

Jody: We are so excited to talk to today's guest. In this episode, we're going to talk about surviving struggling to read. A struggling reader can be an enormous challenge to a homeschool family. I mean, let's face it, reading is usually the first thing you teach your kid and when they just can't get it, it can be a huge source of frustration to the parent and the child. We're going to talk to an awesome homeschool couple who have walked this road and gained great wisdom along the way.

Jenni: Hal and Melanie Young are the award-winning authors of "Raising Real Men, No Longer Little" and the Amazon bestseller "Love, Honor and Virtue". They're publishers, writers, bloggers, and popular conference speakers internationally, known for their Christ-centered focused and for their practical real life stories. They're parents of six real boys, five of whom are grown and two real girls and they live in noisy, messy happiness in North Carolina. Hal and Melanie, thank you so much for coming to talk to us on our podcast.

Hal: Well, thanks for having us. We're glad to be here.

Jenni: So...

Melanie: Yes, we're so happy to be here.

Jenni: We had the great pleasure of hearing you speak at the Florida FPEA...

Jody: In Orlando.

Jenni: Conference in Orlando, and it was so exciting for us, because we, when we speak together, there's a, you know, there's kind of a different dynamic than when you're hearing one person speak we've never really gotten an opportunity to hear another duo speak and we were so excited to listen to you and you guys just did it masterfully.

Jody: Yes, you did.

Hal: Cool. Thank you.

Jenni: Okay, so tell us--

Hal: I-it's--

Jenni: No first, go ahead. Say where you're going to say.

Hal: No, I was just going to say it's been kind of funny, because most people just love it. Most people enjoy the byplay and they feel like...

Jody: Yeah.

Hal: It's very much conversational. There's always like one person in every convention that says, "They interrupt each other." "Yeah, I know. We do. Thank you. Welcome to our home."

Jenni: It's real life.

Jody: You know--

Jenni: We are married! That's what I heard.

Jody: Yeah, well we often hear people say, "We just feel like we're part of your conversation." And so that, and that's how we felt with you guys. We're like, "Oh, they're just having a conversation. We get to listen in."

Jenni: Yeah. I had one lady once who came up to me and she had this big smile on her face and she was like, "You guys were great, but you kept like fixing something on your shoulder. You might not want to do that."

Melanie: I think God sends us those people to meant to keep us humble.

Jody: You're right. Yeah.

Jenni: Well it definitely worked.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: So tell us this story of your son, Sam, who learned to read when he was 11 years old.

Melanie: Well, you know, he was our fourth son and our first three were precocious readers. Like, I'm talking reading chapter books by five and...

Hal: Oh, we thought homeschooling's great.

Melanie: Oh yeah, we thought we're so good at it.

Jenni: That's actually what I was going to say. Did you think you were rocking it?

Melanie: Oh yeah.

Hal: Oh, yeah, it was awesome. Yeah, this is, this is easy.

Jenni: Yeah.

Hal: Okay.

Melanie: And, and then, then along comes our fourth son and phonics just didn't stick. He could not remember it from to day, could not even remember the letters of the alphabet from day to day. His brothers who had learned the alphabet when they were two or three, at seven or eight, he's still looking at it like it's Greek. And I was in despair. I thought it was me. I tried every different phonics program I could find. Nothing worked. I thought it was him that he was lazy or unmotivated because he would complain that his stomach hurt or his head hurt.

Jody: Yeah.

Melanie: Which is very typical for a dyslexic child, by the way. But I didn't know that. And I, and I could not really grasp that he had a learning disability, because he was so clearly smart, super intelligent, and it just, it couldn't mesh in my mind, I thought I knew what special needs kids looked like, and he didn't look like that.

Jenni: You know, that's funny, Melanie, I just have to interrupt you and tell you this quickly. I have an autistic child and I had a family member when he was two say, "Do you think he's autistic?" And all I could think of was "Rain Man". And at two, he didn't look anything like Rain Man because of course Rain Man was a man and he was-- of course, now that he's a man, he actually is a whole lot like Rain Man.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: But at the time, I thought that's not what autism looks like. He, you know, he's fine, so I hear ya.

Hal: Yeah.

