

# Teach Your Child Physical Literacy

## Reaching Roots Podcast, S1: E12

### Melanie Levenberg, PL3Y

[Intro]

**JAISON DOLVANE** Melanie Levenberg is an author, teacher and expert in children's fitness. She is the creator and founder of the PL3Y (Play) dance & fitness programs that follow the 3 rules of Play: Be Positive. Be Fun. Be Yourself. Her programs have reached over 3 million kids and over 1,000 instructors have been trained on how to develop physical literacy. In 2020 alone, over 1 million kids participated in PL3Y programs. Melanie is an international keynote speaker and delivers her workshops and energizers throughout the world.

So what is Physical Literacy? It is defined as having a combination of motivation, confidence, knowledge and the physical competence to choose to be active. As we continue to consume technology, communities throughout the world are seeing the negative effects of our 'digitally distracted' way of life; social disconnect, poor mental health, obesity and unhappiness.

Dean Kriellaars, one of the leading experts in physical literacy says "Children are not learning the basic elements of play and a child with low physical literacy skills has low confidence to perform ANY activity". Basic movement skills, like jumping, running, skipping, throwing are the foundations of physical literacy. However, there are kids that simply don't know how to MOVE and find these activities difficult. This only adds to the growing issue of increased screentime and decreased outdoor free play.

Physical Literacy develops social skills, self-awareness, confidence and trains you to move. Movement has positive effects on the brain's ability to learn - as our minds, bodies and spirits are in a more optimal state of learning & confidence when active. Studies show kids with high physical literacy have better self-esteem, reduced risk for health issues, higher test scores and more stable moods.

Melanie believes that children and students deserve an education experience that not only focuses on academics, but also helps them BE healthier, happier humans. In this episode, Melanie talks about what physical literacy is and how you can achieve this.

Melanie's award-winning flagship program, DANCEPL3Y (dance-play), has been recognized to boost mental health as kids learn simple dance moves from a variety of different genres - from Pop & Jazz to Hip Hop & Bollywood. As a children's fitness expert, she inspires teachers and employees to discover the "best version of themselves" and as CEO of PL3Y, she is helping fitness entrepreneurs launch PL3Y programs throughout the world.

Melanie calls Vancouver, Canada home, where she stays active by exploring the surrounding mountains and oceans. She is addicted to moving and playing outside, with her wife and daughter by her side.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Welcome Melanie.

**MELANIE:** Thank you for having me.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** It's great to have you here. And honestly, I've just doing some research around physical literacy. To me, I had always thought about it as physical fitness and didn't really realize that there was so much more to it. So I'm really excited about having this conversation today. But before we kind of get started, why don't you tell us a little bit about just how did you get started? What got you involved in sort of physical literacy and why you're doing this?

**MELANIE:** Definitely. Well, I grew up in a really small town in northern Ontario called Kapuskasing. So my own physical literacy journey was me playing outside, playing in nature. And because I lived in such a small town, I didn't have access to, I would say the large number of choices of organized sports that kids in bigger cities have. So I was kind of like at sampler of multiple different sports and activities that were available, played hockey. I played ringette, I played baseball, you know, I'm from the generation of kids who, the girls weren't necessarily I wouldn't say allowed to play with the boys, but almost all organized sports at the time when I was growing up

were for boys. And then there was like, I'm like the generation of girls who were like the first girls to play on the boys team.

So there was like a handful of us girls who were divvied up amongst all the boys teams. And we were the one girl on the boys teams. And eventually, obviously the city's caught up and there's all girl leagues or like co-ed leagues and it's not such a big deal, but it was a big deal back in the back in the eighties and nineties when we were starting our journey.

So I grew up loving movement, loving the outdoors, and I just always just knew that I wanted to work with kids, and I wanted to that physical activity and movement and sports or whatever I consider sports and just movement in general was what I wanted to do. So obviously the career path was to become a physical education teacher. I always loved teaching and wanting to be a teacher. So I went to university with the goal of becoming a physical education teacher. And I did, I graduated from the university of western Ontario with a bachelor's in kinesiology, then also a bachelor's in education. And I became a physical education teacher. And I soon realized being in the education system that I had felt a calling to do more and to be more and to have a greater impact than only within my classroom.

And so I started looking at career options that would allow me to have a larger impact when it came to fiscal activity and movement. And I'm also kind of a little bit of a curriculum nerd. And I love like developing curriculum. So I, you know, pursued opportunities to, to write curriculum for the city of waterloo as a public health educator. And then I moved on to the Ontario physical and health education teachers association called ophea. And so I worked as a curriculum consultant there and as my career path went along, I, you know, loved you know, figuring out different ways of getting kids and students active. You know, along with the changes that were happening to the world, you know, like how we grew up, how easy the access, the outdoors, all of it.

