**Ep 4. Stephanie Rino and Maureen Giordano - Voices from Our Village**

**Speaker:** Figure out, what are those pieces that I don't have to do? Like somebody else can do these things and really that's elevating other people. So recognizing, you know, what are the things that are most important to making those lists, even though you may only cross one of those things off, celebrate that you yay. I didn't want to think today.

**Nikki:** Hello and welcome to voices from the village, a podcast from the Wyoming early childhood professional learning collaborative it's often said that it takes a village to raise a child. Wyoming early childhood educators are an important part of that village. And we've created this podcast to help invigorate and inspire your work. I'm your host, Nikki Baldwin. And today I'm so excited to welcome two of our own to the podcast. I've invited Stephanie Reno and Marine Giordano to early childhood leaders from programs in the state to discuss with me our most recent podcast interview with Debbie Lee Keenan, Debbie's a nationally recognized speaker and author whose work focuses a great deal on early childhood program leadership. If you've not listened to my interview with Debbie, I encourage you to do so. She offered so much wisdom for all of us that are working with young children and families in Wyoming. I'm thrilled for this chance to learn from two voices from our village as we discuss that interview. So welcome Stephanie and Maureen.

**Speakers:** Hi. Hello.

**Nikki:** It's great to have you here. So ladies let's just start off with some introductions, so our listeners can get to know you get to know a little bit about you. I sought you both out because I've had chances to interact with you and your programs as directors. And I think you have an amazing amount of wisdom to share with our listeners in the state. So why don't you whoever wants to go first, just tell us a little bit about your background and what you're up to right now in early childhood.

**Maureen:** Hi, I'm Maureen Giordano and I live in Cheyenne and I am a director of a school in Cheyenne and I've been in early childhood for about 18 years. I've worked the school that I am, the director of right now is nonprofit and I've mainly worked in nonprofits actually. I was a home visitor for a few years and I worked as an early childhood special education teacher for many years as well. Dealing with diverse populations. And now that I'm a director for my own school that has been just a different challenge and experience for me that has made me grow as an educator, but also trying to advocate for early childhood in our community.

**Nikki:** Awesome. Thanks, Maureen. How about you, Stephanie?

**Stephanie:** My name is Stephanie Reno and I live in Casper, Wyoming, and I am currently the owner and pedagogical guide as my own program. I have over 20 years of experience working in the early childhood field. Early on, I view myself as an early childhood mom because I worked on my degree while I had young children in the home. I've worked in nonprofits. I worked at the child development center here in Casper. I did have my own home-based childcare center and I've also worked as a behavior interventionist and that was a very eye-opening experience getting to support multiple programs in a community. And I was actually in Iowa at that time. And then when we returned to Casper, I opened my school and I've been there for the last 10 years. And it's definitely been a learning experience moving from viewing myself as a teacher to embrace the idea of being a leader in the early childhood field.

**Nikki:** Ah, thanks. Great. I can't believe how much experience you both have in really a variety of situations and settings in early childhood. That's really interesting. Can you guys tell me what, what led you down this path? You could've gone a lot of different directions, but what led you to want to run your own centers?

**Stephanie:** You know, for me, I think it was the time I spent working as a behavior interventionists because I was going into a lot of different programs. I was seeing different philosophies and different approaches and I really was able to recognize what I wanted for early childhood, what I wanted for my own children. And I think the only way I was going to get that was to open my own program and really dig into what does early childhood mean to me. But I also recognize that we can do better for young children and we can also do better for the educators that are working in the early childhood field.

**Nikki:** That's awesome. Thank you, Stephanie. How about you Maureen? I see you nodding as Stephanie is talking.

**Maureen:** I sort of feel the same way as Stephanie. I, you know, from really an early age from when I was younger as a child, I kind of always wanted different opportunities and then working in the field and working with diverse populations and kind of seeing that I was developing a way of my own style or what I wanted to present to kids that was maybe a little bit different than what I was experiencing in my other workplaces. Honestly just learning more and more and going to really good conferences and trainings added to my excitement to give something more to children. And then really I saw a need. I saw a need in the community that we needed more just basically childcare opportunities. And then as I grew, I knew that I wanted to really stress and provide quality care for children. And what does that look like as it is an evolving, changing dynamic in early childhood and what we do and what we learned for them. And I just wanted to provide more opportunities for children.

