



Episode 67: Motivation & Maximum Efficiency in Music Practice with Elizabeth Guerriero, PHD

Christine Goodner:

All right. Welcome everyone. I'm excited today to be talking to Elizabeth Guerriero. And Elizabeth, thanks so much for being here. I wondered if we could start by you introducing yourself a bit to the audience and letting people know who you are and what you do in the world of music.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Sure. Well, thank you so much, Christine, for having me on the podcast today. So yeah, I work in a variety of ways in music and music education and across a couple of different sectors. So I really have roots in Suzuki violin. I was a Suzuki student from the age of three, and then eventually found myself working through a doctorate in music education and started to see my career morph into academia and then eventually finding myself sort of straddling the nonprofit and the academic sectors. And so now I work actually a good bit with nonprofit organizations, but I still have a small violin studio that I work with as well, which I find gives me a lot of joy and excitement to be able to teach students while I'm continuing to work with nonprofit organizations. I have actually five, I think five nonprofit organizations on my roster right now, which is close to the number of students I have as well. So it's kind of a nice balance.

Christine Goodner:

I love that. I always think as busy as I get with other things, I hope I'm always teaching some because I just love it so much. And I think it also helps me kind of keep in touch with what's going on with families and students.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

And there's so much energy that I feel like I gain from working with my students, learning that I continue to do when they have breakthroughs and things like that. And so that check-in every week with them through their lesson -in the Suzuki lesson to meet with your parents - and to learn allows me to have new ideas in the other fields in which I work as well. So I really appreciate that as an opportunity.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I love it. It's a special thing we get to do to work with families like that and students. I just love it so much too. Well, let's zoom back in time to when you were learning the violin as a very young student. I also started when I was about three. What do you remember about music practice? Maybe you don't remember anything specifically at three, but just in general from your childhood.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Sure. So not necessarily at three, but my mother is a retired music teacher and we were living in rural Pennsylvania and there was a small Suzuki program going on, and so she knew this is the early eighties, and so she knew she needed to take me for the Suzuki violin lessons. This was a thing actually. Subsequently, my brother and my sister also Suzuki violin. So this became a real thing in our house. So I don't remember the three-year-old time period necessarily, but what I do remember about practicing is that I did not like to practice, which I think is a pretty common thing for young children. And having a parent who is a music teacher and has that knowledge is also a very specific kind of relationship in terms of practice, because it was the early eighties. So this is a great story. As I was putting things together for this podcast tapes, like audio tapes we used to do in Suzuki, we would do listening and audio tapes and things like that. So when I was about eight or nine years old, and I love to read, I want to say this, I love to read. I did not like to practice. I figured out that I could record my practice to an audio tape and I was doing, I remember Vivaldi violin concerto and I could put that on and I was in this sometimes unsupervised practice zone with my parent and go upstairs and turn it on and then read for an hour.

Christine Goodner:

True confessions. I love it.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

I had this really great idea that this was going to be the way that I would get better at playing the violin. So hilarious.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

So I would practice on Monday and then Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday through the rest of the week, I would just put this on and then I would read books, books, books. So eventually I sort of got found out and it became a little more serious about viol. So that was one really vibrant memory I had about practicing. But I would say the other thing is eventually I kind of moved out of Suzuki violin and I started to study Growing up in kind of rural Pennsylvania, the commitment was to start to study with teachers in the Philadelphia area. And that shift into working with members of the Philadelphia Orchestra and things like that really shifted my view into late high school about practicing and thinking through pulling things apart at a really high level and measured by measure or these little tiny chunks or things like that. So that's what took me there. And then the other thing I was thinking about that was really memorable for me was actually in college and it had to do with two summers I spent at Boden Summer music Festival.

