

Nicki: Welcome to the Healthy Rebellion Radio. This is an episode of Salty Talk, a dive into popular and relevant healthy performance news pieces mixed with the occasional salty conversation with movers and shakers in the world of research, performance, health and longevity.

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Nicki: Health rebels, this is Salty Talk. And now the thing our attorney advises the contents of this show are for entertainment and educational purposes only. Nothing in this podcast should be considered medical advice. Please consult your licensed and credentialed functional medicine practitioner before embarking on any health, dietary or fitness change. And given that this is Salty Talk, you should expect the occasional expletive.

Nicki: Hello everyone welcome back to Salty Talk.

Robb: How are you doing, wife?

Nicki: I'm doing quite well, hubs.

Robb: It seems like only minutes ago since I saw you last.

Nicki: Because it was.

Robb: Because it was because we have like no life and go nowhere, do nothing.

Nicki: Such as this time.

Robb: Indeed. Indeed. So, what do we have on the docket today?

Nicki: Well, today, this is a Salty Talk episode, I don't know how salty it's going to get because it's a little bit more-

Robb: Well, Salty Talks can be reflective and philosophical, too.

Nicki: No, you don't have to.

Robb: It's not just me having a fit and a meltdown and feeling epileptic over things, so yeah.

Nicki: Okay, okay, yeah. This Salty Talk-

Robb: You're too literal, too literal.

Nicki: I am. I am. I'm-

Robb: You're literal.

Nicki: That is one of probably my biggest faults is I'm like-

Robb: I would call it an asset.

Nicki: An asset?

Robb: Because I get to tease you constantly about it.

Nicki: Yeah, I am. I am ridiculously literal.

Robb: Yes, you are.

Nicki: Well, we're going to talk about homeschooling because a lot of people this year, particularly because of some of the ways that going back to school looks, a lot of people have made the choice to homeschool their kids this year, at least for part of the year until things kind of change. So, we thought we would share a little bit about our experience homeschooling this past year and going into this year and-

Robb: We've had a number of people reach out to us, too and just say, "Hey, what are you guys doing?" And we do not portray ourselves as being homeschool experts.

Nicki: Not at all.

Robb: We literally just passed the one-year mark and so, we may actually be in that Dunning-Kruger mount stupid part of this.

Nicki: Most likely.

Robb: What we think we know what we're doing and probably don't, but we have learned a ton and I think that-

Nicki: I think the main goal of this show is just to share our experience and I know there's a lot of people out there that feel like they could never homeschool, like either their personality isn't right for it or they think their kids are too unruly or they just could never make it happen. And so, we just kind of want to share our experience and maybe that might make others feel like they could actually tackle it if they wanted to and some people have no desire to homeschool and that's totally fine.

Robb: And literally no amenable way to do that with like work and all of that. Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: In some people, yeah, that's true, too, like some people maybe are intrigued about homeschooling, but because both parents work or if you're a single parent and you're working like maybe it's just not feasible at all, so there's that as well. So, we're just going to kind of dig in and share what we learned over the past year and kind of some of the things that we're doing and go from there.

Robb: So, let's see here. Well you're scrolling like crazy here?

Nicki: Well, you know.

Robb: Let's back up a little bit. Why did we choose to homeschool?

Nicki: Right. So, when we were in Reno, we had our kids in a Montessori program there, which we loved for the kind of preschool-kindergarten years. And then when Zoe went to first grade, there was a brand new teacher and early on in that school year, we learned that-

Robb: And it wasn't, just in fairness.

Nicki: I'm trying to be tact.

Robb: Well, I don't think tact is really fair at this point. One, what we discovered is that just very broadly, what we were hearing is that kids were not learning what they were supposed to be learning, like there were kids in seventh and eighth grade that were listening to audiobooks because they weren't at a reading comprehension level to stay up with reading assignments.

Nicki: And what we're saying like this is not the Montessori, this is not the Montessori method, so I think Montessori is an awesome program of methodology. This was all brought onto our radar from a dear friend of ours, who had two girls in the same school and she actually pulled them. She's from Rome. Her mom taught Montessori. I mean Italian through and through, like, Montessori method until you die kind of thing.

Robb: Couldn't find a bigger believer in the Montessori method, yeah.

Nicki: And it was sort of this like existential crisis for her pulling her kids out, but she had a third grader that she didn't feel was being served well in the school. And so and she started digging and, a lot of things came to light. So anyway, long story short, Zoe's first grade, it was almost like she didn't do anything in first grade. In the Montessori classroom, there's lessons and you're supposed to practice, but there wasn't like the follow-up or the accountability that the kids should have had.

Nicki: So if you have a child, that's really diligent and you get taught fractions and then they every day want to go work on their fractions, that's great, but if you have a child that, "Oh, I'm going to go play on the piano" or do something else that's more creative or fun for them, which is great, like it's nice to be able to choose your work at times, but if there's never the accountability or the follow-up on doing the mathematics and reading and spelling and the things that need to be done, then a lot of kids can kind of fall behind.

Robb: Yeah, well, and so, we did. It was as if she didn't do a year of school. She was actually better at math, reading and spelling coming out of kindergarten than she was at the end of first grade. And so that was a thing where it got on our radar that like, "Okay, this program isn't really working." And we started looking around at some of the other options and then this was right around the time where Google gave us a drastic haircut.

Nicki: We decided that we were going to remove.

Robb: And we were like, "Okay, what are we going to do?" And we're going to move and so, we did when we moved, we tried to land in a spot where there was arguably like better public schools.

Nicki: The public school here for elementary anyway is quite good. The schools in Texas are quite good as compared with other places. But Zoe also has a personality where, I mean, she's very, very smart, but if she feels like she's not getting something like she kind of... it would be like a confidence issue and I didn't want to put her in a high-performing public school and have her feel like she wasn't smart, have her feel stupid or dumb or "I can't do it." So, we made the choice that we were going to homeschool at least for part of the year last year just to get her up to grade level because she wasn't at grade level in math and she wasn't at grade level in spelling, writing, reading and all of that, so all of it. So, that was kind of the main-

Robb: She was at grade level for playing air guitar, but that was really that it, so yeah. So, that was a motivator and is kind of a background like when we were thinking about our move and again, I don't know how valuable any of this is going to be for anybody, but we'll like try to give you a little bit of like kind of background color on this stuff. When we moved, we really looked for a place, again, that was in a good school district, like what appeared to be a good school district, because we weren't really sure if we could do it. We weren't sure if this was going to be an absolute disaster and whatever situation either the kids were like are we going to have to default back to doing standard school?

Robb: So, that was a nontrivial factor in our relocation, like had we actually known what we know now that this is, at least for us, very doable, we'd like where we are, but it would have provided much more latitude for us in relocating. We're like, "Okay, well, we're in a district with not a spectacular school district, but because we're confident in the homeschooling that seems to be going well and we enjoy it," it would have given us more latitude.

Nicki: Absolutely.

Robb: Like that was a major limiting factor in the whole relocation story.

Nicki: Absolutely.

Robb: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: Yeah.

Robb: So, I'm wanting to like kind of interview you more a bit on this.

Nicki: Okay.

Robb: So, we made the decision to homeschool because we were moving, we're getting to a new location, weren't totally comfortable with where the kids were, where it should be.

Nicki: And another thing, too, so we were moving halfway across the country from our family, friends. We like to travel. Robb does, did a fair amount of speaking engagements and so part of the been the appeal of homeschooling was that we could take the kids with us whenever we wanted to travel somewhere. So, if Rob needed to go somewhere and do a speaking gig, we could all go if we wanted to and because you can homeschool everywhere, so that was a big part of it. If we wanted to go back to Reno and spend three weeks with my dad and the kids could have some good grandpa time and we could see our friends and you know because we can work from anywhere...

Robb: Kinda from anywhere if we have an internet connection, yeah.

Nicki: ... as long as we have an internet connection, which is really nice and we're very fortunate in that regard. So, the travel piece was a big part of it for us as well, like it would give us this flexibility.

