Four Deadly Errors of Teaching Writing

Transcript of Podcast Episode 359

Julie Walker: Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, "IEW." My name is Julie Walker, and I'm honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Andrew, I think this is going to be one of those talking about remarkable, shareable podcasts today.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I hope so. Aren't all of ours like that?

Julie Walker: Well, I think there are some that are more remarkable, thinking of the term *remarkable*.

Andrew Pudewa: Remark. Like, we're going to do this. We're going to share this ...

Julie Walker: again. Right.

Andrew Pudewa: We're going to look at it again.

Julie Walker: Right, because we have many times referred our listeners to your talk "The Four Deadly Errors of Teaching Writing." And that's what we're going to talk about today.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, okay. It's probably ... I think it is my most favorite conference talk just because it seems to hit everyone in some way at some point.

Julie Walker: Right. And what I love about your conference talks, and I've heard other people say this too, is they're informational, but they're practical. And of course, you are a joy to listen to. So this "Four Deadly Errors" – now this wasn't always the name of the talk.

Andrew Pudewa: No. Well, when I originally conceived it, I thought, we'll call it the "Seven Deadly Sins You Could Possibly Commit When Undertaking the Teaching of Writing to Children."

Julie Walker: That's a very long title.

Andrew Pudewa: It is a very long title. Plus you know, seven is kind of too much to lay on someone all at once. And sin is just not attractive. And it's not a moral thing obviously. So I softened it up to "The Four Deadly Errors." And I always like to let people know, you know: you may possibly in the course of listening to this talk feel a little bit of guilt, like, oh, no, I did that to my poor students.

But the only way I could create such a talk is to have committed these four deadly errors myself. So it's all about, well, okay, let's just move past and get better and avoid things that might impede the best possible progress, attitude, enthusiasm. You know, and people say to me, I want my kid to enjoy writing. I want my students to love writing. And I always counter that. That shouldn't be a goal. If that's a goal, then you won't reach it a hundred percent with a lot of kids.

Julie Walker: Yeah. Yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: And then you fall short, and then you feel like a failure. If your goal is different, that—to like writing or love writing—that can be a side effect of a better, higher goal.

Julie Walker: I think probably a goal should be for teachers and teaching parents to want to teach writing and make that more enjoyable. And I think that's what this talk helps do, helps accomplish that. Because the more willing you are to, you know, give your students writing assignments, the better writers they'll become.

Andrew Pudewa: But what makes something enjoyable?

Julie Walker: You're good at it.

Andrew Pudewa: You're good at it. So the goal should be to get better at doing it, not to like it. The liking of it is the byproduct of getting better.

Julie Walker: I see. Yep.

Andrew Pudewa: That's a different talk. That's motivation.

Julie Walker: This is true. This is true. Link in the show notes to the Motivation podcast that we've done. But I do want to mention to our listeners: This is not the full conference talk that you give, Andrew, at your conventions or that we have now available on our website through video, because you did this as a video for our own staff here at our recording studio.

Andrew Pudewa: This is the abbreviated version, which will serve the dual purpose of reminding people of some of the salient points if they've heard the whole talk or get them interested in unpacking more of the ideas.

Julie Walker: Great. Okay, so let's just jump right in, shall we? Four Deadly Errors.

Andrew Pudewa: Four Deadly Errors. So there's no hierarchy. As far as I know, I don't think any one of these is particularly the worst or the least worst. But I do start with the one that is perhaps most common in people's experience either in teaching or in being taught. And that would be **overcorrecting.** And there's two parts: *over* and *correcting*.

Julie Walker: Okay.

Andrew Pudewa: So I actually would start with the correcting part. And we think about this word *correcting;* it immediately has some implications, the first of which is wrongness. You need to be corrected because you are wrong, right? And I don't know about you, but I don't really like the feeling of being wrong. It's not a positive, right? Now obviously, we all need correction.

But if we're working with children, and there's even a sensitivity to the whole thing because they already kind of don't have a good attitude about doing it, then to add on this idea of, well, "you did it wrong" can really amplify the negativity in a very unhelpful way. So my recommendation is that you don't use the word. And don't say, "I will correct your writing." Instead, use what I think is a more honest, kinder, gentler term: *editing*. Someone who corrects you – there's a little bit of an antagonistic relationship. It just happens automatically.