And this goes back to actually my poor practicing where I didn't properly learn vibrato and needing to go to Boden. And particularly the first summer at Boden, I was there and my entire goal was just to pull apart and relearn my vibrato. And I remember I was a scholarship student, I didn't have a lot of money and I was so lucky and I was living in a woman's home. They were doing home stays. And that woman, she was so kind to me because all she heard was this wow back and forth for six hours a day with a complete muscular retrain of how to practice vibrato and how to rebuild and drill it down. And so that

was another really fruitful period of understanding the importance of how to pull things apart. And there wasn't a lot more than I did that summer at Boden. I played in the orchestra, did some chamber music, but it was all about being able to come back between sophomore and junior years and being able to just have a really great functional vibrato and accomplishing that one core thing. And so those are some really memorable things that I've thought about in terms of practice in my own career.

Christine Goodner:

I think that's so interesting, and I am sure you've heard a lot about it too, just the idea of executive functioning skills and how as we get older, those develop and I think so much of our practice changes as we're just able to grasp how to do those things in our brain. Maybe even if you stayed with the Suzuki, I think people who are listening, we're not saying If you don't switch to a non Suzuki teacher, you'll not get those advanced practice skills. I think some of it is like brain development and we can handle that as we get older, and that coincided with you with switching. But I think those skills are so important to keep in mind too that our practice changes because our brain changes too.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Absolutely. And when I think about the things that really drew me into music, it may not have necessarily been the practicing, but the achievement of what I had going on, being able to learn new pieces and things that threw me into these really fabulous social circles of meeting new musicians outside of my school, which was a really small rural school, or being able to make new friends or being challenged in ways that I didn't have before. And so those were the things that really motivated me to want to be involved in music. And so I think that the practice is the background in some ways to the motivators, and we will probably talk about that a bit more. Right. And that's kind of the topic in a lot of ways. So those motivators really kind of get you there, but the practicing is kind of critical.

If you're not practicing, you're not really getting to achievement. I really love Edwin Gordon and his work a lot and some of my time in academia has been actually in general music education, particularly when I was at Rowan University and talking a lot about this idea that we build aptitude up until the age of nine in a child, but then achievement is sort of the rest of what you do in your life. And so thinking that through my idea that motivators are happening, but really our aptitude for music can be growing and growing and growing and that with these motivators happening for achievement, how that plays a role for every specific individual is really important.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, we are going to talk a lot about motivation today, and I love that it was a great segue to think about what are our motivators, and I'll just leave those listening, especially if you're a parent or family supporting your child with the fact that I talked to a lot of musicians on this podcast and in my life, and some people love to practice for its own sake, and other people just really need the outside motivator of, oh, I want to be with my friends making music, or I want to participate in this thing. And it's both valid. It just, I think sometimes our personality and the way we're wired, whether we just love being in the practice room itself or it's like, okay, this is a means to an end that I want to have, and that could be normal on either end of that spectrum. It's okay to take our child's lead with that and not feel like something's wrong if they're in either situation.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Yes, absolutely. Right. And so I think a big part of it is the psychology of understanding the individual situation and framing it. So first of all, there's in something like Suzuki, the parent child and the teacher

triangle, but there could also be in traditional lessons, the parent and the child interaction, or even in a community like adult learners. I worked with adult learners quite a lot and adult learners who are just working professionals or even adult learners who are retirees. And I think we see that the themes are sort of the same regardless of where you are developmentally in your life, whether the motivators are intrinsic or extrinsic or internal or external motivators, each person is uniquely attracted to wanting to learn, assuming they want, are interested in a specific thing. I mean, that's part of the motivation discussion. But these common ideas kind of come out whether they're a five-year-old in a Suzuki setting or a 12-year-old in a more traditional public school music setting, or me a 45-year-old wanting to learn guitar for the first time from a teacher or some of my community adult learners in a retirees or something like that who are seventies, eighties, and beyond, who are just really interested and excited. And so it's very, very interesting to think about that.