**Nikki:** Thank you. That makes a lot of sense to me. It's still a pretty big leap. It takes a lot of courage to decide. You're going to start up your own business. You mentioned a little bit about your learning, Maureen, and I just wanted to ask this question to both of you because it's related. So this is a podcast from the professional learning collaborative in Wyoming. So we care a lot about professional learning. And I just wanted to ask you both to think back and these, these formative years and those formative experiences that you had. Is there any particularly transformative learning experience that you had, or idea or book you read or something that you-- a presentation you went to that you feel like has really impacted you and shaped the direction that you took in your professional career?

**Stephanie:** You know, for me, I think it was, I mentioned that I view myself as an early childhood mom. My oldest son went to a lab school at Portland State University and they were a Reggio inspired school and it was a philosophy that really resonated with me. And so to experience that as a parent versus an educator was a really eye-opening experience. And it made me feel like I was a part of that community that I did have a voice as a parent. And I've always wanted to create that. It's just a matter of how do you get to that point where you can support families versus coming from this mind frame of, “Oh, my life would just be so much easier if I didn't have all these families constantly coming at me,” How do you embrace that? And I was definitely embraced as a parent, so I really want to continue striving toward providing that for families and our community.

**Nikki:** That makes a lot of sense, Stephanie. Yeah. Thank you. Okay, Maureen, do you have any thoughts about that?

**Maureen:** It is very interesting that Stephanie brought up Reggio Emilia because it's very much my experience as well. I talked about being very young and heightened, wanting to know more about the kids around me and had this thought about offering more opportunities for kids. And I have been extremely fortunate, I think, to participate in so many professional development experiences that have really shaped what I'm doing, but the definitely the changing point was learning more about Reggio Emilia, being able to visit some schools that actually use that philosophy and how they used it. I walked into a classroom for the first time ever going into a Reggio Emilia classroom. And it was like, wow, that's exactly what I pictured when I was younger of what I wanted, but it's definitely a philosophy that I'm very interested in that I've taken a lot from that I use on a daily basis talking with people. And also it's also taught me the idea that everything doesn't have to look the same as it does maybe in that school or I don't have to be perfect. You can, it's very adaptable.

**Nikki:** Yeah. I love that. And I feel like I shared this in a previous podcast, but I had a similar sort of awakening that things don't have to look a traditional school lee as a preschool teacher. And it, mine came from discovering the book designs for living and learning by Carter and Curtis. And I just remember looking at the cover and thinking, “Oh, I could have beautiful, amazing things and not just something that came straight out of a catalog.” So that sort of respect that deep respect for children and families, I think. Would you guys agree that's at the core of what we're talking about?

**Maureen:** Yes. Yeah.

**Stephanie:** Yeah, absolutely. I also think for the educators as well, because those spaces that they're working in it's their space and it needs to also reflect them. So I think that when you, when you are not using those catalogs and you're giving that autonomy to them, they are able to create spaces that are meaningful and create that community in their space.

**Nikki:** Yeah. I think that, I agree. Yeah. That's great. Okay. So thank you for that introduction, that leads to this next question. And I want to go back and refer to the interview with Debbie, because one of the things we talked about quite a bit was the importance of understanding your identity and how your identity shapes, how you see the world and then how that impacts how you interact with children and families. So what Debbie said in the interview is she called identity that personal piece that drives your professional life. And in that interview, I told a little bit about, she asked me about my identity and I told a little bit about just being from a family of school teachers. And that that's one piece of my identity. That's shaped sort of my professional life. I wondered if you guys would just take a minute and talk to us about how you think your identity has impacted your professional life.