And like the societies were just transforming, moving from a small town up in up north and like living now in big cities like Toronto and London and waterloo, you just realize the things that inherently made movement and

physical activity access a little bit easier, just, you know, when we're growing up, you just think that it's going to be like that for our kids, the world was changing. So just finding out innovative ways of making sure that kids can stay active and what this meant for them in their world, in their lives.

So I was a curriculum consultant working in the world of physical education. And you asked me how I came about the world of physical literacy. Well, physical literacy really is the foundation of a quality physical education program. So the term became really much more well-known, especially in north America, in Canada, like around the 2008, 2010 like era, but it's been around for a long time. It's not like a new term. And physical literacy, like you're, like the brilliant introduction mentioned is that it's not just talking about fitness or movement. Physical literacy is a comprehensive look at like physical activity and what it brings to our lives. And that there's more components within just if you're able to move your body. So it's made up of those three components, the competence. So are you able to move your body? But it also looks at the domain of confidence. Like when you're moving, do you feel confident? Are you in settings where your confidence is being built for physical activity and movement?

And then even though you might be really great at moving and you might feel confident when you're doing the movements, do you have an inherent value for physical activity as part of your everyday lifestyle, because you understand what physical activity brings to your life? Not only on the physical side, but also on the social connection side, on the emotional side on this, you know, the spiritual connection side. And so those three components like the competence, the confidence and the motivation to be active for life is really what physical literacy is all about. So looking at it beyond the body, beyond just the movement. And so that's how I came into the world of physical literacy.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** That's amazing, you know, obviously, you know, you've done really well, and it looks like you've impacted over 3 million students, which is phenomenal. What struck me so much about this term and I guess you know, the education of it was that there was so much that was tied to the emotional and the mental state. And obviously, you know, we always think about physical and being

active and everybody kind of realizes that that's it's a positive thing to do, and it's good for our health. But you know, the emotional state is a really important part of actually allowing you to that. So can you talk a little bit about, you know, how, sort of, what this literacy encompass around the emotional side of the mental state and how do you really help children sort of develop that?

**MELANIE:** That's a really great question. So physical literacy addresses, well, the goal of like the lens of physical literacy is that we want every human being on this planet, no matter what their age size ability to be active for life. And so I as a physical education teacher or a movement practitioner or fitness instructor, when we're working with kids, it's about understanding, how does my teaching, how does my class, how does my program, how does my offer support a child or a person along their physical literacy journey so that what they're experiencing teaches them new movement skills. Absolutely that's important but teaches them to value and to choose to be active because they're enjoying it because it brings them pleasure, because it brings them social connections. So having that lens and that understanding of the purpose of physical literacy, and I think it's interesting. And I feel like I've talked about it right now, like at the beginning of this is that we have this notion of like the physically literate person, how can you achieve physical literacy?

And I always challenge, you know, people who speak about it from that perspective, because physical literacy is not actually something that we can ever achieve. You can never like look at a person at any given time and say, you person are physically literate, and you overhear person b are physically illiterate. Because when we are born, we have a body. As soon as we have a body, a person who is a minute old is on their physical literacy journey. And they might not have developed certain competencies, or they might not have certain motivations yet. They have, might not have discovered certain things, but that person is along their journey of physical literacy, the same way that a six-year-old who might know how to jump off two feet and might not know how to hop yet is on their physical literacy journey.

And might the same way that someone who is, you know, an athlete who might've been training their whole life towards high level competition, like aiming for the Olympics or aiming for national teams who injures their knee.

And their whole life is flipped upside down is on their physical literacy journey. So just because you can do a certain skill or not do a certain skill doesn't mean that you're not physically literate. It's the emotional aspect, the cognitive aspect, it's a social connections and also the motivation to choose to be active for life. So when you look at the emotional aspect of it, it's like, how can we as practitioners again, address the emotional side, foster the emotional side, the value of movement and physical activity so that our participants, no matter what they face in life, that they have this inherent value for movement that makes them desire to choose to be active, no matter what their physical circumstances are, no matter what their mental state is that they have that inherent ingrained value for movement.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** So how do your programs actually sort of tackle that?

**MELANIE:** So our programs are, we use dance as a platform. We use yoga as applied for me, also use kids' fitness programs as platforms. So those are the three platforms that we play in. And for me it comes from the mindset aspect of it at first. So yeah, people come to me like, oh, you're a dance teacher. You teach kids dance classes. And like, I'm kind of an undercover ninja. What I do is I help kids and I want them to come into my space, but I really want them to feel excited about movement. I want them to feel like they can do it and that whether it's dance or something else that they choose that through their experience with my programs, that they are excited about physical activity as part of their life.