Robb: Now, we have no travel option, so-

Nicki: Now, with COVID, like we-

Robb: But even though, and again we're kind of bouncing around a lot, but with COVID even though it trimmed our wings on the travel options, the need to wear masks all day in certain formats, the reliance on online curriculum that is like eight hours long and needing to be on a device that whole time and stuff like that.

Nicki: Depending on the school district.

Robb: Depending on the school district, but there's-

Nicki: I mean, not all of them are that way, but there are some that are.

Robb: Absolutely right.

Nicki: And I think that is a big reason why a lot of parents who are in a position to do so are choosing to homeschool for the first time this year.

Robb: Right, right.

Nicki: Yeah.

Robb: So, how did we choose... do you want to talk about the curriculum or do you want to talk about some of the common pushbacks about homeschooling?

Nicki: Yeah, we can do that. So, I think the number one, well, there's a couple, like the first one that comes to mind is people thinking like "I could never do it." We have younger children. So, I think most people are like, "Okay, I could probably help teach my kids reading, writing and arithmetic at sort of an elementary level," but other parents are like, "Oh, my gosh. My kid is 13 and he was an AP." He's advanced and he's doing pre-calculus or whatever and so they feel like "If they weren't good at math, there's no way I could help my child and excel in the subjects that he's in." So that's one of them.

Nicki: And I think the way around that is there's so many resources online, you don't have to be a teacher, an expert in all of these subjects. If you don't like science or you were terrible at science or math or whatever it is, you don't have to be the sole person responsible for doing that teaching. There's enough resources online at this point. I mean, Khan Academy.

Robb: There's just so much stuff.

Nicki: Yeah.

Robb: It's crazy.

Nicki: Yep.

Robb: Which is a little bit overwhelming and that's why we will get into the curriculum that we that we picked out, not to say that it's the curriculum that anybody should do, but we can talk about the hows, whys, whats with that.

Nicki: And then some parents are excited that they get to learn alongside their kids, so even if you don't know, you're not great at biology and then your kid needs to be learning biology that year, you can sit down and learn alongside them. I mean, all you need to be able to do is read and have decent reading comprehension and you can learn alongside your child in videos.

Robb: In videos and stuff like that.

Nicki: Yep, yep.

Robb: So and just as in the side, I would make the case that if your child is kindergarten or first grade, they're rally in the foundation stuff, that's arguably harder than when kids are further down the road because there are all these resources. When your kids don't know what really a number is, I mean, what is addition versus subtraction, what is-

Nicki: Or if they can't read yet or they're just learning to read.

Robb: Or they can't read, yeah.

Nicki: Once a child can read, they can themselves teach in a big way.

Robb: It can just start taking off. Yeah, so it's interesting. I would actually make the case that if you're going to be intimidated about something, it should be more on the front end because you really do want to get that right and because people think it's remedial that it's easier, but we see this in Jujutsu all the time. When somebody is just getting going like "What is a shrimp? What is back control?"

Nicki: What are the positions?

Robb: What are the positions?

Nicki: What does sight control mean? Yeah.

Robb: Yeah. It's actually the beginning foundational piece that is the most challenging and the most critical to get right and again, that's not to dissuade you, but if your reservation is about, "Well, I never took calculus and I think my kid is going to need calculus." You can get a tutor. You can aggregate tutors. People will share tutors and get together, so many different things there, so I definitely wouldn't be... if you were going to be intimidated, be intimidated on the front end, not the back end. The back end is arguably going to be easier because if we foster an ability to learn how to learn, not saying that we're just going to be like, "Hey, kid, go teach yourself Quantum Mechanics," but it's there are more resources, there's more opportunities for the kid to at least get the first couple of passes more or less on the row or two to get some exposure to it.

Nicki: Yeah. And there's a lot of homeschooling cooperatives and groups and depending on where you live like shared resources in that way. We're not in a homeschooling cooperative. My cousin here is. She has four children that she's homeschooling. Well, the youngest is only three, but three that are in school, school aged, so there's definitely so much help around that you can seek out to make that a lot easier.

Nicki: I'd say another big one that a lot of people say is, "Oh, if you homeschool your kids, they're not going to have proper socialization, and they're not going to know how to interact with other kids and they're going to be weirdos and not know how to act in society." And I would say, well, some arguments say like it's a really unnatural thing to have classrooms grouped with just people of the same age level like that sort of an unnatural construct.

Robb: Which is part of the reason why the Montessori does what it does.

Nicki: Which is one of the reasons why, yeah, the Montessori, you're in usually a three-grade level groups...

Robb: Three level.

Nicki: ... so that the older kids can help the younger kids and in a normal society, there's all age groups. And so, depending on your family and your friends' situation, your kids can interact with grownups and kids of other ages. If you're living out in the boondocks, maybe that's a little bit more of an isolated scenario, but one of the benefits is that there's a lot of activities and things that you can do during the day, so all of your stuff doesn't, all of your extracurriculars, you can kind of put in the middle of your day. They don't have to be after school necessarily and your days don't have to stretch on so late.

Nicki: Our kids, we have them, there's a woman here that we met through a neighbor. She's 80 years old and she lived on 30 acres and she loves horses, and she's been a horse woman all of her life and she's teaching the girls basic horse skills. I mean, this isn't advanced stuff by any means, but they learn how to groom them, they learn how to ride.

Robb: What their temperament is, how to be safe around them. Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: They're learning how to ride. They're starting bareback, so that they can kind of feel the horse underneath them. They know how to get on and off a horse properly and some saddle stuff, but it's very, very basic. But I feel so thankful that we were introduced to this woman because she's 80 years old and because we moved here and my father is their only grandparent, they're not around a lot of people older and there's just something amazing about...

Robb: All that wisdom and the experience and-

Nicki: ... people who have lived so much and this woman is just the sweetest person, so calm, so patient.

Robb: But also Broker is no bullshit.

Nicki: And no bullshit, yeah.

Robb: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: And so, that part is great. So, there's opportunities, I think, to do things that you wouldn't otherwise have if you were restricted to a school day. So, like for example, this woman, we do it early in the morning because here in Texas, it's really hot...

Robb: It's hot as balls.

Nicki: And she's 80 and the heat really affects her, so but if we had to go to school that would be off the table because there wouldn't be no time to work with her during the day, at least in the summer when it's warm here.

Robb: Right.

Nicki: We also have them in Jujutsu, which is awesome and there's, I mean the kids' classes, there's like 15 to 20 children there every time and they're kind of a mixed age group from five to 10, 10 and 11.

Robb: 10 and 11, yeah.

Nicki: And they get a ton of playtime and interaction there, which I think is amazing.

Robb: And just on that socialization piece, too, I want to throw out there when I reflect on my own childhood, some of the shittiest habits I developed, some of the worst exposures I had...

Nicki: That's a good point.

Robb: ... were from my peers and I also had some good stuff, but when I think back, it was good adults, a few good older kids oftentimes and a few same age peer groups that I got a lot of value from and then for me personally like there was a good five- to seven-year period of time where I could have gone completely off the skits. I could have been a bad kid and a bad adult and suffered all the consequences. And we did run a PE program for homeschool a long time ago back in-

Nicki: Back in when we were running the CrossFit gym.

Robb: I mean, CrossFit gym.

Nicki: This was like 2005.

Robb: And there were some awkward kids who were the children of very awkward adults, and I don't know that it would have been any different had they been in public school or not. It's just sometimes people are fucking awkward, so I just haven't seen that and in fact, it may be the exact opposite and it may just be a little bit of a Texan thing, but the kids that we've met that are in homeschool scenarios, "Yes, please. Yes, ma'am. No, sir. Yes."

Nicki: Right, right.

Robb: I mean, super buttoned up make eye contact, shake your hand, like it's-

Nicki: I don't think it's just a Texan thing. I mean, even in Reno, some friends that we did jujutsu with, they have four children, that they also homeschool and great kids.