**Maureen:** As with Debbie, I grew up in New York and I was around a lot of diversity and I also have traveled quite extensively in my life because my father's job was with the airlines. And so we traveled a lot and I had distinct memories, even though I was really young of playing and in parks with different kids of all different cultures. And now this is way back. So English was not really very prominent in, in those times. And I really had to, I wanted to play with them, whoever was in the park. And so I had to figure out how we could play and how we can communicate with each other. And I have really great memories of doing that in a lot of different countries with kids that I had no idea what they were saying to me, but we played and we were able to figure that out. And so that really made some difference in my life, on how I wanted to communicate with people, the idea of having different diversity around me and how important that was, how I treat. We treated people in different cultures to respect their culture of when we went to visit that was very prominent in my education. But then also in my own personal education, I was extremely shy child and always felt that some of those opportunities weren't there for myself because I didn't speak up and I didn't know how to do that and almost passed along for some things because I was very, very shy and did not speak a lot in school. And so having those experiences really made a difference in how I wanted to be around kids and how I wanted to talk with them and communicate with them. And just that nurturing piece that I feel that kids needed. Also, when you live in New York, you grow up on Sesame street and that's, that was a big deal to me to learning a lot. You know, I wasn't allowed to watch a lot of TV, but I could watch Sesame Street. And we learned a lot of different things from that and it was similar to where I grew up in the examples that they had. So we were able, I was able to relate and I want kids to be able to relate their home life, what they're doing in school, the purposeful activities, it needs to be relatable and functional for them in order for them to really excel in those opportunities and feel that they're part of something that are a part of that community. So that's why community is so huge for me. And I've also seen that in the Reggio Emilia philosophy community is of really, it, it takes everybody to really work with children and to give them great experiences and opportunities.

**Nikki:** Yeah. Thank you, Maureen. That's amazing. We're going to have to talk on another time about all the places you've lived. We need some time to discuss that. I'm excited to hear. How about you, Stephanie?

**Stephanie:** You know, I have to say that my mind also went to this idea of community, but mine comes from a completely different position. I was born and raised in Montana and we actually moved around a lot. I went to six different elementary schools. And so moving around that much, even though, you know, we had family nearby because I'm part of a large family and we're all spread around the state of Montana. You still, you know, as a child going into different classrooms. And then maybe you're only going to be in that school community for a year before you moved to another one that was really hard. And I didn't realize the impact that had on me and where I would go as an educator because I originally wasn't going to be an educator. And my freshman year of college, I actually had a part-time job working alongside one of my aunts in a small, I would say cottage style childcare center in Montana and my baby cousin was one of the students. And so just getting to experience this idea of you can create a family, you can create a school family or a community in this small school. And it just knowing that I want all children to feel welcome. I want parents to feel welcome. And you know, for me to put that smile, a genuine smile on my face and the kids can see it in my eyes that I truly am excited to see each of them every day, so that they feel like they are connected and a part of something bigger. You know, I learned a lot moving around and didn't realize it though, until, you know, really thinking about it in this context of having a conversation about how that impacted my identity as a young person.

**Nikki:** Do you guys see some value in trying to have a conversation like this with your teachers in your programs? Have you thought about where that could lead? I'm just curious.

**Stephanie:** I think so. I think its idea of being curious about them. Tell me more about you. What is your background? We know the current things that are going on in their lives. If they're married, if they have kids we maybe even know their educational background a little bit, but who makes you, or what has made you who you are today and just being curious?

**Maureen:** I think that definitely is in times that I've taught classes and working with adults, the question questions would come up where, you know, how, what did you do when you were little? What, where did you play? What was your favorite holiday? What were some of the things that your families that maybe wasn't around a holiday, but still part of your culture? I think that educators really willing to share that information. And sometimes, you know, as they're sharing, they're like, “Oh yeah, that's why I'm doing this with the kids today.” I really, you know, I personally really like kids that get messy and get involved and I played outside a lot and I think that's so important in the mud and, and those different type of things. And so they see how, how they grew up and maybe some of those great experiences really can reflect in your classroom. And you could provide that with your children and give them a better maybe expanded learning opportunity that you wouldn't have thought about before.