Julie Walker: And I think the older you get, the more resistant you are to that. I think a two-year-old ... It's easier to correct a two-year-old than a twelve-year-old and certainly someone who's like fifteen or sixteen, eh huh?

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, definitely, whereas editing ... It's kind of like, oh, someone's going to help me with what I'm doing. An editor is your friend, right? We have editors. I use them. You use them. What's their job? To help us be the better version of ourself at least in public.

Julie Walker: Exactly, yes.

Andrew Pudewa: Right? To help. I like editors because they help me not look stupid in public. So there's that feeling. Plus it's a different relationship. I'm going to tell you what is the right way to do it. An editor will say, well, you know, this other way of doing it might be clearer, might be better, might be less awkward. And so it reinforces a positive relationship. So you know, I always say to moms and teachers, if you can be your students' editor and let them know, you know, that you're just there to help them produce the best thing they can ...

And part of that, too, is that the student is ultimately responsible, right? So if an editor makes a suggestion to me, well, I can choose to accept that as a perceived improvement over what I did, which I usually do. Or I could say, no, I don't want to change that. What I really wanted was what I said. Or it may be an in-between world where here's a suggestion of how to say it better. I don't quite like that, but I tweak my own a little bit. And then I get the best of both worlds. So you know, when you say to a child, oh, this is great job; let me edit for you. And then there's a few rules. Number one- just take a minimalist approach.

This is where we get to the word *over*correcting because, you know, I don't know about you, but I think very few of us, especially us guys ... You know, we got the paper back from the teacher whenever, middle school, high school, college. It doesn't matter. And it had all those marks on it. I don't think any of us really sat there and said, oh, teacher, thank you so much for spending so much of your valuable time giving me all of this detailed feedback. I'm going to study and pore over this and internalize your suggestions so I can do better next time. No, mostly you look at it and think, well, I don't know. I'm dumb. I'm stupid. I never make her happy. I don't know what I'm doing. I hate this.

Whereas a minimalist approach – it's kind of like, well, let's make this legal but not try to make it good, right? So, okay, here's the things that could be fixed that will make it closer to legal. But I'm not going to impose my older person's better logic and vocabulary and common sense ...

Julie Walker: Life experience.

Andrew Pudewa: ... and, like, make you better than you are. Well, you can't do that. So taking a minimalist approach, just fix the things that should be fixed, that need to be fixed. And then here's the real trick: hand it back with no lecture attached. You know, you hear this expression: "Let's go over it," which means sit down. And I'm going to explain to you why I made all the marks on this paper that I made.

I remember my early days even before you came along. It was just me, myself, and I, and my family. And that was the whole IEW. I had no money. I couldn't pay anyone to help. So I had my wife, right? So she would proofread my stuff. Well, she wanted me to sit down and listen to her explain why she wanted to change whatever she wanted to change.

I remember sitting there thinking, I don't need this. I don't care. Just give it to me. And I will decide if I like your changes or not. And then I thought, wow, if I, a semi-mature adult and my wife, who I love and adore so much ... If this is creating this level of friction and angst, think about a poor little boy and his mom and how much, you know, harder that may be. Not every circumstance, but some.

So I always tell the kids, now you've got to have an editor. All writers have an editor. And you can hire anybody you want. You can hire your grandmother. You can hire your best friend as long as they're smarter than you are. You can hire an older sibling. You could even hire your mom. But you may have to train your mom to be an editor and not a mom because the mom always wants to give you a little lecture. The editor will give you the paper, no lecture attached.

And that is so freeing. I have had moms come up to me after this talk and say, just that idea is going to save my homeschool, you know, or something like that. I'm sure it's a bit of hyperbole, but it really creates a huge difference.

Julie Walker: Yeah. Well, and I think, you know, one of our philosophies here is teaching at the point of need. If a child has a question about why the editor changed it, that child, that student can go back and ask. And then they're going to be more receptive to it, as opposed to, you know, sit down, and I'm going to tell you why you've made so many errors.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. So that would be the first one, is overcorrecting. Instead of correcting, have the attitude of editing. And be sure the child knows that he gets the final decision, right? And then take that minimalist approach.