So what I do is I use the three rules of play, and that's also the reason why my company name has a number three in it. So we spelled P13y P13y, 13y instead of p l a y. And the number 3 stands for the three rules that all kids have to follow in all of our programs. And it doesn't matter if it's dance or yoga or fitness or whatever else. The three rules are, you have to be positive. So notice if at any time in their experience, these thoughts in their minds might pop in saying, you know what? I can't do this. Or I don't think I'm going to be successful with that. Think all of us, especially as kids get older, we have this brain that projects into the future. And if it projects something that it feels like we're not going to be good at or successful at, it goes into this self-talk of like, you can't do this, this, this is going to be too hard. You're not going to be good at it. So we're going to just teach kids to switch

that from I can't to I'll try, not even I can, because they might not be able to. So, or a level two, I can't to, I can do it say in yourself, I can do this. I can do this. Or even better. We say, you know, saying I can't do it, switch it to, I am awesome. I've got this. So trying to build in that positive self-talk.

The second rule is that kids are not allowed to have fun. And the kids all gasped, we say, you're not allowed to have fun. And they're like, oh what? Because we say you're not allowed to have fun. We don't want you to have fun. It's not something that you can have. I can't say like, oh, Jaison, I'll be right back. I'm just going to go get my fun. So the second rule is that we want kids to practice being fun. So the second rule is be fun. So we want kids to practice being the most fun version of themselves. Like how would the most fun version of yourself address this challenge? How would the most fun version of you learn this new skill? How would the most fun version of you work with your teammates and, you know, try this challenge, try this new activity. So allowing kids to have the space where they get to discover who they are and show up as that version of themselves.

And the third rule is be yourself. So in all of our movement practices, everyone learns the same movement at the same time. So everyone's doing the same poses. It's not just a freestyle free for all program, but what we teach is that while you're doing that movement, we want every person to explore how that movement feels for themselves. And to express it in a way that feels good for them. So we always say, you're going to learn this dance move, but then the way you do the dance moves should look different because you've got a different body, you've got different thoughts and different opinions to share with the world. You've got a different style. So if you're in a class and you're just trying to copy the instructor, then that's just going to teach you to keep copying other people. When really, we want to let every child experience what it feels like, what feels good for them, what's their own style and way of moving that foundational movement.

So all three of those rules, to me address the mindset. It's not about the movement. The first thing that we do, this is the first thing that they learn in every single program. Every class we reinforce it is the mindset aspect of it, which is linked to the emotional side of it. You know? So their emotions

already are like, oh, if this is what dances, maybe I can do this class. So that's my take on it.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Great. You know as you were talking about sort of the be yourself and you know, obviously when people think about dance and then think about an instructor, there's always sort of a comparison to what the instructor does and then what you need to kind of do in response and you judge right or wrong according to that. But you know, if you change, if we change the message to be yourself and by definition, it's going to look different. It feels like this is a shortcut to build confidence with the kids.

**MELANIE:** Absolutely. And as soon as we say, so what we teach say the third rule is be yourself. And in this class, you should move, the way you move should look different than the person who's beside you. And then we teach them. We say, when you add your own style, you can't get it wrong. Just know that. And we make them point their finger point to someone else and look at that person say, hey, you can't get it wrong. They take their other finger. They point someone else say, hey, you can't get this wrong. Then they point it to their faces and say, you can't get this wrong. And so it's, again, these, all of these micro moments as we build the context of our class. Again, I think that there's brilliant programs. There's so many people who are teaching children's programs and the content of what we do is slightly different. Like we don't teach with right for the left foot, like our class doesn't have a right foot left foot dance choreography.

We actually let the kids move through the space, there's no lines. There's a certain things structurally that we've changed in how we teach dance. But at the end of the day, they learn sequences and they'll do the dance moves and we move along to music. But the context, the setting, the tone through which we're teaching that class and that experience is I think what makes us different. Because we invite play, we invite that creativity. We invite that exploration for the purpose of having kids have an open mind, having kids experience the possibility of success that, you know, boosting that confidence before they even begin. Instead of this notion where I think, you know, I will feel confident when I start this thing that I'm not good at, I'm going to work on this thing that I'm still not good at. And then I'm going to

get good at it. And then I'm going to feel confident about it. So like, why not start with confidence, you know, and then use that as well.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Different perspective, which is cool. You know, you've sort of figured this out for your programs and you are teaching a lot of people that, but you also spend a lot of time talking to teachers and students and helping them kind of refine their programs in schools. So talk to me about kind of like, you know, how do you think sort of on an everyday basis schools should be changing their programs?

**MELANIE:** Well, I tell teachers, you know, a lot of the, because our flagship program was dance play. And so a lot of people come to these dance workshops, they have these aha moments, like, like kind of what you just said in the beginning and be like that third rule, like, wait, I'm supposed to be myself, like in a dance class. And they had these like moments and realizations, and physical literacy is about that, it's not just about what you experience in that one activity, but how can you apply that to the rest of your life? So I give teachers the explicit permission to say, take these three rules, bring them to your classroom. Like what if it was in math class? You know, the first rule switch, I can't do it to I'll try, you know, be positive, how would the most fun version of yourself be in this classroom? And then how can you take this concept and add your own style and your creative, your own innovation to any topic that they're teaching. So, you know, and I also encourage teachers to change, to create their own rules. So some teachers will like be awesome. They have their own spin on it and their own take of the three rules.