Melanie: Yeah. It was just, he and I both cried buckets, I mean buckets. And finally, um, I guess when he was about nine, I read "The Gift of Dyslexia", which gave me some ideas for at least teaching him the alphabet we used, you know, he made letters out of clay and things that helped tremendously.

Jody: Huh.

Melanie: But then when I was-- When he was 10, I heard Dianne Kratz speak and she was the first one that just really made complete sense to me. And so we started using her program and brain integration therapy manual and some other things. And that, that's the year that he learned to read fluently. And it was just, he wept when he read his first story. And I did too.

Jenni: I bet you did!

Jody: I would have framed that stinker and put it on the wall and be like, "WE DID IT!!!"

Melanie: We really both, by that point, I thought it would never happen.

Jenni: But you know, it-- Dyslexia is such, is such a challenging thing for kids and parents to confront. But you know, there are kids who aren't even dyslexic per se...

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Who struggle for a long time. And...

Jody: I had one of those.

Jenni: I did too. My first kid that I homeschooled and I thought, oh see, I don't know how to do this. Obviously I don't understand this. That child was sounding out words, it seemed forever. And she would be like, "Cuh, ah, tuh. Cuh-At-Tuh!" And I will look at her and go, "Skyler, what's a 'cuh-ah-tuh'?" "Oh, I don't know." And then, and we just quit. So we just stopped.

Melanie: There's a wide range of readiness to read.

Jenni: Yes.

Melanie: I tell young homeschoolers, "Listen, do not make goals about things you have no control over."

Jenni & Jody: That's so, so good.

Hal: Well, it's like, you know, they have mental development milestones. Just the same as, you know, you wait for adolescents, they hit their physical growth spurt and their height shoots up.

Jody: Right?

Jenni: Yeah.

Hal: You know, you don't look at your, at your six-year-old and say, "Why can't you slam dunk into a standard goal yet?" Cause he's, you know, he's not really four feet tall. I mean he can't-- You can't rush that. You've got to wait for him to reach his developmental stage and that's going to happen on the time table that God gave him, not the one that you did.

Melanie: And that's what's so awesome about homeschooling, is you're not stuck in somebody else's timetable.

Jenni: I think people have to be reminded of that repeatedly, though, because so often, especially newer homeschoolers, feel like they have to prove that they made the right choice to the people around them.

Jody: Well and let's not forget, they are with the other moms who are going, "My kid just recited the..."

Jenni: Co-- Yeah, the constitution.

Jody: "The constitution!"

Jenni: From memory at four.

Hal: Oh, I know. My child potty trained themselves at six months.

Jenni & Jody: Right.

Jody: Well, we have a story about that.

Melanie: What really gets me, is homeschool kids are much less likely to be peer-driven, but their mamas, their mamas are peer-driven.

Jenni: Yeah.

Jody: Oh, yeah, you're right.

Hal: We just have different peer groups.

Melanie: And I think you have to learn to say, because sooner or later it hits everybody your child doesn't need different than your friends.

Jenni: Yeah.

Melanie: You have to learn to say "Thank you, I'll consider that." when they give you advice and you have to learn to say when they say, "How's your child doing?" You just say "He's doing great!" and give him no details, cause it's none of their business.

Jenni & Jody: Right.

Jenni: Speaking of, how's he doing, tell us about Sam now.

Melanie: He is a rising senior in college.

Jody: Wow, that's awesome.

Melanie: He is on a full-ride academic scholarship.

Jenni: Wow.

Melanie: And he has a 3.96 GPA.

Jenni: Go Sam!

Melanie: He was, he was chosen to be a junior Marshall, which means he's one of the top 15 students at his university.

Jenni: Wow.

Melanie: And they are, he just received his, his college's endorsement to apply for a Rhodes and Marshall and Fulbright scholarship.

Jenni: Amazing. From the kid who read at 11.

Melanie: And he's double-majoring.

Jenni: And he's double-majoring?

Jody: Wow.

Melanie: And he's launched two businesses while he's been there.

Jody: Wow, that's amazing.

Jenni: That's awesome.