Julie Walker: Which is going to make it obviously easier for the teacher and therefore maybe more willing to assign ...

Andrew Pudewa: Right. In a classroom situation if you've got twenty some, thirty papers, you really don't want to be spending more than just a few minutes because even, you know, three minutes times thirty is a huge chunk of time. Destroy your life.

Julie Walker: Right.

Andrew Pudewa: You know that idea. And then it touches on another of our key fundamental concepts, which is it's process, not product. And you as the teacher or mom looking at the paper, don't be attached to the product. It's going to go in the garbage someday anyway. So don't worry. See what can be taught at the point of need right then in the gentlest way. The child makes the changes or not, finishes. Okay? You did everything on the checklist. You get a hundred percent.

Now we're done. We move on to another thing. So that, I think you know, is probably the biggest shift people can make. And you know, I always joke, and I'll hear ... People will say something like, "Well, don't you think you could use a better word here?" because it was an awkward word. Why? You know, kid's using a word he doesn't necessarily understand. Or there's some idiom. And he mixes it up, or he makes up his own little weird use of words. That's what kids do. But the child is thinking if I could have thought of a better word, I would've thought of a better word.

Julie Walker: Right, exactly, yep.

Andrew Pudewa: So why are you even asking me? Just tell me what to change, and I'll change it. But don't torture me, like, "Couldn't you have ...?"

Julie Walker: Right.

Andrew Pudewa: So that would be a summary of number one.

Julie Walker: Okay, all right. Three more to go.

Andrew Pudewa: So number two, I think, also is very important. And I think that homeschool moms are a little more susceptible to this than maybe schoolteachers who just have been doing it with a lot more kids for a lot longer time. And that would be **withholding help.**

Julie Walker: Ah, right.

Andrew Pudewa: One of the advantages of being in a class is you don't have someone who's at your beck and call every moment of every day. And so you kind of have to wrestle with it on your own, which is good. But the other side of that is if you're lost, and you don't get help, and you don't know what to do, well then, what do you do? So I think that this idea, you know, a lot of people get is that if I help this child in the way that they are asking, I might be helping them too much.

And if I'm helping them too much, they won't be learning. Therefore, I should not help too much and kind of force them to just wrestle with it and figure it all out on their own. And while there is a time and a place for that, it also can be very deadly because if you don't know what to do, and no one's helping you, and you still don't know what to do, what are you going to do?

You know, you start to hate that feeling. So I'm always kind of comforting, I think, especially moms, saying, "Don't worry. You can't actually help too much." Now that shocks some people: you can't actually help a child too much. Why? Well, because they always tell you when they don't need help, right? That's what they're wired to do.

Julie Walker: Right? Yep.

Andrew Pudewa: And so, you know, if they need a word, give them the word. If they can't figure out how to put in a which clause, dictate a couple options, and let them choose. Give them choices. But give them plenty of options to choose from. And then what happens is it builds this confidence and fluency. And what always happens ... And I can't predict; I can't say, is this going to happen in six months or six years?

Julie Walker: Right, right.

Andrew Pudewa: But what always happens? At a certain point, the child says, okay, mom, I got it. Leave me alone.

Julie Walker: This is one of the reasons why our system works so well for children with learning differences: we give permission to parents and teachers to continue to help the children until they're ready to do it themselves, which is that scaffolding that they need.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, and this idea—I just don't know where it came from—but this idea that somehow if you help them as much as they want, you'll be doing it for them ...

Julie Walker: Hmm. I think of the science fair project, right?

And you think about, well, you've got kids in your home. You know, you help them whether it's cooking or cleaning or doing a puzzle or whatever. You just do it together until they say, I can do this. Leave me alone. Let me try. And we don't really have control over when that will occur. And you know, it's true: You have a child who's maybe older, twelve, thirteen, fifteen. And they still want a lot of help from you. And you're worried; like, oh no, they're getting older. If I keep helping them, they'll never become independent. But that's just not what happens.