**Nikki:** And I was thinking too, and this relates to the, the next piece of the interview with Debbie that I wanted to share. It helps us provide, it helps us to see the lens that we're looking through to see children and families and it also gives us insight into how we're reacting in certain situations, if we can step back and think about what part of our identity might be influencing that. And one thing that Debbie and I talked about, and just for our listeners, both of these ladies listened to the interview with Debbie, we talked about experiencing conflict and disagree equilibrium. So in the, when you're trying to create these community spaces, it's not like it's always rosy. There's a lot of work that goes into understanding a variety of different perspectives and bringing those together. And so Debbie talked about, she always really shares how she embraces conflict, and I wanted to share a clip from that with you too. And then just have you take a minute and just respond.

**Recording:** Well, I think back to PIJ right. And that when he says about disequilibrium and that that's when children learn, right, we fought when we fall down, when we make state make mistakes, we get up and we try to learn from this. And again, I think we learned that in school. We knew that we know that's how children learn, but I think it's just much harder as adults to feel comfortable about embracing, not knowing the answer, feeling the tension, the disequilibrium of feeling, the discomfort. A lot of it's about discomfort, not knowing. And I'm supposed to know when I'm a teacher, when I'm a leader, it's not okay to me. I mean, some of us were grounded. It's not okay to make mistakes we know with kids. It's okay. But we don't give ourselves as adults that permission.

**Nikki:** Any experiences with this that you would want to share?

**Maureen:** I definitely agree, a hundred percent that that's where as a director, I've learned so much in really the different times that things kind of went wrong or something came up and it really was a conflict or just, you know, an uncomfortable situation. Nobody wants to have to tell a parent concerns about their child, or I think back as an educator, especially as a special education, early childhood, special education teacher, the hardest kids I learned so much from when, Hey, in the beginning, I had no idea what I was doing. I just kind of ran with it and looked at what other people were doing and then see that, okay that really worked. I'm going to really do that next time to be able to kind of get through those hard situations and in working in childcare being directors and the whole idea that we talked about really building a community and having families be involved and not seeing it as a deficit, not always going to them with a deficit, but when we do stepping back and either reflecting about what just happened or stepping back from the situation before you even speak about it and not taking everything so personally, really trying to understand both sides, because there's usually lots of sides that you have to understand as a director and work with people who want to support you with that. Whether it's the family, whether it's more the, the educator, whether it's bringing other people in. I mean, even I think licensors because that's a big thing for early childcare centers and home cares is the fact that we have rules that we have to follow. And the licenser comes in and everybody's like, Oh my goodness, they're going to find something they're going to do something. And what I found early on as no, one's perfect. If you just talk with people and come to an understanding and then find a way to have a solution and express that solution to whether it's your licenser, your, your educators, teachers, your families, and being transparent about that. I think that makes things so much better. It's hard going through it, but kind of keeping those things in mind, make it better in the long run.

**Nikki:** How about you Stephanie? How you do this?

**Stephanie:** So I feel as though early childhood educators, we tend to not like conflict. We take things very personally, we're fixers. We just want this beautiful utopia happening all around us at all times. And something that I have learned is oftentimes conflict resolve it, revolves around conversations, and they're probably going to be difficult conversations. We perceive them as conflict, and it's really not even going to be a conflict because we've had this internal struggle over, you know, what are we going to say? How are they going to respond? So we've painted all of these scenarios in our head. And so it's created this really uncomfortable space before we even go into the situation. And I think Maureen hit on it. It's like, you just need to approach it and be curious and pull in different perspectives and really try to understand what's going on from multiple viewpoints and perspectives. So I really do think that we have to flip that script in our mind about what conflict is that way we can embrace it, because those are the moments that we are going to grow. And when you learn the most about who we are and what we believe in.