Melanie: I'm giving all that detailed. Not to brag on him, but because I desperately needed hope when he was 10 and I hope somebody's listening that needs hope and that will give them hope, because I'll tell you what, even it, even after he learned to read, he was severely dysgraphic, ADHD, you name it. He had all the issues.

Jenni: He had alphabet soup behind his name, huh?

Melanie: Yeah. He could not spell three letter words, could not write. Wrote like a first grader until he was probably 14 and I, I didn't know if he would be able to live independently.

Jenni: Wow.

Melanie: And to go from that to the success that he's having out in the world. I just wish somebody had been able to whisper that in my, in my ear when he was 10.

Jenni: Well, how things would have been different if you at a time machine and could see where he is now.

Melanie: Right.

Jenni: Yeah. So you're going to be the time machine for the people who are listening that are struggling with this.

Melanie: Absolutely. I hope so. Please, y'all. Listen, because you know, our-- What the Lord does with our children is not defined by where they are at 10.

Jody: That's right. That's--

Jenni: Amen!

Jody: Thank goodness!

Jenni: Thank goodness.

Jody: We'd all be in a world of trouble, wouldn't we?

Malanie: Isn't that the truth.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Yeah, it is. There's-- God can do-- God has a plan for these kids that is so much bigger than we mamas think. We get caught up in memorizing, you know, classical roots and we don't realize God has such a mighty plan for our children. We don't have to worry about those things. He's got it.

Melanie: That's right. That's right.

Jenni: So, um, obviously, his delay did not create problems for him academically down the road.

Melanie: But you know, we did have, we did have to plan for it. You know, I had him professionally tested as he moved into high school. Um, he was able to get accommodations on the SAT in the ACT, because even once he conquered a lot of these things, it was still a bit slower at reading, or a bit slower at writing than other kids. And he was able to get accommodations. He even got some accommodations in his first couple of years at college like, and a lot of people don't even know they can do this.

Jody: Well I was just going to say, that's a big deal and people need to know that. So can I ask you, how did you find that out? Where did you go to do that, so that our listeners have an idea of what to do?

Melanie: Well, I am an obsessive researcher. I just hunted it down, but it was so hard. It took me so long to do it. Hal and I have actually written a book on how homeschoolers can get accommodation.

Jody: Oh, wow.

Jenni: What's the name of that book?

Melanie: It's called "Help Is On The Way"!

Jody: Oh, that's great!

Melanie: A homeschool-- "A Homeschoolers Guide to Accommodations on the SAT, ACT and in College".

Jenni: And where can they get that book?

Melanie: They can get on our website raisingrealmen.com or on Amazon.

Jenni: Awesome.

Jody: So in your opinion, I mean, should you push reading when it seems impossible or you just back off?

Melanie: Okay. In the first few years, I think you should back off.

Jody: Okay.

Melanie: Because...

Jenni: When you say, "the first few years", you're not talking about two, three and four.

Melanie: No, I'm talking about, until they're, like, eight or nine.

Jenni: Right. But, you know, you get some, you get some really, you know, excited new homeschool moms and they think the first few years are like the toddler years.

Melanie: Yes. We see that all the time.

Jenni: Yeah.

Hal: Oh yeah.

Jody: Wow.

Hal: We were talking one at a conference recently. He was saying, "My four-year-old is so much happier in these classes, because the class that she was in, last year, we're really, really very discouraging." I'm thinking, "Did people-- Do they enroll in a structured class program?".

Jody: Wow.

Melanie: Honey, take her home and let her play in the dark. You know, I would say that up through seven, like, til they're turning eight, I would back off and try again in six months because a lot of kids just need another six months or another year. And one of our, one of our daughters was that way. Um, when I started teaching here at five, it didn't work. But at seven, seven and a half, I think she got it very quickly. And so give it some time in the early years. Now, once they get to be about eight and they're still struggling, then sometimes some intervention and there's things you can do at home, like we did like Dianne Kratz stuff you can all do at home, but, but some intervention can help once they're going to be that age. Maybe they just need to learn in a little different way. Yeah. Maybe, maybe they don't learn the same as your other kids or they need some help learning, you know, to change sides of the brain. And, um, so there are things that you can do and there things that you can do that are not really expensive.

