



## **Transcript for “*Picture Books Help Us ‘See’ Differently*”**

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:00:00] Reach Out and Read where books build better brains. This is the Richard and Read podcast. I’m your host, doctor Dipesh Navsaria, a practicing pediatrician with degrees in public health and children’s librarianship. I’m a clinical professor of human development and Family studies at the School of Human Ecology, and a professor of pediatrics at the School of Medicine and Public Health, both at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. At Reach Out and Read, we dream of a world in which every child is read to every day. Our show explores how children and families flourish and thrive through a combination of individual well-being, confident parents, supportive communities, strong public health, and good policy. Join us here for thought provoking conversations on these issues with expert guests, authors, and leaders in the field of early childhood health and literacy. Research shows that reading physical books together brings the strongest benefits to children. That’s why we’re happy to have Boise Paper, a responsible paper manufacturer, as the founding sponsor of this podcast through their paper With Purpose Promise. Boise Paper looks for ways to make a difference in local communities. Thank you to Boise Paper for investing in our Reach Out and Read community. All children are unique, but just like adults, sometimes kids have a hard time accepting their own differences and the differences in others. But when a book hits just right, sometimes the simplest format a picture book can have the greatest impact on how we see ourselves and each other. Today, we’re talking about picture books that invite us to embrace curiosity, vulnerability, and a broader view of the world. Our guest is Barney Saltzberg. He’s published close to 50 picture books and travels the world talking about creativity and where ideas come from. His books have won numerous awards, including the Nappa Gold Awards, Publisher’s Weekly, and Kirkus Starred Reviews. Most recently, Melinda Gates chose Beautiful Oops as one of the top three books every child should read. Barney, welcome to the show.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:02:04] Nice to be here. Hi.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:02:07] So you’re a prolific author and illustrator. And in addition to your fantastic picture books, what recently caught our eye was an article that you wrote in the New York Times on three picture books about eyeglasses. Tell us how you came to this idea of writing about eyeglasses in picture books.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:02:24] It was quite an honor. Um, with the irony of it was about, I think, the Sunday before I was reading the Children's Book Review in the New York Times, thinking, these people are so eloquent with in how they speak and write, and I wonder how they get this gig. I mean, who who, you know, how do you do this? And literally two days later, I got an email from the New York Times asking me if I wanted to review three books, all dealing with picture books, dealing with glasses classes based on the fact that I had a book called Arlo Needs Glasses. Have that book. And I said, look, I'm honored, but I've never done this before. If you're willing to bop things back and forth, I'd love to give it a shot. And it was really a wonderful experience.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:03:11] Excellent. Yeah. You know, it's eyeglasses are particularly interesting because often when I'm working with students and we talk about disabilities, right. I often point out that, you know, gee, looking around this room, there's at least ten of us that have a disability that we might not think of as one. And usually there's some bright person who, after thinking for a few moments, goes, oh. Glasses, I say, right, it's so common, right, that people are nearsighted or farsighted or whatever, that we don't think about it that way. And it helps reframe how they're thinking about glasses and disability and so on.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:03:50] Absolutely.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:03:51] So you wrote about three books. Can you tell us just a little bit about each of them, as well as about the one of your own that you mentioned?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:03:59] Well, Arlo needs glasses. The funny thing about Arlo needs glasses is I had a goldendoodle probably ten years ago before they were the flavor of the month, and he was this massive dog who looked a lot like a stuffed animal and had about the IQ of a stuffed animal. But he was really cute. And his name was Arlo, and he was £85 and white. I mean, I would be stopped on the street and people would photograph him, and I'd never met a dog. I've always grown up with dogs and been a dog person, and this was the first dog I'd ever had that couldn't catch a ball. And it was funny and sad all in the same breath. I mean, it would literally bounce off of his nose or go over his head. He just didn't have it. And every once in a while it would land in his mouth. But I would always think he was yawning or something. And I was working with an editor who went on to write the book wonder. Uh, R.J. Polacco. And she was my editor on oops. And we would always have lunch in New York, and I would always be doing the rounds because I live in California meeting with other editors. And she goes, what's in your bag? And I said, it's not for you. It's a picture book, because she only was doing, um, novelty books.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:05:11] And she finally convinced me to open up my bag. And I showed her this book, dummy of this story about a dog who couldn't catch a ball. I think at the time I