Christine Goodner:

I love that. And I just think it's all those various ways we can be involved in music are so important, and that's a whole other discussion, but I think it's so important, all those different ways people can get to music. So recently you gave a talk with some science-based research about motivation called "Motivation: Lighting the practice fire", and I'm excited to hear more about that today, and I know we can't give a whole talk on this podcast today, but I hope you can share a few highlights with us or love to hear what you have to share with us today about that idea.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Sure, sure. And I'm excited to talk about that because as we were starting to get into, I feel like behind practice is the idea of motivation and thinking about the internal drivers and the external drivers as well for what we're thinking about. So I was going back through, and there's really a few things to unpack here, and one of them is really understanding for each individual, what are your internal motivators for wanting to learn something and what are your external, are there any external things to be thinking about? But there's actually more than that happening. So I kind of want to unpack each of these. So internal motivators could be your instincts, your preferences and your interests. And so do I have an instinct to want to learn to play the piano? Is it just something that I hear it, I'm excited by it Again, any learner of any age, do I have preferences?

I'm really listening a lot to the music of this artist, Van Cliburn or something like that, and suddenly I'm gravitating towards it in this internal sort of a way. And so you have this intrinsic internal motivator component that gets you excited about it. It can be sometimes challenging over the long term to keep that excitement going. Then we have the extrinsic or external motivators as well. And some of these are also interesting to consider. So you have this idea of rewards, but there's something else in external to think about which is threats, because sometimes threats that are external can cause a lot of things to shut down. And I'm not sure that we talk about that enough in terms of motivation. So external threats could be as basic as the public school music program is shutting down and they're taking the instruments away. That has actually happened to me in my studio with some students.

Basic threats to the external motivators would be anything in terms of resources that would be taken away from the situation, maybe a not as effective teaching situation as well, another external threat to the positive experiences in practicing. And then the third thing to think about is the basic life circumstances. So are you in a supportive, really supportive adult relationship for students learning? Are there social supports coming around to support? So I mentioned my love of going to youth orchestras and group class and things like that as a student, and I had a super positive experiences with that, but a student who's not having those experiences and feels like they're the only student, they may not have

that, and suddenly they're sort of dropping off. So thinking about the positive supports of all of group music making is something, but other life circumstances could be super, super stressful and that sort of taxes the system.

So there's a great diagram for this. So I found this and I really loved it. And so to get a little deeper into this conversation, and I don't know if there's a way for you to put this onto your site. So then we look at these motivators here and we talked through instincts and preferences and interests on the intrinsic side, talk through threats and rewards on the extrinsic side. And then there's one other thing here. So with a threat becomes avoidance. So I avoid it because I'm not liking what's happening. It's a negative experience. And then with a reward, we have this approaching, we're positive. This is a very positive experience. So what this all comes down to, and this came from a Harvard research study a couple of years ago, was that the idea that the desire to have a rewarding experience can be more impacting than the reward itself because, so it's really summarizing it.

It's the journey, not the destination. And that's sort of this whole thing in a nutshell, because I can have my journey and I get to my location and then I'm sort of just done. But that's not really what practice is. That's not really what motivation is because we have our life and if you're investing in doing a thing, if I'm investing in learning an instrument or even learning a new skill of any kind, then I'm in it to be there and to take this on in the longer time.

So that's really the idea behind it. So just unpacking that I think is important there. Then the other thing that I found really fascinating about this work was that there was another study, this was an NIH study from a couple of years ago that actually found that with really good motivation, with really good support systems, there was actually dopamine release.

And I think that's fascinating. So when I'm having these really positive things, I'm locked in my internal motivators, I'm getting positive supports from all these things. I have good life circumstances around and supporting me. I'm suddenly getting dopamine releases from this process. But if I go and I am not practicing well, I have a teacher who yells at me, I have disappointed parents, I have all these different things and I'm just having a total shutdown. And I think that this is, thinking at it more scientific level is a way to approach it rather than it being necessarily an emotional reaction. So this is where I'm sort of approaching motivation from for students in one whole big chunk of things.