Jenni: I had a- I had a- my sixth child who grew up his whole little life in his first few years being told how smart he was, because he had this really big vocabulary. Like when he was five, I was doing the dishes and he asked me a question and I started to answer him and he stuck his little chubby hand up and said, "Mom, that was rhetorical." And I said, "Matty Jay, what does rhetorical mean?" And he said, "It means you're not supposed to answer it." So, so he's always been his whole life. Everybody said, "Oh, my gosh, Matty, you are brilliant. You are so smart." And that became his identity. And when we started to read at the, you know, around kindergarten age, when he didn't get it right away, he began to believe that everyone had lied and that he's not smart. It was all a big trick. Cause clearly if he was, he would be able to do this. And so I just said, we're not "You know what baby, you're, we're not going to do this right now. Mama, will read to you. You don't have to learn to read right now." About six months later he said, "Mommy, when I watch TV or movie, can you put the captions on?" And sure enough that little stinker taught himself to read.

Melanie: Yep.

Jenni: Yeah. We didn't do anything else formally.

Melanie: Yeah. And kids are all different.

Jenni: Yeah.

Melanie: And that's, that's something you really have to- have to grasp when you're homeschooling is that even in a family, your kids are going to be really different.

Hal: And that, you know, what you're describing there, that that makes me think a little bit about, you know, kids that are called "gifted." Gifted kids a lot of times, when things come easy the first time they encounter something hard, they say, "Well, I'm not going to go there."

Jenni: Right.

Hal: You know, cause they expect, "If I don't get it right away, it's not, it's not worth the risk."

Melanie: I can't do it.

Hal: And so, you know, you have to watch that on both the struggling learners and the ones who seem to be breezing through it.

Jenni: Yeah. Yeah. Especially cause they don't want to feel like a fraud.

Melanie: Yeah. And a lot of our kids, a lot of our struggling learners will have ways in which they're gifted. A lot of them are twice exceptional. They're both gifted and struggling learners.

Jenni: Yeah. Yep. Now, when kids are confronted with this reading difficulty and we're talking going into the later years, 8, 9, 10, 11, what are some ways that this affects them emotionally? I mean, we talked about one thing that can happen. Do you know where they really start to feel like they're not smart? What are some of the other things that that happen?

Melanie: It is so hard, especially if they have older siblings that they're looking around and realizing everybody else was reading when they were much younger than I was.

Hal: Or a younger sibling who's starting to pass them in some areas.

Melanie: It's really tough. It can destroy their confidence, it can make them anxious and depressed and worried and they can feel like failures.

Hal: And, and you know, that's one of the, one of the reasons that we really say, you know, if you've got a child who's a struggling learner, maybe the best thing is for them to be at home. Because that, at least, takes a lot of the social aspect out of it.

Jenni: Yeah.

Hal: You know, you're not, you're not worried about getting tagged in the red bird group or whatever. But, but at the same time you still got, you know, your local support group, you've got your own family. There's still going to be some pressure when they start to compare themselves with other kids. And so yeah, you'd have to have, the parent has got to have, I think...

Melanie: Some strategy.

Hal: A strategy, and they have to have a certain calmness themselves to say, "You know what, God has made each of our kids individuals, this kid has different

timetables and that's okay. I'm not going to freak out and I'm not going to let them freak out."

Melanie: And I think you need to have a strategy, particularly for, "how am I going to deal with this?" One thing that we did is we talked to all of our kids separately and together and explained we all have different gifts and you know, Sam is very athletically gifted, you're not. And yes, you're reading earlier than he did, but you can't do this other stuff that he can do.

Jenni: Yeah.

Melanie: And that God has given each of us trials and challenges and gifts and we shouldn't despise someone else because God's given them a different calling, a different gift. And I did not allow ever our kids to mock each other, because it was super important to me that we have a healthy, happy home atmosphere where our kids felt safe.

Jenni: Safe. Yeah. That's the word that popped into my head. Safe.

Melanie: And so we didn't allow them to call each other names, didn't allow them to torment each other and pest and mock each other. And instead we encouraged the siblings to be on their side, to be their helper, to protect them.

Jody: Yeah. Team mentality.