**Nikki:** Would you guys both agree that one thing that helps us approach conflict with more confidence is experience having gone through it a few times and survived and you start to realize, “Oh, we all have similar goals here.” There's like, there's common ground, wherever we're coming from. And we can find that, but as a new director or young director, sometimes it's pretty terrifying because you can't draw from all those previous experiences that you've had.

**Maureen:** Definitely.

**Nikki:** Thank you for that. Both of you just want to call out that there's more in that podcast with Debbie where she talks about creating a third space to solve problems, just to encourage everybody. Basically these two women just described it perfectly how you create what's called a third space. So thank you. Okay. I want to shift gears a little bit and talk about an idea that everybody loves, that directors really love and that Debbie shares, it's the idea of rotated, neglect. You guys both heard that part and loved it. Why don't you just tell us a little bit about what that means to you, help our listeners know what Debbie was saying when she was describing that one of you, if you're brave enough and then just tell us your thoughts about it.

**Maureen:** Well, I think we're always trying to get a balance. I mean, I think in people's personal lives, they do that too. You know, as a director, we wear many, many hats. And so trying to balance that all the time, trying to reach the goals, trying to-- for in my case, you know, I have a board and so we strategic plan and we have to meet those goals. And then we have goals for our educators and things like that. So balancing it all out and then being able to say to ourselves that we're not going to let anything go or, you know, we have to do all of this in one week, having the ability to think about it as a rotated, neglect, meaning that you're, you're just putting this over here for a minute and you're going to get back to it and that's okay. That was huge for me. I'd like to continually think about that so that I could still have all of these things on my plate, but it's okay that I get to that tomorrow. Just the idea that, you know, again, we're not perfect. You can't get everything done by yourself and rotating, you know, what you're prioritizing that day is okay.

**Stephanie:** Yeah. It kind of makes me think of juggling. You have all these balls up in the air and you just have, like, you can't, you can't drop any of them. And then somebody goes on the sidelines throwing additional balls at you. And it's like, at some point something's got to give, so rather than letting them all fall, it's just, “Hey, pause, don't throw anything else at me. We have to focus over here on this one little thing.” But you know, I also think that there's space within this idea of rotated neglect to maybe do some delegating, figure out what are those pieces that I don't have to do. Like somebody else can do these things and really that's elevating other people. So recognizing, you know, what are the things that are most important making those lists, even though you may only cross one of those things off, celebrate that you yay. I did one thing today. But it is a lot, there's a lot going on at all times

**Maureen:** And definitely celebrating those little things I think is really important and delegating, it took me a long time to learn that. So delegating was definitely my friend when I started to do that, really focusing on those little, those little things.

**Nikki:** And I think that's a piece that I would imagine is challenging when you start up a program because you have a vision of how you want your program to run. It might, it was probably tough sometimes to realize that you don't have to have all the answers for that and that you, you can give some things away. And that's pretty powerful.

**Stephanie:** I think there was also a little bit of fear too, that how are people going to respond? If I give them additional tasks, are they going to be, you know, is it going to be received well? And you know, it really has. So I think it's stepping out of your comfort zone, having some dialogue and conversations and deciding who is ready for more.

**Nikki:** Right. That fits perfectly with something that I did want to share a clip from Debbie, where she talks about her style of leadership.

**Recording:** So we say it's, it has to be, it actually has to be both top down and bubble up. Okay, could have you, you need, you don't want to just pop down. You want it to bubble up, but you also need the leader with the vision and bringing it all together. So I often upset that both of those are very important. I mean, most cases you think of leadership as, as power, but I think it's really about building partnerships. I also use the term facilitative leadership, facilitative leadership is leadership in partnership with others, or it could be partnership with my staff, my partnership with families. So how do I bring that together and kind of change that paradigm where we think of it just being talked down.

**Nikki:** Okay. So hearing Debbie talk about facilitative leadership power versus partnerships. What, what came to mind for both of you?