called it, I don't even remember. It wasn't Arlo news glasses Arlo can't catch. And she said, oh my goodness, we're making this into a pop up book. And I said, I don't see it. And she said, oh yes, it's going to be, you know, great, we're going to have cardboard glasses in it. And she spent about six months convincing me, and I finally agreed. And it came out as a pop up book, and it was really cute. And kids would put on these glasses. And then it got to a point that it was so expensive to make it that they decided that they were going to stop printing it. And it was a sad day. But it happens in every book's life, for the most part. And one day they called up and said, we'd like to reprint this book as a flat book. And I had a lot of misgivings about it because I loved the bells and whistles that it had, but I kind of had to put that on the side and go, this is a story that will resonate with any child who needs to wear glasses, is about to get glasses, and there is an audience for it, even if they don't know about all the fun little, you know, additional things that aren't there any longer.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:06:29] So it's only been out for a short time that way. So that sort of gave me the street cred to be the children's book author illustrator that they asked to come in and you put me on the spot because I know the names of two of the books, and I don't know that I know the third. Um, the first one, um, Leo Timmers, who I actually have now become friends with since on Instagram, since I reviewed his book Bears Lost Glasses, and it was a story that, you know, I grew up in an era when we watched Mr. Magoo, who I know that a lot of young kids would know who that is anymore, but even young parents. But he was always, you know, very nearsighted and Miss Mystic, a lot of things that he was saying. And it was funny. And I guess we were probably politically incorrect now, but this just felt like a kids version of that with a bear who was mistaking things he was seeing on his way to find his glasses, and when he ultimately put on his glasses and didn't see any of these exciting things that he had seen, he assumed his glasses were broken. And I think the beauty of it is it plays to the intelligence of the children who are hearing this story, that they'll get the joke right.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:07:41] They'll get that what's going on. And I love that that humor is appreciated by my kids. Yeah. Um, yeah. The other one is Leo. Leo. It was, um, Charlie's eyeglasses. Yeah, yeah, that one was beautiful and sweet. And what was really amazing was it's a story about a boy who's got a. He's tiny. And it had a really interesting introduction that pulled me into wanting to know what was going to happen to him. And he had a crush on a girl in his school who never saw him. She just did not notice him, and he did everything he could, literally standing on his head to get her attention. And she never noticed. And, um, she announces that she's getting glasses and this becomes a very big deal in the class, and he decides that this is great news because now that she'll have glasses, she'll finally see him. And when she comes to school the next day with glasses, he's just sure this is it. And she continues to walk by, oblivious that he exists. Sure. And he decides maybe he needs glasses, because maybe if he got them, everybody would talk about him and he'd be noticed. And he

goes and he rummages through the drawers and finds odd glasses, and there is a little odd disconnect. Somehow he ends up at the ophthalmologist and he shows up with glasses.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:08:54] He needs them, in fact. And she still doesn't notice him. But what he does notice for the first time is that there's a little girl walking next to her that he's missed, and she's very responsive to him. And as the reader, you go back to the beginning of the book and you go, oh my gosh, I didn't see her either. So that was a kind of a fun, nice, fun little, you know, touch for the book. And the last one was, um, George Washington's spectacular spectacles. And it was a historical story, and I had no knowledge of it, but it was really interesting to read a book and find out that George Washington was self-conscious about wearing glasses before he was president. He just wasn't comfortable. And there was a crisis, and he needed to read a speech to calm things down. And he was trying to just paraphrase what he'd written, and it was falling on deaf ears, and he finally donned his glasses and said, you know, this is the war's been taking a toll on me. And look at me now. I need glasses. And everybody was kind of rose and supported him after they heard him and saw what he was going through, and it was just an interesting story. I'm not doing it quite justice, but find it. It's Washington spectacular spectacles.