

# **Homeschool CEO Podcast Episode 56: Achieve Work-Life Success Using Emotional Intelligence and Leadership with Kerstin Kirchsteiger**

26:26

## **SPEAKERS**

Kerstin Kirchsteiger, Jen Myers

### **Kerstin Kirchsteiger 00:00**

Yeah, and now I really love working with moms because I think it's, it's really important to shift our mindset from being a good mom means that we have to do it all and we have to carry the whole burden and pat ourselves on our back. I don't think that that's what necessarily a good mom is. And I think a good mom is somebody, a person who can show their kids that she lives a full life and what it means to be respected, what it means to have healthy boundaries, what it means to ask for help, and to get people to work together.

### **Jen Myers 00:38**

Welcome to the Homeschool CEO Podcast, the podcast dedicated to entrepreneurs who want to successfully homeschool their kids while running a profitable business. In this podcast, we'll reveal the truth of what it really looks like behind the scenes of an entrepreneur who homeschools and how to make it all work. If you're an entrepreneur who currently homeschools or you want to start, you are in the right place my friend. With 16 years experience combining entrepreneurship with homeschooling, I'm your host, Jen Myers, and this is the Homeschool CEO Podcast.

### **Jen Myers 01:21**

Many people believe that time management is the key to work-life balance. But today's guest actually argues that the secret to work-life balance lies in relationships. Welcome back to another episode of the Homeschool CEO Podcast. I'm your host, Jen Myers. And today we're talking with Kerstin Kirchsteiger, who is a scientist turned Life and Leadership Coach, who is helping moms peel back the layers of obligation, expectations, and mom guilt and build a life that they're excited to get up for every day. Kirsten uses a revolutionary approach to motherhood that combines emotional intelligence, respectful parenting and leadership training to help moms find their unique work-life flow success. Alright, I think you're gonna love everything that Kerstin has to say today. So, let's dive in.

### **Jen Myers 02:16**

Alright, welcome to the show, Kerstin. How are you doing today?

### **Kerstin Kirchsteiger 02:20**

Thanks for having me. And yeah, I'm doing great. How are you?

**Jen Myers 02:24**

I'm doing well, doing well. I'm so thankful to have you here today. You've been part of the Homeschool CEO community for a little while now. And we're finally getting to connect and have you on here and talk about all of your amazingness when it comes to how we as moms can be leaders in our home and our business and what exactly that all means. But first, take a moment and introduce yourself to our audience today. What's your backstory?

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 02:47**

Okay, my, my backstory is well, I'm from Austria, where I'm at the moment and I studied sciences and was a huge fan of chemistry. And that took me throughout Europe and then to the United States, to San Diego where I did my post doc. And my, yeah, my post doc. And in my post doc, I got pregnant with my first and that opened up a whole different world for me. And so, basically what I did is I kind of lost myself in motherhood for a while trying to figure out how, how to do this motherhood thing, how to take care of a kid while I was working. I was still finishing my post doc.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 03:33**

And then at the end of my appointment, I became a stay-at-home mom for a little bit with my second child. And I was looking forward to sending her off to preschool because my son at that time was going to a private Montessori school as well. I was looking forward to going back to work. I was envisioning something. I was moving away from sciences. Already a little bit into the business world. I wanted to do more project management or more business-related things within the sciences. But then kindergarten year hit and my son suddenly it - I think you can almost call it school refusal. He didn't want to go to school anymore. And, and so, it was just a time where I was kind of starting to imagining my life opening up again and being able to work or do something for myself. But then we started homeschooling.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 04:30**

And I was like, oh my gosh, my dreams - it's gone. But then I realized the more we dove into homeschooling that it was actually a way of living that allowed me to do what I wanted to do and to follow my passion. And to add on to that, I did a yoga teacher training and I am a certified mountain bike instructor. But then a friend tipped me towards emotional intelligence training and I'm like, "Hey, why?" Like, "I think you would be a good fit." And the more I dove into it, the more I realized that every job I did, every role I had, my power was emotional intelligence. And my power was to recognize others feelings and bringing them together. And so, this, this training was amazing. It was really, yeah, it changed my outlook on life yet again.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 05:28**

And, and so, with homeschooling, and this was - I started my own business. I started a consulting with emotional intelligence assessments for teams and leadership with training. And then the pandemic hit. And yet again, I had to pivot a little bit, because I realized that I again, I could connect so much more with the parents, the working parents that suddenly started to have the kids at home and didn't know what to do. They were struggling to give them an education. They were struggling, just to survive, really, in the pandemic. And, and so, my, my, my

content and everything started revolving around how to integrate work and life and hence my podcast later, Work Life Flow.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 06:16**

Yeah, and now I really love working with moms because I think it's, it's really important to shift our mindset from being a good mom means that we have to do it all and we have to carry the whole burden and pat ourselves on our back. I don't think that that's what necessarily a good mom is. And I think a good mom is somebody, a person who can show their kids, that she lives a full life and what it means to be respected what it means to have healthy boundaries, what it means to ask for help, and to, you know, to get work, people to work together. And so, that's what I'm trying to bring into those homeschooling families now.