**Stephanie:** I feel like this was that I have learned a lot about more so in the last three or four years of my role as a leader, I definitely felt that I was a teacher for a very long time, and didn't really want to embrace the idea of being a leader until I, I found a group of people that were leaders and some of these things could have really come out for me. I was struggling with this idea of why can't people just understand my philosophy, what was in my head. And I'm telling you what I think, why I was excited about it. So that was a struggle. And then, you know, when you really step back and think, you know, our philosophy is very emergent in, in our approach. And so we want this to come from the children. And so it's the same thing with the educators when I recognized that, you know, this educator over here, so excited about literacy in the classroom. And I just found this amazing book rather than me reading it, creating a professional learning session. Why don't I give it to her? And she was so inspired by what she read and I offered for her to, “Hey, do you want to bring some of these ideas to the whole team?” And it really has grown from there. And that's really how we do staff meetings and professional learning within our school. It's what are you interested in research that become a mini expert on that topic and come and share it with us. And when we all have something that we're excited about, I mean it might spark interest in someone else, or it could grow into something bigger that the whole school wants to research or, or get better at.

**Nikki:** How about you, Maureen?

**Maureen:** I feel the, I feel this the same way in when I think about when I first started, I knew, “Oh, I don't, I don't want to be a micromanager, or I don't want to be this, or be that,” knowing the balance of how you get your educators or teachers involved, not everybody is at the same place. Not everyone wants to be that leader in the classroom. They just, you know, want to help in this way. What are they excited about? How can we just communicate what is happening and the interests. And we recently have changed our staff meetings to be more about how can we change this or do this activity in the classroom, you know, and, and have a really discussion about it. And having those educators share with each other, instead of it all coming from administration. And that has really benefited us, I think, as well, that educators are more apt to bring something that they're interested in, or, “Hey, I found this activity and it seems that the kids would be really into that,” and just bring it in, have their own initiative to do that and try that out and not have so much fear in trying new things. But I think that whole communication piece and letting them talk amongst each other and maybe just throwing materials out and seeing, “Hey, what are you going to do with this?” And let them do it before they bring it to kids. You know, I think that is things that we have changed that made a difference in how we did, you know, how my teaching or my style of directing has happened over the years.

**Nikki:** Yeah. I love that. And I really think you guys both described partnerships really well there. And, and one of the things it requires is letting go, you have to really believe in trust in the knowledge and wisdom of the teachers that are working with kids. And as soon as we can see that we have that super strong image of teachers, then they can share it just taps into all the wisdom they have, and they can share that with each other. And it's so much more efficient than just a single person running around, trying to tell everyone what to do and more effective.

**Maureen:** I think in having them realize what their teaching style is or what their own learning style is, you know, their image of the child, kind of really having those discussions ongoing, I think really improves their thinking on what they're doing in their classroom.

**Stephanie:** I think to Maureen, I don't know if you've seen this as well, just to say, you know, this idea of creating a safe space or a brave space. And it takes time to get to that point where everybody on the team is willing to speak up and feel like they have a voice. So it takes a lot of time and it takes practice, but it's amazing to see what will come from even, you know, classroom aides and assistant teachers once you've created that space because they're learning right alongside those lead teachers or the director. And I think it's pretty powerful for everyone to have that voice.

**Nikki:** I'm so glad you brought that up, Stephanie, because I think it really relates to this concept that Debbie talked about in our interview, Mon Mon lie, which just translates to slowly, slowly, it will come. And what you just described so beautifully is that you don't just magically have that kind of relationship, but the idea is that small movement leads to bigger change. And so really trusting in that process is a big part of this. Right. Would you agree?

**Stephanie:** Absolutely.

**Maureen:** Yes, absolutely too. I think that's my new motto in my head every day.

**Nikki:** Yes. That's pretty great. It's a lot of wisdom there. Okay. We're just getting ready to wrap things up. So I have a couple of other questions for you two. In the previous interview with Debbie, she and I both shared any advice that we would have to our young director selves looking back now at this point in our career. And I would love to hear what advice you two would give to your young director self.

