



**Transcript:** Transcript #349 Preventing Your Child From Falling Behind During and After Quarantine: Learning, ADHD & Regression with Carol Garner-Houston

**Wendy Myers:**

Hello, everyone. I'm Wendy Myers of [myersdetox.com](http://myersdetox.com). Today we have Carol Garner-Houston on the show. She's going to be talking about preventing your child from falling behind during and after the quarantine. We're going to be discussing learning, ADHD and even regression. Some kids are falling behind because they're not in school. Their parents are stressed. Maybe they're not getting enough attention or too much screen time. There are a lot of different factors at play, including neurological issues. Maybe the child's brain isn't functioning properly or firing properly. Carol is an expert at rewiring children's brains and stimulating them properly without pharmaceuticals, and she has spectacular results. There is fantastic information on the show today.

**Wendy Myers:**

She's going to be talking about all the tools that she uses at home and that parents can use at home. She's got a great free PDF download that outlines all of the tools that she's using, which includes essential oils, music therapy, the Mozart effect and alpha stim. There are a lot of other tools that she's using to help to calm kids down and get them into a state where they can learn. We'll discuss tips for dealing with kids that are either overstimulated or under stimulated, the symptoms of both and how each of them require a different tool set. It's a really interesting show today.

**Wendy Myers:**

There's no denying that exposure to heavy metals is growing fast. Known poisons like mercury, arsenic, cadmium, lead and thallium, which is 10 times more toxic than mercury, are increasingly in our food, even in some organic vegetables. They're everywhere. They're in our air, our water, our beauty products. More sources than I can possibly list. And with some having much more dangerous toxin exposure than others, it's critical to understand which

metals are in our bodies now, and how these metals are negatively affecting our health. This is the first step on the journey to removing them and enjoying more vibrant health. This is why thousands have taken my heavy metals quiz and why nearly all were surprised by the results. This quiz is inspiring so many to finally take action to reclaim their health. Because as scary and hopeless heavy metal toxicity seems to be, it is possible to get these metals out of the body and pave the way for a deeper transformation in the way that we look, how we perform and how good that we feel each day. Taking this quiz is the first step. So go to [heavymetalsquiz.com](http://heavymetalsquiz.com) to get started now and see how much heavy metals affect our lives.

**Wendy Myers:** Our guest Carol Garner-Houston, is an occupational therapist with 23 years of experience in treating neurological disorders without pharmaceuticals. She's the co-founder and chief medical officer of Brain Harmony, which specializes in applying the principles of neuroplasticity of the brain, through the experienced hands of licensed occupational therapists. Her company provides life changing interventions with a nationwide home program. This allows for the tools to be shipped to the home with an assigned therapist to coach the family through the program via telemedicine. Her outcomes are the best in the world with clients gaining years worth of skills in a timeframe of several months. She specializes in neurological disorders including; PTSD, anxiety, sensory and auditory processing issues, stress and sleep, speech and communication, behavior, autism spectrum disorders, attention and regulation, learning and dyslexia, TBI, stroke and Parkinson's. You can learn more about Carol and her work at [brainharmony.com](http://brainharmony.com).

**Wendy Myers:** Carol, thank you so much for joining us on the show.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Thank you so much for having me, Wendy. I'm looking forward to sharing this information with your listeners.

**Wendy Myers:** **You've been on my Myers Detox Podcast before but I wanted to have you come on again, because you have a lot of great information about preventing your child from falling behind during quarantine, during and after quarantine. We're going to be focusing on learning, ADHD and regression. This is a concern that a lot of parents have. My own daughter, Wynter, she's 10 and she's in fourth grade. She's doing maybe an hour of work a day, with her school transferred to online. I have a lot of concerns about her falling behind and having too much screen time. Please tell us your thoughts on this whole quarantine and lockdown.**

**Carol Garner-Houston:** With so much of the in-school instruction cancelled for the academic year, parents are scrambling to juggle this pre and post quarantine life with homeschooling. Lots of people have those same concerns. They're concerned about vital stages of learning that are being missed or maybe not taught very well, and not embraced by the individual. What's nice is that today, we're going

to teach our listeners how to create the best environment and the best brain capability to learn while in this quarantine. This will also help you as you come out of the quarantine as well.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Much of the stress that parents are talking about is the homeschooling stress while trying to work. I think when we approach trying to change this state, understanding what the stress is actually doing to our children's brain and neurological system can help us understand how to make it better. Let's look at that stress response. It is a very primitive one and its purpose is for survival. It's part of that autonomic nervous system, the things that you can't control like your heart rate. You don't usually control your heart rate, or your breath rate or your elimination organs. Those kinds of things happen automatically.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** The quarantine is a fantastic stressful event; a long-term, chronic, stressful event. When we're under stress our glands produce cortisol hormones. There can be a spike in blood sugar and your heart rates speed up, so that you get more blood flow to the muscles and you can recruit what you need to fight the bear, or the problem, or you can run away.

