

**SD**

All right, we are excited. Today we have a rockstar guest with us. His name is Kelly Smith with Prenda Academy, online schools. He is one of the most fantastic entrepreneurs I've seen and studied to date. Kelly, let's start with your quick intro. Why don't you say your name and the kind of entrepreneur you are?

**KS**

Awesome. Thanks, Scott. My name is Kelly Smith. I am a learning entrepreneur just obsessed with figuring stuff out and learning all the time.

Perfect. A learning

**KS**

entrepreneur. And I don't want to disappoint anybody. You said rock star, just to be clear to listeners. I know for chords, I am not a literal rock star. So thanks for that, but just don't want anybody to be like, I thought you were. I don't know Jonas Brothers or something. So anyway, um, yeah, I don't. Yeah,

**SD**

kids. That's a figure of speech. By Rockstar, I mean, very talented entrepreneur. So it's gonna be a fun podcast, we have so many different things to talk about. We're very kindred spirits. We're both entrepreneurs. We love education. We love teaching kids through this idea of entrepreneurship, new types of learning. But I want to start right where everybody starts. Let's go back to childhood. Let's talk about your first business the first time you knew that you wanted to be an entrepreneur for life. What

**KS**

happened? I don't know if I knew yet for life, that entrepreneur was even possible, but I definitely couldn't stop finding problems and trying to solve them. This was 1986 my family got the Nintendo Entertainment System, one of the first like in home video games. I don't know if you guys listening have ever seen Super Mario Brothers. But it was pretty amazing and mind blowing for me and my little brother. We used to go my dad's from California. So we would drive from Phoenix to like Orange County, California. And we would always hit the swapmeet in Orange County, you walk around this, it's like this bazaar full of tents. And each tent has like a different thing that they're selling. We just loved this. But during the Nintendo days, there would be one tent in the whole swapmeet. That was the Nintendo 10. And it was like our favorite place to start. They'd have games like out of the case, you could buy them for \$5 at the swap meet. And we would always, you know, beg my dad like can we get I mean, I was literally six years old six or seven. One of the trips, we drove home in our, you know, Chevy Astro minivan. And we're sitting there talking, and I don't know where the idea came from. Like if it was, it's actually a pretty good chance that it was like me or my little brother who was five, or my dad, like, somehow that conversation landed on, you know, you can rent movies, but you can't rent video games like this was before Blockbuster did it. And so there should be video game rentals. And to my dad's credit, so I don't really get to count this as my entrepreneurial journey. I was seven years old. But like with that idea, he somehow figured out we could go buy these games from the swapmeet he found

this is pre internet so I don't know where he even did it. But he found these like crystal plastic cases and the labels. And I remember I still remember sitting there like pasting in labels into these things. And then he worked out a deal with a local video game rental shop or no a local movie rental shop to basically rent subleased one wall of the shop and we were video game rentals of Arizona that was the name of the business there's a business card and he sponsored my little league team that year like somehow with the business I don't know how even and and we did like we rented so I was in charge of sort of inventory like stocking shelves. And the perk for that I never got paid but the perk was we got to take a video game home and play it so I always it was always fun. I got to play all the cool games. Uh huh. It was super fun just been the blockbuster of video games.

**KS**

Yeah, well until blockbuster did it a couple years later and then it was it was all over so we we lost but it was fun fun while it lasted.

**SD**

So that's a lesson on patent. Get your IP under control or blockbusters gonna take it that's such a great idea. Oh my goodness. I love that. So what was your favorite game? What do you remember a favorite video game?

**KS**

You know I love all the classics like Skate or Die had was cool it's like a skateboard game there was like excite bike I remember the Top Gun came gun game came out that was pretty cool. But you know the classics like Super Mario Brothers Mario three like some of those. I still so paper boy. It was one that we just like loved. I don't know if you'd like ride your bike down the street. You have to throw the newspapers and if you hit somebody's window, they like chase you down the street. That was like an entrepreneurial lesson in itself inside of the game. That's right. And I'm still trying to beat the original Legend of Zelda elderkin I was gonna say emulator. I've never won the game. I've like gotten to the eighth dungeon or something and I can't, but I haven't really devoted you Even with the walkthroughs on YouTube and everything, I just haven't been able to get over the hump so

**SD**

oh my gosh, Zelda was crazy. Some of those games man, my brother in law, you know my kids call him Uncle owl, unflappable, owl. He is. His full time job has been for 10 years of Video Game Tester. He plays video games for a living kids. Wow, it is wow, dream life. And he loves video games when he's not working. So he plays it for work. And he comes home and plays different games. He can beat Mario. I think in like four, four and a half minutes or

**KS**

so I've seen people do this. It's astonished. Yes.

