

Therapy Chat Episode 321



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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy chat podcast, episode 321.

[00:00:04] **Announcer:** This is the therapy chat podcast with Laura Reagan LCSW-C. The information shared in this podcast is not a substitute for seeking help from a licensed mental health professional. And now here's your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

[00:00:34] **Laura Reagan:** Today's episode is sponsored by Trauma Therapist Network. Trauma Therapist Network is a platform for finding a trauma therapist, learning about trauma and understanding about how trauma shows up

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[00:00:57] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan today. I'm very honored to be joined again by a guest who was on the show last October. Believe it's episode 309. My guest today is Dr. Mona Delahook. Mona has a new book out this year called *Brain Body Parenting: How To Stop Managing Behavior And Start Raising Joyful Resilient Kids*.

[00:01:22] **Laura Reagan:** Her previous book is called *Beyond Behaviors*. And, um, we talked about that on episode 309, but in case you missed it, Mona M Delahook PhD is a clinical child psychologist with a passion for supporting families and children. She has worked widely with multidisciplinary teams in the area of developmental and emotional differences for over 20 years.

[00:01:44] **Laura Reagan:** She is a senior faculty member of the Pro Factum foundation and is a trainer and consultant to schools, public and private agencies and parents. Her blog, and award-winning book *Beyond Behaviors* using brain science and compassion to understand and solve children's behavioral challenges explains a new neurodevelopmental approach to childhood challenges for therapists, parents, and teachers.

[00:02:10] **Laura Reagan:** Although the description sounds a little complex. The book is very readable, very approachable. It has a lot of like charts and images and things are explained really well. So I highly recommend that book. I was very grateful that she was willing to return to Therapy Chat today. So let's dive right into our conversation.

[00:02:37] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And today I'm so happy to have a returning guest, Dr. Mona Delahook. Mona. Thank you so much for coming back to Therapy Chat today.

[00:02:52] **Mona Delahook:** Well, Laura, thank you so much for having me back. I'm excited to talk to you.

[00:02:56] **Laura Reagan:** Yes. I'm really happy too, that we can talk again.

[00:02:59] **Laura Reagan:** You have a new book. That's just coming out called *Brain Body Parenting, How To Stop Managing Behavior And Start Raising Joyful Resilient Kids*. So I'm excited to talk to you about that because it's like, it seems like it's just an extension of your previous book *Beyond Behaviors* and it goes into even more depth.

[00:03:18] **Laura Reagan:** So I can't wait to get started, but before we do, let's just start off by you telling our audience a little bit more about who you are and what you do.

[00:03:26] **Mona Delahook:** Sure. Well, I'm a child psychologist and I've been in the field for, well, like almost three decades now. And I'm a mom and I love working with kiddos who have behavioral challenges.

[00:03:42] **Mona Delahook:** That was kind of one of my specialty areas. And I'm also an infant and toddler mental health specialist. So a lot of my work has been with looking at developmental differences and challenges in the very early years. And that's typically when you wouldn't think about going to see a psychologist, but it really had to do with helping parents understand early development and helping parents and preschools and daycare providers have a better understanding of how our little tiny humans develop resiliency and what their behaviors mean.

[00:04:17] **Laura Reagan:** That's so wonderful. And I was reading in your new book, how you had been a psychologist for a while and decided to go back and get that. Infant and infant mental health and toddler mental health training.

[00:04:31] **Laura Reagan:** Can you talk a little bit about that? How you, you know, you were saying we're like trained in the top-down approach originally?

[00:04:37] **Mona Delahook:** Right, right.

[00:04:38] **Mona Delahook:** Well, in traditional mental health training, I don't know if this is how it was for you, but in our, in our education, we learned a little bit about infants. Maybe in terms of attachment theory and things like that.

[00:04:51] **Mona Delahook:** But generally the training starts at about age five. You know, when you can, when you have little humans who are talking and where you can do psychological testing and understand their, their thinking, their cognition, but in infant and toddler mental health. And the reason I went in there is that I really was wanting to have a preventative model.

[00:05:12] **Mona Delahook:** So I saw so many teenagers and young adults that were struggling for a decade as a, as an adult psychologist. And I was really hearing things that I wish their parents would have known about them when they were younger, like early memories. And how do we develop resilience and what does it all mean? So it's actually, it's a sub-specialty so there are certificate programs.

[00:05:37] **Mona Delahook:** There were not very many when I was doing it, but there was that I have a specialization where we dove deeply. Into development. And when you think about development, it's really the body and the brain developing at the same time, because little infants and toddlers, can't sit on a couch and tell you what's going on.

