

# Disrupt Yourself Podcast

## EPISODE 282: BOBBI REBELL

Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, where we provide strategies and advice on how to climb the S Curve of Learning in your professional and personal life, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. Before we dive in, just a quick reminder that your reviews and feedback help make our show the best it can be. Like this review from Drolfr. I hope I'm pronouncing that right, where they say "Weekly surprises. I love this podcast because I always come away having learned something I never knew I wanted to learn. Whitney has a wonderful skill of asking the right questions and has introduced me to books, topics, and people that launch me down a path that I've loved to discover and explore. This is truly a gift that keeps on giving." It makes me so happy to read this. So, so thank you for sharing. Now, speaking of things you didn't know you wanted to learn. This week's guest is Bobbi Rebell. She's a financial journalist, financial planner, author, and podcaster. And she's talking to us about the financial relationship between parents and children. Her latest book, *Launching Financial Grownups*, unpacks the complexities of imparting financial literacy on your kids. Money can be hard to talk about. There are a lot of emotions and self-worth tied up in it. But Bobby says that meeting your kids where they are at the appropriate moment and having an honest dialog about money, even your own struggles with it, leads to far better outcomes than avoiding the topic or pretending everything's perfect. Just like we have to talk about the birds and the bees. We also need to talk about dollars and cents with our children. There's so much practical advice in my conversation with Bobbi and I guarantee, money back guarantee, it will spark some conversations in your family.

**Whitney Johnson:** Bobbi, tell us about a crucible experience. So, something that challenged you and tested you.

**Bobbi Rebell:** I was so tested when I had to try to get my almost adult daughter, my stepdaughter, to get herself set up in her new job. So, we had had this huge success as a family, in my opinion, that she and it's her success, but we're cheering her on, so we're there with her. She had graduated from college and gotten her dream job, and she's going through all the HR stuff. And she knew, because she's my child, that she had to set up her 401(k), and I asked her to just set it up, and she probably said, yes. I said, Let me see. And we looked at it, and she had, in fact, set it up, but not fully. And so, that was a big moment for me because I realized that your child will be on a great path, be successful, be enthusiastic about doing what they want to do. For, in this case, to set themselves up financially. But as a parent, you can't assume that they have done it fully. So, she had not yet invested the money. She hadn't chosen where it would go. So, it was being taken out, but it wasn't in a bucket yet. And so, it was really important that I then sat with her and helped her make sure that it got into the right place. So, our children may tell us they've got it, but it's really important to, at least at the early stages of adulthood, check in with them and make sure that they do. And be there for them to make sure they're set up. Because think about it, if a child has invested in a 41k but not in an actual investment and you don't check in 30, 40 years go by. Oh, my goodness, what a disaster. So, we don't want to be helicopter parents, which we can talk about later. But it's important to be an involved parent and to really check up on them at the important things in life.

**Whitney Johnson:** I threw you a little bit of a curveball, right, because I asked for a crucible experience. And this particular context, it was a crucible experience as it pertains to *Launching Financial Grownups*. And so, my question for you, if we dig a little bit deeper, is, why was that such a challenge for you in particular to have that conversation?

**Bobbi Rebell:** Because we do hear so much pushback in society about don't be a helicopter parent, let them fly, have confidence in your kid, especially this is a kid that got herself an awesome job. She was doing all the right things, and she was telling the truth when she said she set up her 401(k), right. So, we're being told to step back, but yet we do still need to keep the door open a little bit just longer, make sure that they really are set up the way that they want to be. And so, it is a delicate balance between being too involved with your kids and not letting them have their adult life and having the confidence in them that they can do so. But also, you're still a parent. You still have to get in there even at adult years that in previous generations, we were off the payroll. A lot of people come to me, this book is for ages up to 26, and they say, but my parents cut me off at 18. Why? Why don't we do that? Well, because it's a little more complicated these days. We didn't necessarily have those choices.

**Whitney Johnson:** My brain is going to this notion of, of as you're describing this as a crucible moment of that moment of do you know, to what extent do I intervene? To what extent do I not that realization that as we are launching our children or actually just parenting period is a crucible moment every single day.

