

MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE EDUCATORS

PODCAST TRANSCRIPTION OF

JOSETTE LUVMOUR, PhD

with host

Paul Freedman

A Production of
Luvmour Consulting II, LLC
Portland, OR 97221

Copyright © Ba & Josette Luvmour, 2018

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

Copyright © Ba & Josette Luvmour, 2018 • ba@luvmourconsulting.com

Ba Luvmour: Welcome to *Meetings With Remarkable Educators*. This podcast is brought to you in part, by you, our friends and supporters at patreon.com/remarkableeducators. Each podcast is a dialogue between me, Ba Luvmour, and an educator who sees the greatness in their students and touches the whole of their being. These educators defy generalizations, so here's a little bit about what they've done, and how I know them.

You have to admit it would be weird to interview my wife of 40 years about her life as a remarkable educator. To do so might take well a significant part of 40 years. In that time we've co-created *Natural Learning Relationships*, the first holistic appreciation of child development. We rode the roller coaster of success and failure, and failure and success while parenting, foster parenting, teaching *Natural Learning Relationships*, interns, and laughing and loving.

Intimately we have worked together leading hundreds of seminars, Rites of Passage, teacher training, parent support consultations, and 26 consecutive years of whole family immersion programs. Then I was there doing the wash, reading rough drafts, dialoguing about parents, educators, children, while she compiled and completed her brilliant book, *Grow Together: Parenting as a Path of Well-Being, Wisdom, and Joy*.

I have to stop; you can see why another interviewer is necessary. Fortunately a man who I am coming to see as woven into the very fabric of holistic education, Paul Freedman, head of Salmonberry School on Orcas Island, Washington, and featured guest on podcast four, agreed to step in. One of my jobs is to listen to each podcast and note necessary changes, so that Dimitri, our sound engineer can fix [them].

Here's how great this podcast is, I didn't have to make any notes at all. Enjoy, the podcast brims to overflow with great information.

Josette Luvmour, PhD, is a developmental consultant, educator, author, and public speaker. She specializes in the field of human development, adult transformational learning, sustainable family relationships, and how adult and child grow together.

She enjoys teaching educators at SelfDesign Graduate Institute. Over the years, Josette has delighted in sharing her expertise, knowledge, and understanding with adults, family groups, and

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

professionals seeking to deepen self-awareness, enliven optimal well-being, and develop access to innate wisdom. She's principal producer of this popular podcast series, *Meetings with Remarkable Educators*.

Josette has authored five e-books, and six print books, including, *Grow Together: Parenting as a Path to Well-Being, Wisdom, and Joy*. As well as articles that focus on relationships with children. *Grow Together* has earned the Mom's Choice Award, and is a finalist for the Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Award. Together with her husband and collaborator Ba Luvmour, Josette co-created and developed *Natural Learning Relationships*, a whole-child understanding of child development that supports optimal well-being in children and families.

They have studied and explored consciousness since they met in 1979, and have been using *Natural Learning Relationships* with children, families, and educators in programs and with schools since the 1980s. They have been instrumental in re-instituting rites of passage in contemporary culture. Josette and Ba are advisors to public and private schools, as well as authors specializing in whole child development education, and family dynamics.

They live, work, and play together in Portland, Oregon, and are very close to their children and grandchildren.

Paul Freedman: I am so excited to have this conversation with you, and to have the opportunity, huge gratitude to all the folks at *Meetings with Remarkable Educators* for giving me the chance to have this intimate dialogue with you Josette. We'll just dive right in.

Josette Luvmour: Well thank you.

Paul Freedman: Yeah, it's my ...

Josette Luvmour: I'm grateful too.

Paul Freedman: Yeah.

Josette Luvmour: It's really nice that you offered to be the person who interviewed me.

Paul Freedman: Yeah, well I suspected that it might be a little awkward for Ba to be your interviewer, and I'm delighted to stand in his large shoes

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

today. We've known each other for going on a decade I imagine, and I tell you from my perspective I knew of your work before we met in person, and knew that you were someone deeply committed to both understand and help elucidate what happens over the course of child development from birth to adulthood.