**SD**

Like the literally you press to the right

**KS**

non you don't even bother you don't bother with the mushrooms or anything you just race through.

**SD**

Yeah. And it's unbelievable to watch. Like, I'll stream it and watch him and it's just like, no way. Yeah, that's very cool.

**KS**

Scott, I have another story about video game testers. Now that you mentioned, this is my eighth grade algebra teacher. I was in algebra one in eighth grade. And the teacher of this class in my local you know, junior high, was also a video game tester. But he did not make the distinction of only doing it at home. So he would bring these video games in and he just have kids like playing it. Like I'm trying to figure out how he possibly got away with this because there was very little like, actual math going on. And there was just like, a lot of video games. He was everyone's favorite teacher. But they did it did cross my mind. Like, are we supposed to be learning math? Yeah, yeah. Anyway, it's buddy.

**SD**

Oh, man, I, I want to hear your thoughts real quick. And then we'll get off video games, because I know every parents and you know, we're parents, you know, all of us are sure. What's your thoughts on the video game world? I know, you know, everyone has their screentime issues. How long do we be on the screen? How long? Should we not wait a minute, if they're playing on controllers, they're going to be better at driving later in life. They have a higher finger twitch muscle and their learning strategy when they play these games. What are your thoughts on the video game world?

**KS**

Now I don't buy like all of that stuff. And there's a woman named Jane McDougal that like talks about her TED talk about this about how great this is for problem solving. I think there there definitely are elements to gain. I think the main lesson for me is that basically, when a human being wants to learn something, there's nothing that's going to get in their way and you watch kids like in Minecraft create really impressive things. And I've never played Minecraft, but I've seen him do it. Like, how did you possibly do that? It's like, well, I just wanted to so I went and like read every single forum and I learned how to do it. And you look at that, and then you think of like, how desperate their history teacher would be to get them to do that same amount or even like a 10th of that amount of like concern about learning, you know about the Ottoman Empire or whatever it's like so for me it's it's an interesting experiment in that our kids had never really took to it. So we have four kids. We have a we that's our like current system. So we don't like have the latest and greatest. We have a no like shooting game policy. But we'll play you know, mario kart racing with each other. Or we really like the dancing like, I have two daughters that just like really can move so we'll do just Just Dance with one of my favorite games. And it's funny we we reserve it for sort of like special family time. Like there's a cabin that we'll go to my aunt lets us use her cabin in the north eastern Arizona and we'll bring the we with us there for some reason. Like that's where we play video games, like at the cabin, and it'll be Mario Brothers or Mario Kart or just dancing. Yeah, anyway, so I'm not I'm kind of in the middle on it. I guess I would say I totally hear the complaints on both sides. And yeah,

**SD**

I played tennis one time on the way until the remote flew off my hand and went

**KS**

straight through the screen. It was screen grabs and screen. Yeah, I was my cousin's house by bad. I had an amazing serve with we tennis but I broke a lightbulb on top. Like, obviously, I was like, way too old and taking it way too seriously, if that's happening.

**SD**

I think that's a great perspective on learning. Right. And I think the first thing you said when I asked you about your childhood entrepreneurship experience was solving problems early on. And I think that is really the key that is the thread with so many of these entrepreneurs that we talked to is from an early age, they're excited to learn, they're they want to solve a problem in the world. They see a need, they see a want, they see something to fix that they want to figure out and it's not. And the beauty I love about it is it's not a teacher telling you what to do. It's not a it's not an assignment or a task or an essay. Those are great because look, we all need to learn how to listen and respect and do hard things. So if you're struggling with math, learn math. If you're struggling with reading, learn readings learn to spell, but you know what else is cool? If you're struggling with reading and writing, why don't you start a blog? Why don't you start in a weekly newspaper at all your family and Friends, you know, if you're struggling with presentation, start a little podcast that's easy to do. It's free to do, you know, find things that interest you that and then take off.

**KS**

Yeah, resources and tools that are available to you guys now as kids like, I look at this, I'm like, Oh, I wish I was a kid now, like, my son's making, like Film Editing and playing with, you know, audio mixing, and it's coming up with like loops from GarageBand. And you can like put the stuff together. And there's like, No, I mean, so I can give. I don't know if it's if this fits with the podcast format, but I can give a litany of failure stories, if that would be a let's do it.

**SD**

Let's do it. Well, let me just make sure we tell everybody. So Kelly, when he went on to take this problem solving learning mindset and went on to MIT, right?