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:10:05] Excellent.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:10:06] They were fun.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:10:07] Yes, yes, it it's it strikes me that it's not even so much about the glasses. I mean that they're they're important and. All right. But it's also about like, emotions, right. About being self-conscious about how people think about you, you know? And you wrote your first book back in 1981, right? Uh, it must have been the wind. Um, how how has the landscape changed for publishing in terms of talking about emotions in picture books?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:10:36] Well, it's changed as the world has. And one of the big differences is someone who has been publishing since then is I used to be able to walk into a publisher and meet people. Now you have to, you know, you can't do that. And the proliferation of people, you know, trying to write children's books, thinking this is their ticket. It's harder. It's harder to get get seen. Um, you know, you don't walk in off the street anymore, and, um, I don't know, I think I don't know, there's Ursula Nordstrom was the grandmother of our godmother of, of the modern picture book. And she, um, had Harper, which was Harper and Row at the time, and, um, had an early childhood background and really, um, understood kids and what, what she understood as to what kinds of books they went from the very just pedantic stories for children to stories that, like some of the people that worked with her. Charlotte Zolotov, who then became a publisher herself, wrote a book, William's Doll. You

know, about a boy wanting a doll, which, when it came out, was so controversial. When I got to Harper, Charlotte was running Harper and Row. I got to meet her. She bought my first book. Wow. You know, it was this legacy from Ursula. But I think there was a lot of books that really catered to the feelings of children in a way that were noticeably different from things that had happened before. And I think that's sort of been a through line to where we are today. But I think there's also been a lot of books. I always think of Susan Verde and Peter Peter Reynolds. They sort of had this market of books. I am yoga and I am, you know, me and books that are more almost like self-help books for kids. In a way. They've almost created a new genre, and I feel like there's a lot of room now to get messages to kids in a different way than it used to be.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:12:38] Yeah, kind of that internal dialogue and speaking to that and honoring that. Sure, sure. Yeah. Vulnerability is a challenging emotion. I mean, irrespective of your age, right. You have to admit that there's actually a problem and then hope that people are going to not make fun of you if you tell them. And then hope, hope that they'll help you in different ways. Um, how do children express vulnerability and how can adults encourage children to be vulnerable?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:13:07] That was the key. The key, you know, for so many things, not just vulnerability. How adults model. You know, I don't know that all adults are aware of how much children absorb from just being around adults. I wrote a book many years ago called Crazy Hair Day, and it was about a hamster named Stanley Bernbaum who was going to school for his first ever crazy hair day and how excited he was. They had had twin day and 60s day, and his favorite day was, well, his favorite day was Twin Day because he and his best friend, Larry Finch feather their all bird names had worn the same thing. And when he comes to school, he's a little late and he hears his teacher say, and remember, Crazy Hair Day is next Friday. Just as he walks in and everyone laughs at him and he's mortified and runs and hides in the bathroom. And I've had more adults say, oh, that's my nightmare of showing up at work without my pants. And you know, I think it's a common thread, no matter how old we are, that we're going to be embarrassed. Sure. And how we choose to support each other is really how those things are worked out. And as a writer and an illustrator, it's always been important for me to find a way to have the kids deal with it so that adults not telling them how to solve this problem, but an adult in a situation like that, can nurture and encourage. So his best friend who has teased him in this story, is told by his teacher that he needs to be a peacemaker instead of a troublemaker, and find a way to bring Stanley back to class.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:14:44] Got it.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:14:44] So they work it out, and I love having children come to those decisions together. And that in turn models for kids that I can problem solve with my friends,