So that's really one of the biggest lessons beyond, like in terms of like an entire education system, but I like to support teachers. But a lot of the people that I work with are people who are schoolteachers who went to school, maybe without a movement background, they might have studied geography and history. And then they became an elementary school teacher. And so now they're put in a situation where they have to teach their students movement. They don't feel comfortable with it. So just like understanding what it is that we are doing in a physical education program and what the purpose of it is. Our goal is not to create, you know, the next NHL star. It's not to create the next, you know, soccer star. It's not to create elite dance

choreographers. The physical education curriculum across the world is founded in physical literacy. And so our responsibility through the education sector is to provide movement opportunities where kids can try different activities. They can learn new games. They can develop this competence, this confidence, and it's the motivation to be active for life. And especially through the education system, I would say teacher's responsibility is to provide a variety of different ways for students to discover how they can be active, as opposed to the soccer, basketball, volleyball. You know, there's like this recurring theme that can get repeated over and over in a school.

Like what if instead of playing soccer, they played chook balls. You know, there's a lot of these like international games that they can learn how to play that teaches the same movement concepts, but in a different setting. So it's about opening up the possibilities of, if you want to move your body, there's a lot of different ways that you could move your body. And so what finding the like top three ways that you enjoy, because every kid's different. So some kids are going to love sports. Some kids are going to live individual sports. Some kids are going to love just playing outside. Some kids are going to love [18:11 inaudible], you know, I always tell people, I'm like, what if like your child becomes a kayaker? Like, are you giving them opportunity?

**JAISON DOLVANE:** You know. So I get the confidence part, which was your three rules and makes a lot of sense around that. Also, you know around getting aligned on what the right goal is, right? It's not about sort of creating elite athletes. It's more about making sure that, you know, we're getting kids onto the on ramp to be healthy. But the third piece, which is, you know, about picking different physical activities, I mean, how obviously, you know, there's [18:43 inaudible], right? There's sort of daily physical activity that happens in school and especially in elementary schools. Should those programs change what they're doing today?

**MELANIE:** I think, so I get the chance to work with like some of the most innovative physical education districts in the world. So I sometimes have a skewed perception that all districts are doing what the people that I get to work with do. And then I often go into other places where I'm like, oh no,

this isn't happening everywhere. So like, should pe programs like really depends on the school. It depends on the leadership.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** You might have seen it not being done right.

**MELANIE:** I think like what I mentioned, like having a faculty and a physical education faculty who has just figured out their plan and they do the rinse repeat year after year and where that can tend to look like the same sports. They're like, well, in the fall, we're going to start with soccer because we can go outside. Cause we live in Canada because there's, you know, so it's like, you go from the soccer and then you go to volleyball because it's volleyball season, then I'm going to do basketball because it's basketball season in the school systems. And then I've got to introduce my kids to badminton because then it's the badminton season. And it's kind of like, we fall, pe teachers can fall very easily. I would say like a victim too but like in line with what the year-long school program season is.

And so, because they think that their responsibility is to introduce their pe program kids to that sport so that they can then try out for those teams and then go play that sport. When really a quality physical education program, I think as an educator, if you are working with multiple other educators in the school, or if you're the only person who's responsible for k to five look every grade, what sports, what games, what activities are you introducing to kids? And is there a range so that when kids go from kindergarten to grade five, that they've experienced a variety of different kinds of sports activities and games, not just the typical, you know, top six that, you know, you know, basketball grades in kindergarten basketball and grade one basketball and grade two, like what if they get basketball three times over their k to five experience, but that there's other ways to teach those fundamental movement skills, those core concepts competencies, but using different activities. So I think that that's one thing that if anyone's a physical education teacher, or if anyone's a parent listening to this being like, yes, ask these questions to your teacher. But like what sports are kids going to do in grade three. And how is that different in grade four? How is it the same? How is it different? What are some new games that you're bringing in? You just ask and prompt.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Yeah. Try to prompt them and try to stimulate the thinking. I hear you. So, you know, I read somewhere around movement, right. And there's different types of movements and I don't know where it was, but you know, they kind of segmented into sort of like indoor and outdoor and water sports and ice sports. So how important is, how important is teaching kids movement across those various different types of movement?

**MELANIE:** I like, I think that, again, whether it's a physical education program or even as a parent, when your child was growing up, like thinking about like, what different environments am I bringing my child for them to practice and learn how to move their bodies in different environments? Like, will your child's movement experience exclusively be done in a gymnasium setting or in an indoor multipurpose room setting? Like when do they get to go outside and, you know, have to navigate and negotiate the uneven grounds and nature, you know do they ever get to like practice being on ice or on snow and like having to move through that? What about moving through water and like, learning about their bodies and how it moves in all of these different environments? So physical literacy, you know, like they say, it's like your ability to move the competence, confidence, motivation, being able to move in different environments. And it's true.