Robb: So, I would just when people are noodling on and there's a cost benefit element to everything and it's not an either or thing, but are there challenges around not having kids in standard school because of socialization? Yes, but potentially, but there's also the flip side that you are guaranteed to expose your kids to socialization elements that you would not want them to be exposed to. They're going to get habits and we saw some of that.

Nicki: And we saw some of this with Zoe in Montessori.

Robb: Yeah.

Nicki: I mean, you know.

Robb: There were some kids that didn't have particularly good home lives and they brought that to school and kids need to deal with adversity and whatnot, but this was, we would see Zoe react in ways where we're like, "That is not our kid." And then since we've distance ourselves from that, that type of behavior just disappeared, so yeah.

Nicki: So, it reminds me of that book that I know I've mentioned before, *Hold On to Your Kids* and we can put a link to that in the show notes as well, which really just talks about how important having a connection with your children is and I know that sounds really trite, but when kids are in school all day and this can happen even outside of school, I'm sure. If parents are preoccupied with their own lives and their own work and there's not that genuine connection, the kids can kind of, what's the word, like-

Robb: The imprint with-

Nicki: Hone in and imprint with children who also are young and need really a kind of adult guidance and so then you end up imprinting and kind of shaping your worldview with the other eight-year-old or 10-year-old or 12-year-old or whoever your group is and that can have kind of adverse effects and then you pull away from your parents because you can't follow two leaders basically and so then, they end up. Anyway, long ramble there, but it's a great book.

Robb: And there's some great evolutionary biology behind that whole story. It's not a half bait kind of theory. There's good stuff to support it.

Nicki: Yeah. What else about the socialization stuff? I'm trying to think like when I was working for front desk, one of our co-founders, he was homeschooled and he has four kids also and he was homeschooling. Everybody we know has four kids, not true. And in his mind that socialization piece was just not a factor at all. I mean, you can still do sports, you can still do activities. So, yes, if you sat at home all day and you live two miles out of town and there aren't other kids around then that would be a bigger challenge, but if your kid has hobbies or interests and you can get them in these types of extracurricular activities then I don't see that as being as big of a deal.

Robb: Right, right.

Nicki: One other thing that we didn't mention that was kind of a big driver for us with the homeschooling thing when we moved here, like in Reno, the school started, you had to drop the children off at 8:30.

Robb: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's a great point.

Nicki: And here, at least last year, I don't know. Actually, it's probably still the same here even with the COVID stuff. You had to drop the kids off at 7:30, like school started at 7:40, so the kids had to be there. The first bell was like 7:35 and then school started at 7:40, which means you're getting them up at 6:40, 6:30 sometimes. And kids have had to take the bus, like the bus comes really, really early. And just knowing what we know about little bodies and growing and sleep, like for us that was a big motivator for us to try to figure out how can we make this work.

Robb: And we go to bed early. We are teased by the people who know us who are like, "Oh, we'd better wrap this shindig up because Robb and Nicki need to go to bed." But even when we go to bed early, our kids sleep a long time. They're very active. They do a lot of things. It's not quite 12 hours of sleep, but not infrequently, one of them will put like they go into a growth spurt or something like that. And when so occasionally even just doing the horse riding lesson, we typically have to wake them up a little bit earlier than what and they're kind of grumpy. And instead of that being every single day, it's a little hit and misdeal and there was, I forget who we're talking to, but an Austin area high school shifted its start time from 8:30 to 9:00 or 8:30 to-

Nicki: Or 8:00 to 9:00 or...

Robb: Yeah, 8:00-

Nicki: ... 7:30 to 8:30, just an hour difference and the number of kind of-

Robb: Motor vehicle accidents with the-

Nicki: Teenagers.

Robb: ... teenagers drop by 85% in one year.

Nicki: Because of sleep deprivation.

Robb: Because of sleep deprivation and this is the most likely way for these teenagers to die is in a motor vehicle accident and the best teenager, their head is on a swivel, but if you sleep deprive people like we know what a horrible impact that has on folks' health, so I'm glad you brought that up because as we were noodling on this when we were kind of looking at what the demands would be of hauling the kids out of bed early and there just reaches a point also where you can't put them to bed early enough, too.

Nicki: The sun's still up and-

Robb: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: Well, and also, one of the things about regular schooling is that frequently, they're there all day long and then there's an hour, two hours, three hours of homework following that. And so, oftentimes these kids are up until 11:00 at night, midnight doing homework and especially if there's any kind of sports or anything like that involved. So, the sleep deprivation thing with kids is a big deal.

Robb: So, let's talk about that a little bit and then we'll get into the curriculum we chose. What does the pacing of an average like kind of day end-week look like?

Nicki: For us?

Robb: For us.

Nicki: So, the kids wake up, we do breakfast, and then, so last year, so we'll kind of talk about what we did last year and then what we're doing this year. So, last year, Sagan was in kindergarten, Zoe was in second grade, and so our biggest focus was, "Let's get Zoe up to grade level." So, that meant up just primary focus on math and reading, writing and spelling. And so, Sagan being in kindergarten, we did the same stuff. And so breakfast and then usually right into math. And we'll talk about curriculum and whatnot. And you kind of have headed up the math for the most part.

Robb: You were totally qualified to do it. You've done as much math as I have, but we just had to draw some lines and you are far better at language than I am, so yeah.

Nicki: And then after the math, we would go right into our phonogram program, which we'll talk about, which basically encompasses spelling and writing and then reading. So, it was pretty limited in scope and then we would let any kind of interests and just questions that they had about the world kind of, we could go on tangents about those different things.

Robb: So, like just as on the side, the girls are watching a show.

Nicki: Emily's Wonder Lab.

Robb: Emily's Wonder Lab, yeah. And they were super-

Nicki: And she's this scientist woman and there's six kids. And so, she's doing different experiments and talking about hypotheses and different scientific-

Robb: So, one of the scenarios was that these kids, they were talking about the structural integrity of eggs and then they were trying to figure out what is the best way that one could walk on top of eggs? And so, one kid tried walking on one foot and another kid had two feet and then one kid was going to do...

Nicki: Bear crawl.

Robb: ... a bear crawl. And I asked Zoe, I said, "So, like if you have one hand down versus two hands down, what is the difference here?" And she's like, "The two hands down means more surface area and surface area is one of these fundamental concepts of physics and biology, just the world. There are situations where you want to increase surface area and there are situations very specifically you want to decrease surface area."

Nicki: And we have a lot, we talked about surface area a lot in our family especially at the dinner table, because it's like something, "Oh, Mom, it's too hot. I can't eat it." And so it's like we cut it up and it's like, "Why do you think that helps?" "Well, it has more surface area, so it can cool off more quickly."

Robb: And it sounds ridiculous, but this is teaching an eight-year-old and a six-year-old. The primary beginning concepts of thermodynamics and there are so many fucking people that have no goddamn idea what any of that means, in either a practical sense or in a scientific like how could you characterize surface area with like a mathematical equation and stuff like that, but because we-

Nicki: And some of that just happens at the dinner table. So, it doesn't have to look like-

Robb: Which is a good point that not all the education is going to happen in class time.

Nicki: Right.

Robb: And so I don't want to divert out here too far, but just the point being that I was super impressed that Zoe was able to have a hypothesis based off of a basic concept. And she said, "I think that the bear crawl is going to be the best one," and it ended up being the case. And the show was pretty cool because they throw out different hypotheses and then compete them against each other and empirical lab comes in to just driving the day. That's my little jab at the world right now, but-

Nicki: I'm going to take a quick or...

Robb: You want to do a quick break?

Nicki: I'm going to do a quick break, so that we make sure we get in our sponsor for today's show.

Robb: Okay.

Nicki: And then we'll dive back in. So, this Salty Talk episode is sponsored by Perfect Keto, the makers of a delicious suite of keto products like MCT oil powders, Keto Bars, Keto Collagen Protein, and Keto Cookies.

Robb: Is that suite as in several offerings or sweet as in-

Nicki: No, suite several offerings, both actually. Well, they're not sweet though, they're like, they're keto.

Robb: Okay.