too. Sure, sure. Um, and it's just how they handle it. But I think everyone can relate to, um, some sort of shame to hear that George Washington felt funny wearing glasses in public. To think that you showed up on the wrong day looking different than everyone else. Those really expose vulnerabilities in a large way, and I find that those are the stories that I've written that kids connect with and adults, because we've all had our own versions of those experiences. And I think it's really comforting to find out that we're not alone. That's a great message. Whether in any medium you're working in. And to find, what a wonderful editor, Andrea Cascardi, who became an agent, used to say to me, try to avoid sitcom endings. You know, it doesn't all have to be perfect at the end, make it believable and make us care enough about this character that when they do experience whatever this this vulnerability is going to be or whatever their situation is, that we want to find out how they've solved their problem. And it's always in the inner workings of writing these stories.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:16:03] And then, of course, there's the example of those who just lean into the the vulnerability and say, whatever, I don't care what you think, which might be those of us who are bow tie wearers. So there you go.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:16:16] Yeah, I wasn't that kid. My wife was. That was that kid, you know, and I think that was part of our my attraction to her that she just didn't care. And that's and that's, you know, an interesting, uh, set up for an interesting story to have two characters who have those polar opposite approaches.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:16:33] There you go.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:16:34] So you gave me an idea for a book.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:16:35] There you go. Awesome. I look forward to it. Yeah, there's a great quote out there that a bow tie is a way of, uh, as a as an aggressive way of communicating, a lack of caring about what other people think. So there you go. See? That's interesting.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:16:48] I think it just shows that it's different. You know, one is different, you know, and it's funny, I had done a book that didn't ever sell, and the teacher did wear bow ties. And what I loved about them. And I guess you could do that with any tie, but I always had the holidays on his tie. Oh, yeah. They would reflect whatever was going on. Yeah, yeah.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:17:06] I have a few of those.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:17:07] Yeah, yeah, I'm sure, I'm sure.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:17:10] So, um, speaking of, we were talking about, uh, vulnerability and all and also admitting when you've made a mistake and all. You have a recent book that I mentioned earlier. Beautiful. Oops. Can you talk to us about that?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:17:24] Well, it's actually what I love that you called it recent. It came out in 2010, but it's the only book I've ever written that actually goes up in sales every year. I have a PowerPoint keynote on my iPad that I used to use as a slide presentation, and now it's digital. And in that I show a couple of things that happened in my daily life. One, I spilled a cup of coffee on a sketchbook and I, you know, kids can relate to it. It was this great sketchbook, and now there's this brown stain on it. And how many of you would want a new one? And everybody would raise their hand and it's like, okay, you can't always do that. So I still have it. And rather than just keep it as a brown stain, I took out a Sharpie and I drew a coffee blob monster on the dried stain. And then the coffee had leaked under the book, and there became the profile of a gorilla head. And I traced that. And that was in my PowerPoint. And then in this studio where I'm talking to you from where it was reconfigured in those days, my son locked a dog in here by mistake, and I had been working on a collage for a book called *The Flying Garbanzos*, and it's a circus family. It was a some really intricate work cutting and gluing and using X-Acto knives. I used to say to my wife, if my career doesn't work out as a children's book illustrator, I can be a brain surgeon. Given my hand on this, and my son left the dog in here, and the dog was miserable and climbed up onto my desk in an effort to get out of the window. And when I came in, the dog was still there and it was a giant lab. It wasn't like a tiny little dog. There were these paw prints all over my picture, and I could not erase them. And I was determined not to start over because there was so much work involved.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:19:00] See, I was thinking you were going to tell me that the dog ate the point. The drawings. Okay. Oh, no no no no no. That would be what my dog would do.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:19:08] My brain is the dog. Finished the book for me? Um. I realized that I could use acrylic paint and cover each paw print and make clouds so that even the composition of the picture was different because of what the dog had done. So I show those images in my presentations. And there became a very common theme after I spoke from teachers saying, can you teach how you fix your mistakes? And my wife, when I was working on it, said, mistakes is such a harsh word, an unforgiving word. Oops is more gentle. And she was right. I had a book dummy sitting in here and had the good fortune of meeting Jamie Lee Curtis, and she came here and she was looking at this book, and she was squeezing my leg on the couch going, this book is going to change your life. And I mentioned it to my agent, my editor, rather, and she said, I have two questions. One, would she write a blurb on the book? And two, would she be my best friend? And I said, I don't know about her being your best