[00:05:56] **Mona Delahook:** You have to interpret their behaviors through their actions and through how fast they move their bodies and through their looking at their, what we call the autonomic nervous system, what is happening in inside of a body in terms of their relative calmness or agitation, their level of distress or their level of feeling safe.

[00:06:17] **Mona Delahook:** And this led to a whole, it really, it was pretty amazing. I was able to study with clinicians in the LA area during the decade of the brain. And that's when a lot of people were thinking about the intersection between stress. And trauma and early development and, oh, uh, what does, what does this look like? What does this mean for our therapy models, where we began to think about the body's experience in the world, informing our predictions of what will happen.

[00:06:49] **Mona Delahook:** And it just opened up a whole new way of looking at behaviors for me and, and looking at development. So, yeah. It's been, it's been really fun. And now I'm, I'm still, I'm still in the office and working not as much, but I'm writing about this transformation, kind of this paradigm shift from looking mostly at our child's thinking mind and looking at a more holistic approach, which is how their bodies are informing their sensations, feelings, and emotions. And we now know that our emotions come from these basic sensations from deep within our bodies. So it's a really exciting time in the field.

[00:07:34] **Laura Reagan:** It is. And you know what, when you said you were lucky to learn in LA during the decade of the brain, I, I didn't know.

[00:07:41] **Laura Reagan:** I didn't know exactly what you meant and I I'd love for you to expand on that, but it, it sparked a curiosity. Like I thought immediately Dan Siegel is in Santa Monica. There's something happening there.

[00:07:54] **Mona Delahook:** Yeah. He had a study group. I was, I was in a study group with his co. One of his colleagues, Dr. Connie Lillis. And then there was Alan Shore.

[00:08:04] **Mona Delahook:** Then the decade of the brain. Also, there was this huge tone that came out called neuron from neurons to neighborhoods where the

government did a study on, on basically how to develop our human beings through resiliency, through the model. Um, of looking at brain development, it was called from neurons to neighborhoods.

[00:08:27] **Mona Delahook:** And all of this was coming out in front in the 1990s, which was known as, that's why I said it, the nineties were known as, it seems so long ago as the decade of the brain. And that's when the different types of research and brain scanners came online and they, and there was just a ton of focus on the brain in a new way, in a new way.

[00:08:48] **Mona Delahook:** And, uh, yeah. And here in LA it was just, it was, there were so many people studying this, that we were able to form study groups and teams. So I was on teams, for example, with people who were occupational therapist, developmental pediatricians. Physical therapists, educators, mental health. And so we would look at a child.

[00:09:14] **Mona Delahook:** We would staff a child from all our different disciplinary lenses in this, in this kind of whole, whole body way. And I just learned so much, I learned so much from the field of occupational therapy, sensory integration, for example, because a lot of the kiddos that I got in through my practice, for example, who were kicked out of preschools or who were, who were having really aggressive behavior in kindergarten or first grade.

[00:09:42] **Mona Delahook:** And we sought, we looked at them through this lens of their individual differences in their sensory processing and found that once we helped them feel more comfortable in their bodies and the way their bodies were taking in information and moving in response. Well, all of a sudden the challenging behavior is decreased.

[00:10:02] **Mona Delahook:** So.

[00:10:03] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, it's amazing. Like, you know, I don't know, there's so much to say here, but I just I'm excited. And when you said, like, it was such an exciting time and I feel like, again, now we're in a really exciting time. It seems like there's so many different ways that people are approaching the questions of, you know, wellbeing for our whole human population and from, you know, the sensory aspect.

[00:10:28] **Laura Reagan:** Attachment development, understanding trauma and what trauma really is. And it's not just what we, you know, used to think. So, um, I feel like this is a right place, right? Time thing for I'm happy to feel that I

have like 20 more years in the field at least. And so excited to see the way things are going. So thank you for everything.

[00:10:52] **Mona Delahook:** Thank you. And thank you for, I mean, this is Therapy Chat, right? You're bringing people together. You're bringing on colleagues and others who were talking about these different, exciting pieces. That you're right. We are really at a, at an exciting time where so many different pieces of information are coming together and we have more ways to help people and reduce suffering.

[00:11:15] **Laura Reagan:** Absolutely. And I should have added in culture too, because that's definitely something that is more present to looking at. What, how culture influences, you know, what's working and not working for people in wherever they are.

[00:11:29] **Mona Delahook:** Absolutely absolutely culture and equity and bias. And, and what it's like for some of some humans to, to experience threat or safety in our world.

[00:11:41] **Mona Delahook:** I mean, I think we're really are coming to a new understanding of all of those areas. In the last couple of years, as well as just additional stresses from the pandemic. So it's been a wild ride.