Nicki: Perfect Keto's Keto Cookies are super good and they're a great option for people who eat a ketogenic diet or you like to avoid unnecessary blood sugar spikes. Maybe you insist on eating real food even on the go, imagine that or if you're busy and want a clean ingredient snack option, or would like a decadent treat that is guilt-free. And I know, Robb, the Perfect Keto Cookies are a favorite of yours. Which of the flavors are your favorite?

Robb: The peanut butter chocolate is pretty darn good.

Nicki: So, they have double chocolate, chocolate chip or peanut butter. I think that the peanut butter-

Robb: The peanut butter is quite good. Yeah.

Nicki: Yeah.

Robb: But I mean all of them are phenomenal.

Nicki: Peanut butter and I think chocolate chip are the kind of our family favorites.

Robb: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: Yeah, really good. So, you can check those out at Perfect Keto, perfectketo.com/salty and you'll get 20% off and get this, they're doing free shipping plus free nut butters on orders of \$80 or more for the rest of 2020. So folks, get in on that, grab some Keto Cookies. Go to perfectketo.com/salty. And again, you'll get 20% off Perfect Keto, free shipping and free nut butters on orders of \$80 or more for the rest of 2020. We all need little 2020 perks.

Robb: Smoke them while you got them.

Nicki: All right. Let's jump back in to the episode.

Robb: Okay, so we were starting to talk a little bit about how our day plays out and talk a little bit about how much time it takes to do this, which is both a benefit and a curse.

Nicki: Yeah. So, I think one of the biggest hesitations a lot of people, I mean friends that we've talked to that have been super resistant to homeschooling or have the opinion that they could never do it, I think the thought is that you need to create your homeschool. It needs to look like what a traditional school looks like, like 8:00 AM to 3:00 and you need to have an hour of all of these subjects and that can definitely, in your head, you can easily psych yourself out that sounds like a lot.

Robb: And it is within that format.

Nicki: Yeah, but, and this was something that my friend Jessica in Reno, who I mentioned before, she has four children that she's been homeschooling. And she told me straight out she's like, "It's not going to look like regular school. Don't expect it to look like regular school."

Robb: And I just want to interject something here. We did something crazy. We listened to and believed people who have done this stuff before, not to say that we were going to abandon our empirical ability and be like, "Well, I don't know if this is what," but we were actually like, "These are smart people. We trust their opinion." So, we at least said, "Okay, I'm going to unpack that anxiety around this thing and believe in what they're talking about."

Nicki: And another thing that she shared, which has kind of stuck in the back of my head, which has been nice is she would say like, "My older daughter, she's at a sixth grade reading level, but a fourth grade math level. And my son, my five-year-old is at a third grade math level." In traditional school, you're in a grade and even if you're not doing well in all the subjects as long as you pass, you get shoved up to the next grade, but that might not mean that you really have grasped all the concepts of the math that you would do in fourth grade and then you just get pushed on to fifth grade, even if you still don't have those concepts, the fourth grade concepts mastered. And so, one of the things that she loved is that she would work on things until mastery, which is one thing that we really like about it. It's "You get it wrong, okay. We're not moving on to the next concept. We're going to stick on this one until you actually master it."

Robb: And you keep rewarding good behavior, hard work, but it doesn't turn into a punitive thing where it's like, "Well, you totally shift the bed on that one." It's not like, "Okay, well, what are we not getting there? What are we not understanding?" We go back through and it's like laying coat to varnish. It's like, "Okay, we didn't get everything done on this first pass through," so yeah.

Nicki: But there's not that rush, right? So, her oldest, who might be a little bit behind in math, by the time she's in high school, she'll have it. Sometimes kids, they'll be behind in something because it doesn't interest them for whatever reason and then something else catches their fancy and then all of a sudden that math is really exciting or needed. And so, their focus goes there and they can take leaps there, but the fact like when you think about being able to work with a child on a given concept until they absolutely master it, which means that they can teach it back to you, I don't know it feels-

Robb: And it gives the kids so much confidence. When the kid is able to teach you back the material that you've been tinkering with and so, the Math-U-See program, which is what we're using for math.

Nicki: We'll talk about that for a second.

Robb: There's an introductory phase, there's a student workbook, an instructor workbook, which typically the parent is using. They have some online resources that includes video introduction to all the different chapters, but they make the case that you should be able to introduce this material to the child, a child gets all kinds of exposure to it, you should see them succeeding in the material. And then the final gold standard is like, "Okay, Sagan, explain to me how we deal with subtracting numbers that that add up to nine. How do we subtract those?" And she goes through and explains it and if she can't do them, we just go back through it again, but what's been cool is every step along the

way, the girls have gotten mastery and I feel like I do a pretty good job, too, of instead of it just being rote memorization, like what is the real story going on behind this.

Robb: The Math-U-See is kind of interesting. They start off with just addition, although they sneak in some subtraction, but in kind of an interesting kind of sneaky way, so that the kids aren't bombarded with too many different concepts, but they start off with like, "Well, what's adding zero to something?" Well, it's still to something and then plus ones, plus twos. I think then they skip to adding with nines, adding with eights, but the way that they end up doing it, there's a similar concept with all of those things and they end up mapping everything from zero plus zero all the way up to 10 plus 10. And so they get those basics and then when they're done with all that, then they shift into subtraction. And this is all largely single digit addition and subtraction. That's the alpha book and then the beta book is multiple digit addition and subtraction.

Robb: But the girls have done great on it and it's something that had I had that degree of mastery of this type of stuff and I'm just projecting forward, "Oh, man, my multiplication tables and fractions. Oh, man. I could have been somebody." I would have really had a great understanding of that stuff. And again, there's not a specific timeline or rush. We carve out some expectations. That's one thing that I do think is important that you have some expectations of how we're moving through this material, so that it's not too loosey-goosey, but at the same time, we're working through things, but if they didn't get that, then there's no big deal and going back through and just putting another layer of paint on it.

Nicki: Do you want to jump into curriculum now?

Robb: Yeah, yeah, let's do it. I mean, I kind of covered to some degree the math curriculum.

Nicki: Right. So, we chose Math-U-See. We'd heard about it from several people, including my friend in Reno, the Italian woman who pulled her kids from the Montessori School. She's actually one of those folks that really, like she's called a Maven.

Robb: She's a Maven. Yeah.

Nicki: She researches everything, so if Luchia says, "This is the program I like," then I listen because she's put in the work. And so we just looked at the reviews online and it was very, very popular.

Robb: And it was cool. One thing that I forgot to mention is that you have to buy this separately, but it comes with what they call manipulative, so it's blocks. It's one unit, two units, three.

Nicki: Very individual.

Robb: And it goes up to 10. And with this, you can figure out that "Okay, if I get 10 ones then that is equal to a 10-block and 10-10 blocks is equal to 100 block." And so, they-

Nicki: Yeah, this was super, like in the beginning so like just to give you a frame of reference to where Zoe was, we asked her this was like after first grade, the summer before when we were moving here, "How would you write 326?" And she would say, "Three, zero, zero, two, six."

Robb: And I would try to not lose my mind.

Nicki: Like in the beginning because we were like, again, it was basically like first grade didn't happen for her. And so many times, Robb would have steam coming out of his ears because of like, "What a waste of that year was," but like waste, I mean, we're making up for it, but it was a bit frustrating to say the least.

Robb: And what was challenging there was I did not want to direct any of that at her.

Nicki: Right.

Robb: That was not her fucking fault at all.

Nicki: Right.

Robb: But I wanted to murder somebody in that moment.

Nicki: Yeah.

Robb: And that took a while because again, we-

Nicki: But these manipulatives that you're talking about really, really helped because they're visual. You can have three 10s. They call them three... yeah.

Robb: Yeah. They're all color-coordinated, too, so the kids were able to zero-in on the color and also the amount.

Nicki: Yeah, so you can get three hundreds which is... we should have brought some here to show but like-

Robb: Three red blocks. Yeah.