**Bobbi Rebell:** Yes. There really is, there's so many micro-decisions that we make. I mean, even, you know, you could have a little kid. Do you have them get themselves dressed, and then do you live with the consequences for what comes out of the room? Because it's sometimes not what you want. Right. But you have to let them be themselves within the range of let's say if they're wearing something that is not up to the dress code. Some schools maybe have you wear a sweatshirt, but it can't have words on it. So, you have to make sure that they are doing what is required, but also giving them the freedom to be themselves, and being themselves may not be what you want them to be at that moment. We all have ideas we project onto our children, but we have to let go a little bit. I mean, it goes the same way even in the business world. I had a really hard time when I hired an assistant because she did things that were correct but not the way I would do it. And it's very tricky. We have that anyone that's ever worked with employees, how much do you want to get in the weeds and give them trouble? And, and you impact your relationship depending on how you interact with that employee, the tone you use, how you give them the feedback. But if you don't interfere, as with the 401(k), there can be very long consequences. Because if you don't tell them that it does matter that you had just the spelling mistake or the formatting on this email was sloppy and or the branding what didn't look quite right. If you don't interfere with those little things, they will go on. With parenting, you want to constantly course-correct your child and keep them on the path while giving them the freedom to be themselves and not little versions of you. Even though we really, we really see them as little mini-mes, a lot of us.

**Whitney Johnson:** Why, yes, we do. Our children, we like to project onto them. All right. So, you were a financial journalist by training. And you, you have interviewed some of the world's most prominent people. What are one or two lessons or conversations that stand out to you as it pertains to money?

**Bobbi Rebell:** I love a conversation I had off camera between segments with Kevin O'Leary, who is an entrepreneur, and he's well known for being on *Shark Tank*. He has many different ventures, business ventures. He's, by the way, a very good photographer, not well known, but I've gone to his photography exhibits, and he sells photography for charity, fun fact. But I asked him, I said, Give me the real story about *Shark Tank*. What's it really like? And he said, Well, I love it. I love helping entrepreneurs. But he said, What people don't realize is so much happens after they get the money. And very often, it's not a fairy tale ending. Very often, even with the money, many of the entrepreneurs don't succeed because they simply don't have the entrepreneurial tools to succeed. And there's only so much that the money person can help them. Execution is really everything. So, people focus so much on getting the funding from, in this case, *Shark Tank*. But in life, many different places that you can get funding for a business. But it has to be the execution, and the personalities involved, and the complications of actually growing, maintaining, and then continuing to grow a business. And the S Curve is a perfect metaphor. You can get started, but are you going to get to that last part of the S Curve? It depends, and not everyone has it. And that's really frustrating. Just because you get money doesn't mean you have a business.

**Whitney Johnson:** Okay, that's a perfect segue way. That's a perfect launch pad into your book, *Launching Financial Grownups*. This idea of, even if you provide your children with money and even if they're frugal, it doesn't necessarily, necessarily mean they're going to be a financial grown up. So, so talk to us about this book. Why did you decide to write it? Give us the gist of it.

**Bobbi Rebell:** So, the gist of it is that we as parents are the ultimate stakeholders in our children's lives, and the stakes get higher as they get older. It's also been complicated by changes in society because we don't have necessarily the life milestone structures that we used to have. So, I joked earlier that people say, well, I was cut off at age 18. Well, yeah, in previous generations that made sense. Or they were cut off after college. Yeah, that still makes sense for some people here. Why 26 will now we have a perception because we have Obamacare, the Affordable Care Act, where children really adults can be on their parent's health insurance until age 26. So, we have financial ties that are put in place by society until age 26. We also have just everyday things. Think about cell phones. When I was growing up, I'm a Gen Xer, we did not have cell phones, so there was not this discussion. When do you peel the kid off your cell phone? That is the most common question. What do I do? My kid's on my cell phone bill. Do I take them off? Do I not? You know, it sounds trivial, but these actually go to parenting discussions. And also how are we letting them be adults? So, many of our children have been raised by us helicopter parents, and we've been so involved in their every day, in part as a reaction to the fact that my generation, Gen Xers, were often latchkey kids.