I had read some of your work, and used it in my teaching and in my parenting. Then fairly early on in our relationship from my perspective, what seemed to happen, and I'm wondering if this is actually what happened, is something of metaphorically you picked your head up and noticed, "Oh while children are developing, someone else is in the room so to speak. Us adults who were so attentively trying to nurture children and their healthy development, we're not objective distant participants. We're intimately all-in."

Something happens within us too, I wonder if that's at all accurate, if that was a sudden realization light bulb, or what happened that led you to focus your work on adult development?

Josette Luvmour: Well, it's really interesting that you bring this up. I think the first time we started interacting was when you were holding a conference up at Salmonberry School, and you had invited me to come and speak up there to your teachers and to your parents. I accepted, and it's been rolling ever since, but our work with *Natural Learning Relationships* preceded my work in adult development for a number of years.

I can never remember how many, but a long time, and we held whole family immersion programs as part of a lot of the ways that we worked with parents and families. People would come, we had a land-based center in California at the time, and people would come to the land-based center for three days, four days, or seven days, up to seven day immersion programs.

During those programs we would teach families how to use child development in daily life with their children. How to nurture their children's developmental needs as a part of everyday experiences, not something special that you just think about sometimes. The way those programs worked, is we held cooperative activities where we played *with* children, and then we would hold on educational sessions where we talked about what we had all observed.

We ate meals together, and we just played together the whole day. People who actually took it to heart and applied these understandings and developmental principles in their daily lives, I

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

began to see over time that it wasn't just the children that were changing, but that something was happening for the adults as well. We began to notice that adult and child, adults develop in a different way, but adult and child were developing together.

As I went back to graduate school, I decided to take a look more closely at what was happening for the adults. I studied adult development, and I worked strongly with looking at parents who had been in our programs for five years, ten years down the line, what was happening for them? In my dissertation research, I began to understand that something very, very interesting was happening for the adults.

I thought I was seeing an integration of cognitive and emotional development, which is something that I thought the research was showing me. My mentor at the time, who was Dr. Judy Stevens Long where I was doing my research, pointed out to me that actually there was a lot of wisdom that was beginning to occur in the adults who were working with children and being with children in these developmentally appropriate ways.

Paul Freedman: Great, I'm going to interrupt you for just a second, and I do want to get into wisdom, because I think it's such a mysterious and yet powerful concept that we use in our language. Do we really understand what we mean by wisdom? It's so important and interesting that it emerged unexpectedly when you were looking at adults who were parenting mindfully and thoughtfully.

You're working with children and adults together, and you notice that not only the adults are, I'm sorry, not only the children are growing and changing, something is happening with the adults as well. You mentioned that adult development happens a little differently. Maybe before we get into wisdom, which I'd love to do next, can we talk a little bit about that process of adult development?

You and I share this amazing thing, which is...we were both parents, and that parenting process was transformative for each of us. Maybe we'll talk about that a little bit too, but after doing your research, how does that work? What happens exactly, or is it continuing to be enigmatic? Is it just mystical, magical stuff that happens when you're a parent with child? What goes on, how does that development happen?

Josette Luvmour: Well, what I began to notice in the parents who really took it to heart and made real effort to learn about child [development] ... Let

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

me back up a second, most parents came to many of our programs initially, because in their view something was wrong in the family, or something disconcerting was happening with the child. Some communication had gone out, something was not happening the way they wanted it to happen.

That's the initial stimulus that oftentimes would bring people to learn about child development, to learn something new. Out of that learning something new, then there comes a point where you just have to start practicing it, and playing with it, and making it work in your family. Even though the developmental information was something that we would share, every family is unique, so you have to adapt it, and utilize it in a family situation that works for *you*.

As parents started doing that, sooner or later they began to realize that they came up against their own childhood you could call it conditioning, you can call it programs, their own way that they were parented. They would call that the norm or some social standard that people would call the norm. That norm began to be challenged by the needs of the child in front of us.