**Wendy Myers:** Or math.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Right, or math, whatever it may be that invokes this physiological response, which is what we know as the fight or flight response. Unfortunately, so many of us from the parents to the children are stuck in the fight-or-flight patterns. When that happens, it limits the blood flow to the brain. It limits the access to all of the areas required for good, efficient learning, for storing and retrieving, whether it's for written or verbal output. If that stress continues to build and we don't have an outlet for it, we're seeing that some of these characteristics of the children are presenting like sensory processing disorders.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Some parents are reporting more GI upset, sleep disturbances, an understandable increase in generalized anxiety, excessive energy, having a hard time honing in, poor emotional regulation and maybe some more tantrums, more intense ones, more meltdowns, more defensive responses like sensitivities to sounds with their hands over their ears. They might be sensitive to touch and they withdraw when you try to snuggle and hug them. All of this, rigidity in thinking, all of these things that lock up the brain can also pull resources from the immune system because the brain and neurological system are working so hard through this stress. My intent today is to help you to change that trajectory.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Some children are even seeing regression in skills. That's when you have a skill that you thought was already there for your child, let's take potty training for example, and then they may be having more potty accidents, or the meltdowns are more intense, or they just can't get restorative sleep. With that, we're going to go ahead and figure out how to change this trajectory. The key to doing that is

looking at their observable behaviors as a reflection of the state of the brain. You've heard me talk about and reference the pyramid of learning, a lot. We're going to reference it here again, on purpose, to show you how we're going to change this stress fight-or-flight response and return to good quality learning for the brain.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Here is our pyramid of learning. Parents are usually coming in looking for skills at the top of the pyramid, in the higher cognitive centers. That's what we're talking about, academic learning, activities of daily living, caring for themselves, their attention centers, their behavior, auditory processing and language skills. All of those higher cognitive centers are dependent upon the solid foundation, lower in the central nervous system. So, I'm going to teach you how to come in from a bottom-up approach and improve that learning profile for your children. That'll be wonderful.

**Wendy Myers:** **Fantastic. I think a lot of kids are not really stressed by themselves. They aren't naturally stressed out. My daughter is talking to her friends, chatting away and playing video games and things like that. It's when the parents are stressed, and a lot of us are on a pretty interesting emotional roller coaster right now, the children reflect that. They feel it. They sense it. They feel that in their body and they're mirroring the behavior that we have and the emotions we have.**

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Absolutely, I like what you brought up about how they are reflecting the emotions that we have in us. One of the first things that we do whenever we go in to provide care and organization to a person, we first go in and we use the Calm Method. It's a four step process to maximize learning and organizing that central nervous system. It's going to help us soothe that fight-or-flight, like you're talking about. You can do that first by comforting the neurological system and setting up safety cues in their environment. Exactly what you said is how you're speaking, how you hold your body, your facial expressions, those are all safety cues for the children. You can continue to reflect that by saying, "Hey, we may be in this difficult circumstance, but we're going to get to work. We're going to work through it together and we'll come out better on the other side".

**Carol Garner-Houston:** That first stage of comforting the neurological system is so important. I have a few things that you can do in your home to continue to set up more of those safety cues. We just talked about some prosodic features of your voice and your facial expressions. Let's think about our auditory senses and light, classical music for example, to get started on your day. Specifically, we like Mozart for the Mozart Effect. There's some great research about it having a great impact on memory and learning. That's a beautiful aspect to bring in, to start your day. Another piece that we can look into is bringing some essential oils in, right? We can illuminate some basic things that can help us stay engaged, like vetiver essential oil. It's used for grounding, calming and nervousness.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** We have just recently embraced nutmeg. We use that in our reflex integration protocols to support better sleep, promote digestion and heart health. When you say those three things together, it does make you think of the parasympathetic nervous system. That opposes the fight-or-flight, that which helps us stay calm and soothed, get restorative sleep, have a regular good homeostasis with a good heartbeat. All of this is part of what we're doing, trying to change that trajectory. You can also think about some activities for them to do. In the clinic, for example, we have these sensory swings. We actually ship them into the homes as well. They'll be stretchy types of material. The kids can crawl in there and really get some good input. It squeezes the body very in utero, giving that neurological system input that they are safe before they start to learn. So those are great ideas.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Like we've mentioned, we're going to put that in a nice downloadable PDF for you, so you can have these ideas that we're talking about today. You can print them out and put them on your refrigerator for easy reference. Make sure that you download it because it will have those pieces on there. That first step of calming and soothing the neurological system is really where we need to go first.