**Jen Myers 06:56**

So good. So, something that a lot of our moms, they'll come to me and say all the time, they'll say, "Jen, just teach me time management skills. Like, teach me how to juggle it all. How do I get all my business stuff done and homeschool these kids and still do self-care? And take, you know, all? How do I check mark all the boxes?" And a lot of people believe that the key is time management. But I know you have a really different approach to them. So, tell me more about that.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 07:23**

Yes. I think oftentimes, what you what you see is that people think if - I only get better at using my time, I will solve that problem. And I don't think that that's the reality. It is certainly part of how you can become more effective. But I think the key lies in, in those thriving relationships. If you manage to build deep connections, with your family, with your friends, with your peers, you know, if you have a team, if you lead a team, the same thing. If you have good relationships, then it's really easy to create those common goals, to create buy in for whatever you need them to do. It is more important to be able to have these open and authentic conversations when things don't go right, how to troubleshoot. Like, if you build on those relationships, they're not only, not only gonna be okay with having to do something, or having to do their part, they're gonna love doing this. They're gonna, if there's a conflict, they're gonna grow out of the conflict. It's not, you know, asking for help is not weak. It's actually a really strong skill if you know how to ask for help.

**Jen Myers 08:40**

Yeah, well, so what is the key to building those relationships with our kids?

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 08:43**

So, without kids, I think just, it is, of course, like, the time you spend with them. But again, it's not so much the amount of time you spend with them, but honoring who they are and building quality moments, moments of connection, really being open to listening to them and to giving them a voice. So, one of my, my most favorite tools are family meetings, for example. It's really like, you can almost envision it like a business meeting. Everybody, like we go over what works, what doesn't work. Where are we now, where do we want to go? What has to happen in order to get there, and who can take which part? And so, you basically build upon their skills. You teach them skills. You - the older they get, the more responsibility that they can take on, of course. But also,

you give them a voice. You give them a seat at the table and you show them that you listen to them and that you, you really care about what they think, what they want to do. And then you try to find solutions together.

**Jen Myers** 09:51

I love that because that's such a core value with Homeschool CEO. I mean, that's how I really stepped into this CEO leadership position realizing that as I ran my home, like a business and with the love and compassion, it wasn't that it was military style by any means. But that order and that leadership, and we also had weekly family meetings, and we ran them like a business meeting, and it wasn't this emotional, you know, charged conversation. It was, what worked, what didn't, who has what going on next week, what needs to happen in order for those goals to be met. You know, whether it was I had to do something or my husband had to do something, or maybe one of the kids had to do something in order to get where we all wanted to go, because that was success. So, you talk a lot about moms stepping up into that leadership role and being a leader in their family. What does that mean to you?

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger** 10:47

I think I mentioned it a little bit in the beginning. It's, it's more about, like you said, you run your family almost like a business. And I think it's a, it's a really good parallel. Because if you look at leadership training, it is about taking care of your employees. It is about giving them a voice. It is about bringing them together and finding out where they need support. And I think if we translate this to our family, what does the mother do or what parents - we can open it up to parents, of course. I talk mostly to moms because they're the ones that come to me. It is basically, you kind of set a vision, like - let me try to put in in different words.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger** 11:32

A lot of moms don't think of themselves as a leader. But when they are in the home, they set the tone. They set the energy that's in the home and they transmit values, like core values, if you bring the corporate term into it again, right? So, we already have our values and our belief systems. We do have them and we have some of those values that we would like to ingrain in our kids or to you know, to teach them. But the way of doing it is actually to live these core values, right? It's not about what you say, it's about how you show up and what you do. So, if I'm a mom, and I say to my daughter, or my son, it doesn't really matter. I say, "Hey, as a as a girl, you can go study. You have kids, you work and everything is gonna be fine." But then in my home, I'm the one who who did that. And I'm a stay-at-home mom and I run the household. I run the finances. I run extracurriculars. I run the schooling. This crashes. And so, we have this contradictory way of showing up at home, which might be socially ingrained in us like we, you know.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger** 12:07

It is a difficult time to and now with the pandemic, I see even more people struggle with this. But actually, as a short story, like yesterday, I read a post in a group, in a mom's group, and it was about if you from one day to the other weren't at home, you would need like a 6 - 16 binders to explain how the household is to be run and what it has to get done. Let me tell you, I see you, you're not alone, keep going. And I was like, "No! Stop doing. It is what you have to do." Right? I cannot tell my kids that they can be successful, that they can have family and I cannot do it, for example, right? So, the really the solution to the problem is to bring everybody together and see how can we work it out that everybody in the family can be their individual, can bring their joy, you know.