There were developmental needs that this child was expressing or showing a need for, and the adult would come smack up against some childhood program, or maybe even an unresolved issue from when they were children. I remember parents saying to me, "Well, I can really see my child needs this sense of trust and fairness and justice and caring, and these very specific developmental nourishments for trust to develop, but I have to tell you I did not get those things when I was a child."

There's two ways a parent can go, they can back up and say, "Well, I never got it and I'm just fine, and I think my child will do fine and figure it out on their own," that's one way of going about it. Then there's the parent who will say, "you know, I really didn't necessarily think I had the best childhood in the world, or I think I can improve on what I received, even if it was pretty good. I'm going to go ahead and make the intentional effort to do things differently."

That willingness to do things differently, to engage the unknown, to venture into territory that's new with their child, and meet their child with the needs that the child was showing them was necessary, inevitably leads to a self-questioning. You observe the things that are coming out of your mouth where you start saying to yourself, "Gosh, that just came out of my mouth, and I never thought I would say that to my child."

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

Have you had that experience?

Paul Freedman: Yeah, isn't that universal? It's like, who am I becoming? I'm my dad; I'm my mom, yeah.

Josette Luvmour: It's certainly happened to me too where something comes out of my mouth where it's like, "Holy cow, I never thought I'd say that." Then you back up a sec and you say, "Let me reflect on that, let me reflect on where that's coming from, and let me do some self-inquiry here and question myself as to what do I want to bring forward? Do I really want to make that part of my child's future?"

One woman, the way she put it to me, she said, "I had to think to myself, am I going to take my story and make it my child's story? That's when I decided, no, I'm not going to do that, I'm going to move forward with understanding there's a better way to do this." That kind of self-observation and then reflection and then really questioning ourselves of what we're ready to go forward with, that is the pivotal point, that's the key turning point for the adult to engage something new and enter new territory with their children.

Paul Freedman: Right, and so that aspect, that pivotal point is a cognitive awakening of self-realization and where have I been, and where is my child going? That I have a role to play in not just perpetuating patterns that were given to me, but I can make a difference, seems to be a cognitive shift. I know also, concurrent with, or maybe in advance of, or at some point during that cognitive awakening, comes this just profound emotional awareness and attachment that you just feel when you're with your child, when you're with your infant, and then throughout the different miraculous stages of development, right?

I know your work talks a lot about the integration of both cognitive and emotional and then we're moving towards wisdom I think.

Josette Luvmour: Well that originally is why I started thinking that what I was seeing was an integration between cognitive and emotional development. As we begin to self-observe, that's an internal process, and even self-reflection is an internal process. You're right, it is cognitive, but we differentiate. Through that process we start to differentiate ourselves from our past. The past takes on a new order, in other words, my relationship with my past, the charges or the energy I have associated with that, starts to change.

That differentiation from the past starts to move us forward into seeing ourselves in a new way and seeing our children in a new way.

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

Our view of ourselves, our view of the world starts to shift and change. With that comes emotional change, so cognitive development in the adult often stimulates emotional development, and feeds into emotional development.

Feelings of trust start to grow for ourselves, for our children, and for others in our lives. That emotional development inevitably stimulates new perspectives in life, and cognitive development again. Cognitive development and emotional development do feed back and forth to each other in adult development, especially when we conscientiously are willing to engage children in a relational way to what is the developmental need that this child is expressing here.

Paul Freedman: Right, that is so beautifully said, and mirrors my own experience exactly. In some ways for me the cognitive, "Wow, this is a big responsibility," awakening happened even before birth. You realize you're going to have a child, and what an awesome responsibility that is if you take it seriously. Then the just awe and wonder of infancy as a loving parent, and what that does to you...the first touch, and the first smile, and all those things just changes your being. Then leads you to reflect, exactly as you said.

I find that whole focus of your work to be unique first of all, at least in my awareness in the field. As an educator I'd read a lot of child psychology and child development, and at least all the popular theorists of the last hundred years. Even those that talked about relationship as important to child development, truly neglected, I think it's a huge hole in the history of holistic education, progressive education, is noticing again, "The other person in the room," the adult who is profoundly developing as well.