**KS**

I did, I studied nuclear physics at MIT,

**SD**

nuclear physics, another kindred spirit. I literally was reading a physics book, A Richard Fineman book last week. I mean,

I love Richard

**SD**

Fineman and and went straight into the tech world. Right. And yeah, I mean, real quick to everybody. What how you lead into prenda, this online educational platform that's exploding? Oh, sure.

**KS**

Yeah. So that's, so I, after leaving MIT, I was spending a lot of time alone with a laser, which was cool. And also, it wasn't doing it for me as a human being. So I was finding myself like talking to the laser. They This is literally my experience as a grad student at MIT was, they said, We need I had built laser systems as an undergraduate student at college. So they said, you know how to build lasers, awesome. Like, we've got this plan for far infrared laser polar emitter, it's like, it was \$600,000 worth of laser equipment, and another \$400,000 worth of like detectors and, you know, electronics to process those a million dollars, you're doing the math on the 600,000 400,000, it's a million dollars worth of stuff. And, and literally, it was like my job to like, spend a million dollars on laser stuff, and then get it all, like received to the lab, I would like open the boxes. And it's like, oh, here's a new like crystal like, you know, prism that can like, spread the light this way. And then here's a particular type of mirror that can handle high intensities, and all this stuff. And I had to like put it all together. And like, keep everything maintained. super interesting, but like from a technical brain, and I like solving problems. But the problem for me was we I would go every year to the annual physics conference and talk about what I learned, I'd make a poster. And guess how many people stopped by to see, to see whatever, there was 660 people, and it was the same six people every year, because they were also building a very similar version of the experiment at their lab in a different part of the world. So there was the guy from South Korea, and the guy from Japan and the guy from England and the guy from San Diego. And it's like all of us kind of together. And very, you

**SD**

know, a very small market and entrepreneur. Yeah.

**KS**

So we're solving a really important difficult problem. And that was cool. But only six of us cared about the solution. And so for me that I didn't think of myself in terms of an entrepreneurial stuff. But that was really demoralizing to me. And I started to ask questions like, well, what could I do? You know, how could I sort of move my career into something that maybe solve some problems. So fusion, I was working on fusion energy, which is going to someday solve all of our energy problems, it's a clean, renewable, like source of unlimited electricity, it's going to be great. And if you haven't studied fusion, it's like, super interesting. So take a minute and just like read the Wikipedia, or look stuff up, because it's, it's really cool. Everybody should know about fusion. But it was clear that it wasn't gonna work in my lifetime. It's like a long term thing. And I needed to. So I got excited about energy. And I actually started working in clean energy, I cared a lot about using the energy that we already have more efficiently. So you can like start turning off coal plants, just by sort of having better windows and better air conditioners and better lights. And so I became sort of an expert at that I was working for various like consulting companies or big companies, a lot of it has to do with information. So it's like helping sort of collect all the data about how a building uses energy, and then you can like, process it certain ways and figure things out, like, Oh, you know, if you switched out your lights, then you would save, you know, 20%, and it would pay itself back in a year. So, so basically, like packaging this and, and giving business owners, it was all interesting and fun and involved big companies and small companies, I did some

engineering, but I also found myself really liking the challenge of like, explaining the technology to people. So it was like, I got into kind of marketing and I would tell tell the story of like, well, what what this is, but not just how it works. Like what can this do for you, which I know you guys talk a lot about as you kind of coach, Coach kids on entrepreneurship is like, you don't want to speak to the features you want speak to like, the feeling or the value or what what do they actually get out. So I found that really interesting. I kind of practice on both sides. And at that point, I built a small software startup. This was 2013. I quit my job. We sold the small software startup to a bigger software startup. And that's when I moved back to Arizona, I had been living in all these random places, but coming home I, I had some extra time on my hands. So I started volunteering at the library over here in Mesa Arizona. And, and I was teaching kids to code it was like, Come learn how to program computers have the my poster that I put up in the neighborhood around the library said, learn how to make a video game, come make a website, and kids just started walking in off the street people like they would tell their friends about it. And pretty soon, like parents are driving them in. So we grew from, you know, I was just there every week for five years. So over time, I got to work with thousands of kids and see not just how kids learn coding, but I got to learn how kids learn, right that there was this bigger laboratory for me of what learning even is. And one of the things that really stood out to me about it was like we just talked about video games, it's like once a human being decides they want to learn something, there's nothing that can get in their way. And the flip side of that is if they decide they don't want to learn something, there's almost nothing you can do about it, right? You, you can like force them to do some worksheets and to sit quietly in a chair. But you can't really like learning's not really happening unless they make that choice. And I realized that most of my experience, most of my kids experience with with education was schools like this thing that happens to you, and you kind of sit there and and you're processed. And my hypothesis, then, as an entrepreneur was like, Well, what if it wasn't what if we made school where you're the actor, you're the center of this. And this, of course, aligns with a lot of the philosophy that I know, Scott, you and I share, and I'm sure a lot of your listeners. But what if you made the choice I'm going to learn and then I can learn what I want to learn. So he had lots more freedom to, you know, if I want to get really good at nuclear fusion, I'm gonna start learning all of that I have a son right now that that really wants to be involved in driverless vehicles as an engineer, or, you know, some some form. And so he's, you know, on his own, like researching what Wei mo is doing and figuring out all the things about driverless cars, and like we talked about the beginning, there's no limit to what's available. So we have this, you know, a better resource than the Library of Alexandria, like in multiple places in our home with very, very easy access. And so everything that humans have learned is free, and you can find it. And so anyway, I got excited about this, I started a micro school around my kitchen table, I pulled my own son out of school, I convinced some friends to pull their kids out. There were seven of us, this was January 2018. And we, you know, spent some time just basically reinventing school and it grew from there, we now have thousands of kids close to 4000 students in you know, 400 plus locations around Arizona, and Nevada, Colorado. And we're just really excited to bring this this model for learning to as many families as are interested in it, I love it. I love