What happens is independence is the result of building up a critical mass of information, experience, confidence. And if you lack information, experience, and confidence, that's when you don't become independent. So I think we can consider, you know: this is an organic process. And we can't necessarily control it. You know, I always go back to my teacher, Dr. Suzuki, who had all sorts of little aphorisms and stories and examples. And you know, his favorite one is you

can't say to a plant, "Grow" and make it grow. Right? You can't say to a kid, "Learn this" and make them learn this. What do you do with the plant?

Well, you give it good soil; you give it water. You give it sunshine; you can sing or play music for it. You can think positive thoughts, which may help, but you cannot dictate the speed at which it grows through your will. Same thing with kids. You give them the right soil, the right environment; you provide them with enough water, information, and opportunity. You give them sunshine and love. And they will grow, but they will not necessarily grow according to the schedule that you want, which kind of leads us to the third error, which would be **unclear assignments**. Unclear assignments are kind of a form of withholding help.

Julie Walker: Okay, right. Sure.

Andrew Pudewa: And I think this is one reason people – just as soon as they get into Structure and Style, whatever of our products they're using, whether they are making their own lessons with the TWSS, or they're in a class or a school and using a theme-based or with our excellent video courses, we are making the assignment very clear. Here's the first thing to do. Here's the next thing to do. Here's what you do after that, and here's how you know you will be finished.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: And you know, I've often said shorter assignments are often much better. More frequent, shorter assignments are great because what do kids love the most about schoolwork?

Julie Walker: Being done.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, being finished. So if you do more frequent, shorter things, you get to be finished more often.

Julie Walker: I like that.

Andrew Pudewa: Not to say there isn't value in a longer paper, research project, whatever. But you don't want to start there. And so making the assignments very clear, very precise in terms of process and what the finished product looks like – it's so comforting to the teacher and the student. And I think if we were to look back in our own experience and find maybe a few times we've been frustrated with a teacher, that frustration may be connected with, I didn't know how to make that teacher happy. That teacher didn't communicate to me well enough. Or I just didn't hear well enough what she wanted, what would get a good grade.

Right? And then that grading problem becomes very arbitrary in many ways. You know, you get a paper back, and it has a *B*. Well, why isn't it a *B* plus? Why isn't it *A* minus? Why isn't it a *B* minus? Where's the way I could have known how to do better?

Julie Walker: I'm going to interrupt you and ask you to tell a story. And I know you know what story I'm going to ask you to tell. And I know you're thinking, oh, we're not going to have time

to tell that story. But the reason I want you to tell the story ... And this is the one that the teacher came to you and said, this is the assignment I gave, and none of my kids can do it right. Because I think, well, it illustrates this really well. And we fixed that.

Andrew Pudewa: So I was at a teacher's convention. I think it was a core knowledge convention, long time ago. And I was there, setting up my little table and getting ready. And this woman walks up and says, "So you teach writing?"

I said, "Well, I try."

She said, "Well, I teach writing."

I just thought, oh, this is going to be a long conversation. But you know, she wanted to talk. So I said, "Well, who or what do you teach?"

"Freshman comp."

Then I thought, okay, this is definitely going to be a long conversation, but she obviously wanted to talk. And so I said, "Well, how's it going, teaching freshman comp?"

Julie Walker: Yeah. Great question.

Andrew Pudewa: And she said, "Oh, these students come to high school with just so poor skills," which, now that doesn't surprise me – a teacher complaining about the ability of the students when they come into a class or grade or high school or whatever. And then she said the thing that kind of, I thought, hmm.

She said, you know, "I give an assignment to everyone, and no one can do it." Well, you would stop and say, if you give an assignment to everyone, and no one can do it, whose problem is this? You know, is it the kids' problem, or is it your problem?

Julie Walker: Right, exactly.

Andrew Pudewa: So I didn't go there. And so I said, "Well, what kind of assignment do they have a hard time with?" And I expected her to say something like, well, I give them a poem by Maya Angelou and ask them to write a reflection paper on how it makes them feel or something, which would kill all of the boys and half of the girls right there in ninth grade.

But no. This was actually a pretty good idea. She said, "I have them research an occupation or profession and write about it."