Just huge gratitude to you for calling our collective attention to that. When we start to parent, we have a good 40, 50 years of life left, and there are developmental opportunities right in front of us, is an amazing thing to have ignored.

Josette Luvmour: Well, I don't know if we've ignored it, or just nobody's ever observed it in the parent-child relationship. It just became so obvious to me in helping people integrate the *Natural Learning Relationships*, or nurturing children with *Natural Learning Relationships*. The thing that you just said that's so beautiful, is what awakened in you with the birth of your child, was a motivation out of love for the child.

Many parents out of that motivation of pure *love* want to do more than what they received as children. That stimulates, that emotional development that starts be stimulated in the adult, we could even

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

call empathy. That feeling into the feelings of our child just blossoms and grows. As parents learn more about child development, they feel a trust for their children.

They feel into their ... The way their child views the world, and understanding not to impose on the child the adult's worldview, but rather that the adult has within us our capability to feel into the feelings of the child. That is a huge heart opener, and in adult development, that empathy, I think it's been noted in many fields, that ability to feel into the feelings from within ourselves, feel into the feelings of the other from within ourselves is a huge motivator for shift and change in relationship to our children.

Paul Freedman: At the end of each school year at Salmonberry School we participate in some ritual closing activities with the students. At one part of our closing ritual with our grades four through six, we have a circle, and in the circle we speak to each other from our hearts. Sometimes I use that quiet opportunity with the children in a circle and a concentric ring of parents and loved ones around us to tell this story.

This story came to me represented as a folktale from Tibet, but in looking for it online I haven't been able to verify that. In fact have discovered a 27 word poem by a poet named Christopher Logue, which was published in 1969, which I think is either the pirating of an old folktale, or else might have been the inspiration. Anyway, here's the story.

Once there was a wise teacher, he spent a very special year working with his students. Every day the students would dutifully enter the classroom and engage with the teacher on all sorts of subjects. Always the wise teacher seemed to come back to what he called the big questions. Who are you? Why are you here? Where you going? What will you do when you arrive?

Slowly the year passed, in one of the melancholy mornings as the year was drawing to a close, the students dutifully entered as always and came to sit down. The wise teacher surprised his students by saying, "Wait, don't sit down today, we are going on a walk." "A walk?" Objected some of the students, "There's still more to learn, we don't have time for a walk?"

"I haven't the proper shoes," said another. "I didn't bring a coat, I'll be cold, and where will we go? When will we return?" Calmly the teacher reassured his students, "Think back on our work together this year. Have I ever harmed you? Have I ever put you in danger?"

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

Do you trust me?" It got quiet, and the students reflected to themselves. They did deeply trust the teacher, so off they set on a walk.

It turned out to be a long walk. The dirt road twisted and turned, and then narrowed, but the teacher, followed by his students continued in silence. Until after several hours, again, one of the students complained, "I'm getting tired." "I'm hungry," said another. How much farther? The wise teacher calmly reassured them, "Think back on our year together, have I ever harmed you, or put you in danger? Do you trust me?"

They continued in silence. The road became a path, the path started to incline. The path became a trail and got steeper and narrower still. Eventually the group found themselves walking along a single file goat-trail along a rocky precipice. The path seemed to cling almost unnaturally to the side of a sheer cliff. The teacher proceeded to a stone outcropping.

"I'm frightened," said one of the students. "I can't go any further," and others agreed. "We won't follow you anymore," calmly the teacher looked back and reassured his students. "Reflect on our year together, have I ever harmed you, or put you in danger? Do you trust me?" One by one the students inched forward toward the outcropping where the teacher stood overlooking the vast abyss.

One by one the teacher pushed them off the cliff, and one by one they flew.

The original poem, what I think is the original poem by Christopher Logue goes like this:

Come to the edge. "We might fall."

Come to the edge. "It's too high."

Come to the edge. And they came, and he pushed, and they flew.