**Bobbi Rebell:** We were left alone, so much so. We're making up for time. We have a lot of societal pressure to make our children our number one priority. You talk to our parents? Maybe they'll waffle a little because it's become so unacceptable to say. But if they were honest, they didn't run their whole life around our soccer game, right? Now, it's great that it's perfectly acceptable for mom or dad to leave work and say, I'll be calling in from the soccer game. Also, they didn't have a phone to call it from the soccer game. But then it wasn't really acceptable. It was your career was first or whatever it was. Now we've been told our kids are first. Our identity is wrapped up in our kids. We're not letting go, even when they're adults. And it's really hard. I mean, I will tell you one quick story, not in the book, because it happened more recently. We belong, we're Jewish, we belong to a synagogue. The way it works is there are actual tickets for the services at this time of year. I emailed in my ticket order. I said, I need five tickets, one for me, my husband and our three children.

**Bobbi Rebell:** I got back a note Whitney and it said, Well, we're all set for your 13 year old. We've got the college kid covered. But, you know, Ashley is now 24, she's not 25, she's 24 years old. She needs her own not only her own ticket, she needs her own membership. She's an adult. And I was like, no, I, I resisted, but I was about to call her back and be like, No, I'm sorry, you're mistaken, she's my child. Why wouldn't she? And then I realized she was right. I was trying to get a child ticket for a 24-year-old, Whitney. So, our perception of childhood has stretched into the mid-twenties where there is no shame for a child living at home. Also good in many ways that a child can live at home when they need to as a young adult, that's good. But it used to be you were a slacker. If you were dependent on your, on your parents in your twenties, our whole societal perception is change. And so, that really drove me,

that's a long-winded answer, but that drove me to write this book because I think we need to be talking about this. Is where does adulthood begin, especially when it comes to money?

**Whitney Johnson:** One of the things that really came up for me is as I was reading your book, is this idea of what do you do? So, you're saying, all right, Bobbi, I hear you, I'm going to launch these financial grownups. But what do you do for our listeners who are saying, I don't feel qualified to talk to my children about becoming a financial grownup? What do you say to us?

**Bobbi Rebell:** Well, first of all, the answer is you're wrong. Look in the mirror, you do no more. Because whether your financial experiences have been good or bad, you have had financial experiences. And so, what you have to do is come to terms with the fact that you should share with them one of the toughest things that parents can do. And I think this is often a mistake, and to some degree maybe my parents made this mistake, is that they were not candid with me growing up about their own ups and downs financially. I always thought things were great. Frankly, I never thought about their finances, so I didn't know until even when I was writing this book, which is dedicated to my father, who is just the most wonderful, wonderful parent ever. I'm going to cry. But I didn't know a lot of the ups and downs that he had had with his career and with whatever financial decisions they were making. I had no idea. So, when your child is ready and when you are ready, share with them that you wanted to buy a second home. But you were stretched, and you were nervous, and you waited until this happened. Or share with them that, you know what? When you were little, you know, mom or dad was actually unemployed for six months and we were really scared, and different things happen.

**Bobbi Rebell:** And if you let them know that you're not perfect, they're going to be a lot more open to talking to you about their financial concerns and their anxieties and what they worry about. Because that will give you the change in relationship that you need to start treating them as adults. You're still a parent. You shouldn't be their friend or their peer. I make it very clear in the book, but you can parent them very differently when you start having those honest conversations and they can see you as human, not as someone that always had everything perfect because none of us have, and even the wealthiest people have had setbacks. Trust me, even the biggest billionaires have lost money, and I'm not going to name names here. But everybody thinks about the news, right? Think about people that had hedge funds that just had a bad year and went under. Things happened to the best and brightest all the time. People just make bad decisions. So, talk to your kids about that. Even if you want to bring up the news. You know, say, what do you think about this decision by this billionaire to buy this company and leverage the stock of another company? Oh, that's interesting. You know, that's a risk decision. That's a personal passion decision. Have conversations, use what you have around you.