Christine Goodner:

Well, I love thinking about that and I really love when there's studies that sort of, I mean, I think as a teacher I have seen that in action, but it's great to have some research behind it that confirms what we might experience if we've taught a long time and watched a lot of students go through one side of that process or the other.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Yeah, and so I think so much of it comes down to as teachers, just knowing your students and what they need. So because we as teachers are in it for the long haul as well, I mean ideally I always think you come to my studio and we are going to work together for as long as we are able and to be as successful as possible, and I want to know you and I want to see your growth, and we are going to experience this together. And it doesn't always work, but through these other factors that we've kind of outlined. But this is really the investment that I feel like we're making in our students.

Christine Goodner:

I agree. And if you're a parent or family member listening and you support a young musician and their practice endeavors, I think thinking about that really positive support role, we can't force a student to have any sort of development on our own timeline, but we can put things in their environment that feel like they're supported and that are helping with these positive feelings. And that's really a role that we can fill whether we're a Suzuki parent and in the practice room every moment or we are on a different, more traditional style of learning and we're not in the practice room, but still our environment of support is so important.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Well, and so that positivity, if you think about it as at a cellular level with the right atmosphere, we are triggering a dopamine release. So what is happening at the other level, it's so negative and the shutdown is going on. So in my perspective, that's really, we want to go in that positive way because we don't want to maybe get them addicted to practice. But I mean some people

Speaker 4:

End up there. Yes,

Elizabeth Guerriero:

It's so funny. And when you see the really highest achievers who are enjoying practice, you have to ask because the ones who are wood shedding and it's difficult, that's another story.

But I think there are people who really are finding their way and enjoying that at the really intense level as well. So I would say one more thing, and I really mapped this out in the talk I gave a couple of months ago, but one other thing that I like to think a lot about, and I listened to Molly Ian's talk as well, and I think she talks a lot about this is the idea of maximum efficiency. And I cannot stress that enough with my students and even in how I do things, even in my business. And I feel like it's a fine line, maximum efficiency because you want to be efficient and as efficient as possible, but guiding through maximum efficiency is the critical thing. I mean, because developmentally you can't say to a five-year-old, now we're going to be maximally efficient. So

Christine Goodner:

This, yes, that will backfire, I think,

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Right? It doesn't make any sense, but you can say to an adult professional or a retiree who understands that concept. So what you kind of have to do thinking about developmentally is map out a plan for how to guide as a teacher or even as a parent if you're working with younger children, how to help guide what maximum efficiency is, knowing that there's just limited time in the day and you don't want to spin your wheels. And so I think that that's some of the magic actually that happens in lessons is thinking through what does maximum efficiency mean at any given point for a five-year-old, an 8-year-old, a 10-year-old, and then how do I continue to explain that and guide that? So they're thinking in a maximally efficient way as they're approaching what practicing is to have meaningful progress. And some of them grab onto it, I feel like really quickly, and it's part of all these different variables, and some of them it takes a little longer for them really to get in there.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I think that's a really good point. And sometimes as practice advice that I feel my students, especially early teens, are resistant to trying. And I do think that's sometimes I can get them on board if we're like, oh, we only have so much time. Let's be as efficient as we can, or here's how we can help you get there with less time wasted. So I think a lot of people at a certain age do want that. It's just how do we do it?