Ba Luvmour: Let's have some fun interpreting this teaching story. Become a Patreon supporter at patreon.com/remarkableeducators, and you have access to our detailed comments on how this story applies to education and parenting. Of course, that's just our perspective, the fun comes with community dialogue as the many shades of the teaching story come alive, see you there.

Paul Freedman: So, let's go back to *wisdom* where you were trying to lead us. One question that arises for me, is so we have increased cognitive awareness, we have heightened emotional stimulation and presence with our children. Time passes, and we perhaps make discoveries

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

and tons of mistakes as parents and educators, I will throw us in there too, as people nurturing children in their development.

Eventually, with the integration of the emotional growth, and the cognitive awareness's, and decisions to parent or educate with those developmental imperatives in mind. Something miraculous happens that from reading your work perhaps we call the emergence of wisdom. Talk to us a little bit about that, what do you mean by wisdom? How does that happen?

Josette Luvmour: That's an enormous topic, and first let me back up one second and say, I really appreciate that you brought forward that teachers change when teachers take on nurturing children in the classroom, or creating classrooms that are developmentally appropriate. Creating curriculum, keeping the developmental ages and stages of the children in mind, and creating curriculum that matches and meets kids where they are in their development.

What starts to happen, is each of the developmental stages has specific ways to nurture what's organizing in that developmental stage. For example, I think everybody can relate to the first developmental stage, or below the age of seven, where children need a lot of loving touch, and a lot of sensory exploration security and warmth, and the nourishment of being flexible and all these developmental needs that are in the environment.

As the adult nurtures those needs with the right relationships, then the adult also organizes a deeper sense of relationship to place in the world, or courage, or personal strength. Parents who continued to do that with children, started to notice that they were accessing a relationship to being of service, not with resentment.

We might call it even compassionate action for the benefit of others started to appear. As parents are nurturing the needs of children let's say between the ages of 8 and 12, they're starting to realize that their nurturing has to change to becoming more feeling mentors, and things like fairness, and honesty, and justice, and adventure starts to become really important to nurturing that child's sense of trust.

Well, as the parent starts providing these things, they start realizing that trust in themselves grows deeper and more connected with the child. A sense of empathy as I said before, and emotional complexity with things like honesty and humility, and a greater emotional connection started to emerge in adults.

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

That was just two of the developmental stages, so one of the things I would say, is what starts to happen for adults who are really willing to engage, not only nurturing their children, but reflecting in themselves, is a sense of well-being starts to emerge. That well-being starts to look like being more open-minded, and being more fair, and feeling a deeper sense of connection with others.

Deeper insights start to appear about ourselves and with others, because the more we know about ourselves of course, the more that we know about the whole human race. From that sense of self-acceptance and courage and personal strength, a deeper resilience started to appear. These are all aspects of well-being that people, ... when I did my research, parents were talking to me about what they were experiencing.

In a state of well-being, or feeling really good about ourselves, our relationships, our connection with our children is flourishing. From that emerges a sense of inner knowing where we are being in relationship with children from a ... you might even call it a wisdom-based-relationship, where their developmental moment is met by us from our connection to them and ability to supply them with their needs.

There's a momentary, maybe more than a momentary, but there's a deep ... The wisdom in us is meeting the wisdom in them. There's an inner knowing inside of ourselves, where our sensory, emotional, physical, intellectual, all parts of ourselves are working together. There's a hum where you might say there's a *yes* moment, where every part of us knows, yes, this is right.

Paul Freedman: Is that sense that exactly as you describe, is that what we might call the arrival or emergence of wisdom?

Josette Luvmour: Would you say it sounds like that to you?

Paul Freedman: It does.

Josette Luvmour: It does to me too.

Paul Freedman: Isn't that so what our culture, what our world needs, is adults who are reaching towards wisdom, and not just material, "success," right? Sorely lacking.

Josette Luvmour: Well, in the field of adult development there's a trajectory to adult development, and it's toward, the trajectory is toward wisdom. The way I define it in my book, is that it is right actions that is according

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

to the context of a person's current developmental moment in their life, in relationship with the environment or the context that the person is within.