## **SD**

it. And what's so good about this is you know, kids can learn in a lot of different places, some kids love learning at home, some at school, some with, you know, some are engineering minded, some are theatrical minded, some are literary, they love telling stories, kids all learn in different ways. And all of them are great, what we want to, we want to advise everybody has to find something that you're

passionate about. And just go fast. And learn as much as you can about that. Right. I mean, so if there's, you know, kids out there that are entrepreneur families, and you're thinking about this, like, how do we get it fired up to learn? Figure out what you love? What are you passionate about? What are you good at? Right? And then what is a something that fascinates you in the world, right, I need in the world, something to fix something to solve? I mean, I've got this poster behind me. So I don't you can see this, Kelly,

**KS**

I've been reading these. Yeah, these are 10 of

**SD**

these life principles. It was signed by Dan Sullivan, one of my closest mentors, he's the mentor to some of the best entrepreneurs in the world with Strategic Coach, he signs and gave these to me as a gift. And my favorite one is right here. Always make your future bigger than your past. What if What about this idea, kids? What if most of the jobs by the time you become an adult have not even been invented yet? Have you thought about that? The pace of growth and the pace of technical technological advance the way things change? Even 15 years ago, Kelly when we were coming out, half the jobs today weren't even around. You got to think about that kids. There are so many, many things to learn and become experts at and to find out I mean, we Yes, we might not have more land to conquer like they did back in the day when you know, the Oregon Trail and Lewis and Clark and everyone who explored new worlds and they were like cowboys and adventurous. You. You can do that with fusion. You can do that with energy. You can do that with entrepreneurial ventures. You can find out new things. Kelly, I think there's more. There's more Unknown about our world. Yeah. And we've learned from all of human history combined.

**KS**

And it depends on what you mean by land. I mean, if you count living on the ocean or moving to space, like we've got still lots of stuff. And by the way, if I can put in a plug for some of you kids listening, like, can you please figure out vaccines because this is like kind of taking too long with the pandemic. So if you guys decide, decide right now that like, you're gonna be great at inventing vaccines. And then the next time This, this comes up, you're ready for it? That would be great. Thank you.

**SD**

And by the way, I've found that most of the, the most of the incredible things that are figured out are done by kids done by teenagers, high schoolers, college kids, people that are young enough to think, Hey, there might be a new way to do this.

**KS**

Albert Einstein 1905 like, look it up, you guys. It's amazing,

**SD**

like Albert Einstein 1905. I know what you're referencing, but I won't say it because I want people to look it

up. Look it up.

**SD**

Yeah. Thomas Thomas Edison 10,000 experiments starting at age 12. You know, I mean, half the Declaration of Independence signers were under 30. I mean, these the world's changes on the backs of youth.