Like, you know, so it's easy to throw a ball when you've got two feet on the ground and you know, you're playing baseball, but then can you transfer that skill into the pool for example, if you're playing water polo, like, are you able to throw while you're treading water? So it's, and it's just like, again, it's like different ways for our bodies to move and having that competence and confidence to be able to move our body in different environments.

The notion of a natural athlete, like you're a natural athlete. Probably, you know, building natural athletes just means exposing your child to different environments and giving them the opportunity to practice those skills, not with their environment actually changing.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Right. So you mentioned parents.

**MELANIE:** So you said, you mentioned parents and it cut out. I was like, yeah...

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Yeah. I was saying for parents and what can parents be doing to help their kids with getting more physical literate?

**MELANIE:** There's two things. I think one is their own, like just an assessment of how many opportunities they're providing for their child to move their bodies in different environments and different types of activities. So, you know, there's the sport route. There's also, you know, Kenya, does your child have opportunities for free play? Do they get to go into nature into playgrounds, into, you know, different settings?

And then the second one is their own physical literacy journey. You know, like a parent taking ownership and recognizing that they are on their own physical literacy journey. Yeah. Maybe when they were growing up, they were super active and they did a bunch of things, but this is where we talk about physical literacy being active for life and how the motivation component and the confidence component can affect how you are and how you move as you grow older.

So, you know, you might've had kids. I know, like one of the things I said, my own physical literacy journey when I became pregnant, you know, like things, physical movements that I was able to do before I couldn't do, because I literally was pregnant. But then I also was more tired just because I'm pregnant. And so just like our everyday state affects our motivation to be active. Sometimes our confidence with certain activities might affect us. So having that awareness as an adult being like, how am I physically active? How does physical activity play a role in my life? And what are some different ways that I could move my body that I enjoy?

Because I think people think that fitness is supposed to look a certain way. They're just, especially now, you know, we're filming this in the January timeframe and everyone's like, well, it's the new year.

So, and with fitness people are like, well, I need to get, if I want to improve my health, I need to improve my fitness. And in order to improve my fitness, that means I have to go to the, I have to lose weight. And in order to lose weight, I means I have to go to the gym, but I don't like the gym. And I don't like group classes and I don't know how to use the equipment. And so already your confidence is low, your motivation is low, but it's like, you think you're supposed to because we're adults and we make everything super serious.

And as parents, the best thing you could do is just check in with yourself saying like, what are some activities that allow me to move my body that I enjoy? Like, what if it's shoveling the driveway? What if it, like, so in your introduction, you said, I live in Vancouver, I just moved to whistler. And so my own assessments, my own assessment of myself is like, I sometimes don't work out because I go chop wood. Like I literally live in a house with like a wood-burning fireplace and I love it. It makes me feel like my roots, my northern Ontario roots. And I shovel the driveway. And I recognize that that is physical activity. I warm up my body. I go out there, but I'm outdoors and I'm like enjoying it. I don't make it a chore. I make it fun because I would rather be in my front yard, shoveling the driveway with my three-year-old play, making a snowman and us having random times and for me to go to a gym, that's just personally sit there and do like bicep curls with a dumbbell, you know, like it just to me that's, but that's my own journey.

Some people love the gym. That's their journey. And that's, what's beautiful about physical literacy is that every person gets to choose their own path according to how they feel at that time in their life. And it can change. And this is the beauty is that it's an ongoing process. You never get to be physically literate. You just, you are on your physical literacy journey. You can say you're physically literate at any single time. And then your level of competence on certain skills might increase or decrease. Your motivation might be affected in different, from different emotional states. And your confidence might also be affected. And it's all great. It's just checking in with yourself and seeing if you want more, you know, if you want more movement, then choose to bring it in.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Yeah. That's a good point about you know, being conscious about what movement is, and it doesn't necessarily need to be tied to the formal environments of a gym. And if you can do that, you know, maybe people can just find more time by, you know, making it part of daily activity as opposed to having to do something separate from that.

**MELANIE:** Oh yeah. And, from a parent's perspective, this is like something that's so small, especially with like the world of like, cause we're filming this in the COVID-19 like lockdown, isolations restrictions went, you know, having my three-year-old at home playing with me. I just notice how, when we play, she loves to run. Like, obviously we're running, so play running games. I love playing with her. But then as soon as I would like slightly get out of breath and be like, okay, okay, I've hit my wall. Like I just like started to like start like slightly get out of breath. And I was like, what if, when I start to get out of breath, I like play with her another 10 minutes. I keep the game going. Like, what if, instead of like, as soon as I hit that, like, whoa, I'm like slightly out of my, like, you know, regular breathing rate that I actually let myself get a little bit like sweaty playing with her.