Nicki: Yeah, three groups of a hundred units and so you can... anyway, very visual and they have videos and the teacher in the videos is great. He's teaching in front of a classroom of kids and so, it's-

Robb: He gets interaction with kids.

Nicki: He gets interaction with the kids and he does it in a brilliant way. The girls are excited when they get to watch their math videos, so they learn the concept. The videos are usually like five to seven minutes long, so they're not super long and it covers the main concept that they're going over in that section of their lesson and then they have practice problems and lots of word problems, so it's very-

Robb: Yeah. The whole goal is to get the kids doing word problems, so it's not this afterthought that you get to middle school and then you start getting exposed to word problems. They do that immediately, which one interesting thing like Sagan is really coming on strong with her reading and all that, but she just got done with kindergarten, so her reading comprehension wasn't quite where she could unpack all these problems on their own and I ping customer support. I'm like, "Should I wait until her reading comprehension is there, so that she can do the math?" Like, "Nope, just help her with the reading and so long as she can set up and do the problems and demonstrate that she understands the concept, she's good to go. And when the reading comprehension catches up, then she'll be great." And she's crushing it. She does a great job on that stuff. Yeah.

Nicki: Yeah. So that was... and you'll read homeschooling books and people will emphasize. You might choose a curriculum that for whatever reason your kid isn't thriving on and usually, folks will try to give it at least a year and then if they feel like that it's not working, then you can always change. You can always choose a different curriculum. My friend in Reno with the four children, she found a series of books called Life of Fred and we actually had somebody mention that in an Instagram comment or a podcast or something.

Robb: In a podcast. Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: So, we actually ordered those. We haven't started them yet, but also the premise behind those is that you're learning math in a real world scenario, so it's a lot of reading, reading comprehension and real world scenarios, so-

Robb: But apparently a really engaging story.

Nicki: Really engaging.

Robb: It reduces the need for adding, subtracting, multiplying and apparently, it goes all the way up into calculus, so yeah.

Nicki: Because one of the biggest questions is kids will be like, "Why am I learning this? When am I ever going to learn to use this in real life?" And so, the whole premise of these books is that it makes it all grounded in reality, so the kids actually, they know why they need to learn it because it's rooted in everyday circumstances. And this was the book, these were the series of books that she used with Ellie, which made her actually start loving math. And so-

Robb: Oh, interesting. Okay, okay. And just as a quick side, the Math-U-See curriculum goes from addition and subtraction all the way up to calculus. So, as far as I can tell, that's probably what we're going to use to run the gamut with that and it's not even a negative. But in reading the reviews online, somebody mentioned that if your child is particularly good at math, once you start getting to trigonometry and heading into calculus, there are some more rigorous programs that may be more of a fit. If your kid is just particularly good at math or they've got a bent towards engineering or something, then you may end up stepping up into one of these beefier programs. But yeah, but that's it's super impressive. And again, if your kid just crushes this stuff, then maybe they're doing calculus in seventh grade like cry me a river, so.

Nicki: Again, that's the beauty of it. It's like at the pace that the kid is getting mastery. So, if your kid is particularly bright, you might move through the material fast. If your kid is struggling with the concept, you stay there until they master it, so there's like that confidence and they actually got it and there's no... you go at the pace that makes sense for your child. So, that's a big plus.

Robb: Talk a little bit or a lot about the spell to write to read curriculum and also, let's just circle back around and talk a little bit about why we just focused on math, reading, writing, spelling.

Nicki: Well, mainly because we wanted to get Zoe up to grade level in those items and so, we just felt like doing an intensive on that, or you have something else mind?

Robb: And also we kind of assumed that science and history and art and stuff like that we could graft that in easier, so long as we have these kind of core concepts.

Nicki: Core. Exactly, exactly.

Robb: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: So, the program that we chose for spelling and writing was also recommended to me by my friend, Luchia and it's called Spell to Write to Read. It's by a woman named Wanda Sanseri. And again, we'll link to this in the show notes as well. But I'll say this, the program isn't organized as cleanly as I would have liked, not being a teacher. It took a while for me to find my stride because there's two different workbooks and you kind of have to flip back and forth and I think it could be presented in a much cleaner, easier to understand for the teacher. But once you get it, it's a brilliant program.

Nicki: So, basically the idea is there are 70 phonograms, which are basically from the letter A, which can say aa, a and ah, all the way up to words O-U-G-H, of, off, o, u. And so, you start by teaching the sounds that all of these phonograms make instead of the letters. So, you don't say that this is the letter A, you show the card and this is what it says. It can say aa, a, and ah. So, the kids learn the phonograms and they have example lesson plans, so you're teaching these sounds and the idea is that you learn to spell first before you learn to write and then reading is just sort of a natural extension of that.

Nicki: So this is the approach that we've taken with Sagan and Zoe. I had done some kind of, what do you call them, like flashcards for words early on. But Sagan, I really didn't push reading at all. We've just been focusing on this, but once you know the sounds that everything makes and when you want to write something, you know that if you want to write something like cat, it's C-AT and then, you can write it, so and then once you can write it, clearly you can read it.

Robb: And what's kind of interesting is the kids not infrequently, so we have our dedicated time that we're doing school, but then like if we're driving to jujitsu, we're like, "Okay, math quiz." We'll bounce back and forth and we'll frequently go through the-

Nicki: Do spelling quizzes.

Robb: Spelling. And what's really fascinating to me is every once in a while Nicki will throw in a word that is related to what you all were doing, but it's not a word that the kids have seen yet, but the kids will sit there and they'll think and like let's say you went over and it's not a great example, but the word you were looking at is tall, but then you'll throw out ball, and the kids will B-A-L-L. And they get it because they understood the concept and that kind of blows me away.

Nicki: So, there's phonograms and then they also have spelling rules. So, there's all these rules to the English language. One of them if you could use that ball.

Robb: So, you often double.

Nicki: You often double F, L, and S at the end of a base word. So, you have these rules and they're all on kind of flashcard thing, so part of each lesson is we're drilling the phonograms, we're drilling our spelling rule cards. And so, if they're trying to spell something and they're struggling, and I'm like, "We often double," And they go, "Oh, F, L and S and then sometimes G, D, Z." So, there's other, and silent Es. There's five reasons to use a silent final E in a word, so they have these rules that they learn. And so, it just helps shape all of spelling. And I don't know, I think it's a really, really brilliant program.

Nicki: I'd say it takes about 20 minutes a day per kid. This summer I actually... so last year, I was doing them separately. Zoe was doing okay, but it was still not at grade level. This summer, I started back from the beginning and worked with them together and just kind of reviewed everything that we'd learned last school year. And now Zoe is testing at the 3.1, so like third grade and one-month level. So, there's a way that you can do diagnostic tests and they have a way of kind of assessing what grade level your kid is at. So, she's now theoretically at the third grade level and this year, she's in third grade.

Robb: And she's really coming on strong.

Nicki: She's really getting it now, so that's been fun. Something that we also do with the program. There's a lot of dictation, so I'll read sentences that include the words that they're learning, their spelling words that they're learning, having them write original sentences, using some of the words that they're learning, so some of that. One thing I didn't really do much of last year, but we're going to do a lot more of this year is sort of creative writing prompts. So, giving them a prompt and then having them write five sentences, 10 sentences about that thing.

Robb: Do you want to talk a little bit about what we're using, so like devices and screen time are a big contentious topic and we're not fans of it. We try to super minimize because our kids turn into little shit stains when they spend much time on devices. We're very limited with that, but one thing that we-

Nicki: They have this horse riding game that they really, really like and they don't do it every day, but in order to do it, they write about it.

Robb: They can be totally on point with all their...

Nicki: All of their other-

Robb: ... skill chores like brush your teeth, brush your hair, make the bed.

Nicki: Make your bed.

Robb: Blah, blah, blah. That's the buy in, like don't even ask.

Nicki: And then all of our regular schooling.

Robb: And they need to show up and have a great attitude for school. If we're poopy pants and dragging our feet then it's like done, yeah.