**Whitney Johnson:** As I was reading your book, preparing for this interview, I was making this list of, okay, I need to talk and make sure that both of my children have a Roth IRA. Oh, my son's got about to be 26. I need to make sure that his insurance is shifting. Like I was making this list of things. Oh, I checked on my will because we're about to take a trip. And I realized, oh, we haven't signed the documents. Probably a good idea to do that. But one of the things that was so powerful for me as I was listening to you is, is just as we do this patter, this everyday patter of what? You do today? And who did you talk to, and what did you accomplish and what did you love doing and what was the challenge for you? Talk about your money stories as well as what I'm hearing you say.

**Bobbi Rebell:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, you share a quote in the book from Roy Feifer, who says, and I thought this was really interesting, a parent-child relationship is a financial relationship.

**Bobbi Rebell:** It is. And the things that you've referred to in this interview only highlight that. There are so many things that go on between ourselves as parents or grandparents or anyone that has a financial has, has a relationship with a young adult in their life that has financial ties. So much of our relationships are financial, and we don't actually sort of openly acknowledge that. And I think it's important that we do because it is intermingled with love, because we make decisions with respect to our children that are emotional and that are informed by love that we might not make in a business setting. So, for example, we might see something going down the bad path in business and we could make a business decision, we're not going to do that. But with a child it gets so complicated because there's emotion and love involved and different personalities involved, so it's so important. And also, it's not a perfect

system. There's so many iterations of your relationship with your child and we're going to constantly make mistakes and decisions and have to course correct. In the book, I interviewed a father and a son, Jason Feifer, who is at *Entrepreneur* magazine, and his father, Roy. And I interviewed them because I had heard Jason on his podcast being teased by his co-host that he is still on the family phone plan, even though he was approaching 40 at the time. So, I called him up and I said, I want to hear about this, and I want to hear your father's side of the story. And so, I won't spoil the whole book. But long story short, they were able to talk about the ways that they have strategically. Roy, the father who talked about that a parenting relationship is a financial relationship.

**Bobbi Rebell:** They've used money to strategically help their children without undermining their children's confidence in their ability to be independent financially. We talked about the phone and why that has gone on for so long, even though the sister is not on it anymore. And we also talked about the fact that when Jason got, the son, got an opportunity to move to New York to pursue a very important job, a big career break. But he would not necessarily have had the money to set himself up the way that he wanted to set himself up in New York City. The parents came and strategically helped subsidize his first few months with a plan, an exit strategy, so that he wouldn't be continually dependent on his parents. But they used money in a one-time focused way to set him up for career success. And that is what has happened. Now, the phone, like I said, complicated why he is he was as the as of the time of the interview, he was still on their phone plan. I will let you read it in the book, but it's very endearing, the story. It became part of their family bonding, and it shows that it's more important than the extra X amount of dollars that the parents are paying. It's not really about the money. It's about, why are you paying this money? What does it do? The family actually has a whole routine and their own rituals tied to the phone bill that were so awesome. And it makes sense for them because it's not about the money. But if it's about the money, maybe you want to take your kid off the phone bill because they should know that they can pay their own phone bill. And there's nothing bad about that.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah, it is a very charming story and very, like you said, very endearing. So, for those who are listening and want to do one or two things today, they're on the launch point of the S Curve. And this idea for them is sort of been something that they've it's been out here, but not in their brain. And they're having this moment of aha and of awareness. What are one or two things that you can do today? So, yes, go by the book, but what's something else that they can do?

**Bobbi Rebell:** If you want to start talking to your child about money, you need to figure out what matters to them, and you need to meet them where they are. Because, for example, my older stepchildren, a lot a lot of parents might say, well, you know, you need to do this or I'm not going to help you get a car. They're not interested in a car. They live in New York City. I cannot get these children, adults, see, I just refer to them as children, you see. I cannot get them to be interested in even getting a driver's license. So, what matters to them? You have to figure out what matters to them and structure the conversation there. You also have to make sure that you get them at the right time when they're going out the door to meet their friends is not the right time. And you have to get them to be focused and you have to make sure that you listen to them. So, for example, if I think that my child should go into career X, but they want to go into career Y, I'm not going to win that battle, not initially. What I can do is listen to why they want to go into that career, talk to them about how that's going to look in terms of their lifestyle and see if it matches up. So, I talk in the book about the oldest one here, Ashley, and she originally when she entered school, into college, she was signed up to be a teacher.