**Stephanie:** Oh, I have so much advice for her that it's not even funny. But I also recognize that I don't want to give, I wouldn't want to give her too much advice because you have to go through those struggles to find the solution on your own. All of that. I think the biggest thing though, would be to find a thought partner or a mentor. And I liked the idea of a thought partner, more somebody who's maybe in the same position that you're in someone who you can have conversations about your struggles with, because it's important that you process those things with somebody who understands it. But that, it's not somebody that's going to let you stay there as someone that's going to help you come up with the possibilities and that you have this back and forth reciprocal relationship. So you can work through those things and grow and build one another up. I think that that is vital for any leader is to find that person and really partner with another program, have a sister partner or a sister program, something to that effect.

**Nikki:** I'm glad you bring it up because isolation is such a problem for leaders, for everybody in Wyoming, but for leaders in particular. And that was the primary thing I remember experiencing in my first position as a director was that isolation and loneliness. So, and you know, that's why we're doing this podcast. That's why we're trying to connect people through the professional learning collaborative is we want to decrease that isolation and connect people. So I love that. That's your advice, Stephanie? How about you, Maureen?

**Maureen:** Honestly, Stephanie and I are on like the same page because I had, I wrote that down last night when I was listening to this again for like a third time I would say definitely with that stay true to your main value or a goal that you had or what you wanted to become as a director, whatever that looks like, stay true to that because there's going to be lots of people that you will have to deal with to say, “Oh no, you should do this.” Or you should really, you know, we need to do this in the world now. And to really stay true to your main value of why you were becoming a director. And I also totally agree on seeking out someone, a mentor or someone in the same position that you could speak with because I went from being in very collaborative type of situations in all of my experience before I became a director. And then as a director, all those collaborative people, I mean, I still talked with them, but it wasn't the same. They were with me every day, all day long. And so I definitely saw that isolation and sought out people that I needed to speak with and definitely this collaborative professional collaborative thing has been absolutely fantastic. So I definitely hear that the same thing.

**Nikki:** So one final question for you guys, because this is about learning this podcast. I just want to hear something new you've learned recently that you're excited about.

**Stephanie:** I feel like so much of mine is work-related because we've been doing so many new and innovative things around the state with early childhood. But actually there's something that, you know, Shar has said a good friend named Shar and she quotes Bernay Brown. She says ‘clear is kind’. And so that saying is something that I bring up in my mind all the time, just being really clear that idea of transparency about all things is so important. And that's, I mean, I think that goes back to the idea of conflict because maybe there wasn't that transparency that needed to be there. So that's something that I am working on. Just that the idea of being really clear with educators with, you know, my own children, my relationship with my husband, other professionals that I'm engaging with. So just being really clear with them about expectations or how I'm feeling and thinking about something,

**Maureen:** Just taking the time to take the time be okay with, Hey, I'm going to take this five minutes to be able to distress, take a breath and then move on because this could be really stressful job at times, over the past two years I’ve really learned different ways to deal with this stress which has been really helpful and I’ve been able to take the day, day by day how things come a little bit better, not stress over it so much.

**Nikki:** Yes, those are excellent ideas to end on ladies, I just want to thank you both Stephanie and Maureen for such a thoughtful discussion for sharing your experiences with us today and I just hope listeners that you are able to learn from these ladies and if nothing else, if you take nothing else away, see what you can do to find somebody to collaborate with, find a partner, find somebody to talk to and think ideas through. And if you need help connecting with somebody get a hold of your professional learning facilitator and they can help you out with that. So thank you listeners for joining us on Voices from The Village this podcast is made possible with support from The Federal Pre-School Grant and its produced by The University of Wyoming Early Childhood Outreach Network, our director and editor is Bryce Tugwell. Thank you so much.

**[End of Recording]**