**Wendy Myers:** **I love that. I use essential oils with my daughter. I've got to get more on the music. I play some Rūfūs Du Sol music, but I need to play some Mozart.**

**Carol Garner-Houston:** I'm glad you brought that up, too. It's like, "Which one do I use?" We have different ones that can provoke or elicit a certain response, in our friends who are listening. The next stage of our process is once you have these comforting pieces, "How do you activate their brain before you ask them to learn"? Helping parents learn how to determine how to activate your child for the best state of learning, is based upon their observable behavior. In a sensory approach, there's basically two types of behaviors. There's the over responsive behavior or the hyper response, and then there is the under response or the hypo response.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Depending upon what your child is presenting with will determine which type of music you would choose or which type of activity to layer in, to help get the best input to the brain so they can get the most from your learning event. Let's look into those. What does it mean? What does a child look like if they're in an over responsive or hypersensitive state? Those friends are excessive movers. They're the ones who like to climb the ceilings. They can have excessive talking and lots of pressure when they're speaking. They can withdraw from touch. They can be very sensitive to the touch. If the child's in a stressed state or has some other disorganization, a light touch that can be soothing to me can be received by the brain as noxious and on some level painful, and they withdraw.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Of course, those are that hyperactive type of responses. They're quick to hit their siblings. They're prone to tantrums, aggression, emotional distress and just

an over responsiveness to what's happening around them. Again, energy is lost trying to maintain homeostasis. That's essentially giving you the idea of that type of presentation of a child's neurological system. Another one is considered the hypo. Those are the friends who are a little more on the draggy end. It's hard to get them up. They may be sleeping a lot. They may have poor body awareness. They may be clumsy. They may be the friends that when they're eating, they get food all over their face. They're talking to you and they just can't even register that that's still right there on their face. It gives you a clue that they're more hypo-responsive.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** It's important to understand this as a neurological state as opposed to a reflection of their character, for example. These types of friends can be considered lazy or a behavior problem, when actually they're just children and their behavior is a reflection of the state of the brain. Here's an opportunity to choose exercises and activities to pull that person, no matter where they're from, whether they're too high or too low, we can pull them into a "just right" state for learning.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** For the friends who are over responsive, we do grounding activities. We do heavy work and lifting. We're referencing something called the Wilbarger Protocol, which some friends may be familiar with, which is a brushing technique and joint compressions to all of the joints. When I do this type of deep pressure input to the joints with our friends, I mean, we can sit in a bean bag chair, and all I'm doing is going around their muscles and joints doing the input. It works like a sedative. It's a fantastic experiment to try. Their heads will start going this way, and their eyes will get heavy and I didn't give them a sedative. I didn't do anything like that. What I did was I fed their system, their neurological system, organizing and grounding input that they so needed and they lean into it when you're doing it.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Things like deep pressure and breathing exercises are also good for these friends. Slowly rocking in a rocking chair or over a therapy ball, giving them an opportunity to pound clay or an appropriate outlet for some of that energy, before you ask them to sit down to learn. That's a great way to get them to the "just right" level. For our hypo-responsive friends, the ones you're dragging, trying to get to come on, we want to do more alerting type activities. Things like Jumping on the trampoline, walking the dog, skipping, jumping jacks or contralateral jumps using both sides of the body and activating both sides of the brain, can really lift them and prepare them so you're not pulling at them when they're trying to learn.

**Wendy Myers:** There's active music, exciting music, I love Wholetones. They have a thing called Activa, it's music that has frequencies in it that gets you excited and energetic. It's really neat.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Yes and it's free on YouTube. That's how I learned about Wholetones. I would pull it up and I would set the tone in our clinic, when the families were coming. Wholetones was so fantastic because it does have that frequency. I'll be straightening up in the other room, and I just remember the feeling, the vibration of the music several rooms away from that Wholetones. You can feel a shift in your body. Why not use this perspective that I'm sharing with you today, to try and find what works in your environment to help cue your child's system that they're comforted and safe? Now we can activate and get ready to learn.