What if I like, let myself have my heart pounding? Like that could be physical activity. Like why is it that I only count it when I, you know, I'm sitting on a spin bike and I'm sweating, that's my movement. Like what if today's activity is, I literally noticed that I get myself get out of breath, playing with my kid and then I keep going. I choose to keep going. That was a big one for me. It just like gives me those extra moments to get my heart rate up, to get the physical benefits, the emotional, the social connection, benefits of movement and play. And I find, I just noticed myself stopping as soon as I get to that point with her. So just one tiny little adjustment, right. Maybe I'll just do two more laps, two more games. I'll be the monster two more times, instead of saying no to, I'm like, okay, I'm getting tired now it's enough. Like, I'll just like, I'll do two more times then I'll stop. Just those tiny little steps moving forward can bring in that...

**JAISON DOLVANE:** That's an excellent example. So you talked about COVID-19 you know, a lot of our listeners are probably thinking the same thing, which is you know, I've got three kids, probably why we're getting some glitchiness, is

probably all of them are on their computers right now doing school. And you know, how do parents, or how do we kind of make sure that we can get our kids physical activity around COVID-19? Do you have some resources, some tools, some thoughts around that?

**MELANIE:** Definitely. I think, you know, two things I have a lot of, two things, one of them is do your best. Just recognize that like, this is the world we live in right now. And that by being safe and staying in our homes, we're taking care of each other, which is important. And it doesn't mean that you can't move your body. So there are so many resources out there. If whatever your child enjoys, like, again, it's like when parents like, okay, it's my responsibility to make sure that my child is active. Like, what if you had a conversation, be like, hey, what is a new skill that you'd like to learn? Like basically google anything. And someone will teach you how to do it. For us, we love giving parents like five-minute, four minute, like little samplers and activities. And as the samplers, but dance has opportunities. So instead of like having to commit to a 30-minute class or like a thing, so we've put together a playlist for parents, which is like 16 dances that they can, you know, use at any time to spider-man dances. Like, you know, there's like hulk dances, superhero dances, there's all kinds of different dances that they can learn with their kids. These are designed to be family-friendly dances. So those are just like, okay, let's just put on a dance before dinner. Let's just put on a desk before bed or whatever it is just like a quick thing. And so that playlist, I'll share the link with you, and you can put it in the show notes. And then the second thing is just recognize it. If you can go outdoors. This is a time that I think a lot of people are really concerned about the effects on kids. What are the kids, they're not going to move. They're not going to kind of like, this is probably a time in their life that we're going to look back saying how many children were on the path towards screen time, sedentary sitting down screen, screen, screens. When a lot of the programs are being removed, it gives an opportunity for us to explore outdoor spaces. For us to show our kids how to walk around the block, how to find the playground, how to find nature and just be outdoors more. So I actually believe that we'll look back at this time to say like, wow, what an amazing phase in society, when kids were able to explore outdoors more because they didn't have the programs. So as a parent choosing to bring your child outdoors and teaching them, what's available to them with, for no money, you know, teaching them about their environment, I think is going to be a really powerful experience that you can create for your family and your kids.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** You know, it's better than, I mean, I say it as better than, but you know, obviously a lot of parents like, but it's better than driving kids from one sports event to another right. All day long, that's what parents are doing.

**MELANIE:** Oh yeah. Absolutely.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** This is maybe a time to kind of like take a breather and do all the outdoor things.

**MELANIE:** For sure. And also like with the screen times, just like, you know, everyone's like, so like, oh, I'm a terrible parent because my kids are on the screen. If this is a season, it is a season of like, you know, don't have guilt for the amount of screen time that your child is on. If you find that you're having guilt, just make that an opportunity for you to check in. So like, okay, listen, they're going to get screen time, but how am I also making sure that they're moving at least 60 minutes every single day, get the 60 minutes in and then just like, relax, you know, have compassion for yourself.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** They can do whatever they want.

**MELANIE:** Yeah. Honestly, because, and also like find ways on using technology that they can move, like people are, so I teach dance. So everyone's like, oh, pe teachers like, oh, the Fortnite dances, the Fortnite dances. And I'm like, don't you like, [33:03 inaudible] Fortnite dances. And like, I love it. In my time, working with students who was the number one, most challenging group of people to engage? Oh, I don't know, grade three to seven boys. Like I would just say in general, you know, and now all of a sudden, I walk into a school and they were like, hey, we're doing dance. Like, hey, check out this. And like, kids are like, running up to me, boys are running up to me, like showing me their dances. They're just like, oh, they just break out into the floss or the dab or the orange, whatever, all the things. And I'm like, it's amazing. People are literally spontaneously dancing and

like a group of people that typically didn't now are. So find something that your kid loves and see if you can use technology as a tool for them to learn a new skill for them to move their body. Maybe they want to learn how to do like a ninja kick. I don't know. Someone will teach them how to do that, make it safe, make it fun, but like work with them.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** They always try to YouTube video for anything.

**MELANIE:** Oh my gosh, we call it google that stuff. GTS.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Yeah, exactly. Tell me about any you know, on your journey here. I mean, any challenges or obstacles that you've kind of, or frustrations that you faced or face along your path here?

**MELANIE:** The physical literacy path or the business path?

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Both.