**KS**

We need you kids, like

**SD**

do it. Like we need it. Absolutely. I love that. I just love that. I want you all to just like, step up and be like, yeah, this is on me to learn this stuff and figure it out. And don't let people tell you like what can and can't be done. Like, just go go do it. You know, and and it's exciting. I think this is the thing, kids do not have to be scared. My favorite thing is when I talk to kid entrepreneurs, specifically, but you know, kids all over the place. When they say I can't wait to figure out the next product I want to launch. I can't wait to figure out the next project to do right. I know a lot of what printer does is project learning. Yep. That is that is gold. Because what it does is it lets kids step into the shoes of the Apollo 13, or the founding fathers or an artist or somebody that's, you know, in a revolution, or somebody who's a scientist, like when kids become something or go on a hero's journey. The the learning is is unbelievable. And the excitement for the future is just goes through the roof, right? I mean, there's there's two types of people in the world, batteries included, and Batteries not included. I actually think that all kids are batteries included, trust me, I have three of them. All kids are batteries included. But if you pound this idea into kids that you have to figure out what you want by age 15 you have you know, the future is scary. It's not scary. If you put these things in kids minds, then they become Batteries not included. But what we want to do is make sure kids understand like the future's bright future has so much opportunity. And there's so many cool things to learn. And we're just, you know, we fell into both of the things we're doing and things tribes doing. You know, it's it's really, really exciting. What's coming down the pipe.

Yeah, and I and I love just to jump in real quick. I love the it's really kids, it's just, you are geniuses, and you can create something amazing. And so I was just thinking that you're talking here about creating, right, so Scott knows we have a we have a duo of boys on our microsoft.com that created a company called creator complain. And it's actually a family value. I don't know, Kelly knows this family. But it's so cool. They, they took an idea from their family in, which was either create or complain as a family we choose to create, right, and they made a T shirt company out of it. And it's at what we were talking about before the show is like, there are lots of cheap cedars in the world. They're going to throw rocks as Taylor Swift said, people throw rocks at things that shine. My wife and I always laugh about that book. So little teach left shout out there. I believe I

quoted Taylor Swift on a podcast. Hey,



**KS**

wise person. Yes. Right.

So you know, she's got some great truths in her inner inner lyrics. But that's, I think that's very true, right? There's cheap Seders, people that are not in the arena. They're not in the game. And kids, all you got to do is you just got to get in the game. And like Scott, and Kelly said, just do something you love. And you're going to create something that's going to help the entire world it's going to be a vaccine, it's going to be something really really cool that that nobody knew about you know,

**SD**

yeah, those those kids Kelly, those two boys, they're like 10 years old and 12 Tanner and take their their t shirt business that they started on my first sale has 30 \$500 in sales already in the first leg launch.

**KS**

Well, I run by I'm gonna go buy a shirt. So Oh,

**SD**

it's and the story is so perfect. They were on Fox News. They've been on all these awesome Facebook groups, because people just love this idea of kids creating the future, you know, way to go kids keep it

going. You know? Yeah, shout

**SD**

out if you're listening guys. Well done. I know there's hundreds of awesome businesses already launched but Okay, so I love this idea of learning. And, you know, I think it comes down to the foundational things that that kids need to get excited, I think let's talk about this for a second. This whole learn how to learn Principle. Okay. Yeah, I did not realize when I was a kid how to become resourceful how to figure out answers that I don't know and and not wait to be told to do something by my parents or a teacher, I didn't realize that that was like the mark of maturity and becoming an adult and becoming like, a, you know, a productive citizen. And and a helpful individual is learning how to learn. So talk about this with what you've seen at prenda. And in your own life, how does learn how to learn help people?

**KS**

Yeah, I mean, I think the first thing is just like everything we've been talking about is you just have this one switch of like, Am I going to be in learning mode? Or am I going to be in some other mode, right? And learning mode on is is a conscious decision. What's interesting about like, as I look back at my childhood, learning mode on was always on when I was home, and mostly off when I was in school, and I'm not blaming that on somebody else. But I got in trouble. When I was a kindergartener for coloring wrong. It was It must have been the most tiniest little thing from the teachers perspective. But

for me, as a five year old, it was like a big deal. Like, I hated the feeling of like, I've disappointed this adult in my life. So like, I spent all of my years of school like kind of complying, like, I got good grades, I did all the things, but I wasn't like, I was a totally different person at home. And and as I look back on it, the home person was, you know, like, creative energy, like creative destruction. I can tell all kinds of stories about this, but it was definitely like, that's where I learned how to learn was like, I was totally fine with doing something wrong or like having it not be very good. I, my friend, Michael, and I've made a rap album when we return. We were like, you know what, like, vanilla ice is cool. MC Hammer is cool. Like we created homeboy and MC It was like our own little like, Rap Album. And we wrote our own lyrics. Like I had the little than these, like, Yamaha or whatever, like synthesizers, kind of the small ones. And Batteries not included, but I found some and added them in there and turned on the beat. You know, like, you could you could do could you do? And it was like, yeah, and then my friend was like, rapping over it. Like, you know, on the dance floor. We had like, I mean, I think we still have this on Soundcloud somewhere, like, it is so bad, but it's like laughably bad. And I look back on it. It's like, with so much fun. It's it's like we took this risk that like I never would have done if there was a grade involved. Like it would have been a bad grade. Right? We you Okay, you should have said that. Because kids are gonna find that.