Nicki: No dragging feet or like being exasperated about anything and-

Robb: And so, both girls are though very excited about these horse riding games and there's all these stories around, but then we sit down with them and ask, what questions could we ask about this? So, we're even trying to get them interactive on the front end of that, like what are some good questions we could ask and then the girls like we have a paper over there, we've got maybe about eight questions that we want them to then answer element. So, what's the difference between horse riding tails versus stable?

Nicki: Stable.

Robb: Yeah. And the girls did some stuff on that and they did a good 30-minute writing exercise around that, so we found something where they're highly, highly motivated.

The little buggers wanted to get on the games, because the games are like crack cocaine...

Nicki: Like cocaine.

Robb: ... and they're addictive and I got to be honest, this is one of the things that we're kind of like, "I don't know if we're actually going to."

Nicki: And we've had this conversation with them. We're like, "As parents, we know that these games are not good for little brains and so we really don't like the fact that you want to do them, but we understand that they're fun." So, we have this conversation like this is kind of a challenge for us as your parents."

Robb: And we don't know if what we're doing is a good idea.

Nicki: "Figuring out if any amount of this is good for you or not." So, it's-

Robb: But we have figured out a way of some accountability for the kid, so there are some nonnegotiable elements that you must do and you must largely do it on your own or you don't even bother asking about getting 30 minutes on the game or something like that. And then the flip side is that you if you do it then we're going to have some discussions around what you do, like what are you wanting to achieve in these games? What did you learn and different things like that. But yeah, this is one of these things that if we listen to this, two years from now, we may be like, "Oh, my Go. Yeah, that was a horrible idea. We shouldn't have let them on the devices at all."

Robb: We did explain to the girls that the people who make these games and devices do not let their children on these games and devices, which then begs the question of whether or not we're totally shitting the bed on this. But I mean, this is also I think some of the flexibility stuff where it's like, "Well, I don't really know." I played a little bit of Atari and stuff like that, but those things, they weren't the type of a dash in...

Nicki: Very different. Yeah.

Robb: ... in the data mining and all the rest of that stuff, but I don't want to divert it out there.

Nicki: Another thing that we are doing that was started in Montessori, which I love, especially if you have young kids, is to start them writing in cursive. So, one of the things that Zoe really struggled with from the beginning is, I don't know if you can see in the video, I can't see the screen, but she would hold her pencil like this instead of the standard pencil grip. And in kindergarten, her teacher had her with one of those little like things that fits over your pencil, so your fingers could all be in the same spot, but she was just hell bent on having this kind of a grip, which is more of a clunky, not as an efficient pencil grip. So, when I started working with her, I found these it's called New American, I think it's new American cursive.

Robb: Mr. Meerkat, yeah.

Nicki: Mr. Meerkat is what we call them because there's this little meerkat that kind of guides you through your cursive and they have different leveled workbooks and so I started her on that to really practice. And I told her, "I really want you to only do it with your good grip." And she now only writes with her good grip. If she draws she reverts back to holding her pencil...

Robb: Yeah, it's interesting. Yeah.

Nicki: ... and so, she'll draw like that, but when she's writing, she has her good grip. But the cursive is so good. I mean, I think there have been tons of kind of studies out there showing that writing and that flow kind of is really good for the brain. That was something that they did in Montessori and so, we just continued with that and so, that's great. I mean, there's lots of handwriting worksheets online that you can print out, but-

Robb: The Meerkat Program, that was really good.

Nicki: So, they each have their own workbook for that and they work through it. So, you start with the different letters and then you learn how to connect the letters and you're off running.

Robb: But they're both quite good now. Yeah. Nice.

Nicki: So, they only really write in cursive.

Robb: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: They don't print, and if they're doing any kind of writing exercise for school, it's always in cursive.

Robb: it's kind of funny they don't really know how to print, like the flip side of that. Yeah.

Nicki: Which is okay. Actually, in Spell to Write to Read, they also emphasized starting with cursive and they have a little handwriting example, so if somebody starts in kindergarten with cursive versus I think it's normally introduced in maybe third grade, the penmanship quality when they start earlier is just significantly better. And Zoe in particular, but both girls are sort of hamstrung in the handwriting department because of Robb.

Robb: You only have one good example, yeah.

Nicki: You've heard Robb joke about his serial killer handwriting before in all of our CrossFit nutrition seminars that we did, the Paleo solution seminar, and you struggled with it in school and you had teachers beating you about your penmanship.

Robb: Tenth grade like AP English, he took me out of regular English and I just did a handwriting workbook, similar I think to what these girls were doing in kindergarten and my handwriting was worse by the end of the process than in the beginning.

Nicki: Yeah, yeah. So they have some-

Robb: They started off to be-

Nicki: Poor genes in the handwriting department.

Robb: Yeah, yeah.

Nicki: But it's coming along, so that's another thing that we've done. Do you want to talk about the Tuttle Twins?

Robb: So, there's kind of the core curriculum, which is basically math, spelling, writing, reading, which is the main thing because I'm of the opinion that if people have strong skills there, I think they can go out and learn pretty much anything, but then there are some other things that are kind of like how does the world work? What are the different value systems and whatnot and so there's this set of books called the Tuttle Twins by a guy, Connor Boyack and they hit on, so one of them, the miraculous pencil and I'll show it up for people who are watching, but I'll describe this thing, too. It describes everything that goes into making a pencil and it sounds banal, but there was actually, there was some kind of libertarian leaning podcast or video cast, feed blog that talked about the making of a pencil.

Robb: Again, a pencil just seems like this ridiculously simple thing, but when you think about how you develop and refine the graphite that goes in the pencil, how the wood gets processed, the glues. There's no one person that actually understands totally how to make a pencil. There's a multistage step and it's so complex that there's literally not a singular person that can describe the totality of this process, really and carry it forward. And there's definitely some kind of economic, money type stuff like one of the books is the Tuttle Twins learn about the law and it's basically-

Nicki: There's one about creature from Jekyll...

Robb: Creature from Jekyll Island which is-

Nicki: ... Island, that talks about the Federal Reserve.

Robb: And it's interesting because-

Nicki: And they're illustrated and they're really engaging, interesting stories about these two young kids. And it puts some of these really more complex topics in a really easy to understand format.

Robb: So like the Creature from Jekyll Island, if people aren't familiar with that, it describes the founding of the Federal Reserve, which if you want to understand why inflation happens. And it's kind of funny because I was asking Nicki the other day, I'm like, "Are we setting up our kids for success or failure by doing this?" Because I feel like all this stuff, in my opinion, it's really opening their eyes to the way that the world works. When you understand the way our monetary system is set up and that we're now in a world of negative interest rates, which fosters if you're smart, then you should kind of spend all of your money today because your money is going to be worth less tomorrow or you go into things like the stock market, which is basically a casino and you're gambling.

Robb: Our financial system is set up in a way that is very dangerous, very precarious, shit continues to get more and more expensive even though that's not the normal state of things. It doesn't have to be that. The inflation and the economy can be rather stable over long time courses, but we're in this situation, but I feel like the kids are on the one hand going to be armed disproportionately with understanding the way that the world works. I just don't know if they're going to interact with that many people that they're like, "You guys could have a third arm growing out of your head for all I care." This just seems crazy, but a lot of these things that we're digging into, we're trying to help just understand the world at a macro level and the way that the things work, we definitely are endeavoring to teach girls what money is, the value of money, the value of hard work of committing yourself to doing good work. You may not always win something, you may not always be the best person, but if you do the very best job that you can-

Nicki: You may not always like what you have to do, but-

Robb: But if you commit to doing it and focus, the amazing things come out of that. And one thing that we haven't circled back around to, again, is what's called the Fallacy Detectives.

Nicki: This is going to be part of what we're incorporating in this year.

