiosity, without any judgment - any "you should be learning this because this is your age" - You might be really surprised by what they're interested in and what they want to learn. And they might need some time to deschool. You know they might need some time to lay around and do nothing. That's okay. It's kind of like the detox phase, but if you can just approach your kids with open-heartedness and open-mindedness, love, curiosity and with the confidence that, not only will your child be okay. But your child already is okay. That's the starting point.

Michael: So there's clearly an element of trust in this and it might be trust in yourself that you can help guide your child's learning. Trust in your child that your child can learn and thrive at

home. And trust in the universe that it all will work out here. That you can challenge the status quo and the common narrative about schooling.

Michael: Another excerpt from your book is that there are no basics to master. There's no critical information to memorize. It goes with the assertion that there's no way your child's going to fall behind but this may cause some hyperventilation among people. To think there are some parents to reflect that there are no basics. How do you justify writing that?

Caprice: So when you and I were in school Michael, maybe it made sense to have kids memorize information because all the information in the world was either contained in books or in people. Right so schools and libraries kinda had a monopoly on information. That is not the case right now you know when you can search for anything online and find it within a matter of seconds. That changes the whole game you know. People are drowning in information. So to make kids sit still, day after day, and process information doesn't make sense. We need to teach them how to access information, how to learn to tell truth from fiction, how to not be manipulated by the media. These are skills they need. But they're not being taught that in school. They're being taught the opposite. You know they're being taught. Okay, all of these adults know better than you what's worth learning. All of these adults know what you should be doing. And I just think it's absurd.

Michael: It is. It may well be and I guess you know people say the proof is in pudding. What's the outcome here? You've talked about you know lofty terms about the awakened person and the joys of creativity and Attributes of having fun and all of this, what's the child like that emerges at the end of fifteen years of this, you know twenty years of this?

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Michael: Can you comment about what you've observed in your own eldest daughter and in other kids who've chosen an alternative home learning path?

Caprice: Right. Because I'm getting towards the end of this journey. With a 14 and almost 18 year old and they just have this unshakeable sense of who they are. You know the teenager years are hard especially for girls now. And what I see is that they are not swayed by peer pressure. They are true to themselves. They know who they are. They know what their interests are. They are very cooperative, kind, compassionate, creative. They can think for themselves. And then I contrast that with statistics that I see - the skyrocketing rates of anxiety, depression and suicide among high school and college students. I don't know how we can continue to justify a system that produces those results.

Michael: You're at the end of this. Do you recognize - what are the health attributes of this? Clearly data does point to increasing anxiety in adolescents and teens. And that was before the pandemic commenced. Surely, it's increased since then in the midst of it now. You mentioned

that your children are self-composed and self-assured. What other other health attributes do you notice either in your children or ones you've worked with.

Caprice: Well I mean I think they're just incredibly resilient and part of that is not just the home education but my work as a coach. I put this in my book which I really wanted to be helpful. To help people understand their relationship to their thinking. We have been trained to believe that there is this external world out there that we have no control over. But we try to control it. You know, and all we can do is manage our reactions to this fixed external reality. And what I speak to in my book and, what I've worked with my daughters on, is realizing that you are living 100% in the experience of your thinking. It's not that okay - you must do positive thinking. It's not about trying to control your thinking. It's about what spiritual wisdom talks about. I just read a great book by Jeffrey Foster. When you look at all of the spiritual traditions, they're saying the same thing. Which is you need to know how to rest in your impersonal, non-judgmental awareness in which all experience is.

Caprice: Okay. So it's not that my daughters and I don't have stressful thinking, right? It's not that we don't have challenges in life. Because I won't get into our personal story, but you know that my daughters have had more than their share of challenges. With my divorce and all of that. But it's that you don't have to believe everything you think. So you can have the thought, "Oh, I am so stupid." Because everybody has self doubt. But it's that you don't have to believe it. You don't have to take it seriously. And they haven't been in a system where they are powerless and where adults can cast their judgments on them as if it's the truth. Which I think is also just a very, very disempowering system. Like you know the boy I said, who's art teacher just told him he was a terrible artist and was crushing his dreams. I mean the vast majority of teachers don't do that. But I can't tell you how many stories I've heard where there was just one teacher that crushed someone's dream. And so what I love about the way that my daughters have been educated is they have been educated to believe that they are limitless.

00:50:08 - 00:55:37

Caprice: And their learning is not limited by anything either.

Michael: Well that's a feature of so many of the hundreds of thousands of the kids that I've come to know in the course of my journey as an educator supporting home based learning and things like. But there's a big question looming still that I'm interested your insights into. And it is okay, my children are well adjusted, they're resilient, they're super creative. But they're now 18 and 19 and 20 and It's kind of like - now what the funneling process of all that mass education and schooling is to prepare children and young adults for is the post secondary experience of going to university or trade school. How do you skate around that one? What are the things that you recommend? What are some experiences you're facing now about that road ahead?