Hal: You know, one of the things it was a real blessing for us to observe was, um, Samuel had his next older brother was just, they were the closest two together in our whole sequence. And, and so they, they were always like, you know, Heckle and Jeckle, they were, they were the two that were always together. And when they started doing activities outside the home, by this time, we'd started to realize, "Okay, this is a special case, this, this kid's got some interesting challenges." And Matthew just stepped up and it became his, not just his protector against hostility but protecting his dignity. So when they did things like they go to a meeting where, you know, the first thing you do is fill out a name tag. That was something that just, that's so discouraging to a dyslexic kid who says, "Gosh, if I write my name down, everybody's going to say 'Hi. I read like a preschooler.'".

Jenni: Yeah.

Hal: I get wear it on my chest all day. And so, so Matt would just, would just go through the line first and he would fill out his real quickly and then he turned say, "Hey Sam, I got yours."

Jody: That's awesome!

Hal: And he would just write Sam's card. And so, you know, and I did the same thing when he was interviewing for football. Uh, cause he got, he ended up being recruited by nine different colleges to play football.

Jenni & Jody: Wow.

Hal: at a high school, and so we're doing all of these visits to different colleges. And the first thing to give you as a, an information questionnaire. And I would just, I would just grab that and say, "I'll fill this out. You talked to the coach, you need to talk to the coach here. This is routine stuff." And so we avoided that kind of thing. So if your family knows, "Hey, you can come alongside your special brother, your special sister and you can do things that will protect their dignity, that will help them to show the gift of this to have and not be embarrassed by the struggle that they may be having." And you know what, those two boys grew up just as tight as intertwined vines. They are still best friends the...

Jody: I love that.

Hal: The love that they have gotten from one another. It is earned and bonded together through so many trials. It's fantastic to watch what happened.

Melanie: Yeah. It has been such a blessing. And you also need to, um, prepare the way when you're doing outside stuff you're doing, outside co-ops or classes or anything where your- where your son or daughter might have to write or read. Sunday school.

Hal: Yes.

Jenni: Right.

Melanie: You need to go to the person in charge, privately, beforehand and you need to use those words that are very hard to come out of your mouth, sometimes. You need to say...

Hal: The "D" word?

Melanie: The "D" word. Yeah, I was uncomfortable with it. You need to say, "I have a child with learning disabilities", because when you use the "disabilities" word, then you invoke some legal privileges.

Jody: Yeah.

Melanie: Some legal requirements that these things are that are public accommodation.

Jody: Right.

Melanie: They have to help you. And so say "I have a child with learning disabilities, please do not ask them to read aloud."

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Right.

Melanie: You know, "please send them home with anything they need to fill out", you know? Or "I will send somebody to read their tests to them," or whatever.

Jenni: Yeah.

Melanie: But you make, make sure that you get the accommodations that your child needs. Just like, and this is hard for homeschoolers. Last year at a conference, a mom came up to me and she was just in tears and she said, "I heard you had a child who struggled," and she said, "My son, his school is taking him 14 hours a day." And I said, "What in the world?"

Jenni: "...are you doing? Maybe change the plan."

Melanie: She was not giving this young man any accommodation.

Jenni: Wow.

Melanie: And so, he was filling out all these worksheets.

Jenni: Ooh.

Melanie: And writing all these essays and it, it was, it was impossible. And it was destroying his love of learning. It was destroying their relationship.

Jenni: Oh, yeah. Oh, my goodness!

Speaker 2: I said, yes. I said, "Honey," I said, "Why on earth aren't you letting him dictate his essays? Why aren't you doing this work orally?" She said, "Isn't that cheating?"

Jody: Oh, my goodness.

Melanie: She said, "My husband says he's got to learn to make it the real world". And I said, "You know, if your son was born with one leg, four inches shorter than the other one, would you tell him-- Would you deny him having special shoes and say, 'you just need to learn to make it in the real world'?"

Jenni: Hmm. Good. What'd she say?

Melanie: And she just said, "I'd never thought of that."

Jenni: Yeah, that's it. So, she just haven't thought of it that way.