Robb: This year. And it's 38 lessons on how to recognize bad reasoning. And this is something that we are literally in an age where there are people that are advocating for the notion that empirical evidence is bad because it comes from some sort of like colonialism or something like that. But empirical evidence is what determines whether or not your house gets wired with 110 versus 220 electricity in any given circuit. Empirical evidence is what determines whether or not grandma gets an insulin injection of X versus Y. People live and die by the objective truth of empirical findings particularly from math, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Robb: And so, we really feel like the ability for kids to both ask critical questions, but also ferret out bad reasoning and there's all kinds of people in the world that have all kinds of opinion and emotion and those things can be valid up to a point but we are kind of the opinion that empirical evidence wins the day in those regard and so, that's something that we're really trying to incorporate into all this stuff.

Nicki: Incorporate into this year.

Robb: And it's interesting, too. The girls ask questions about things like religion and all kinds of things and I do my best. I'll say, "Well, I think this about something, but then these other people think that about something." And so, I'm really trying to not also paint the world in total absolutes, but I do say I think, in my opinion, I think that-

Nicki: And ultimately, we'll say, "Well, some people think this and what I think is this, but" so we can kind of give context to sort of the debates that are out there.

Robb: And what I always try to do is that at the end of that, I'll throw some stuff out and I'm like, "What do you think and how could you ask questions or think about this so that you could maybe get to a solid answer?" And that I feel like is instead of just trying to dump facts into these kids, getting them to a spot where they're really asking critical questions, and then can assess that and even think about like, "Well, where could we go dig that up?" So, we have an iPhone app called iNaturalist and there's all kinds of bugs in Texas.

Nicki: Bugs in Texas.

Robb: And we'll see a new one and I take a picture of it and this iNaturalist thing will give you a pretty good shot usually of what the identification is and more often than not, the girls are like, "Well, Dad, what's the life cycle on that critter?" And I'm like, "I don't know. Let's look that up." And kind of talk about it. And so, we're really doing the best job we can to foster the ability for these kids to learn how to learn, to know how to critically assess information.

Nicki: And to stay curious about things...

Robb: And stay very curious.

Nicki: ... instead of just... I mean I feel like when I was in school, I was your typical rule follower, assignment doer, A-student but not a great learner of the underlying concept. Like I could study for a test and get the grade, but then, two years later, I couldn't explain it.

Robb: It is kind of funny, and I think it's different now, I think you've kind of shifted like you critically assess things a little bit more differently than you did before, but if you and I were taking a course at the same time, you would beat my ass up one side and down the other.

Nicki: But then ask him, give him the same test...

Robb: A year later.

Nicki: ... several years later, and he would cream me. And so, I recognize how I was taught and how my method of learning, which I think is really how most schools operate. It's like here's the material, you learn it, you regurgitate it, you get your score, you move on, but I don't want that for them. I'm hoping that they can learn more in the way that you learned where you understand the underlying concepts or the underlying principles. And so, regardless of what problem presents itself in the future, they have the tools to kind of think about it using those principles.

Robb: Right. Because I tell you, you know it. So, we run an online business, we write some books, we do some stuff, but there's a nontrivial amount of planning and problem solving and logisticizing and stuff like that, that critical thinking is really important for what we do. I mean, even when we had the deal happen with Google and our site traffic and everything, it's like, "Well, what do we do about that?" It was a pretty, pretty big deal whereas if we were more in a mindset of, "Well, I work a certain hour and I get paid a certain thing and that's about as far as I think about it," we would have been hosed for our situation.

Robb: And so we really are and I don't know if this may be breaking the girls for them being able to work for, like have \$1 paid for an hour earning type deal. It may foster some entrepreneurship or like scientific endeavors, something like that will be really interesting to see where it goes, but we also meet plenty of people that are very good critical thinkers and they're CPA or whatever, but yeah, yeah. I want to beat that one to death.

Nicki: Let's talk about our biggest challenge with homeschooling.

Robb: It's not doing the schooling, and this is something I really want people to appreciate, the time necessary to do the school is small, it's really not that much. It's all the rest of the time and there should actually be a little bit of an insight into that. It tells you how much fucking grab ass is going on in regular school and when you think about it when you've got one teacher and 30 kids, and you divide up, okay, it's 60 minutes, how many of those minutes reasonably you're going to be dedicated to your kid, like two minutes if each kid is getting an equal whack.

Nicki: Well, and oftentimes there's things that go on in the classroom, so the teacher has to take time to address a certain situation and there's lines and lunches. If you took away all of the frivolous stuff in the day like the actual learning time and there's also a lot of busy work, a lot of busy work in a regular school. So, to your point, it doesn't take that long to do the actual school work.

Robb: And that's awesome on the one hand.

Nicki: For us, that's our biggest challenge because we get that done, but then we both work from home and we have work to do and so, it's figuring out how to keep them engaged and occupied when it's time for us to work.

Robb: So, a big challenge to be aware of is that once you get your pace and it takes a while, like it took us both about three months to really figure out are we doing this at all right?

Nicki: Right. And you wanted to make that point, too, when we were talking earlier that like, don't judge whether you can succeed at homeschooling based off of one or two weeks.

Robb: We know a couple of friends that did a week of this or three days.

Nicki: And they were like, "This isn't for me." And it's not going to be easy in the beginning. It's going to be messy. Your kids are finding a rhythm with you. You're finding a rhythm. You're trying to get like what it is.

Robb: It will take you at least three months to probably find your rhythm.

Nicki: It takes a bit of time.

Robb: Yeah.

Nicki: And it can get messy and every day doesn't always look the same like one day, your kid might be particularly grumpy and not focusing. And so, all of that will happen and it's okay.

Robb: Yeah, yeah. What were we talking about on that? Just like the challenges of the day, I'm trying to think of anything else. This is the stuff though that we will tell the girls, "Load up your backpacks and get some water and get some food and go right around the neighborhood and tell us how many animals you can see and can you capture any bugs?"

Nicki: And now that Zoe's definitely taking off on reading like she loves to read, so we have self-sustained silent reading.

Robb: And they really dig that.

Nicki: And they do like that and Sagan is coming along with her readings, so they have age appropriate books that they're digging into. We can do some audiobooks if they just want to relax.

Robb: Relax a little bit more and kind of, yeah.

Nicki: And listen to somebody read. We'll read to them clearly as well. We have them read us.

Robb: That's a biggie, which you were better at than I am, really encouraging them to read to us. So like part, it's kind of funny. Somebody was giving me grief on social media because they're like, "Well, you're just an asshole because you just sit there talking and then your wife just sits there bobbing her head." And I'm like, "Listen, fuck head. Nicki can actually read and speak at the same time and she asked the questions and then most of the correct questions are directed kind of at me, so I answer them and if you

listen to the whole goddamn podcast and you get the totality and Nikki is actually 50% of the show, so fuck you, but-

Nicki: You're making this one salty after all.

Robb: We did get a little salt, but that is something I never really developed, is I'm not that good at like taking written words and-

Nicki: I mean, people wonder why Robb didn't read his own book, the audio for his own books and it's-

Robb: It's a hot mess. I'm not that good at it.

Nicki: And this is a thing, some people are really good at reading aloud and we actually had one of our friends who's a Navy Seal, he was Montessori educated, and that was something that they emphasized at the school he went. He's like 45 or something now. Some people cannot read aloud.

Robb: And I am terrible.

Nicki: They can have a great reading comprehension like reading a book, but as soon as you're supposed to read aloud, it just kind of falls apart. So, that's something that I'm having the kids do like, "Zoe, pay attention, there's quotation marks there, so that's the person is, that character is saying that. What do you think that character's voice sounds like? Can we change our voice and read it..."

Robb: And she's starting to get some inflection and some emotion, yeah.

Nicki: "... such that it sounds like the person's actually saying," that versus like the author just writing the filler material.

Robb: But it's kind of cool because maybe a year ago when she would read, it sounded like a robot.

Nicki: It was all run on sentences and not-

Robb: And he jumps over he-

Nicki: And not paying attention to the period and going right into the next sentence and so, we're paying close attention to that and doing some work there, which I think is good.