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Yes, absolutely. And so I think there's that guiding question of how as a teacher or as a parent, how much conversation do we have about this idea of maximum efficiency? And that in and of itself can be the motivator in some ways. I can knock this out in 15 minutes. I watch, who is it, Robin Bollinger's blog Instagram. I'm not sure if you and your listeners have seen that from the Minnesota Symphony and on Instagram every couple days she posts a two minute practice video as she's preparing for Shahrazad or some other huge solo that she's going to do as a concert master of the orchestra. She was a Suzuki student growing up and really that Instagram post every time is about maximum efficiency. And she'll say, I've got three minutes right now between all these gigs I'm doing and all these other things, and it's really brilliant because it's a way of helping maximum efficiency to be really accessible. And I've sent it to a lot of my students and things like that. It is so accessible, it's very motivating for others to see it, and especially I would say from teens on to be able to get that.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I imagine, I'm just thinking of putting myself in the shoes of the parent of the three to 5-year-old, which I was back in the day when my kids were young. And I think we could put a lot of pressure on ourselves or make practice stressful if we feel like we're trying to make it super efficient. What advice do you have? We're young parents and families of young students who are just starting that process. How would you start talking about that with a young student? Do you have any ideas?

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Yeah, yeah. So for the parents, for the really youngs for the efficiency, I think there's so much value in trusting a really good teacher

In the moment. So I can't tell you right now, you have to do, this is for your nitty gritty in your lessons, but I think it's you having your really great teacher and if you're listening to this podcast, you're in a good place, you, you're in that zone. So I think that's the first thing.

And then I think the second thing is to really know your child and what really piques their interest. So going back to those, what those motivators are, and to be thinking about the, I've called the balance of internal and external motivators, not rewards necessarily that are concrete, but a little things that are a little bit more abstract, which is hard for three to five year olds, but it's important and setting up the best possible atmosphere. So going back to that life circumstances part of the conversation, which also I think is really tricky in this day and age because of working situations for parents and all sorts of other complex things that are happening in our world.

So I think that that's something, the other thing I would say is going back to trust with the teacher is cultivating the relationship with your teacher that you can ask them the questions that you need to understand the whys, not necessarily the questioning of why are you doing this, but more about just I'd like to better understand. And I think being open and curious is always a good thing.

I'd like to better understand why we're doing this specific exercise and how it will support this set and the other in practicing, because sometimes I think about if I'm teaching the same lesson over and over and over to my students, and that is not maximally efficient, and so it's not efficient for anybody. It's not efficient for me as a teacher, for the student who's having the same lesson, a potential if there's a parent involved who's watching the same lesson over and over. And so there's I think a very specific map out and plan and reason why the teacher is assigning and working on different repertoire or different activities in a lesson and how that all fits, which is really critical. So having those dialogues I think can help to guide things along, especially for the younger children.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I'm so glad we talked about that because I think we could take it as a non-teacher as we're supposed to stand in one place and not waste time and be efficient in our practice with this preschooler. And that's not what preschool practice looks like. And my experience often is very creative and it needs to be playful. And I love what you said about what environment are we setting, getting to know our child and working with that and also really working with our teacher. So agree.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Yeah, absolutely. And that's where I was talking about also that understanding developmentally where everyone is along this trajectory, right? When I think also about the overall ideas of motivations specifically for very young children, I'm also thinking about this idea of climbing mountains a little bit and each task as its own mountain.

So then I think about it as a mountain range. So let's say you are a Suzuki parent or Suzuki child and you're climbing the Twinkle Mountain. Each of the skills that is climbing that Twinkle Mountain is its own mountain. And then you have book one, and it's a whole set of mountains. And so you're thinking about this idea of mountain climbing, which feels really daunting in a lot of ways. And so it's hard to kind of map that out in the longterm, but then you get to book two and you're like, oh, I just climbed all these mountains. So that's a whole other thing.

But what you want to do is understand the connections about why climbing this one mountain is going to help make it easier to climb the next mountain. And there are some places where there are really natural plateaus that happen, and there are some places where, and particularly with life circumstances and things where things drop off a little bit, I had some students who typically would travel internationally for an entire summer year after year, and our lessons would go to Zoom, and it is just going to be the way that things happen where we plateau and we even drop a little bit. I can do the best that I possibly can as a teacher, and the mom who is fantastic, can do the best that she possibly can as a parent. And everybody is absolutely always doing their best, but it's just going to be the way and the flow of what practice looks like. And that is our most maximally efficient way at that point. Exactly,