[00:11:55] **Laura Reagan:** It has, but something else that you said, I just like you to expand on a little bit and just in that little blip that you were saying before you mentioned how are, how the, basically you were kind of saying that the inputs to the body influence from externally and from inside the body, the way the person predicts what will happen. And I, I think that it would be easy for a listener not to get what you meant when you said predict what will happen, but can you talk about that a little bit?

[00:12:23] **Mona Delahook:** Yeah. Thank you. Thank you for picking up on that because it's related to, this is kind of new information, but it's related to one of the most exciting theories, I think. New neuroscience-based theory called the theory of constructed emotions and the lab of Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett and what, what her lab is discovering and what, what the neuroscience about how we experience emotions.

[00:12:52] **Mona Delahook:** How that happens is so interesting because it has to do with how our brain predicts what's going to happen based on our past experiences. Plus what's going on inside of our bodies. That's a process known as interoception, so feedback from literally inside of our body. That is feeding

up to our brain, giving us a basic sense of like, what's called an effect like calmness or agitation, positive feelings or negative feelings.

[00:13:26] **Mona Delahook:** These are coming up from both the insides of our bodies and also from how we experienced the outside world through our sensory systems. So all of a sudden, you. Idea of sensory processing that isn't just relegated to a sensory processing disorder or certain children with overreactivity it's all of us, we all process the only way any of us understands the world is through what's going on inside our gut, inside our bodies.

[00:13:54] **Mona Delahook:** Essentially our whole, not just our gut and how we're taking in information. And then our brain mixes that with all of our aggregate past experiences and makes a prediction for us as to how we're going to react in any given situation. And it really is kind of mind boggling if you think about like its implications, because.

[00:14:15] **Mona Delahook:** For our children. For example, we, our goal then becomes to help them predict better, help them predict that their world is a safe place. Let's just say a child who, who has, uh, all of a sudden develops a phobia or panic attacks. And we know that that is because all for some conflict, ration of reasons, that child's brain is now predicting threat and danger, even when that child is physically safe, ostensibly safe.

[00:14:46] **Mona Delahook:** But that doesn't matter what matters is our internal experience right. Of how we feel on the inside. And so then we go to all these nice things that we can do to help our bodies feel safer and help coach parents on what are those things about your child system that helps them calm down? How do you use your relationship to help what we call co-regulate that little nervous system into feeling better, to feeling safer and to communicating with you when they're in distress.

[00:15:16] **Laura Reagan:** Mhmm yeah heh heh heh, how do we?

[00:15:20] **Mona Delahook:** Ha ha ha, how do we? Right, right. Well, that's kinda it. That's kind of the topic of, of, of this next book of this book, Brain Body Parenting is that what we really need to do is become observers. Of our own nervous systems of our own internal state, right? On a relative relative scale of feeling calm and alert to feeling over excited, you know, agitated fight or flight-y kind of, or maybe just so exhausted, we're checked out.

[00:15:52] **Mona Delahook:** So understanding on that continuum where we are at any given point in time and when our, where our child is. And once you do

that, then you can kind of do a roadmap. So if you see a child who is upregulated overactive in what we call that fight or flight response, then our first goal is to use our relationship.

[00:16:17] **Mona Delahook:** To use our own calm, nervous system to help calm the child down. And if you've ever tried to calm a child down by lecturing them or giving them a timeout or dangling a goodie in front of them, you'll know that if that child is truly in distress, that doesn't work very well. What works well is our own lending them, our calmness lending them our what we call co-regulation.

[00:16:41] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:16:42] **Laura Reagan:** Oh, you know, I just thought about how, when you said a tantrum or a timeout, you know, in those moments, like how you handle it and how, how well does it work? And think back to my own parenting when my kids were little, because they're in their twenties now I can just remember easily how chaotic it would feel when you know, they were throwing, throwing a fit, throwing a tantrum, whatever you want to call it, they were losing it.

[00:17:09] **Laura Reagan:** And I was probably losing it too. Maybe I was losing it first and then they did. Who knows, but, um, but then you just feel so powerless to do anything. And so I was thinking about how it's so automatic for many parents to yell when they don't know what else to do. And then the child may be become quiet.

[00:17:29] **Laura Reagan:** So it's like, it seems as if that calmed them down somehow. But I know it's not that it's probably that they're shutting down.

[00:17:37] **Mona Delahook:** I think so, Laura, that's, that's what, that's what it appears to be happening. If it, if it works, you can, you can have a behavior change, but that behavior change may not be calming the child's nervous system. It may be revving it up. So if a child is scared, for example, if they are in a, again, this isn't, this isn't meant to put any guilt on parents. Because we've all been there and it is so hard is really, really hard. But if a child is, is blamed or reprimanded, or if we, if we overpower a child and that behavior stops, it might be because they're going into that.