Robb: I think, clearly, it's really good and it's a great skill. I think it's a good cognitive development tool and it's one that I didn't get. I'm not very good at it. I guess I could get better at it if we worked on it, but that was something that you were pretty emphatic about. They need to read on their own. They need to enjoy and be able to get something from us or somebody else reading them, but they also need to be able to pick up a piece of written text and be able to read it, articulate it in the cadence and the emotionality that is built into the writing and then be able to talk about it, like actually get something out of it so, which I think is all really valuable stuff. Yeah.

Nicki: Yeah. I think we have covered...

Robb: Is that the bulk of it?

Nicki: ... the bulk of our points.

Robb: Do you want to talk a little bit more about the technology part. We don't yet let the kids on computers all that much. Something that we're-

Nicki: We're not really doing any technology based learning other than the Math-U-See videos. They're just a video that they'll watch.

Robb: One thing that I will mention that I am thinking about using for Math-U-See, they do have an online problem generator that I'm probably going to start giving because the girls, it's like, "Oh, wow, I get to be on the computer." So, it's like, "Yeah, go do 10 minutes of your math skills." And so, I haven't done that yet. I'm thinking about doing that. We are considering that in these writing exercises that they're doing that we'll pick the one that they liked the most. And then we're going to help the girls do kind of a PowerPoint presentation with some pictures and some written words and then have the girls present where they can advance the slide and tell us about this stuff. Because the ability to, it's kind of like developing a project. And so, I think there might be some value to that and they will like freak out with that.

Nicki: Well, they have favorite animals and favorite animal kind of changes every once in a while but go to the library, get books on elephants, do a deep dive on elephants and then be able to present, what are the main things that you learned about elephants? How can you prepare a presentation?

Robb: And have some pictures with it and do a little clip art with it and everything.

Nicki: Yep, so it's-

Robb: So, we're looking at it doing that. We know some folks that's kind of the thing that they do and I really don't agree with that. But again, we do live in a technological world and so, we're trying to find what's a good, I don't even want to say balance, what's a smart application of these tools, because I think balance is just like a, it's a ridiculous concept.

Nicki: It's like everything in moderation.

Robb: It's like everything in moderation. It's more like what's going to actually benefit the kids, so I'm not really shooting for balance here. If I had balance, we wouldn't have any of this goddamn technology in our lives at all really, but we do. But I guess if we didn't have that, we wouldn't be doing this podcast either. So, can you think of anything else to button up on this?

Nicki: I don't think so.

Robb: What would be a sign, what would have been a sign for us that like "Okay. This is a bad idea for us to be doing it." And let's say that somebody recognizes that, let's say they want to do kind of the homeschool experience because of the sleep, because of the ability to travel, assuming that we ever get to travel again or what do other types of enrichment activities. Maybe their kid is super athletic, maybe like a gymnast or something. They want that extra time to be able to do the training, but the gears are not meshing on doing the homeschooling itself. What are some options there for people?

Nicki: Well, depending on your community, I know there are a lot of parents that kind of pool together and have one parent champion one subject and another there are, like I mentioned coops. So, if where your kid can go and get the main learning and then they

just have homework or kind of practice work to do at home. If your child is old enough, I think they can be fairly self-directed as long as they've got some drive to do it. I think one challenge would be if the child is pretty disinterested and if the parent-child relationship is stressed...

Robb: Adversarial.

Nicki: ... or adversarial, yeah, that could be a challenge.

Robb: And I will mention that like in the beginning for us, when we were trying to get this just foundation laid, I would get very frustrated and again, it was largely because of how Zoe had been failed and it was difficult for me to not project that on to her. And I have noticed like I really try to hold both girls accountable and I detail what my expectations are, but I also really endeavor to not make it emotional. It's kind of like, "Hey, if you're not going to do a good job today, I'm not going to get mad, I'm not going to yell at them, but you're not going to do any of your kind of iPad stuff. You're not going to watch a show, even a nature show on TV. Those are all things that are earned by good behavior."

Nicki: You might not go to horse lessons.

Robb: You might not go to horse lessons. And so, we've really tried to de-emotionalize all that which I think has been particularly good for me and just talk about consequences.

Nicki: You got to earn it.

Robb: If you kick ass on stuff, then we're going to like, man, we're going to do everything in our power to help you guys do what you want to do. If you're really, really showing up and committed in earning it, we'll do damn near anything that we can to help you, but if you're not invested, you're not getting this other stuff. And I think that that's been really valuable. They're starting to learn the value of hard work and when the girls do something new, particularly if they've been struggling with something, and then they get a breakthrough, like the actual way that they have it, it's so cool.

Nicki: Radiance, yeah.

Robb: Yeah. They are just fuckin' jazzed about that, and then when we come back-

Nicki: And it's actually really cool because in a variety of situations, Zoe recently had said, "You know, I just kept working on it and then finally I got it." Because in the beginning, she would get really, really frustrated if she-

Robb: If it didn't happen immediately the first time.

Nicki: If she didn't get it right away, very frustrated. And now, we've just tried to like emphasize that not everything comes easily. Frequently, nothing comes easily and you have to just practice and practice and practice and that's finally seeping in and she's seen some good results. And so it's like, "I finally got it."

Robb: Do you think jujutsu has been a factor in that? Because there's constant failure at jujutsu.

Nicki: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I think so.

Robb: And you just have to show up again and keep doing it. And I will give some mad prep, there are lots of schools with lots of kids programs. We've seen some absolute appalling kids' programs where possibly well-intentioned but the kid running it was like a State caliber wrestler and they're showing kids how to do like a head and arm, hip toss on day one and it's just like, that's kind of sad.

Nicki: Intimidating and not, yeah.

Robb: Not well-structured, but I got to say, this street blast gym curriculum where they got both the life skills...

Nicki: Our kids are amazing.

Robb: ... and the jujutsu skills and they introduce so much of this stuff in a game-based format.

Nicki: And they have to earn them. They have to earn the games.

Robb: They have to earn the right to the games, yeah, when it's other stuff.

Nicki: Yeah. And if some kids are goofing off, then "Oh, you didn't learn that game."

Robb: And they've kind of shifted it to also like if one kids goofing off, the whole group doesn't get it. So, there's kind of the accountability there and being a part of your tribe and being a good citizen of your community and all that type of stuff, but I really feel like that's been a major factor because yeah, there is constant failure and there's almost nothing in jujutsu that you just get it the first time. You got to iterate and tweak and fiddle and then you do all that stuff with the bigger and stronger person and then you got to go deeper on it.

Robb: But yeah, I would say Zoe has really come on remarkably strong in that work ethic and that belief in herself that like, "I may not like what I'm doing right now. It may not be the funnest thing, but by God, I'm going to do my best job on it and focus." And then at the end of that, again, the sense of accomplishment, like that is something nobody ever will be able to take away from her.

Nicki: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think we thoroughly covered that. If there's anything that we didn't cover or you have other questions, you guys can certainly send those in and we can do our best to-

Robb: And we'll have links to all these resources that we've been using.

Nicki: Yep, yep, absolutely. Yeah. One other thing I want to mention we are gearing up for our 30-day Rebel Reset inside the Healthy Rebellion Community, so if you have been thinking about that or you're on the fence or you want to go through a 30-day reset with an amazing group of people, now is the time to sign up. You can do that at join.thehealthyrebellion.com that kicks off. Our kickoff call is going to be September 11, which is a Friday. Then that will be followed by the seven-day carb test, which we're going to do that next week, starting on September 14, and then the 30-day reset will begin that following Monday.

Robb: Yeah. And just if we haven't mentioned this, historically, we've done the seven-day carb test on the back end of this reset. I think it makes a lot more sense to put it on the front end and see how people are doing with their carb tolerance and then we can kind of shuttle people into the appropriate direction for what their goals are.

Nicki: Absolutely. Thanks everyone for joining us. Make sure you check out our show sponsor, Perfect Keto. Grab some of their Keto Cookies. You can do that at perfectketo.com/salty and get 20% off, plus free shipping, plus free Nut Butter on orders of \$80 or more and that is good for the rest of 2020.

Robb: Awesome.

Nicki: All right. Thanks, everyone.

Robb: Bye, everybody.

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