**SD**

Yeah, that's gonna be the first post on our YouTube

to check out

**KS**

MC and homeboy. Oh, we had you guys it's good stuff. We had a rap about drugs, how bad drugs are and how you should like never do drugs. It's so good. And it's like, anyway, so good and bad. It was not like I don't claim any sort of, we did I I loved peanut butter on pancakes. This is the thing that me and my family did was like, we always put peanut butter and then syrup. But if you like do it right away. When the peanut the pancakes are so hot, like the peanut butter melts on there. You get this like swirl of peanut buttery, syrupy goodness. And it was like my favorite thing when I was young. And so of course, I spent countless hours like trying to sort of bottle this as like a peanut butter flavored syrup, I would take some peanut butter and syrup. But there are these chemical properties that would like separate, you know, so it's like, you could get it when it's hot. And then we try to stir it and bottle it and like prevent the air but it would always settle back down. And so it was a that was a complete failure of a product. But um, but so fun to just like, try to like bring this the solution that I had discovered, which is peanut butter on your pancakes and sort of share that with the world with the world. Yeah, so anyway, I'd never these are cases where I never made \$1 but I had so much fun learning and failing. And that games. Yeah, yeah, that's it

**SD**

the learning and trying and testing and learning, right? I mean, this is where kids shine, right? I mean, I if you can get a mindset where the light switches on and I'm a learner, and I'm not going to be sitting down and you know, numbing my brain, looking at you know, social media numbs your brain a lot of times video games that hadn't numb your brain a lot of times, instead of just getting curious about the

world and finding out new things and trying and testing new things. That is the most fun part of childhood for me. It's probably the most of the times I got hurt too. But who cares? It was super fun. I mean, we tried to fly I mean, I have I have crazy stories of trying to zip line off the roof with a rope and metal coat hanger and a Hutch football helmet. And I you know we were trying to learn physics to see how far we could go and the mattress that was going to save us if dropped was about four feet too far.

And because you forget that the rope sags. Yeah, and the

rope had the rope was like one of those thick boat ropes that had been grooves on it. And so the hanger did not go at all. And it just broke

highway. Right down. I do not

**SD**

recommend this for everyone listening. Do not do that. Be safe, be safe. But yeah, I mean, it's just testing and trying and testing and trying right? The light bulb was 10,000 tries to get the light bulb, right? How many? How many times? You know, you're a coder, I work with a team of coders for all my businesses, probably 12 of them now, how many times you have to try something before you get it? Right?

**KS**

Yeah, 1000 times, hundreds, at least computer programming is the perfect way, by the way to become a become a learner is like, because you never you have this thing you want to do you have it like clear in your head, and then you sort of start working on it. And it never works, right? So. So it's just this perpetual. And this is what like, cracks me up and why I started thinking about sort of education constraints. Because if you were to say like, this is a unit on coding, and we're going to, we're going to learn variables or something or for loops, and we're going to finish it in, you know, three weeks. So then the end of three weeks, like you get a grade, then basically no one's going to learn because it's like, you're going to stress out, stressed out, stressed out and then be like, I guess I'm bad at coding. I mean, I literally took it to programming classes in college. And that was my experience, I did not code. Because, you know, I did not major in computer science, I did not study it. Because it was like, like, I wanted to build things with it that I cared about. And I needed the space to sort of like make all these mistakes, and it just wasn't working for me inside of inside of the structure. So yeah, that's the whole idea. I will

**SD**

say this, and there is a caveat to this, too. I mean, I you know, even in the normal educational system, there are rockstars everywhere. Yeah, the teachers, you know, are amazing. My wife's a teacher, my dad was a principal, like I grew up in this world, the the constraints can be difficult A lot of times, right, with a lot of the Common Core and getting the testing done, and all that kind of stuff. But the teachers are absolutely phenomenal at Yeah, helping kids learn how to learn. I mean, I'm looking at the news

now. And every day, there's a new story of a teacher around the country, who is finding a creative way to get their kids to learn and be excited and be great listeners and get them to explore something brand new from a home virtual environment. I mean, it really is like lifting the consciousness and encouragement level of the whole country when I see that stuff. But at the end of the day, it's what can we do to get excited and get curious and learn how to learn. I think that's the best message we can give kids today.

Yep, I love that great moments. If I'm a parent, okay, and I am looking for better options. Because either whatever my situation is at home, or, you know, with with COVID, everything going on? How can you give me like a 32nd pitch on panda? And like how I would get involved?