[00:18:16] **Mona Delahook:** What we call the blue pathway, the dorsal vagal pathway, where they are protecting themselves and kind of shutting down a little bit. So we want to remember that human nervous systems thrive on cues of safety, not cues of threat. And so to the, to the best extent possible, the research

really shows that the pathway to helping children in distress is by lending them another nervous system, which is us.

[00:18:45] **Mona Delahook:** That is witnessing their witnessing their pain. Of course, keeping them safe and not allowing them to do things that will harm harm themselves or others. But at the same time, just being able to witness someone's distress and let them know they're not alone, that we know there's a difference between a top-down in a purposeful testing behavior and an out of control human, which is that's that body up behavior.

[00:19:10] **Mona Delahook:** The bottom up behavior is different than the mediated. Thinking about, I'm going to do something on purpose right now and test out my limits of my power, which kids do, but that's a big difference between that and a child who was a red face. Snotty nose, heart rate is very irregular, sweaty hands, you know, falling over themselves.

[00:19:33] **Mona Delahook:** That's true autonomic distress. And that's where we really want to pour on. If we can, of course, compassion for ourselves, make sure we're good at we're okay enough to help that child to say, I see you, we're going to get this together to get through this together. Oh buddy, this is rough. This is rough. This is rough, but you're not alone.

[00:19:54] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, that's so hard. And I think it's also hard, you know, if the parent feels so dysregulated that. To, to bring a calm, nervous system to co-regulate. And I say that from experience, not for, not in a shaming, I've been there so I know it can feel like I don't know what to do, you know?

[00:20:13] **Mona Delahook:** I've been there too. I think every parent can relate to this and, and on top of it, you're exhausted.

[00:20:21] **Mona Delahook:** If you're a parent of toddlers, for example, who really require a lot of patience and we expect more from them than they're really able to do in terms of self-control, but they are so tricky because they seem like little adults, but oh, they're just not. And it really takes a lot of, a lot of, I think again, like mindful self-compassion for ourselves as caregivers.

[00:20:47] **Mona Delahook:** And also some education, because I really think we don't really understand social and emotional development well enough.

[00:20:54] **Laura Reagan:** So true.

[00:20:55] **Laura Reagan:** So true. Do you think that it would be helpful to talk a little bit about a little more in depth because you started to and then I asked you a few other questions, but when you were talking about infant mental health, can you talk a little bit more about the brain and body developing from, from birth?

[00:21:11] **Laura Reagan:** Like you were saying in the nervous system, autonomic nervous system?

[00:21:16] **Mona Delahook:** Well, human, humans are born very immature. Their, our brains are very immature relative to other mammals who come out and they're, they're more developed, but humans are completely dependent on, on our caregivers to meet all of those needs.

[00:21:37] **Mona Delahook:** And. That, that first, every, that, you know, the first breath and including your inter uterine environment, but everything begins to wire that baby's brain gets wired to the world they're in. So they're what they learned to expect from the world is shaped by how well their caregivers are able to essentially see their needs and meet their needs.

[00:22:05] **Mona Delahook:** And that's called the studies on that are related to something called responsive care and what we know works best for developing resilience for infants are adults around the baby who do those, those steps of responsive care. That is first of all, have awareness when the baby has a need, just to see it right, the baby is fussing or crying, for example.

[00:22:32] **Mona Delahook:** And then number two, make it an accurate guess. Accurate enough guess, as to what's going on. So let's just say the baby is hungry. And then number three, you meet that need, you feed the baby. And so this, this fills three aspects of responsive care are highly correlated to infants who get to start to develop better self-regulation because they get to believe that a need as they have it, is going to be met.

[00:23:02] **Mona Delahook:** And this is why we don't recommend letting babies cry. For example, it's not useful to let a hungry baby cry for an hour before it's fed that gives the baby a different message, right? About how well somebody is taking care of their body. So infant development really ha is, is, is anchored in co-regulation.

[00:23:27] **Mona Delahook:** So that is the needs are met by the caregiver. And then we, we gradually do a little bit less and a little bit less. Then as a baby turns into a toddler. You mean even babies start to develop these little techniques. Of

calming themselves. Babies can find their thumb, they can push their little feet against the crib.