It provides us with opportunities to experience life, to learn, to grow, to actualize our individual and collective purpose and meaning.

Paul Freedman: Right and it seems like historically and through cross culturally, there has been this reverence for the wise elder, and the expectation that with age, wisdom is ubiquitous. It's coming, you are present as a sentient being for long enough on this planet, and wisdom will be the outcome. Somehow in the modern age, and maybe it's for longer than that, we've lost access to wisdom.

What a relief that a tool for reconnecting with our potential for wisdom is right in front of us in the form of our children, and our relationships with them.

Josette Luvmour: That's nicely said, I really appreciate that. I think a lot of times parenting is thought of, and even teaching sometimes is thought of as something we do for children. We are interconnected creatures, we know from the brain sciences now that our brains are connected with other brains. Wisdom does not only just come just by aging; you have to put in a little bit of effort.

The relationship with one another, especially with children, is one of those places where there's enormous opportunity to engage and grow.

Paul Freedman: Can we perhaps, thank you so much, really insightful and beautifully articulated.

Josette Luvmour: Can I offer a description of wisdom that one of the parents who I was speaking with, this was her description, and it's in the book, but I just think it's just perfect, the most beautiful...

Paul Freedman: Please.

Josette Luvmour: She said, "I trust that there's a wisdom in every interaction, and that if I can sit back and let that wisdom emerge, it will take us where we need to go."
She went on to say, "Wisdom is a knowing, and it's not the kind of knowing I get from my head and my intellect, though my intellect gets to contribute. It's not the kind of knowing I get from my heart and emotions, though my feelings get to contribute."

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

"Although there is a spiritual component, it is not a spiritual knowing. There's a wholeness to wisdom that incorporates all of those kinds of knowing. My wisdom is generally very simple, there's a rightness to it. Not a wrong/right type of rightness, there's just an isness. I can tell its wisdom by how I feel, there's no struggle in wisdom. There may be a struggle getting there, but one of the ways I know I'm in wisdom, is by its simplicity, its wholeness, its rightness. I have a certain peace in wisdom."

I just thought that's a beautiful definition that sums it up nicely.

Paul Freedman: Beautiful elegant, yeah, poetic. Lovely, so yeah, and again my heart is imagining the world where on many levels our parents, our educators, our leaders are on a trajectory towards wisdom as you say. What a different world we might create for our young people, and *with* our young people.

Yeah, let's, if it's okay with you, shift attention a little bit to the school settings. I know not all of your work, but some of your work is with teachers and helping with professional development in school settings. Again, in rereading your book in anticipation of this conversation, I came across this lovely phrase, or sentence you wrote, which says, "We are swimming in an invisible ocean of relationships with our students."

So beautiful, and so if that were how we viewed what education is about, what are the implications of that? How does that change the mission of schooling, or any other thoughts you'd like to share about your work in the institution of education?

Josette Luvmour: I love the way you said that, we're swimming, or the way I guess I said that, *we're swimming in the ocean of relationships*. There's nothing other happening, children are below consciousness we could even say. They're reading us all the time. They're taking in who we are, our attitudes, our facial expressions, our tone of voice. These are ways that we receive each other's internal condition non-verbally.

Some people call it tacit knowing. It's a way of knowing without words what's happening inside the other. We're reading each other all the time, so as teachers in the classroom, the relationship with the students has to be respectful of what that child is capable of understanding developmentally. The relationship being developmentally appropriate, the language we use being developmentally appropriate, and the curriculum being relational

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

to the students interests, in many ways is what holistic education is all about.

It is emerging with the interests of the child, and I understand of course there are certain things that have to be taught, or can be learned at different ages when the window is open. Being *with* the child and finding ways to work *with* the interests of the child, almost invariably leads to a better relationship for learning to occur.