I thought, well, that's a good assignment for a couple reasons. Number one- you don't have to tell how you feel about something. You can go get information. And number two- it's relevant because every fourteen-year-old in the world is starting to think about what am I going to do with my life. So I probed a little bit further. And I said, "Well, do you give them, like, a checklist or a rubric of things to do?"

And she said, "Oh, yes. I give them a list of ten things to be sure to include."

Julie Walker: Oh, that's great. Yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: So now I'm kind of mystified because it sounds like a good assignment. It sounds like there's this rubric; whatever it is, at least it's something. Where's the problem? So I probed a little bit further. And I said, "Well, do you give them, you know, kind of a sample, like an outline? Do you tell them how many paragraphs and what to put in each paragraph? Do you, you know, do you give them an example of what you want them to do?"

And that's where she said, "Oh no, I would never do that. That would be helping them too much."

Julie Walker: Okay. Right.

Andrew Pudewa: And when she said that, I think that was the seed for this talk. I mean, I came up with this talk years after. But I just remember it so clearly, thinking this should be self-evident to her that if she were to help them more, give them a model, do one together. I mean, we learn everything through imitation. We don't invent too much new stuff. And really anytime we do invent new stuff, we're just using previously existing information in a new combination or permutation. And if they can't do what you think they should be able to do, well, you would show them. You know, and you hang out with teachers, and they all love to say things like, "Don't tell; show."

Julie Walker: Then, yeah. Right.

Andrew Pudewa: And then they don't.

Julie Walker: And then they don't. And I mentioned that we fixed that. And this is how we fixed that because I love that assignment. And I thought let's bring that into one of our *Structure and Style for Students* courses. So we did that assignment; I think it was a Unit 7. No, no, no. It must have been a research project. So either Unit 6 or Unit 8. Yeah. And one of the examples ... So this would be a Level B class, so middle school, early high school. I think it was Year 2, Level B. We'll put a link in the show notes to that actual course. But one of our students that we use as an example ... Now this wasn't a career that she was necessarily going for, but she researched being a bounty hunter.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, I remember that.

Julie Walker: And what a great example. And so we have exemplars in our *Structure and Style for Students* so that the kids can look at that and know, okay, this is what you're looking for. It's a five-paragraph assignment or whatever it was and very clear. And yet the kids did do the research, and some of them actually did some crazy ideas of what to do. But some of them – I think they may actually become

Andrew Pudewa: interested in pursuing

Julie Walker: the occupation that they researched. Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: It's a good assignment. I tried to convert this woman to my way of thinking, which is, well, what if you gave them a sample? Or what if you did one together or at least created an outline for one together? But I could not. And she kind of went off, I guess, in a huff and did her thing.

But you know, this idea of complaining about kids not being able to do something – it's always a trap. And then you get, you know ... The high school teachers blame the middle school teachers. The middle school teachers blame the elementary school teachers. The elementary school teachers blame the primary, and the primary blame the parents. But you know, the good teacher will say, well, the buck stops here. You know, yeah. They didn't learn this, so I'm going to back up and do this well enough that everyone can have a modicum of success.

Julie Walker: Exactly. Yep.

Andrew Pudewa: So, okay. Now the fourth deadly error, because we've got to move on here.

Julie Walker: Yes, we do.

Andrew Pudewa: But again, the whole hour talk – it's much better because it's got all the stories, not just a few of them. But the fourth one is **overexpectation**. And again, I think that this is connected with a fear, much like the over-helping too much is kind of a fear. And that is, you get to this point, and it usually happens around twelve, thirteen, fourteen: Oh, no, this kid is growing up fast. I'm trying to get them ready for high school or college or career or life.

And what they're doing is a far cry from what they're going to need to be doing as an adult. And you know, that kind of ... It's funny because, you know, you look at the writing of an eight-year-old; whatever they do is cute. You put it on the refrigerator; you're happy. When they're ten, it doesn't have to make sense. It's cute; you're happy. They're putting words on paper. But that same thing at twelve is no longer cute. And at fourteen, that's downright scary. Now the first thing we have to notice about this is the nature of kids growing up and that super awkward phase.