Hal: Yeah. Well, I, you know, the illustration that I use, I have, I have worn glasses since I was in third grade, because you know, at that point somebody realized, "Hey, he can't see the whiteboard, clearly. The answer was not, we'll put them on the front row and make him squint. But no, give him some glasses so he can get on with his schoolwork and not worry about vision." And that's an accommodation, okay? That's something that something that helps you overcome a disability. Yeah. Go ahead and use the "D" word. You overcome that disability so you can get on with your life.

Jody: Yeah.

Hal: And that's what-- That's what we're doing, when we give them the accommodations. Which they truly need for, you know, for timed tests or for written material or whatever it is that they're challenged on.

Melanie: Well, because you know what, what does handwriting really have to do with composition? We've written seven books, but we don't, we haven't written that one single word of it by hand.

Jenni: True.

Melanie: And so, yet we connect this so closely with our kids, but a child may be able to write a facet. In fact, that was a turning point for us. When Sam was in the eighth grade, he said, "Mama, I wish I could, I wish I could, um, win prizes for essays at the History Museum, like my brothers," we have a state history club for young people. And uh, and a thought, and I thought, "Well, why not?" And I picked up the phone and I called them I said, "I have a student with learning disabilities. Would it be all right for him to dictate his essay?" They said, "Absolutely. As long as he does his own research and you type whatev-- exactly what he says." And he won number one in our state.

Jody: Wow. That's awesome!

Jenni: Hal, Jody, Jody and I both smiled when you use the, the eyeglass example, because we, you know, parents who have kids with special needs for, some crazy reason, sometimes are tempted to feel like it's somehow like our fault. We did something wrong. It's-- Or, or we're failures because we have-- And I, when I first, um, got my son's diagnosis, he was very little and for a split second I thought, "Oh Gosh, did we do this?" And there was like this moment of shame and my mother in law looked at me and said, "You know, if your kid needed glasses, would you feel responsible? Like you messed up their vision? No, you'd go get them glasses and you wouldn't, you wouldn't do what you need to." And it changed my whole outlook. So the minute you said that, we both looked at each other and smiled.

Melanie: Well, it, it's, it's really takes a change of perspective and to, I think we just take our, our kids' education so personally when we're homeschooling and if they struggle, we think surely we must have been able to prevent it or make it better. But you know, one thing that helped me and our son, and we actually have another child who is dyslexic, um, since then, but um, what really helped us, is, is looking at history and realizing, "Oh, wait, you mean Thomas Edison was dyslexic?"

Jenni: Hm. I didn't know that.

Melanie: That general George Patton was dyslexic? That Agatha Christie was so dyslexic and so dysgraphic and struggled so much with spelling, that her editors often couldn't even tell what word she meant.

Jenni & Jody: Wow.

Jody: That's huge!

Hal: She sent it in a manuscript and they would have to get on the phone to say, "Would you please read this to us?" You know.

Melanie: And, and yet she is one of the bi-- One of the best sellers of the entire last century.

Jenni: And prolific.

Melanie: Yes. And wrote so many books. And so, when we don't help our kids, by getting them whatever interventions they, need by giving them accommodations, when we don't help them, we may be limiting what God has for them to do. Because if they graduate thinking they can't write a book, maybe that book won't ever be written. And so we've got to build their confidence. We've got to praise their intelligence. We've got to recognize the things that they do well and praise the things that they're doing well. And we've got to separate the learning from the struggle to learn. Like, you know, just because it's hard doesn't mean you don't learn it. Just because it's difficult doesn't mean you can't do it. And so we've got to encourage our kids that, you know, it's alright that you didn't read until you were 11. Look at you now.

Jenni: Yeah. Yeah. And really pointing up until you get to that point, pointing to the people who, who've made it and, and had the same struggle. Is there a specific point or is there a moment that parents can identify where they can become aware that they may need help?

Hal: Well, I think you already mentioned it. If you get to about eight or so, and the reading is just not there, or the math is just, I mean, the basic calculation is just not setting in.