[00:23:48] **Mona Delahook:** They can look around the room, right? They can look, they can find your face. They can suck on their hands. So little babies start to do things on their own. And then we don't have to be there constantly, right? Every single second, holding them and putting, forcing their hands in their mouth. They start, they do that on their own and our, and then our toddlers, again, with the emotional regulation, they need so much patience and help from us when they disregulate because they get a, a pink sippy cup and they really wanted a blue one when they have this enormous meltdown, because the wrong kind of, uh, we ran out of the type of toothpaste that they love and they have to use a different kind of toothpaste.

[00:24:34] **Mona Delahook:** All of those expected what we would call tantrum behaviors are really normative in those early years. And it requires a ton of patience from parents to just know this isn't a discipline issue. This is a little child developing self-regulation. Through the help of attuned adults who see it see an issue and don't judge them, but just help them.

[00:24:58] **Mona Delahook:** And a lot of our preschoolers who don't have regulation, a lot of the preschoolers I see in my practice, like the ones with aggressive and challenging behaviors, the, there isn't a, quite an understanding that these behaviors are not a child's intent to misbehave. They are stress responses, stress reactions.

[00:25:17] **Mona Delahook:** And those stress reactions are coming from a nervous system that is detecting that it's just not feeling safe. And even that child could be in a very safe environment. It's not what it means. It's how it's landing in the child. And that's the concept that doc Dr. Porges, he developed the polyvagal theory calls neuroception and I, in the book, I just call it the safety sensor.

[00:25:40] **Mona Delahook:** We all have a safety sensor and sometimes it'll go off on things that are invisible to us. For the child and we don't know why they're crying or fussing or hitting, but something has clicked. And right now they have moved into that nervous system that is moving a lot or yelling or screaming. And it's it doesn't ask for their consent first.

[00:26:00] **Mona Delahook:** It just happens automatically.

[00:26:02] **Laura Reagan:** Right. And yeah, I think it's so important. What you said one piece about, it's not intentional. It's not, it's not being spoiled. It's not, you know, you've, you've overindulged them or you're not getting them in under control enough. It's their attempt to feel to get there themselves, to feel right within the environments that feel right for them.

[00:26:24] **Mona Delahook:** That's right. Exactly. It's a feeling, it's not mediated by, I am going to do this right now because I am mad. It's more of the body moving in a way to feel better. So if you ask that toddler, why they did it, they will have no idea why they'll make over because humans do.

[00:26:43] **Mona Delahook:** Right.

[00:26:44] **Laura Reagan:** And they'll want to give you an answer because you're asking for one, they're trying to give you what you're asking for.

[00:26:49] **Mona Delahook:** That's right. That's right. Yeah. They're such interesting little people

[00:26:55] **Laura Reagan:** I know. And they're so sweet. I mean, when it's not your child and you see a toddler, you like, they're adorable! But when you're raising toddlers, you're like, oh my patience you know, it's really, it gets hard.

[00:27:08] **Mona Delahook:** It gets so hard. It gets so hard. And I think we just have to so emphasize that if you feel, if you have a toddler or you, or you remember having toddlers.

[00:27:20] **Mona Delahook:** It is bone crunching, hard work, and it pulls us in every direction, emotionally, physically. And if you're, if you know, yeah. If you're working from home or if you have experienced additional stress through the pandemic, and most people have, it's been even harder to parent. I think it's been harder to parent. These last few years...

[00:27:43] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I really feel for parents who have little kids to take care of during this, because it's been very hard for me and I'm not even, I'm just, it's just me and my husband and our pets, you know, it's hard.

[00:27:56] **Mona Delahook:** It's hard. It's hard. I do. I feel for everybody it's really been hard.

[00:28:00] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So there was an example in the book that really felt relatable to me, which was not because this is something I've

experienced, but I think a lot of parents and teachers and therapists have seen and heard about things like this. You talked about a dad who's dropping his child off at school. And his daughter is like clinging to him and she doesn't want to get out of the car.

[00:28:24] **Laura Reagan:** And she's like, you know, she's crying. And she's begging not to go in. And of course, what we do is we just like force them, you know, into the hands of the teacher and drive off and your parents crying and child's crying. And, you know, but you talked about how the, the child's body showed that she was in distress and her body was trying to regulate her.

[00:28:49] **Laura Reagan:** You said like her body was undulating and, you know, trying to actually, even in the behaviors of the grabbing onto the dad and pulling and like the way she was moving her body, it was clear that she was, it wasn't just the dad that she didn't want to let go of. She was actually trying to get herself regulated to go in.

[00:29:08] **Mona Delahook:** That's right. That's right. That's the, the body uses movement, the platform that are our brain in our body uses movement to manage that stress that's felt on a very primitive level and inside. And so the feeling of threat, she felt the feeling of threat, but this was a child who loved school. So it wasn't like we call school refusal, you know, and it's kind of an interesting word.