**Wendy Myers:** Yes, sound therapy is so powerful. You mentioned so many cool modalities, but sound therapy's great. Just music is sound therapy. All music has frequencies. Mozart has frequencies in it. That's why we like it, we're attracted to it. My daughter tends to do things like, if she's not doing something perfectly she gets overwhelmed and then wants to quit. I'm not like that at all but I'm doing this thing called biofield tuning with her, where I have this tuning fork and it helps to relax you. Whenever she's feeling really overwhelmed, we'll go do this tuning fork, and put it on her chest and it helps. It's sound therapy in a way. It tunes up your body's energy field and really works.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** I love it. You're building that brain-body connection for her. What I really like is you're saying, "Okay, yes stress or this is going to happen to us through our lives, but when it happens recognize what's happening in your body. We can talk about it, you and I together. We can try this process". It's getting her deeper in touch. As she begins to calm down, she can feel her heart rate. You can cue her to that. It's like a little biofeedback session, so I love that tool and all of this. It's a very exciting information exchange age. We're pulling all the greatest resources out there and getting them to our friends who need it in the home. It's really making all the difference, especially right now during this incredibly difficult and unusual time.

**Wendy Myers:** **Any children who had some issues before with learning, or ADHD or what have you, it's all amplified right now. What are some of the success stories that you've been having? You mentioned some of those when we were talking before recording, that you were having great success with kids making a lot of progress during this lockdown.**

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Yes, so for the friends who got into our program right when the quarantine was started, they got these tools that we ship to their home. We connect them with a therapist. We help them open the box and get into their listening program. Making these changes to the neurological system that we talked about today but on an incredibly deeper level with the use of these sound tools. We had a family of five start this, right before the news started to even talk about quarantine, they just jumped in with our program. First, we go in to comfort and soothe with

vagal regulation. We like to use a tool like the Safe and Sound Protocol, it is a good one, or we use the Alpha Stim to help soothe and comfort the system.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Then we go in and we can get into training the brain and building the connections for function. So this family of five came in, and they started doing the work. By the middle of about three weeks later, they are actually calling me saying, "I don't understand how we're going to come out of this quarantine with more neurological organization than they had when they went in." I'm talking about an older child who is incredibly carsick, who now can read in the car while in the passenger seat. We're talking about a child with emotional regulation issues that were just terrible and negative and he was just so stuck in this very limited development. We were able to break apart that. He's now got so much more connections in the brain, and this calm, soothing way about him that now he's able to see more of his aptitude. He's able to learn more and he's able to perform better in school.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** His little brother, who was not interested in reading in Pre K is now doing kindergarten work, and the family is just thrilled. It's absolutely possible. Change the trajectory you're in by knowing that you can change the brain and neurological system, that fight-or-flight state, by invoking some organizing input. This is how you get it done.

**Wendy Myers:** **I love this type of conversation and talking about all these different tools that parents can use. Too often, we have parents that have children that are having angry outbursts or don't have emotional control, they have ADHD. They take them to the doctor or they take them to a therapist and they're put on medications. That should not be a first choice or first line of tools that are used, you can do things to rewire the brain like you're doing. It makes me so sad that so many millions of children are medicated. Can you talk about that and how that potentially negatively caused the brain to not form properly, how that's impacting brain formation?**

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Yes and thank you for bringing it up, because it's a difficult circumstance. Unfortunately, there's just so many primary care physicians and so many people you don't know what to do with the children. When they verbalize their issues, the first thing they're offered is a pharmaceutical. There's a range now of pharmaceuticals that they can provide, and some of them are not stimulants, but the majority of them are. Parents don't really understand what a stimulant does. Actually, when you say a stimulant, they may think, "Oh, a mild stimulant." Actually, they're in the amphetamine type of arena. They're like, "Well, I don't know. He's struggling so much, this may help."

**Wendy Myers:** Or my doctor prescribed it. It must be totally safe.



**Carol Garner-Houston:** Right, medication is a compensatory strategy for a disorganized brain and neurological system. You can put that in there and it may improve some things for a week or two. But in general what we're finding is, eventually the effects wear off. They go back to the doctor. The doctor says, "Let's do more," and then, "Here, take this medication for the side effects of the more." In the end, they have not changed the brain or neurological system. They've just set up a process where the person is dependent upon an amphetamine to get the right cognitive level. You're right, that just doesn't make any logical sense. That's why I'm so glad you invited me because when people hear these podcasts, they just get so excited because they didn't even know this was an option. Not only is it an option, we're finding it is the best outcome that we've ever seen. We're walking friends out of diagnoses and with the partnership of their physician, off of medications when applicable.

**Wendy Myers:** My concern is that taking these stimulants and ADHD medications and other things, essentially they stimulate the frontal cortex and stop these compulsive behaviors and outbursts and things like that, but it's creating a nation of meth addicts, essentially.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Yes.