Melanie: And there, there are some, there's some diagnostic stuff on Dianne Kratz' website and in the first part of her brain integration therapy manual, that's kind of a checklist, some kids that struggle with reading may exhibit these things. And often when I'm talking to somebody to a conference alternative that those first few pages of that brain integration therapy manual and go over that with them and I say, "Oh my goodness, I didn't even realize that it was connected." "Yes, this is my child." And so HSLDA also, in their special needs section, has some checklists that you can look through and see is what we're going through look like something that needs further help. And I was very afraid to take that step. I feel foolish looking back, but I was very afraid to, to think, we need help. We need testing. We need some ideas here. I guess I'd, I just, I guess I felt like I could, if I denied it, it wouldn't be right. It wouldn't have happened. You know what I mean?

Jody: Yeah. I think a lot of people feel that way.

Jenni: And I think a lot of homeschoolers specifically feel like if I get help, it means I'm not really homeschooling and I and I failed.

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: And it doesn't work.

Melanie: And also, everybody said so much, "Don't get them-- Let them be labeled. Don't let your children be labeled."

Jenni: Oh, my goodness. Yes.

Jody: We hear that so often.

Melanie: But I didn't understand that if I'm homeschooling, I don't have to share that label with anyone unless we need to.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: That's right. Unless it can give them the help they need.

Melanie: Yes.

Hal: The idea of a label, is, is about the social aspect of it, but honestly, what you're looking for is a diagnosis.

Jenni: Exactly.

Hal: And you know, this is something that parents need to internalize and they need to, to explain this to their kids. You have a diagnosis of a particular problem, you are not a problem. Your whole identity is not wrapped up in, "Hello, I'm dyslexic

and my name is--", that's not you. You have-- You have a particular thing that you struggle with and all the other stuff is fine. So, so, okay, we deal with your problem, but you are not the problem and that's doesn't define your life.

Jody: Right.

Melanie: And uh, I do want to say that our son told me we needed to talk about this. That would not be sharing his name or what he's going through without his permission. That he, when he was in high school, he came and he said, "Mom, there are so many people out there struggling and their parents don't know how to help them. You and I need to write a magazine article." And we wrote a magazine article and the response to it went so big that he said, "You know what, we ought to do a session at conferences about this." And I said, "Now look, you haven't wanted people to know about it. If we, if we get a contract that says we're going to do this session, you can't back out.

Jody: Right.

Melanie: And he said, "No." He said, "I think it's really important."

Jody: So, what would you say to the parent who feels so inadequate that there they're seriously contemplating putting their child back in school?

Melanie: I would tell them that it's unlikely to help. And because my brother actually was dyslexic and he had a horrible experience at school. The only help he got was from tutors that a mother hired. Instead, he got a lot of humiliation, a lot of bullying.

Jody: Wow.

Melanie: And he, and he's now a very successful businessman in China. And I just think that nobody cares more that your child gets the help they need than you do.

Jody: That's right.

Jenni: That's good.

Hal: And I think that, you know, until you really start to look into this, you don't realize that your average classroom has to go find somebody who has the resources to deal with special needs children. And guess what? You've had access to the same-- not not the same individuals, although some places you do, but you can find educational psychologists, you can find therapy programs you can do at home. You can find-- There's all sorts of resources out there that don't require you to go to a bricks and mortar school.

Melanie: And, two things about that I want to say, first of all, don't be afraid of the cost. There are very low cost interventions.

Jody: That's good news. That is great news.

Melanie: We have quite a few of them on our site at raisingrealmen.com just hit the shop and scroll down to struggling learners. Um, there are very low cost interventions that you can use and I was afraid of that. Also though, here is the reason to keep homeschooling, because when your kids leave home, what you will care about when they leave your house is yeah, you're going to care or they prepared for adult life? But you're going to mostly care about relationships.

Jody: That's right.

Jenni: Yeah.

Melanie: What kind of relationship do they have with God and what kind of relationship they have with us.

Jody: Yeah.

Melanie: And because that's what really matters to the rest of your life.

Jody: Right.

Melanie: And there is no better way to build a relationship with your kids than to have them with you.

Jenni: Amen. In your, um, notes on the talk that you do on this, you said something that really intrigued us, Melanie or Hal, I guess both of you wrote it. We're just-- Were the moms. So you know, we think mom wrote everything.

Jody: Because Hal, she really did, right?