They can live their purpose. They can bring, they can work in the passion, if it's possible. They can be their own person. They don't have to be reduced to mom and servant.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 13:33**

And so, I think this is the huge shift that has to happen for a lot of people. And again, one book that I usually mention is Equally Shared Parenting, that I came across some years ago, actually in a lactation room. It was a couple and, and it's actually a movement, but it didn't get enough traction, I think. They were a couple and they were just saying, "Hey, how can we do this so that we both share and -{. They have really good strategies and really good, you know, got tips on how to talk at work or how to reduce your hours, for example, so... Their solution was to both reduce their hours. So, not one did career and the other one stayed home. But so, they made it everything, everything work. And I think we really have to shift that because also I think we have to create the space for pay - for partners or dads because they want to be more involved. And so, I think it's not okay to say, this is all on me. You know, I mean, maybe, maybe in the very early months, there's really not extremely much they can help with and they still can help. But I think, yeah, I think we have to create the space for everyone in the family to play their role and to, to find their passion to be, you know, to live to their whole potential. I think that's, that's what it means for me.

**Jen Myers 15:26**

Now in the world, do we get kids on board with this plan? Like, I could probably talk my husband into taking half of everything. I mean, he's pretty, he's pretty okay when it comes to that stuff. But with I mean, other than he hasn't supported, like the business side of it, but household stuff he'll do if I, if I delegate and assign a task to him, he's usually pretty good about doing them. But sometimes the kids will be like, "No, you can do it. I don't need to." So, what do we do to get the buy in from our children, especially during those teenage years?

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 15:57**

Yeah, I don't have teenagers yet. So, I'm not quite there yet. But I think if you have like this deep relationship, they will, you know. I mean, for example, my kids are smaller. So, what I say to them, if they're like, "I don't want to do this." I'm like, okay, so it's about boundaries. "Okay, you don't want to do this. But if I do this, then I won't have time to play with you." Right? So, so I do like this. I, it's obvious that if I have to spend my time doing, I don't know, I always talk about folding laundry because that's something my kids do on a very consistent basis. And then otherwise, I talk about contributions that like we are a team. And again, those boundaries and expectations age appropriately set, they can be set in those family meetings, right? It's a space where you actually try to problem solve, and like, you can set those goals.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 16:52**

Look, you want to play - my kids, again, they're small. My kids wanted to play tag. You want to play tag, but you're interrupting my husband. So, how can we solve this problem.? We sat down and we wrote down the needs, their needs, what they want it to do and have in a day to feel like the cup is full. So, we did this for my daughter and my son, myself, and my husband. And we put our work hours in there, for example, because this is a need that we have, that we want to fulfill. And then we took those Post-Its, sticky notes. We cut them and we shuffled them around and we made a rhythm to our day, basically so that as many needs as possible could be fulfilled. And so, I think if you have this approach where you kind of give them what they need and want in a way

that you're okay with. And our solution with the tag, for example, was that my husband would come out of the office, set a 10-minute timer, and for 10 minutes, they will play a tag with no distractions. And so, these 10 minutes made a huge impact. They, the interruption stopped. They were happy again, you know, so it was just like, sometimes we, we think so complicated. We think like, we need to give them the whole day. And it's not true, like sometimes 10 minutes of a board game, like those early.... They're small kids' board games, they usually like 15, 20 minutes. And it's just a space for connection.

**Jen Myers 18:17**

I think especially as entrepreneurs, we tend to overcomplicate things because we think the more complicated they are, the more valuable of a solution they are. So, I love that you said, you know, things can be simple. They don't have to take all day. They don't have to be these grandiose ideas that take hours to implement. It can be just a simple thing. Alright, Kerstin, if you were talking to a mom right now who is just really struggling trying to integrate this work and life and homeschooling just all the things and juggle all those hats, and you're sitting down to coffee with her to just encourage her, what would you say to her?