**Bobbi Rebell:** She was in the teacher's college, but she also had grown up in New York City. And you know what, she liked in New York City. She wanted to be able to afford a life in New York City that did not involve living at her parent's forever. So, she looked at what else she was good at. She went lifestyle backwards. She said, I want to earn money. What am I good at that people will pay me for that I can earn money at? And she decided to switch to the School of Informatics. She's a very successful consultant right now, and she's being, I'm very proud. She's being hotly pursued by many companies that want her skill set, which is great because she's good at it and she likes it. So, she was able to work backwards, but it had to come from her, right? I couldn't convince her, for example, to be a journalist. That's not what she wants to do. My father would have loved for me to have worked on Wall Street. We talk about that in the book. I wasn't going to do it. What he could do was say, okay, you want to be a journalist, but you also want to have a family. You also want to live in New York.

**Bobbi Rebell:** You are interested in business, so why don't you do an internship at CNN Business News? And maybe then, you'll do something that's a more lucrative version of journalism, because financial journalism does pay more. But also, if you want to make the switch and work on Wall Street, you'll have the information, the knowledge, the background so you can pivot to something even probably even more lucrative if you want to in the future. But he was reflecting back on what I wanted. You're never going to win if you are reflecting what you want on your kid. Other things that are important to be discussing is also setting them up for success. And one of the ways you can do that is work with them instead of just telling them. So, for example, with credit cards, the truth is they are part of our life, and a lot of young people are very afraid of credit cards because they saw what happened to older generations with credit card debt, we're now facing rising inflation and so they may be scared. It's important to understand with them, to discuss with them, make sure they understand why it's important to build a credit score and then work with them. Very often in the book, I say it's okay to give your kids a head start, so you may need to cosign on that first credit card.

**Bobbi Rebell:** There are plenty of guardrails that you can put in place with spending limits and so on and notifications if they spend in certain ways or other ways, ways to protect them when you do this, but make sure that they understand it takes time. One thing we did do with Ashley is we did set her up to make sure that by the time she went to buy an apartment, which was her goal, she'd been pursuing that goal since she was 13 years old. She bought an apartment at 24. She, she knew what a credit score was. She was conscientious and she would actually come to us. It was like a high five moment. My credit score went up because I did this. She knew what to do to activate better results from her in her credit score by doing certain things. So, having that and even making it a gamification when you do those things is really important. Also, in the book I talk about trying to get both older kids who were in college at the time to put money they were earning into Roth IRAs. I made a mistake here. I did finally get them to, to do that, to open them. But only one of them invested. Bradley, number two, who's now just graduating college, he invested because he was earning good money, especially during the pandemic.

**Bobbi Rebell:** He earned good money because he was able to do extra things from home. But he invested because he had a long-time horizon, and he had no specific goal. So, he maxed out the, the Roth. And then also important, we set up a regular brokerage firm. Not all investments should go to retirement. People need to remember that. But Ashley, she pushed back. She said, I'll open it, so I have the option because you got to open up by a certain date. She said, but remember, I'm saving for a home that's going to complicate things. My money is going to basically cash and very conservative investments because I know I need it short term. So, you're wrong. I'm not going to put that money in retirement. I'll do it after I buy the home, which is going to be she had a whole spreadsheet backing into when she would have the exact amount of money she needed to start looking. And she said, you know, in 2021, when I'm set up, then I will start doing the Roth IRA. Right now, my priority is that down payment and the closing costs for the home. She knew all the costs, by the way. So, listen to your kids. Help them learn about saving and investing for the goals that matter to them, not for your goals. Very important to distinguish that, in my opinion.

**Whitney Johnson:** Well, I've just added another thing to my list, which is to have my children check on their credit score.

**Bobbi Rebell:** Well, so it does take time, and everyone should check on their credit scores, by the way. All of us.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah. How can people engage with you if they're interested in just being in your orbit? How do they do that?