Christine Goodner:

Exactly. And everybody has life circumstances. I feel like the whole world had one at the same time a few years ago, but everybody's going to have them at different times, and that's just part of life. So I think knowing you're saying we're doing the best we can, if you're in those life circumstances now listening, just doing what you can, the best of your ability, and hopefully we can out the other side or we

learn to, like you say, maximize with what we have and where we are. And that's just life for some of us. Many of the times I've certainly been there.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I love that idea of the mountain climbing. I think like you're saying, it's helpful to see what's coming next, and also sometimes it's just like, okay, what's the next place I need to grip and grab a hold and make my next move? And that's okay too. We can shift between both.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Yes, yes, absolutely. Right. And so that I think is really, really helpful Within that mountain climbing idea, I think there are really clear places that goals can be set, but sometimes there are setbacks In mountain climbing, you kind of have to think about that as well. And it can be possible to identify them. It can be possible to knock 'em out before they happen. And sometimes they're just going to happen and it's okay to acknowledge that they're going to be there. And then thinking about this external supports, there could be different incentives or different rewards externally that are needed to help push up a little bit in terms of the mountain climb. And then also if there are social supports and other things for younger children in particular, I think there's something to be said for the literal tracking of progress and celebrating what that means for getting something done.

For example, thinking about mastering all of an entire Suzuki book, then what you could think about is what does it look like to actually walk through an entire mountain range? And I think for younger children too, I think that concrete thinking versus abstract thinking kind of develops at the same time as aptitude versus achievement aptitude around the age of eight or nine. And so I do think that there's value in having a greater understanding of seeing something visual.

And so thinking about, we're going to do this mountain range and it's going to be walking through all of Suzuki book one or this other thing that we're going to learn together, even in public school, essential elements as a method book or some other kind of a thing, and trying to get a hold on, here are the ways that we're going to walk through and here are the skills that we might learn and kind of building that out. And so I do think that that's super helpful for the understanding of both a student and also for the parent to get a sense of, I'm not just flying without a net here, but I have this very concrete and specific plan for how this is going to be put together.

Christine Goodner:

And knowing you have a teacher that will help guide you through that, we're not on our own. So I think as a teacher, I always want people to reach out if they need more and have a conversation if they want more information about where we're headed and why. And you've mentioned that earlier, but I just want to say that again. I think that's so important.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah. I wonder if you would say something about the rewards and incentives piece, because I know we want to be careful about that. And also I think some people have the idea that maybe it's bad to have any of that just because of some of the parenting advice that's out there about punished by rewards and such that it's a valid concern, I think for some people. So what's your advice to families thinking about using incentives or rewards?

Elizabeth Guerriero:

So my feeling is I think the goal is long-term building long-term rewards. And I think you need to be really thoughtful again about developmentally appropriate ideas. So I tend to really love the a hundred days and a hundred days is something that happens a lot in elementary school classes, so kids are familiar with it. So a hundred days of something seems like it's a really great place to go in terms of developing some kind of rewards incentive for younger children. I'm going to be honest, I struggled a lot during my dissertation and I had to give myself a reward. And so when I was writing and in it at one point I said, I will write for 30 days straight and I will take myself shopping. So thinking about adult learners and adult goal setting, I mean, I think there are times when sometimes you just have to dig in and make it happen. But to go back for a second, I would just advise that in terms of rewards or incentives, it's always thinking about what is the long-term sort of thing that would entice a student to really want to be involved and that you're building out these practice habits and that it's a small piece of a bigger picture of internal, external and life circumstances. It's the bigger picture. It can't be the only thing. In no way can it be the only thing.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, thanks for saying that. And I think sometimes even just in my studio, we'll do a sticker chart of 25 times on a piece. They're trying to master something, but it's, my hope is over time they figure out, oh, when I fill this up with all these stickers, the song has gotten easier to play and there's internal reward that's also linked up with it as we can see that all this repetition is helping us or the a hundred days like, oh, now it's easier to practice. I don't resist it and I've just made it a habit and that kind of thing. So I think that's also a piece.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Absolutely. And I love your point about that because I think about students I have, you go back a couple Suzuki books like you're in Book eight and you go back to book six, and when you reflect with them, and that's a good part about the rewards thing as well, when you can reflect on, look at your journey, and this goes back to that, the journey itself over the destination, right? Look at your journey here when you're in Book eight now, when book six was challenging when you're in LA Folia or something like that, and it was so difficult, that last page, now you're in book eight and you can play lots of things. How does it feel now to go back and do a review of this material and the student comes and says, well, actually, I really have it. This is great and whatever. And now you're able to take it to a higher level and things like that. And so I think that there's also reward in those sorts of things as well, and that builds that internal drive.