## **KS**

Yeah, so I think the main thing with parents like you that I think are asking these questions is, I think up until recently, it didn't occur to most of us that there was anything you could do, it's like, the best I could do is go volunteer in the classroom. And maybe I could like find those those rock stars, you know, lobby to get my kid into their classes, go volunteer, so I'm there I'm present, or sign up for a private school, something like that. What we're trying to do with prenda is create this, this option, right? For people who are like, well, homeschooling feels like a stretch, like I don't know, if I want to do that much work, I want my kid to be around other kids. But I don't think that they're getting they're getting enough freedom to kind of create and learn and, and do these these things inside of you know, the structure for whatever reason. So prent is all about just helping parents and pull together and create this, this new option. So we call it a micro schools, five to 10 kids, they typically meet inside of a house, but they can be it doesn't have to be a house, we have people using the back room of a community center or a church or an office building. You need you know Wi Fi, there's a Learning Guides. So this is an adult typically from the community. Often it's one of the parents it doesn't have to be that says I will be the you know, the kind of day to day mentor and guide and facilitator for this. And then we provide them with with the rest right so we have these certified teachers like developing a curriculum and helping support the whole thing so that the learning sciences there but the day to day, you know, it's it's one adult with up to 10 kids so you get these very human interactions. And and as you guys know, a lot of this is about kind of coaching mindset, right? It's like, hey, you're going to be really frustrated when you find out that you actually don't know that thing you thought you knew, but what are you gonna do about it right? And you can just like fall on the floor, you can kind of like skate through in prenda. It's like, rise up like one of our core values is dare greatly and we're really referencing, you know, the teddy roosevelt quote, but it's like, pick a mountain and start climbing. It doesn't matter if that's your mountain forever. But you can tackle you can conquer math, and you can conquer reading, and in the process, like be equipped to conquer whatever else you want to do, whether that's entrepreneurship or you know, my son doesn't want to be an entrepreneur. He wants to go work for Google and like design, self driving. cars like, great, like, you could totally do that, like learn everything you can, like, have those experiences now. And prenda's really designed, you know, project based learning structured group activities. It's designed around creating that space, so that the light switches is on. Yeah, this is so good.

## **SD**

I mean, I love this model, just simple projects, you have a, you have an arena, right? You set up the the arena, and then it's like Rome, Rome, you know, and kids need that they need structured chaos, and they need freedom. And you know, a kid learns so much better when they feel free, and they don't feel like they're worried or anxious or have fear of something like, that's the best way to learn. I mean, it's this whole positive versus negative reinforcement. I mean, like, if you want someone to really stick a lesson to stick, you don't beat it into them, you know, you encourage it into them, you should model it into them, you know, that I think is where learning is happens. And so often, there's so many things that get in the way of that, right. There's, there's, you know, the problem sometimes with school is that you're trying to teach to the kid who's struggling the most, and everybody else is waiting around, and they're worried in its struggle. And so I really do think you've, you've touched a note that a lot of people love the sound of Scott,

### **KS**

let me just jump in here. Because I think your points earlier about teachers are exactly right, like for us that none of this is about like saying teachers are doing it wrong, right? Like, right, we meet teachers all the time that are retiring, or maybe staying home to be with a kid and they'll come to prenda. They're like, this is what I wanted. Yep. When I got into teaching like that, my heart is here. And I want to be able to provide that individual attention. But there's a lot of structural things that aren't anybody's fault. It's just, you know, it's a system that's been around for a long time. And so now, like total agreement with what you're saying about the heart of these great people, a lot of my family are also educators. So it's, it's in the blood. And some of them were even, like, what are you doing when I told them but as they kind of got close, and some of them came in and subbed for me, and like, participated in my classes, it was like, this is this is exactly what I want to be doing as an educator, right is like creating that space for kids to become learners. So yeah,

### **SD**

and those are the principles to of entrepreneurship, right? Like, well, we tell people all the time is you don't have to be an entrepreneur when you're, you know, older. But the principles of entrepreneurship are pretty simple. Find a need in the world, get curious about it, and see if you can fill it. And then you just need to learn the ideas of find a product, find a pitch that you can market it to someone to sell your ideas that happened, you need to do that in every job. You ever have, you know, just do the lawyers do that everyone does it right. If you want to promotion, if you want to get hired, if you want to get into a college, like you've got to be able to listen, learn what other people need, listening to customers is the best way to learn empathy. If you learning delayed gratification, that is a skill that is desperately needed. With today's you know, I I learned it young and it was hard, but you got to learn it if you want to understand like, don't take the cookie. Now, if you wait a little bit, you can have two cookies, right? Like that type of an idea is perfect when you go through I mean, we're doing my first sale, right kids launch a quick three week three week business, they make a bunch of money and they're done. But what you're doing is like that every six weeks, every five weeks, right? how long each of the projects,