**Bobbi Rebell:** Well, thank you so much. So, everything is centered on my website, which is just my name, BobbiRebell.com. I'm on Instagram @BobbiRebell1, and I'm on Twitter at just @BobbiRebell and I recently started a Tik Tok account. We'll see how that goes, Whitney. But that's also just under Bobbi Rebell, my name.

**Whitney Johnson:** There was a quote that from *St. Elmo's Fire* in the book that I just thought was so good and I'm going to read it. And then I would love for you to, to, to comment. So, character says "You want to know what's great. Last night I woke up in the middle of the night to make myself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. And, you know, it was my kitchen, it was my refrigerator, it was my apartment. And it was the best peanut butter and jelly sandwich that I have ever had in my entire life." Is this the payoff?

**Bobbi Rebell:** I love that quote, too. Yes, it is. It's the payoff. And it's also projecting onto our children, understanding that our kids want to be independent. And it's about money, but it's also not about money. The character in this film is a very privileged young lady who, you know, she's a rich kid. And we misunderstand that what's most important to them is to have the money. She clearly didn't care about the money. She just wanted her own space. She wanted to be her own person, to be an adult. And it didn't matter if she was eating PBJ for the rest of her life because she finally owned her life. And we have to give that gift to our children. We have to let them know not only that they have the competence, but also that we have confidence in them, that we believe in them, that they can do it so often, as I call it, helicopter parents become concierge parents. We are undermining them in our well-intentioned efforts to help them. But if we step back and let them figure it out for themselves, they will. And if they need a little help, let them know that we're there for them. But they will figure it out. And it may not look the way we want it to look, but it is the way that it is for them, and they have to live their life. We often expect kids, you know, we make mistakes. We'll say they'll say, what restaurant do you want to go to? And we may pick a restaurant that's in our budget. That might not be their budget. So, it's important to remember the life stage that they are in and let them be in their twenties, earning whatever they're earning in their twenties, and enjoy that and not feel any less than because they're not where we are at whatever age we as parents are.

**Whitney Johnson:** So, in my work and in *Smart Growth*, we talk about this idea, and this is from Tara Swart, of an action board, to visualize what you want. And, and we talk about the power of our words to create the future that we want. And so, if you talk about getting out of debt, then you're going to get in more debt. And if you talk about building wealth, then you're going to build wealth. And you talk about something that for me is the verbal equivalent of an action board, which is to talk about your happy financial memories, say more about that, and then share a happy financial memory with us.

**Bobbi Rebell:** So, often we characterize these financial conversations as negative. And I love what you just shared because it is a reframing of it. We talk about getting your kids to do this and we talk about cutting them off and making them do this and having them pay for that. And it's not that. I, for example, happen to still, just because we haven't bothered, I can see what's going on with all the kids accounts. And I remember loving seeing Ashley's bank account because I was cheering her on. The bank account was building. And so rather than scolding her, I could cheer her on. I could say, Oh, my God, you hit this milestone. It's so close. I'm so excited to start apartment shopping with you. This is amazing. I remember growing up, my father would bring us into his study one by one, I have two siblings, and he would ask us for sort of a report card on how we did with last semester. Let's say when we're in college, how our spending went, we would report back, how things went, what maybe we overspent on, what we maybe wish we had spent a little more on in some cases because my sister has accused me of irrational frugality at times, but he would also have us budget with him.

**Bobbi Rebell:** You know, we would basically he was very generous. We would have to come up with a number that we needed for the whole next semester. And he would write a check which is unbelievably generous. I now see looking back, I of course had no concept how fortunate and privileged I was. But I said to him, and he, now he's read the book after it came out, which is really interesting to have his perspective on how I remember things. And he said, I remember those conversations. And I said, Well, Dad, what would have happened if I came to you and said that I needed more money? He's like, But you never did. And I said, Yeah, because I had a job. And he's like, Well, exactly, you had a job, so I figured you'd be fine. That was it, as simple as that, and I wish we could do more of that. He just figured I'd figure it out, right. He was still giving me money. He wasn't on principle, saying, you're 19, you're in college. I'm not giving you spending money. He had enough money to give us money. He was able to do that.