Paul Freedman: I imagine you're probably called in to consult with school communities who on some level are already, "Getting it." It might be like the parents, analogous to the parents you referred to earlier, who sense there's something wrong, something amiss, not optimal, and can't put their finger on what that is. How do you, how have you found educators specifically receive your guidance, or suggestions about relationship-based teaching?

Josette Luvmour: Well, different communities react differently, of course.

Paul Freedman: I bring it up; because it strikes me that it is in opposition to what we are trained to do as teachers. Teacher training and teacher development does not emphasize relationship, which is an understatement of course. It's about performance and management and assessment and documenting skill acquisition. There's no relationship in that model.

Josette Luvmour: Which is really interesting, because everything you just said is nothing but relationship.

Paul Freedman: Right you would hope, right?

Josette Luvmour: It's like who does the child perform, or not perform, but work best with, is the person who can really relate to them. I was just talking to a colleague of mine the other day, and she said her students respond most to her, because she listens. They say to her that she listens, that's something they really notice about her. When I'm working, or called into a school, I'm not telling them what they're doing wrong, I let them figure that out for themselves.

I offer the information, and this is human development. I'm not making this up. I'm relaying the laws of nature, in a certain way, that make it very easy to access. There are Aha moments that will occur for teachers where they realize themselves ways that they could up level their own teaching practice, at least the best teachers are always looking for ways to improve and grow and reach their children, or their students rather in a more authentic way, a deeper

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

way, a more meaningful way, and those teachers really blossom and grow.

The teacher that is going to stick with what they received in their college courses, that's a different type of teacher that might not really be willing to do things any differently.

Paul Freedman: Right.

Josette Luvmour: Both are true.

Paul Freedman: Yeah, do you find ... I'm in a position where I'm both hiring teaching faculty at my school, and then trying to develop their practice. Sometimes I have a sense I think born out of just an intuitive feeling, that parenting was so profoundly important to me in being able to see the child, see through their eyes, feel through their heart as you write.

That those adults who have not yet had the transformational experience of parenting, are challenged, might inherently be challenged to be in the teaching or nurturing profession. I don't know, it's just something I've wondered about. When I reflect back on my own beginning of my career as a teacher before parenthood, I now think, "What an arrogant, judgmental young teacher I was."

When I was thinking, "Why can't these parents just make this child behave?" Now I just have so much more empathy and ...

Josette Luvmour: Compassion.

Paul Freedman: Compassion, exactly for what it means to parent.

Josette Luvmour: Well that's an interesting question, because parenting certainly does change us. I think when I speak to a group of people, I'll ask the group, "is anybody the same as they were before they were parents?" Nobody will raise their hand. "Can you raise your hand if parenting has changed you in some significant way?" Everybody's hand goes up. And then we start talking about in what ways has parenting changed you?

Certainly, tremendously. But there are people who are called to the teaching profession who do incredible things out of the love for teaching. I know some teachers who ... One in particular I'm thinking of who knows that he will not have children. That's just his choice in life, and yet he really has the ability to stretch into his middle school students, and reach them in a beautiful way.

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

A little side note...it's worth noting that this teacher learned to use *Natural Learning Relationships* child development as a part of his teacher training. A large part of his success in creating relationships with his middle school students, by his own admission, was using *Natural Learning Relationships* in his classroom and curriculum creation.

So...We know that parenting changes us tremendously, and those of us who take on parenting conscientiously in the ways that I've just talked about here today. Also, teaching is the same thing. When we take teaching on conscientiously, and we're willing to grow with our profession, and grow beyond what we learned in our graduate schools and in our original courses that we took. That we continue to grow tremendously, but growth requires vulnerability, and it requires self-questioning. That's where the rubber meets the road, can I use that ...

Paul Freedman: Sure, yeah.

Josette Luvmour: Yeah, that's the real ... The person who's really willing to take themselves on and say, "I just observed myself doing that, and I want to see if there's another way to do it."
Then actually go out and seek new information to learn how to do something differently, or collectively work with their colleagues, and discuss best practices that have worked for others, not disciplinary practices, but relationship practices that allow us to reach into really meeting a child where they are.