### **KS**

we don't time. Um, so some of them are as short as one week and some of them go months, we had some kids in one of my classes decided to write a biography, it was meant to be like a kind of a shorter form, but they did lots of primary research and turned it into a whole, like actual book biography about

somebody that they hear. So you know, like you can get really excited about a project and and dig into it. starting a business would be cool. I haven't seen anybody yet. And we need to work together on this, obviously. But yeah,

**SD**

that'd be awesome. Let's create like a little project for kids to Yeah, launch a business and then be done. It's and celebrate, like, our biggest thing is celebrate, to share now, kids should always have I learned from BJ Fogg very recently, always have a shine moment at the end of every good habit. You know, if you're gonna floss right after you brush your teeth, make sure to like give yourself a high five. Make sure to like give yourself like yes, or do a little dance, you know, always celebrate, right? That's one of the most important things I've learned as an entrepreneur all together.

**KS**

It's like we're the same person Scott. So the print of micro schools, the kids are working through like mastery of math and English. And and when they get a level complete, or like a milestone in the software, my micro school, and I think a lot of them still do this was as a dance party. So it's like, choose like that person gets to choose the song, but everybody in the class gets to like, take a break. Like we're going to do like a one song little dance party and just celebrates It feels so good to just be like, Look, I just did that, you know, and yeah, and reinforcing that positivity. Absolutely. Awesome. Awesome.

**SD**

Okay, well, I know we're almost out of time here. I want to respect your time. But what any last thing about family, think about your kids. I know. They Did the business fair, and they sold coding service help to the community, which is an amazing story there. They made \$10. Right?

**KS**

Yeah. Yeah, it wasn't the most popular business of the day. But I tried to encourage them to pivot and go start selling to the kids that are running the successful businesses, like you could build their website, you know, but yeah, they didn't feel comfortable direct sales at that point in their life. Yep, there you go. So give me what what's one thing that comes to mind about family, so raising kids, and in this type of mindset, because really what you're talking about is a mindset is what the number one thing that you found that's been successful with helping raise your kids? Shoot, can I give five I mean, we have our core values really are designed around what what does it take to empower a learner and to be that in your life. But what we hear back a lot of times is that this is changing the way that that they people think about their own life and their their relationships and their kids and their families. So I'm going to go quickly through them, because I know we're trying to finish up but start with heart, you have to see somebody as a human being first, like so any other category. Oftentimes, too often parents get stuck in a box with their kids where they see something like you're a terror, or you are determined to destroy the piece of the family or, you know, something that's not you are a human being. And anytime that's true, like you're missing out foundation of trust, we talked about a lot meaning like, I believe that the other person is looking at me as a human. And I will also look at them as a human. And then you've got figure it out. So we say figure it out all the time. It's like just this approach of like, I'm not going to be daunted by jargon, or by, you know, how difficult that must be, like, if I want to learn something, we've

talked on this podcast, nuclear fusion, you know, solving vaccines, you know, like building like civilization on the ocean, or in other planets, there's like your 10 year old your 10 year old rap career, restart a rap career, like these things might seem daunting to you. But like, if you say the words to yourself, like I can figure it out, and we say to each other, like, figure it out, not in like a jerky way. It's like, I literally believe like, as a human, you're capable of figuring it out. We talked about dare greatly, like choose that mountain and climb up it. And then the last one we have is learning over comfort, which I think is related to your poster behind you. But this idea of like, I can always choose comfort, and my sort of primitive brain is going to tell me to sort of like withdraw, protect myself with armor, like not take any take any risk. And to just put that out there and say, it's learning over comfort. It's not going to be the comfortable way. But it's it's definitely better long term, not just for your kids, but for you as the adult and for your whole family to just adopt this, this way of being and learning. So these these values we found to be really helpful. And we hold ourselves as a company accountable to them. We talk to them, you know, with the Learning Guides and with all the kids. So hopefully that's helpful for somebody listening.

**SD**

Fantastic. Well, there you go. That's our that's our show. Kelly, thanks for being here with us. prenda is the micro school. You guys can look it up on Google. It's probably the first 10 hits. So what's the website?

**KS**

prenda. School calm. There you go.

**SD**

All right. Well, thanks so much, Kelly, from video games, to rap career to MIT, to nuclear fusion to transforming the way kids learn. So congratulations to you. We're so excited for him that you're gonna do and everybody out there listening. Thanks again for being with us today. Thanks, guys.