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 18:55**

So, I think the individualized approach is difficult to, to bring on right now. But I think, perspective. Like, first of all, sometimes the day-to-day struggle is really hard and feels really overwhelming. But once you get into this perspective of what do I want my life to look like or our family and my kids to be, to become? What are the values? Then oftentimes those things that look so big in the day-to-day they become really tiny, right? Like, I don't know, homeschooling. Maybe you have what is it copy hand, hand copy? Copywriting practice and the kid doesn't want to do it. Right? And for you it's like they'll never write or they never write perfectly and then it's like maybe they're not in the mood right now. Or maybe it seems, it seems there is something in the skill that they are lacking that they can't do it, right? So, we have to kind of also almost be like a scientist. You also have to find to get to the bottom of the problem, not just the way you perceive it.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 20:04**

So yeah, I think one thing is always perspective. Just because they are not wanting to do copywriting this week, does not mean they will never write. Right? I mean, this is just - I don't know why we set these limits to ourselves and make our life so much harder sometimes. So, it's usually perspective, expectations. And then, one thing that, coming from the emotional intelligence background I work with, like noticing your triggers. Like, when during the day, is there a time of day? Is there a certain situation, certain words that, that trigger, you know, those fight flight or freeze responses, where our emotional brain basically disconnects from our thinking brain? So, when this happens, then what you want to do is to take deep breaths to, you know, like, all those calming methods that you also would teach your kids, like counting backwards from 10 to one.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 21:05**

Everything and anything that you can do to bring, again, like the space between the current situation and every action, you don't want to have knee jerk reactions. You want to be able to calm yourself down. Take a minute, even you know, when it's with your kids or with your husband, or partner. Just sit. You can say, "I think I need a moment to process this and I'll come back when I'm when I'm okay to talk about this." So, I think this helps a lot. The really important thing is to learn to recognize your triggers, like, like I said, the day, the time of day, the

situations that trigger you, maybe some words, and then learn how to, how to calm yourself down in order to be able to respond. And rather than react, because of our brain, right? Our emotional brain sets those tags, those emotions of anxiety, anger, maybe even rage. And or fear, or uncertainty, like this year was really difficult with uncertainty, right?

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 22:14**

So, when that happens, our emotional brain also starts producing some biochemical hormones and it disconnects our thinking brain. And when that happens is we cannot problem solve. We cannot really think. It's just, you know, we are so focused on survival and on fight flight or freeze response it is called. So, the step would be to recognize those triggers. Recognize the emotions you're feeling, the feelings in your body. So self-awareness is the first step to that. And then the next step, once you learn how to calm yourself down, like I said, with those different strategies of counting backwards, or taking a deep breath. And it's amazing, I know everybody says, like, "Take a deep breath." But it's amazing what a breath can do. So, it's really a powerful way to calm yourself down. Or like stepping out of the room saying, "Hey, I need a moment. Give me a break, and I come back when I, I can reason with you in a better way."

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 23:15**

And then the next step is an awareness of others. So, emotionally, where emotional intelligence has a lot to do with recognizing both your internal emotions, but also other people's and recognizing that when they say something, it might come from - it comes certainly from a different point of view. But also, you know, they might be triggered, or they might feel fear. Like I said, the copywork example that we had before. Your son or daughter might not want to do it because they fear failing. They fear that they can't do it perfectly. And so, recognizing this in your kids, and in yourself, of course, is super valuable to creating these deeper connections. But also like, you know, getting this perspective of my view is not the absolute truth. So, I don't know if that....

**Jen Myers 24:18**

That's powerful. I think that gives our moms really practical steps on how they can improve the situation. Thank you so much. Where can our audience connect with you and find out more about you online?

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 24:30**

So online, I'm - I use my first name, last name, and it's KerstinKirchsteiger.com. So, it's K-E-R-S-T-I-N-K-I-R-C-H-S-T-E-I-G-E-R.com and forward slash checklist. That's a tool a freebie that I have for getting your kids ready on their own so that they learn a little bit of executive function skills. And it has really helped my family to get out of the house without all the stress involved. And then I'm also on Instagram. I'm again, it's my first name underscore last name. And my, my podcast. It's called Work Life Flow.

**Jen Myers 25:11**

No good. And we'll be sure to put all of those links in the show notes as well. So, be sure to reach out to Kerstin. This has been such a pleasure to have you on the show today. Thank you.

**Kerstin Kirchsteiger 25:20**

Thank you so much for having me. It was fun.

**Jen Myers** 25:24

Alright, friend. That's a wrap for today. Kerstin dropped so many value gems in this episode, and I'd love to know what your biggest takeaway was. Let's talk about it over in the Homeschool CEO Community on Facebook. Right now, we're all chatting about what leadership in the home means to us. And I'd love to hear your thoughts. See you there.

**Jen Myers** 25:51

Hey, friend. I just want to say thank you so much for tuning in today. If you loved what you heard, please be sure to head over to Apple Podcast and leave a review. I really appreciate it. And for more information on connecting with other homeschool CEOs just like you, be sure to check out our website at [www.HomeschoolCEO.com](http://www.HomeschoolCEO.com). And as always Team Homeschool CEO, you ladies inspire me. Thank you for always showing others what is possible. You guys are awesome. See you next week.