**Wendy Myers:** You're setting children up to be addicted to stimulants of all types. So it's incredibly concerning to me.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Many families though, are beginning to pick their heads up and look around, collect more information and are reaching out. This type of therapy that we do actually restores the central nervous system and builds connections where there aren't any. The individual doesn't have to look for external factors, external people or a pharmaceutical to make those changes to maintain their state. We've organized the system and that's the difference.

**Wendy Myers:** **Can you talk about any positives that you see that are coming from the lockdown?**

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Yes, actually a few of them are there. You have to look for them because none of us chose to be here. Now that we're here, we have lots of friends who are finding that because of homeschooling, they have less anxiety in general. When that happens, for those friends, that lets you know that the school environment, the brick and mortar and that routine that they were in, that treadmill, was adding a layer of stress to their neurological system. They were just working really hard to keep going because that's what we're all laying them up to do. Now, since we've been able to get more time and not as stressed with our schedules, they're finding that they're enjoying this online learning even if it's not the most robust.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** We're also finding people can get some IEP modifications during this time as well, when you had a school system that maybe wasn't listening to your child's needs in the brick and mortar. You just couldn't get anyone to pay attention or make changes to it. Families nationwide are finding that the school systems are a little more responsive these days. You had mentioned that your daughter only has one hour of schoolwork to do. Some people are finding that and then there's all these others who may be overwhelmed by the quantity of work they're being asked to produce. There's an opportunity to communicate with the school and get a modification to decrease that workload, especially if you have sensitivities to screens. It can produce eye strain and some children get so worked up that it adds an additional layer of difficulty to ask them to be in front of a screen to learn, so the schools are helping to modify how much time is spent behind the screen. They can print out things, do paper copies and send those in. It can really help give that break away from the screen because we're spending so much more screen time now with this more sedentary lifestyle, with us all being locked in. That really does have a negative impact on the neurological system.

**Wendy Myers:** **I was also concerned about the social aspect of not being in the social environment. Going to school is very much about learning about life and interacting with people, how to get along and how to deal with rejection and all of those things. That's not happening when a child is at home, essentially being home schooled. Do you see any negative impact from that?**

**Carol Garner-Houston:** I think it's going to be dependent on each person individually because say you're isolated from others, but what if that gave you the opportunity to engage on a deeper level with your primary caregiver? We just don't have any place to flee to anymore, and so we're finding a deeper intimacy and level when you provide that comforting and soothing as a caregiver. You can facilitate and foster that. You take an opportunity where maybe they're not able to visit with their friends as they'd like to but now you can get more one on one, as well. That's been a wonderful asset. Lots of parents are making arrangements where they can visit friends but stay outside or they can play on the field, but they're staying different spaces away. We're getting that engagement coming back, it's coming in there.

**Carol Garner-Houston:** I do think of that social piece, specifically in regards to the mask that is over their faces when we as a family and the children go out into that community again. Depending upon where you are, in our area we're already going to the grocery stores. There's more of us going and the shops are opening. More people are wearing masks. I'm usually glancing at faces and getting these cues of safety and engagement from others. Instead, my vision is blurred, and I'm searching to see, "Oh, is that person okay?" I just find it's this natural response and I look at their eyes. I found that when I'm walking through, I try to then

make eye contact, even with those masks on, and give them a smile with my eyes. Those are all things to think about to embrace that social engagement and keep that connection going.

**Wendy Myers:** I know it's tough for kids when they look at faces and are looking for how to feel. Should they be happy, or sad, or whatnot. They're not getting those cues. I do love the fact that my daughter is home more. I do love that we're interacting more and are getting closer, so that's really a wonderful benefit of her being home. I liked her going to school too, so I can have my adult time and my "me" time, so the grass is always greener, right?

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Yes.

**Wendy Myers:** **Carol, any closing thoughts on anything we haven't discussed so far?**

**Carol Garner-Houston:** Essentially it is that we can change the state that we're in. We can change the trajectory of this quarantine. We can change the trajectory of our development out of this circumstance by focusing on organizing the brain and feeding it what it needs, to feed our systems. Look for this opportunity because we may need to shave off some excessive things about our lifestyle that aren't available anymore. We have to do them in different ways. It may not feel good but that resiliency and that ability to bend and adjust is going to serve you not only now, but as you go forward.

**Wendy Myers:** Fantastic, Carol, thank you so much for joining us. My name is Wendy Myers of [myersdetox.com](http://myersdetox.com). Everyone, stay safe, and I'll talk to you next week.