**MELANIE:** I think it's really easy for us to like sit in our schooling experiences and our like own personal reading experiences and our own interests and be like, this is the best-case scenario for kids, and this is what I'm trying to create in my family. And then look at other people being like, why aren't you just doing that? Like for me to go into a pe program and be like [34:35 inaudible], think at the end of the day, we can just lead by example. And so challenges like, for me, it's always like personal, like wanting people to like, give kids better experiences and just wanting people to just have that information right away, recognizing that we can't change every one of these first instances. But what we can do is lead by example.

So at any time, you know, just trying to show the example of what's possible, having conversations and not accusatory, or like, you know, making anyone feel guilty or shameful, just, you know, bringing up conversations and having conversations with people, showing them

examples of what's possible. And just doing that within yourself and just knowing that everyone is trying their best. No one is actively wake up in the morning, be like, I'm going to mess up some kids today. You know, I'm going to make them not like movement. I'm going to go and like, make them do pushups. Like no one desires that. They truly believe in the things that they're bringing into their programs, the way they're teaching is the best way. So maybe just having conversations to have them consider a different perspective. And I think everyone has their heart in the right place when it comes to moving with kids.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Yeah. It's so important. What you're pointing out is, you know, obviously you can give all the education in the world, but people have to take action. And I guess that can be frustrating when people don't take action.

**MELANIE:** Yeah. And they won't take, it'll just come from you. You can't control what action they're going to take, but you can embody what you hope that they would do.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** And everyone has their own context, their own busy-ness right? So it's hard to sort of relate to that also.

**MELANIE:** Totally.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** So is there is there one feeling you have as a parent that you would rather not feel?

**MELANIE:** I like, I would love to let go of the guilt. I think, you know, I just feel like no matter what we do, we always feel like it's not enough. You know, you just like, I just like, is it ever going to like, feel like you're doing enough? Are you ever like, oh, that was, everything was perfect today. I did it all great, and it's just rinse, repeat tomorrow. I just, you know, it's like, did they move enough? [36:40 inaudible], like, did they have enough fruit? Did they have, you know, is it like too much cuddles or is it not enough cuddles? You know, am I overstepping them and am I not spoiling them enough? Just

like constantly, just like not ever knowing if you're doing enough, you know, so just that, but I think that also keeps [36:58 inaudible].

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Parenting is hard that way?

**MELANIE:** Totally.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** So what personal transformation have you experienced, you know, outside of sort of the business part of it and earning an income out of it? You know, what else are you kind of getting out of this?

**MELANIE:** Oh, like I'm a completely different human. I think that, I feel like the transformation is like, it is so cliché, but like the more you know, the less you realize you know, like it's, the transformation is just like to not take things so seriously, or to feel like you have so much control over things. And just kind of like to like relax and enjoy the process for yourself and realize that everyone else is also on their journey. They're going to go through their own process and stick to your lane, focus on what you can control. And like, just be fun along the way. Just the be fun, don't have fun. How can you be fun no matter what life throws at you and whatever business challenge, over family challenge, over life challenge, how would the most fun version of you approach that situation? The most loving, the most compassionate version of you.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Well, those are the rules that you put into your... [38:11 inaudible]. So that's fantastic. And you know, what is your hope for your audience?

**MELANIE:** Oh, well, my, like I said, my undercover ninja, my mission is for every single child who experiences our programs through our network of instructors to have a moment to move their body. And at the end we finish every single class with the kids claiming, it's called bubble of awesome. So we teach them at the space all around their body is a space where they get to be the most awesome version of themselves. So when they're in our classes,

they're moving and they're literally like filling up their bubble with their own awesomeness. And at the end we have every child shake out their hands, take a breath in and say to themselves in their heads of three most important words they'll ever learn to say to themselves, which is, I am awesome. So they take a huge moment, breathe in and say it in their heads. But then we get them to say the second time out loud. So every single class finishes with a group of kids when we're in schools, it's like hundreds of kids. When I do special events, it's thousands of kids at the same time screaming. I am awesome. And at that moment comes after a movement experience where they've moved the energies. It connected with each other, they've expressed their own style.

And to me, it's like just opening up the opportunity for them to tap into their own inner greatness, to their own inner awesomeness and like scream it out, like knowing that that's what they are and who they are and feeling that moment just for one second. So that is my wish for every person and adults who experienced kids doing this, have a shift, some adults who dance along with us have a shift. And it's just this like, I want every person, I desire for every person to experience their own inner awesomeness. Even if it's only for that tiny little moment, maybe it'll stretch for a minute. Maybe it'll stretch for three minutes. Maybe that's how they're going to show up to the next class or they're when they get home and share that version of themselves to their parents. And just continuing to reopen that space to share the best version of ourselves with each other.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** That's all very super energizing.