Melanie: Actually we- we really write about half and half. And even our kids when they're looking through the books, can't tell who wrote what.

Jenni: Oh, I love that.

Speaker 3: Oh, that's just that one flesh thing. So we can both take credit for whatever the other one's...

Jenni: There you go. Perfect. So you wrote, and this really, really caught our attention, you, you wrote that being a delayed reader can ultimately bless your child. Can you talk about that for a minute?

Melanie: We have no child more diligent than our son who had to work his behind off to learn to read. Nothing came easy for him in academics. And because of that he learned to work. He learned diligence and he learned determination and he wanted to focus. And that has really blessed him in college. And I, he is really

discussed it with his friends and because he's like, "What do you mean you didn't do the reading for today?".

Jody: We have these kids, we know what you're talking about.

Hal: Yeah. You know, one of the thing, again, one of those things that blessed me as a parent, was when he, he finally got his feet under him and he's just starting to read with some, some fluency. I mean, he's not reading, you know, he's not reading at top speed yet, but he's, he's reading enough that he's, he's comfortable reading and he's reading everything he can get his hands on. So, he wants to talk to his friends about it and he says, "What are you reading?" And, and somebody for instance, "Oh, I don't really like to read. I'm just, I'm not doing that." And he'd say, "What's wrong with you?! What is wrong with you?! I had to work so hard to do this and you don't, and it's easy for you and you don't care?!".

Melanie: It made him so mad.

Hal: And I was just like, "I love you son. I'm just blessed. You appreciate this."

Jody: Yeah.

Melanie: He, he learned character through his struggle. And that, I'll tell you what, when you get to the upper levels of education, a lot of times character means more than native ability.

Jody: Right.

Jenni: I think all the time.

Jody: Yeah.

Melanie: Yeah.

Jenni: I mean, what we're seeing out of our own kids is the same thing, there-- It's their character that that gets them through every open door, every opportunity. It's character that gets them through the door and keeps them there. Charisma might help for a moment, but it's really their character and their constitution that keeps them there.

Jody: Yeah.

Melanie: Absolutely. Our son went in to talk to the president at his college this week to ask for the endorsement for, you know, the Rhodes and everything. And um, and he, he called me afterwards and I said, "Son, you were in there but a few minutes?" He said, "Yeah, Mom, I just went in and I, I asked him and he said, 'Of course'".

Hal: Yeah. He said "I'd like to ask you for an endorsement." And he says, "You've got it."

Jody: That's so awesome.

Jenni: That's amazing.

Melanie: And so he was just, you know, he was stunned but I said, "Son, the work you put in over the past few years has led to this moment."

Hal: Yeah.

Jenni: Yeah.

Melanie: And you know, I just think that, I think that this is conforming us to the image of Christ, us and our children.

Jenni & Jody: Yeah.

Melanie: And it's not easy. And I cried a lot. I felt like a failure a lot, but God is able to take our pitiful efforts and to do His will with them and make them into something beautiful.

Jenni: Wow. Hal and Melanie, you have been so much fun to talk to. Tell people who are listening how they can find you.

Hal: Okay. The easiest way to find us is at our website rasingrealmen.com. It was named as her first book. So that's kind of our hangout.

Melanie: Yes, our blog and store is there. We also have a podcast that's linked from there, weekly podcast.

Hal: Yeah. Every social media platform slash "Raising Real Men" is us.

Melanie: Yeah, we're everywhere. And we have, um, we also can be invited to speak, you can go to our speaking website at halandmelanie.com.

Jenni: Okay. And people can request to have you come to their town through that site. Awesome.

Melanie: Yes, we speak at conferences and churches and homeschool groups literally all over the world. So...

Jenni: Well, we are so, so grateful to you both and we're excited to be able to see you again. We're going to track where you are and hopefully we'll get to be at some of the same conferences together in the future and we can connect with you

guys. In the meantime, we will add you to our regular podcast lists cause we're huge podcast listeners.

Melanie: Awesome!

Hal: Thanks.

Jenni: Well, thank you, guys and God bless you in all the work that you do.

Melanie: Thank you, it's been a delight.

Hal: We do appreciate the opportunity.

Jody: I know! And it's kinda nice to be able to carry--