Paul Freedman: Right, yes, I appreciate that, and I have had plenty of encounters with beautiful teachers who get it, who understand the transformative potential of relationship-based education, who are not yet parents, or who might never be parents. I think that's true, but it does sometimes feel like the exception, because there is something that just shifts within us as we parent.

I think we're running close to the end of time, and I want to give you a chance to bring forward whatever you feel is most salient, or that you think we neglected in our conversation. Perhaps this will be edited out later, but I just have a question for you. I read a lot, and I've been going back and reading some of my favorite texts.

As I was rereading *Grow Together*, your beautiful book on all of this that we've been talking about, a relationship-based adult development. Particularly that quote that I said before about *swimming in an invisible ocean of relationships*, it led me back to Martin Buber. I don't know how much his work influenced your

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

understanding of humans and relationships. I was like what is it about that quote? I feel like I've almost read it before.

Buber wrote in 1923 this, "Inscrutably involved, we live in the currents of universal reciprocity." Again he's talking about what he calls the "Ich und Du", the I/thou relationship, and the idea that we either see ourselves and the world as self-object, or this other (kind of) being. The effort to understand other, and again feel through their hearts, experience them viscerally, and concretely, but also with our whole being, spiritually and emotionally, feels a lot like the underpinnings for *Natural Learning Relationships*.

I think he nailed it about 100 years ago, and I wonder if that has spoken to you, or if I don't know.

Josette Luvmour: Oh yes, oh yes, I've been strongly influenced by Martin Buber. In his I/thou approach to relationship, and I'm particularly influenced by the viewpoint that we are creating the social world between us. It's in the space between us in our communication where we are creating that social relationship, and treating the other as *thou* and not *it*.

He put it so well, is entering a new sphere altogether where we're respecting the other as not just a part of ourselves, but a part of the divine.

Paul Freedman: Beautiful.

Josette Luvmour: Yeah, thank you for bringing that up, that was a good question.

Paul Freedman: Sure, yeah, so before we close, I just wanted to give you every opportunity to say what's on your mind in what came up during our conversation, or what you were hoping might come up during our conversation that we didn't quite get too. I just give you a moment to close us out with any messages, or ideas that you'd like listeners to hear before we say goodbye.

Josette Luvmour: That's really sweet, well first I want to thank you, because I feel like you've done an extremely good job.

Paul Freedman: Thank you.

Josette Luvmour: I don't know that too much has been left out, but of course, you can't say everything that could be said. I think the one message I would hope that everyone listening to this would receive, is that we are connected with children, and our children and students are

Meetings with Remarkable Educators

connected with us in invisible ways. We're not separate, and to reach into and be ... what's the right word? ... empathetic with children, feel into their feelings; see the world as they see it. And, work with children in ways that are connected, developmentally appropriate, and relational creates a better world for them, for sure, but for us as well. We're not doing this just for the kids; it's a whole systems approach. We're part of a whole system all of us together, but thank you so much Paul for giving me that opportunity.

Paul Freedman: Thank you Dr. Josette Luvmour, it is my sincere pleasure to have had this time with you, and we'll have a cup of coffee sometime and continue.

Josette Luvmour: I look forward to it.

Paul Freedman: All right.

Josette Luvmour: All right.

Paul Freedman: Thank you so much.

Ba Luvmour: *Meetings with Remarkable Educators* is brought to you in part by our friends and supporters on Patreon. If you enjoy our podcast, and want access to enriching gifts for parents and educators, please visit Patreon, at **patreon.com/remarkableeducators**, and consider becoming a patron. Your support means the world to us, and will allow us to continue this essential project.

Our sound engineer is Dimitri Young, our webmaster is Nathan Young, and our all-important social media maven is Cleo Young. All podcasts are transcribed with show notes, and can be found at **remarkable-educators.com**, that's remarkable-educators.com.

This is Ba Luvmour reminding you that holistic relationships with children leads to joy and self-knowledge with the adults in their lives. With respect for you and for children everywhere see you next time.

Meetings with Remarkable Educators