**MELANIE:** Thank you.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** So Melanie, you kind of do a couple of things. One is you know, you've designed these programs and kids can kind of access these programs and families can access these programs. And then the second thing you do is actually train sort of fitness enthusiasts or entrepreneurs to actually sort of host these programs themselves. So just tell us kind of you know, on the first one, how can kids access these programs? And then the second one talked to us a little bit about, you know, what you're doing in terms of training others?

**MELANIE:** Absolutely. So we have programs exactly like what you're saying that are delivered right now, because it is COVID-19. Our instructors are teaching virtual classes. So parents can contact us at [www.dancepl3y.com](http://www.dancepl3y.com) or [www.yogapl3y.com](http://www.yogapl3y.com) and plays always spelled pl3y and they can connect with one of our instructors. And if you tell us where you live, there's perhaps someone who's teaching classes in your city, we'll connect you with the nearest instructor. And so through in-person classes, hopefully when they come back or if they're already in your city, there would be COVID-19 safe, physically distance classes right now. Your child can participate in a yoga play or a dance.

So parents can connect with one our instructors. So through [www.dancepl3y.com](http://www.dancepl3y.com) or [www.yogapl3y.com](http://www.yogapl3y.com). So play is spelled p l 3 y in both of those words. Our instructors are teaching virtual classes because it is the time of COVID-19. So you can access classes from instructors, even though there might not be someone in your city right now, basically there's people who are teaching virtual classes. We'll also connect you if you tell us where you live with someone who lives in your city, if there is an instructor in your city who is teaching in person classes, and if they are teaching in this time of COVID-19 those classes would be physically distanced like kind of every child in their own mega bubble. So that is happening. If there is that opportunity, depending on which province or province or state you live in, some people are teaching physically distant classes.

Yeah, it's great. So that's how, if you're a parent you want to access that. We also have that YouTube channel where they can do dances with us virtually and to connect with us on social media, because we host special themed classes. Like we had a big mega zoom winter themed holiday theme class. We had a Halloween dance party. So every couple of months we host this mega zoom party where all the kids come on zoom, and we do these big classes and they're all free. So to check out our social medias and to follow us on there for those details.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Yeah, we will put links to all that in the podcast description.

**MELANIE:** I was going to say if you're listening to this and you're like, these programs sound incredible, like the way you're teaching guests, the way you approach yoga we'd come at it from a physical literacy lens. So everything that we designed is designed to develop physical literacy and we play. So we play with dance, we play with yoga to inspire kids, to develop that competence, confidence, and motivation to be active for life. If you'd love to learn how to become an instructor, we have instructor training courses that are online. And you can bring, you can be an instructor of these programs in your community. Kind of like, you know, a side hustle. A lot of parents love doing this as a way to, you know, bring in extra revenue, doing something that you love, getting kids, your own kids and other kids in your community active.

And if you're interested in learning how to launch a business, we also offer the opportunity for people to launch like career level income, you know, lifestyle, supporting income level opportunities called becoming a regional operator where you run a business of multiple instructors who work for you in a geographical territory. And then you're the one who brings these programs to an entire area. Whether that's your city or like, depending on where you live, it could be a beyond a city. It could be multiple cities. So we support people in getting kids active, getting communities active, getting families active.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** And do you really want to be you know, to be an instructor. I mean, talk to me a little bit about like, do you really have to be like a fitness enthusiast or like, you know, can you just care about fitness and not be in best shape, but really want to be able to do this?

**MELANIE:** Absolutely. Especially the regional operators side of things, like some of our regional operators don't teach any classes. They just believe in what we do. And they love the business model and the business opportunity. So they don't teach any classes. They run the business, they hire the people to teach the classes. On the instructor side of things to teach, you have to love moving your body, but you don't have to have any dance background. You don't have to have any yoga training. We teach you

everything. The program that you teach with us is predesigned by a team of experts.

So your job is just to learn the program it's all done for you. And then you get to apply your passion and actually working with the kids, being the in-person one who's there, you take our program that we give you, and then you're the delivery of those programs. You get to experience those. I am awesome moments and all the little moments throughout the class that spark children's joy and excitement for movement for play, and just being with one another.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** That's great. And they can learn about that at pl3y.com also that's pl3y.

**MELANIE:** pl3yinc.com, www.pl3yinc.com. Yeah.

**JAISON DOLVANE:** Okay, great. Well, thank you, Melanie. It's been a pleasure.

**MELANIE:** Thank you so much, Jaison, for having me, it was amazing.

[Outro]

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[Links]

**Move with Your Kids! - Free Playlist of 16 Dances to Stay Active at Home**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdm1wVIA4OE&list=PLTfstHhuPAIMjHGmRsf3CmbZ\\_PVq7NtTa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdm1wVIA4OE&list=PLTfstHhuPAIMjHGmRsf3CmbZ_PVq7NtTa)

**TedX Talk: How to Find Your Inner Rockstar With Movement**

<https://youtu.be/ujTBbFrGW58>

**PL3Y Website:**

[www.pl3yinc.com](http://www.pl3yinc.com)