You know, a mom will come up to me at a convention and say something like, well, we've been using your writing program for a year now. You know, she's wringing her hands. And I'm just a little worried about my daughter's writing. It's just awkward—as if the writing program were the cause of the awkwardness. Okay. Fair enough. Fair enough. My question is how old is this child. And it's usually, well, she's twelve and a half.

Okay, so back up a little bit. Just think about twelve-year-olds in general. There are exceptions, but in general, twelve-year-olds – they look awkward. They walk and move awkwardly. They feel awkward. They talk awkwardly. Actually everything about them is awkward. So why would you not expect their writing to be awkward? And so there's that disconnect between their nature and this product that exists in your mind as some ideal they should be achieving. And this is

exacerbated by the problem that every kid that age, twelve, thirteen – their full-time job is to try to convince you that they are older than they actually are.

You know, but a thirteen-year-old is a whole lot closer to being ten than they are to being eighteen. There are exceptions. Obviously, there are some children who mature either physically or intellectually or both at a younger age and some who do that at an older age. But everyone goes through that period. What makes parents anxious is when that period of awkwardness conflicts with their idea of what a kid should be able to do at that age.

So I just kind of have to, again ... You just back it up. And let's look at this and understand: This is the nature of growing up. Relax a little bit. And I tell some stories. I can't tell them now; we're running out of time. But I tell some stories of how I've seen kids at fifteen, sixteen, producing stuff that's just fingernails-on-a-chalkboard-level irritatingly awkward.

Julie Walker: Right. Well, they're playing with these new stylistic techniques, and they don't know how to do them.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. And even if they didn't have stylistic techniques, they would still be doing awkwardness. And then just a few years later, they're all grown up. And they're writing stuff that sounds super mature and intellectually appropriate and great vocabulary and language. And you just ... Again, back to Suzuki's thing; you just can't make a child get smarter by telling them to be smarter. You just keep watering; keep the sunshine; sing songs to your plants. And they grow, you know. And so just removing that anxiety of overexpectation – that can make a huge difference. And I think that is exacerbated in great part, particularly with parents and sometimes with schools, is this fact that we do age-segregate children.

And so we put all the thirteen-year-olds in one room together. And then what's going to happen? They will compare themselves with each other. The parents will compare their kids with other peoples' kids. The whole system is based on comparing kids with each other. But they all grow at different speeds. And so it's a disordering type of environment.

And that's why, you know, a lot of my work is to just help people realize if you compare the child with themselves and see progress, that's the only thing that matters. Comparing your thirteen-year-old with someone else's thirteen-year-old just because they happen to both be thirteen – it doesn't do any good for anyone. It's disordered and disordering. And yet we are constantly fighting against that: the whole grade level idea.

And you know, we could talk about that, you know, for hours. And teachers very often know that all kids are different. But yet now they have to give grades to all of their seventh grade students because they taught them the same stuff in the same way according to the same schedule. And you know, the good teachers are constantly trying to work around that. How do we appropriately assess without penalizing kids whose only fault is they have different neurology?

Julie Walker: Right.

Andrew Pudewa: They're just neurologically younger, or they came from an environment with a different level of language experience. So you know, and that's the subject for a completely different podcast on, you know, assessment and what is the best philosophy to build a best practices for the assessment that serves well the child and their development, the student and where they're going to go.

Julie Walker: Well, especially something like writing, which is an art and you know, comparing that to other children. Yeah, I could just go off. But I love this talk, "The Four Deadly Errors of Teaching Writing." But I have played with the idea. I've never actually done it yet, but I've got some notes of giving this talk, kind of stealing it from you, Boss, at a conference and calling it "The Four Deadly Errors of Teaching Anything" because you know, I am, of course you know, managing people. And a lot of what we do even here with those we serve – we don't want to overcorrect. We don't want to withhold help. We want to give clear assignments.

Andrew Pudewa: Maybe you should write a book called *The Four Deadly Errors of Managing People*. And then you could really make your millions.

Julie Walker: Maybe. But there's a lot of great insight here. And I'm sure our listeners will appreciate this and share it with their friends.

Andrew Pudewa: I hope so.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Google podcasts, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.