Caprice: So I've always told both my daughters that IF college makes sense on your path, we will make it happen. But it has to be part of a bigger plan. So college has never been like this big

carrot that I'm tangled in front of them. You know - get good grades to get into college. College is really training kids for jobs that don't exist anymore. Sir Ken Robinson in his popular TED talk says that college teaches people to be university professors. Well, before the pandemic, there was a shrinking market for university professors. And now. So as long as you realize that the college admissions process is rigged. As long as you realize that student loans are a scam. And that going to college makes sense if your child wants to be a nuclear physicist or a petrochemical engineer. You know something like that really does require college, then what I would say is figure out how to do it without any debt. So for instance, my daughter Sage did four courses at our local community college. Our state provides lottery funding. So it's extremely cheap. We're still trying to decide if college is going to be her next step or not. But if she does do college, she'll be entering with a full year of college credit.

Caprice: So be creative. You Know - hack your way into college if you want to. And I also put in my book some fabulous alternatives to college. Because there are so many. And we're living in a time where it has never been easier to start your own business. I mean, there are so many great books and courses that are free about how to start a business. The other secret that nobody talks about is how many kids drop out after their first year of college. And then they've already got all this debt. But they don't have anything to show for it. Because, unless you do the whole thing and get the diploma, nobody thinks three and a half years of college are worth it if you don't get the diploma. So I don't know if I answered your question. I think it's an individual choice and it's going to make the choice different for everyone. But don't just do it blindly out of fear - thinking if I don't go to college, I'm going to be flipping burgers somewhere.

Michael: No that one of those mindsets that is promulgated and it's pretty groundless. You have to go deeper than just seeing a published report that is old - at the top here's how much college graduates earned last year, and you can see that you know it's all linked to your amount of education. It's true that the world is evolving rapidly. Those situations are disappearing. And it pays to do your own investigation and arrive at your own conclusions.

Michael: Your book is a compendium of resources. To that end about how to evaluate things and where to see some information that you may not not have encountered before. If one is inclined to do a little extra snooping you know you've got some great links in there. I would just add that if anybody wants further insight into how how rigged the you know college recruitment is they need look no further than one of the chapters in the book by Cathy O'Neil, from 2016 or 2017 - *Weapons of Math Destruction*.

00:55:38 - 01:00:06

Michael: I shared only because it was jaw-dropping to me what I learned in reading about the college recruitment scamming that was happening then and only seems to have increased. But we know that colleges and universities are facing a massively disruptive moment right now. It's time for the big gulp for so many of them. A professor at New York University feels that 50% of existing colleges and universities may perish within one to two years from now because of

declining enrollment tuition because of the pandemic. So, many people are inclined to rethink this schooling experience right now. And I think that your book gives some really interesting opportunities for people to question what they've been hearing about schooling and learning. For so long, and you know there's just a lot packed into your book. I think I highlighted several pages worth of your insights and quotes as I went through it. And you've just got some really important insights in your book. Like I say - this is not a cookbook. It's not an encyclopedia that's going to take people weeks and weeks to go through. It'll be something I predict that people will go through and want to go back to again and again and highlight. And it's a book to sit down - not necessarily with yourself to read - but to discuss around a kitchen table with - after you've read - then gather your family around and we need to talk. I just read this book and here are some of the premises that the author Caprice Thorson is laying out here. What do you think about this? Can you envision those kinds of conversations happening?

Caprice: I absolutely can. I can because I think everyone will read it and have their own insights that they want to share. I tried to put a lot of resources into the book. The kindle version has resources with links that are clickable. Of course, the print doesn't. But I do have a whole page of resources that keeps expanding on my website [CapriceThorsen.com](http://CapriceThorsen.com). If you go to the page that says "book" you can find it. So yeah I do. I wanted this to be more of a conversation starter. I really want people to start thinking a little bit more deeply about how they're educating their children, how they were educated. I can connect the dots between our forced government schooling system and a lot of the problems that we're facing on this planet.

Michael: That's for sure. I would wrap up my interview by closing with another quote from your book that builds on your acorn quote and it goes like this. "Your work as a parent is to provide the best environment and curate resources to optimize the growth of your child. You are like the gardener who's making sure the soil is rich, there is enough sun and rain, but you don't need to modify the seed. You don't need to modify the seed. It is perfect." I think that's a wonderful analogy that you obviously hold in your heart Caprice. And again I congratulate you on your book and I look forward to hearing about the conversations that you have with people about it and book success going forward.

Caprice: Great, thank you so much Michael This has been a wonderful conversation and I want to thank everybody that's been listening. If you liked this episode, please subscribe to let me know that you do like it. And I greatly appreciate reviews on Apple podcast because it helps other people find this podcast as well. Thank you.