**Bobbi Rebell:** And he said, I wanted you to be able to not be stressed out about money. And I wanted to give you what you said you needed. We made our case. We had to tell him why we needed whatever we needed, but he also gave us the space to figure it out if we didn't come up with the right budget. And by the way, I went, I was very fortunate. I went to Paris as a junior and I did not estimate the right amount of money. We did not have the Internet at the time. I did not have the information. I did not properly research. In fact, I don't know if I researched at all, and we had to pay for our housing and our meals and everything. And I underestimated and I was pinched. And it's it was it just stunk. It was awful. I stayed at like one-star hostels with my friends. But you know what? We were fine. Again, it never occurred to me to have my dad wire me money. I just didn't really. I don't know, we figured it out, and our kids will figure it out and we're there for them as a backstop, but they'll figure it out. They're good.

**Whitney Johnson:** You mentioned a minute ago about when I was 18, I was kicked out. But how do you think that the changing face of the workforce and the economy generally has, has impacted our ability to launch financial grownups?

**Bobbi Rebell:** It has had a huge impact, Whitney. So, you really hit the nail on the head because there are structural changes in our society. Some of which are wonderful, but they have had a huge impact on how the next generation is relating to the workplace. So, for example, we have the gig economy, so wonderful in so many ways because it's allowed the next generation to carve their own path and really find things to do for money that makes sense for them. But what it doesn't do necessarily is provide a natural transition when they get out of whether it's high school or college and move into the workforce of this sort of work family that we used to have, which is a different kind of support system. And so, that has in many ways made this younger generation more tied to their families and their friends. Also, if we're being honest, but they don't have that routine where they're going every day, where they're having lunch with the same people, where they develop real friendships with people at work and also the, the same kind of network. If we're being honest, a lot of our young people started during the pandemic and it's very hard. I hope that people start doing more in person, even if it's in this hybrid way, because those connections you make early in your career are so essential and mom and dad can't really be the same. They're not going to be your career champions 20 years down the road. When I first started the Financial Grownup brand, I went around and did a mentor tour talking to people that had been impactful to me earlier in my career.

**Bobbi Rebell:** I hope this generation has that. It's not yet clear if they will, so, it's going to be interesting to watch. We also have a lot more flexibility in terms of taking a gap year to do something else. We have a lot more room to fail. We have a lot more room to get funding. If you want to be an entrepreneur, these are all good things. But when you become an entrepreneur, especially at a young age, you don't necessarily know the structural things that you have to start. When you do a business beyond the actual business stuff, if you have a child that because it becomes an entrepreneur, they need to find ways to mimic the corporate benefits they might have gotten. So, they're not going to get a matching 401(k), but they may have to set up a solo 401(k) or a step plan or whatever it may be. Their own accounting, they are their own HR department. So, we as parents need to make sure to get them this information or get them to a place. If we're not the experts help them find the experts, so they're set up for success in that way. And I mentioned 401(k), let's not forget, they're not going to get pensions. They're lucky if they're getting a matching 401(k). There's a lot of stuff at work that's there as benefits that they need to be coached through to make sure that they take advantage. I know my first job at CNBC, a wonderful HR person named Suzanne, literally said, I'm putting in the max 401(k) because you're going to get a match. And these are the other benefits that matter that you need to learn about.

**Bobbi Rebell:** You should sign up for disability insurance. You should sign up for this. We don't necessarily have a human doing that with our kids now, so when we set them up for success, even in a corporate job, sit with them and go through the HR website because odds are they were just given a link. Here's how you educate yourself on your benefits. No human is sitting next to them, certainly not coming out of this pandemic and making sure they don't miss something good. For example, for years I didn't know that there were legal benefits tied to a job, and that would have been handy to do something like a will or just have a health care proxy, which is something everyone should have. They might be able to do that for a nominal fee if they sign up for legal benefits. So, as parents, we need to get in the weeds and take the place of some of these corporate things that used to just happen because they were structurally set up that way. We no longer have that infrastructure in our society, always. Sometimes we do. So, parents need to pay attention to what their kids need in their careers and be there as a supporting player, not a main character. We used to be costars in our in our kids' lives. We need to step back, be supporting player, but take that supporting role very seriously when they are making those decisions, when they get set up in a new job, it's so important.