[00:29:36] **Mona Delahook:** It was more, well, maybe what we would think of as separation anxiety, but this was a child who really was that cascade of feelings that hit her when they got to a certain place in the drop-off line. And her, again, her brain. Was beginning to experience all of those body sensations that she had before that were negative.

[00:30:00] **Mona Delahook:** And she didn't have any positive ones to cling on to. And so her body would use movement, which is clinging holding onto his toes, holding onto the parent's leg, begging them not to leave screaming, crying, and one way for to deal with that. And what, in this, in this case, what, what was, what they tried, which didn't feel right for the parents was that, you know, they pried her off, the teacher pried her off and then went inside with her and they, they texted the dad and mom later and said, yo, she was fine after 10 minutes, you know, but we really, you know, we really...

[00:30:38] **Laura Reagan:** it's like something about that says, was this really the best way?

[00:30:42] **Mona Delahook:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. It's this prying off a kid off of a parent like, is this, that was pretty hefty cost to the child and to the teacher and to the dad. Right. Everyone involved. The physical handling of the child. It just all felt wrong. And anyway, when we, when we, when we began to create and curate, creating a new scenario, that her body felt safe in. That's where we got some traction.

[00:31:14] **Mona Delahook:** So, what did we do? We we stopped the, the school drop-off because I analyzed that there was likely her body was likely picking up cues of threat from the chaos. There were a lot of mommies and daddies. There was the car, there were people, there was background foreground noises. It was very, it was very an overwhelming environment to do a drop-off.

[00:31:37] **Mona Delahook:** And so I think all that chaos. Was signaling her body to say, ah, this is weird. So we started having the dad arrive and the teacher was amazing 15 minutes early before the drop-off period. And he parked the car and they walked in together and just chatted with the teacher outside the door of the room for a few minutes every day.

[00:32:00] **Mona Delahook:** And sure enough. If the teacher asked the girl, if she'd hold her hand and be her special helper and she's went into the room and the first time it happened without, you know, first few times she was a little sniffly, little cry, but she did not cling onto the dad's leg and within a couple of weeks. And so within a week she was walking in with the teacher and then about, I think, I can't remember it was two or three weeks later, but at some point later, She asked her dad and she told her dad, she was ready to be dropped off in the, in the carpool lane again, I mean the drop-off lane again.

[00:32:38] **Mona Delahook:** And so it was, it was really understanding this child, this child's nervous system, looking at her stress response in her body, looking at her individual differences. She was. As it turns out, she was quite aware of sounds very, she could hear things from a mile away, so that can increase the child's stress sometimes in strange situations.

[00:33:01] **Mona Delahook:** And then thirdly, her, her developmental ability, her. She needed more co-regulation and that wasn't her fault. That was just her, how she was developing. We develop co-regulation from birth to our, you know, early adulthood. So it was a nice way of thinking about once we respect. The child's body's sense of things and taking it, their pace.

[00:33:27] **Mona Delahook:** Oftentimes those challenging behaviors disappear. They go away on their own.

[00:33:32] **Laura Reagan:** I love that.

[00:33:32] **Laura Reagan:** I mean, it's like it's as if, if we stop pathologizing, everything that maybe they can just actually come to solutions together and just. You know, and the child says, well, here's what I'm feeling. Here's what's going on. Instead of, you know, force her to do this, make her do that, get her to comply, you know?

[00:33:52] **Mona Delahook:** Right, collaborate with the child and let them thrive!

[00:33:57] **Laura Reagan:** Like, assume good intent.

[00:33:58] **Mona Delahook:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:34:00] **Laura Reagan:** Like why do we see kids as like, you know, a threat to somehow, like they're trying to get one over on me or something that's like, what? They depend on us.

[00:34:09] **Mona Delahook:** I think. I know, I think it's somehow in our inner cultural DNA to think that we need to, we need to control children's reactions and behaviors, and maybe we need to make sure that we are, we don't have enough discipline if we don't have enough discipline, maybe we'll raise children who are out of control.

[00:34:31] **Mona Delahook:** I think there's some sort of mythology around that. And, and it might relate back to hundreds of years ago when they're the saying was children should be seen and not heard. I mean, I think if we have some roots in, in our early understanding of children that are still kind of there, that aren't really in line with how we see how we know.

[00:34:56] **Mona Delahook:** Children are in our, in our new knowledge.

[00:34:59] **Laura Reagan:** Right.

[00:35:00] **Laura Reagan:** I agree. I was thinking (about) that too children should be seen and not heard. It seems to still kind of pop up a lot.