Christine Goodner:

Yeah, I do really thinking of how are we building the internal through the external, and I think they work so much together and we don't need to feel bad if we need something external because like you said, for me, I try to do weight training and sometimes it's like, okay, after 10 weight training sessions, I am

fine or something silly. But it does sometimes really get me through when I don't want to start on a given day. So let's just human nature. I think sometimes

Elizabeth Guerriero:

I think absolutely I, and I could tell you so many stories of when I needed to.

Christine Goodner:

Yes, yes. Yeah. So if you're a parent, a family member listening, I think maybe just, I always say pick something that's within your value system or that's feeding the practice habit and we can release the guilt and just know this is so normal. It's a big long-term project climbing mountains. We need those celebrations in some way. Well, Elizabeth, I appreciate your time. I feel like we could just talk and talk about this and hopefully we, someday we can do this more, but I wonder if you could tell people where they could find you if they're interested in connecting with you after hearing this conversation.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Sure. My website is bethgconsulting.com, so they can find me there and to learn more. And I'm excited to connect with anybody, so that's great. Great.

Christine Goodner:

We always wrap up these conversations with a practice idea or tip that we could leave people with. It can be something we already talked about today or something totally different. But what can we leave listeners this week to think about with their own practice or with their children?

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Well, I have actually two for you. Hope that's okay. So the first I wanted to share, it's less of a tip and more of a question. So it's a question to ask parents or to ask teachers. And the question is, are you having fun? Because all of this should be fun. Well, maybe not all the time, but there should be a component of fun for parents, for children, for the teacher. And I think when we're talking about the internal and external motivators and the social life circumstances and everything, that can be really powerful that are we having fun doing this? If it feels not fun, let's go back and really evaluate and figure out some ways in which it can have a feeling of really genuine fun, joy, those sorts of things. And so my question is just, are we having fun, real fun? So that's less of a tip, but kind of a tip as well. But then the other thing is I asked my student, Mackenzie, her advice, she's 10 because I knew I was going to be on here, and she told me too, and I quote, tell listeners that quality is better than quantity, and this means going slow and being careful and mindful. And then she emphasized the word mindfulness, but she also wanted me to add that she recently got a bird, a pet parakeet named Ralph, and she's nicknamed him rj, and he practices with her as a practice buddy, and he chirps a lot.

So if as a practice tip, it may be helpful for everyone to get a parakeet and practice with your parakeet, but the parakeet may chirp a lot during practice.

Christine Goodner:

That's great advice. And I have my fuzzy black cat that comes in the room when I practice and likes to be close by. And that's my little motivation sometimes too. So I love the practice pets, see? Right?

Elizabeth Guerriero:

I mean, they really do help. They really do help. So I actually pulled all the students and her answer was just so adorable and really lovely, and so I thought I would share it.

Christine Goodner:

Oh, thank you for sharing that with us. I love both of those. I think you've given people lots of food for thought and really a pleasure to speak with you today. Thanks for your time.

Elizabeth Guerriero:

Happy to be here. Thanks so much.

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