**Whitney Johnson:** Yeah. And it's one of the hardest roles to play, right? It's easy to be like not there at all or completely trying to be the lead actor. And to play a supporting role, that's a tough role for anyone to want to play. And therefore, perhaps the most challenging. What was useful for you in this conversation? So, it might be something that you hadn't thought about before or you're realizing, Oh, that's interesting, or a connection that you made.

**Bobbi Rebell:** I love hearing from you what resonated in the book. And I think it's important to, I love the quote you pulled out from talking about parenting as a financial relationship. Because that is something that was said, you know, from someone who in my book was, "not an expert". He was the father of a journalist who I pulled in just by happenstance. And I think it goes to the point that we have that wisdom in all of us. We don't have to be Whitney Johnson, that we don't have to be the expert. All of us have wisdom and knowledge about the things that matter in our life and knowing that we don't have to be an expert per se, every one of us has wisdom. And you talked about the fact that what if we feel we are not a money expert, or we've made money mistakes? How do we then take it on ourselves to educate our children? We all have that in us, and we need to also have the confidence in ourselves that we can set our children up for success. And we're not helicopter parents if we go in there strategically in the right way. And we're not concierge parents, if we go in there and use money effectively for a purpose, being mindful of it and knowing that this is going to set them up for success.

**Whitney Johnson:** Right. And launching our children as financial grownups will probably help us grow up a little bit more, too. Any final thoughts?

**Bobbi Rebell:** Very well said. And to your to your final statement there. It helps us grow up too. It is important for us because we do need to remember that independent children will help us enjoy our retirement both financially. Because we won't be supporting them artificially, which we should not be doing, again, the right support. But we want to enjoy our retirements and we're going to have a lot more peace of mind if we know that our children are going to be okay. There will always be adversity and challenges that will hit us and hit our children. But having the strategies in place to navigate is going to set the next generation up for success and set us up for enjoying our retirement. Because we never want to be having to depend on our children for money because we haven't taken care of ourselves. So, always take care of your own finances first before you go in and start subsidizing children. You're not going to want to go asking them for help, and you certainly don't want to ask them for help and have them not be able to help you. So, focus on yourself first as a priority, even though society often tells us to put our kids first.

**Whitney Johnson:** Bobbi. Thank you.

**Bobbi Rebell:** Thank you so much.

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I have three key takeaways from my chat with Bobbi. Number one, have honest conversations with your kids about money, even if you don't feel qualified to teach your kids financial literacy. Consider what Bobbi said. Even if you don't know everything, you definitely know more than your kids do. And it comes from your own life experience, whether that's positive or negative. Share it with your children. Let them see the ups and the downs so they can be better prepared for their own. Our instinct is to protect our kids from everything, but if they grow up without this context, it can harm their financial future.

Number two, intervening at the right time is not the same as helicopter parenting. We have to let our kids learn their own lessons, make mistakes, set boundaries. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't step in at the appropriate time to offer guidance. Any parent will tell you this is an extraordinary balancing act. But Bobbi says meet them where they are. There are financial lessons you can offer that take your child's life stage, current goals, and financial context into account.

Three. Don't forget to share happy money stories, just as you need to keep an honest dialog about finances going. Don't ignore the happiness that sound financial planning can bring to your child and your family. Saving for that first apartment, taking the dream vacation, or buying the forever home. The parent-child relationship is about love, but as Bobbi said, it's financial as well. Making a long-term budget or sharing a bank account is as much about planning as it is about cheering your child on when they succeed.

For more on adulting, listen to Julie Lythcott-Haims, [Episode 215](#). For more on finances and investing, listen to Ashley Fox, [Episode 207](#). And on the idea of an action board that can lead to happy money stories, give Tara Swart, [Episode 156](#) a listen. Thank you again to Bobbi Rebell for being our guest. Thank you for listening. Thank you to our producer, Matt Silverman, audio engineer and editor Whitney Jobe, and production assistant Stephanie Brummel.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is Disrupt Yourself.