[00:35:06] **Mona Delahook:** Yeah. And, and our education system is very heavily anchored in behaviorism, right? So that is taught to most teachers. You know that field of behaviorism, it was an interesting field of, of, of research on animals, you know, around the beginning of the of the 19th century.

[00:35:29] **Mona Delahook:** And I mean, of the 20th century in the 19 hundreds, it was, it was interesting research. Right. But then it got, it got hijacked into psychology. And we still, I think, think that that's modern technology, but behavioral looking at behaviors as the target and not the signal is another piece that I talk about in the book.

[00:35:50] **Mona Delahook:** And that is the newer thinking is that behaviors are a signal. And if we try to always go after behaviors and making sure. Children are behaving well or in air quotes, or if they are compliant, we may be missing the bigger picture of what's going on inside the child that is motivating the behavior, which is an internal, body-based, sense of not feeling good and being activated in their nervous system.

[00:36:20] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And you know, before we started recording you and I were saying that this, this is all children, not just children, who've experienced trauma or children who have sensory processing disorder or other, you know, neurodivergent presentations, but it's it's children.

[00:36:36] **Laura Reagan:** This is how humans develop.

[00:36:39] **Mona Delahook:** It's how all humans develop. We all are on a journey to thrive, to survive by feeling safe and our bodies take care of us. Our bodies travel through these different pathways of our autonomic nervous system to make sure we are, we are safe. And I think that's the best thing we can do for our children is to be aware of how they are perceiving the world and not judge them for it, but use their bodies as they're our roadmap, to helping them develop a sense of safety and insecurity and eventually flexibility, because I think in the end resilience kind of equals flexibility.

[00:37:21] **Mona Delahook:** And the ability to shift. And if any of us have needed that in the last couple of years, we've had to be so flexible as parents and as professionals. And as all of us with, with these shifts in our daily life. Our work life, everything due to COVID-19. So, yeah.

[00:37:42] **Laura Reagan:** Right. Yes. And that what you said there about flexibility that really resonates and it feels like, you know, rigidity and compliance and force.

[00:37:52] **Laura Reagan:** You know, that's, that's not really sustainable. I mean, people don't thrive in that, that paradigm. So if we're forcing kids into boxes, you know, to, you have to be like this and not looking at them as individuals, we're not only missing the essence of who each person is, but we're

limiting them. And potentially there could be, you know, we could be contributing to the toxic stress that they may have been exposed to before, or we could be giving it, you know, inadvertently by trying to make them just, you know, be quiet, be still and not do what their bodies want to do naturally. Yeah.

[00:38:29] **Mona Delahook:** And not that we not, you know, I think that it's so where we don't blame or shame ourselves as parents, if we, if we tried to have complaints, cause which parent hasn't done that?

[00:38:39] **Laura Reagan:** Well, I thought that, I'll just say it right now. I mean, I thought that if my children weren't obeying me, I was not doing it right. And I didn't, I couldn't figure out how to make them obey, but finally I realized if they wanted to, if they wanted to comply, it was a lot better. So we started working with it that way.

[00:38:56] **Mona Delahook:** That's so great. I know. And somehow I did too. I thought, well, maybe I'm not consistent enough.

[00:39:03] **Mona Delahook:** Maybe I'm not a strong enough disciplinary. And I think it's, there's a lot of pressure. To feel that way as parents they're really is. And of course

[00:39:11] **Laura Reagan:** We got a messages about that.

[00:39:13] **Mona Delahook:** A lot of messages about that, and parents do feel very, very judged in our culture. There are studies on that parents feel like eyes are on them and it's so difficult, but yeah it's.

[00:39:25] **Mona Delahook:** When we, when we understand that our best efforts really on, on P in parenting, aren't simply focused on our child's behaviors and on the way your child's body and brain processes integrates. And experiences their world and we really have a new roadmap and it's pretty exciting because we can then be, we can be sturdy, strong parents and still be, you know, raise children with the values we want to have, but also having awareness of their emotional life, hopefully in a way that maybe other generations never had.

[00:40:04] **Laura Reagan:** Exactly. And, you know, I don't want to shame anybody because I am far from perfect and I've gotten many things wrong as a parent and as a human, but. You know, we, we have to just, I think we just have to be open to learning the best information that's out there at the time.

[00:40:23] **Laura Reagan:** And trying to synthesize that into how we relate with the people in our lives. You know, our children, ourselves, our parents.

[00:40:31] **Mona Delahook:** Amen to that. I, I, I think that. As far as our field goes. I think that's kind of amazing that in mental health, you know, if, if you're suffering as a, as a parent or as a preparer as the provider or anything in between, there are therapist available that can help you make sense of that jumble inside of you, the jumble of experience of what may have happened to you.

[00:40:58] **Mona Delahook:** Some of what you remember, some of it, which you may not remember, and if you're feeling dysregulated upset, anxious, Uh, on a, on a really continual basis and it's, and it's impacting the quality of your life. You know, we have, tele-health now it's, it's opened up, uh, the pandemic opened up a whole range of options for, for getting help.

[00:41:19] **Mona Delahook:** And I urge you to do that because certainly in the last couple of years, life has really thrown a lot of stress. At people. And additionally, if you're a parent raising children, this has been a really wild ride so.

[00:41:32] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Really challenging time.

[00:41:34] **Mona Delahook:** Yeah.

[00:41:36] **Laura Reagan:** Well, I'm so glad that your, both of your books, but your new book in particular is here because I think it's a very compassionate guide for parents and teachers and anyone, you know, we can only do the best we can with what we know. So if you don't know how to help children, co-regulate, you give the instructions right there in the book. So I think it's wonderful. And thank you for what you do.

[00:41:59] **Mona Delahook:** Oh, thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you for what you do.

[00:42:03] **Mona Delahook:** It's great to be talking to you again, and, uh, really looking forward, have a lot of hope for 2022. So let's see what happens.

[00:42:12] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. That's a great way to end. And I'm so grateful that you could spend time with me today to share this message with our audience. Can you tell people where they can find more of what you're doing?

[00:42:25] **Mona Delahook:** Sure.

[00:42:26] **Mona Delahook:** I'm on - my website is MonaDelahooked.com. And I'm also on Facebook, uh, Dr. Mona Delahook, Instagram @monadelahook and Twitter. And I just, yeah, I love to post like studies and tips and stuff. That is really, I'm trying to translate neuroscience research for our use as parents and in everyday language. So we'd love to have you join me on social and again, just so happy to be able to connect with you and your audience today.

[00:42:58] **Laura Reagan:** Oh, thank you again so much for being here.

[00:43:04] **Laura Reagan:** Therapist. I just wanted to take a minute to talk to you about why I created Trauma Therapist Network and how I hope that it will benefit your clients and you. Pretty simple. There has not been one place to find information about trauma, find a trauma therapist and for trauma therapists to find networking, training, connection, support, practice-building, all in one place. So for example, as a trauma therapist, you can have a Psychology Today profile and they are definitely the biggest broadest therapy directory that exists. They've been around the longest. But what they don't do is they are not specific in what do you do that makes you a trauma therapist.

[00:43:50] **Laura Reagan:** So if a therapist on Psychology Today says, I specialize in trauma and PTSD, but when you look down their listing, it also says that they specialize in like every other mental health disorder that exists. And how do you know that they have the knowledge and experience and that they are the person that can help you with your trauma?

[00:44:12] **Laura Reagan:** There's no way to know. So that's why I made Trauma Therapist Network. And initially I felt that it would be useful to create a site for people. Wanting to learn about trauma and find a trauma therapist all in one place. But what I didn't account for is that therapists are missing out on connection and community even more during this pandemic.

[00:44:33] **Laura Reagan:** So once I realized that this was something that could be added into Trauma Therapist Network to make it a true community for therapists, I decided to go ahead and add in some content. So starting in March Trauma Therapist Network Community for therapists includes your list. That lets people know how you work with trauma.

[00:44:52] **Laura Reagan:** It includes once a month, an hour long training workshop on a topic related to trauma. And once a month, an hour long Q and a workshop about various topics related to our work, including practice building.

And I'm going to bring in some outside practice building experts to help with that one time per month, we will have a call focused on therapist's self care.

[00:45:14] **Laura Reagan:** An experiential practice of self care for one hour per month. And once a month, we will also have case consultation calls. So I'm working on putting all that together in the membership community. The new content starts in March, so you can sign up in February. And in March, you'll have access to that registration closes on February 28th for any new members.

[00:45:38] **Laura Reagan:** So if you are thinking of joining, this is the time, just go on over to www.traumatherapistnetwork.com. And you can take a look around the site, look at the listings, check out some of the amazing therapists that are going to be in community with you and who will be learning with you and learning from you and you will be learning from them.

[00:46:01] **Laura Reagan:** I'm so excited about this, and I'm so grateful to all of you who have already joined. So if you're thinking about becoming a member of Trauma Therapist Community, don't wait, just head on over there to www.traumatherapistnetwork.com and sign up.

[00:46:17] **Announcer:** Thank you for listening to Therapy Chat with your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

[00:46:24] **Announcer:** For more information, please visit therapychatpodcast.com.