friend, but I'll ask her. And in 30s, she texted me the most beautiful little blurb that's on the cover of that book. And I do believe that it gave the book some visibility that it might not have otherwise gotten had she not put her touch on it. And I don't know if you know. But many years later, we ended up doing a book together based on our texts. She would text me photographs and I would draw on them and send them back. And we've been doing it for the past ten years since that book came out.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:20:37] But the real question is, but did they end up best friends?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:20:41] I don't think so. But I think she did publish a book with Jamie.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:20:45] Excellent. Um, the beautiful thing.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:20:48] And having done as many books as I've done, and kids always say, what's your favorite story? I bring up Crazy Hair Day as a story that has a soul to me and resonates. But as far as just a book that has had the most impact, beautiful oops has. I mean, I get letters on Instagram daily and it's again a 15 year old book. It's, um, that's marvelous. And it doesn't happen very often. But I do see that, um, I'm now doing a lot of workshops for adults on beautiful oops or I'll meet with either educators. I met with cognitively impaired seniors in Santa Monica recently, where I'll do a huge art workshop with them and have them make oops art, because I really want people to play, and I really want parents to play and model that for their children, that they see you willing to make an oops, a mistake and not melt down about it. It telegraphs a way for them to feel vulnerable in a safe place, like, yeah, I don't know what I'm going to do here either, but I'm just going to go for it as opposed to I'm not going to touch the paper, I'm not going to draw. And I feel like it's a great starter for people to make their own creations. And it continues.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:22:08] Indeed. Indeed. That does sound like great workshops.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:22:12] So yeah, it's fun. It's really fun.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:22:13] So a few years ago, the US State Department, of all things, sent you on a creativity mission to I think China and Russia so well. One did you travel with official diplomatic immunity, but two can you talk to us about what you did there?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:22:31] This is a longer interview but the first one was to China. I did 14 days in China and, um, uh, it was remarkable. It was during it was the weekend of the Fukushima meltdown, and it was during Arab Spring. So there was a lot of tension for many reasons. And I was given an official minder to follow me everywhere I went. And she listened to my talks. And after three days of posing with me for pictures and enjoying what I was



talking to these kids about, oops, had just come out. And I do wonder if the State Department consciously sent me because of that book. Because the message of that book is when you think you've made a mistake, you can fix it.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:23:13] Sure.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:23:14] And three days into my talk, she blocked one of my talks. She said, it's not appropriate for for me to be addressing Chinese students. She was worried about it and it was a big kerfuffle. And ultimately I was allowed to continue. But flash forward to nine years later. They printed the book in Chinese and invited me back. So I think things have changed over there a bit. Russia was was daunting. Um, but it was remarkable. And and it's it's sort of, I think, cliché to say it, but kids are kids and and they responded lovely. And my favorite memory of Russia was being in Samara, where the Sputnik was made, and speaking to a whole room of eighth graders on a stage. And I was asked to stay up on the stage after I finished addressing them. And they had a present for me, and they stood with their arms around each other in a line and sang John Denver's Country Road to Me, and I cried on the stage. It was so moving and beautiful and to see with all the differences that we hear about all the time, that music and literature could connect us in a way. And the kids were completely open to me being there. It was beautiful. So I think I got as much out, if not more, than the kids I got to meet along the way.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:24:34] Sure. Yeah. You know, as you just said, you know, kids are kids, and I think there's so many universal connections. Do you think there's differences in that? You noted in, at least in China and Russia, in terms of how the adults treat creativity in children, in terms of what should or shouldn't be encouraged?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:24:52] Well, you know. I can't speak to it now because it's been a while. I did go right before the hike in 2019 again, you know, I know that what I do is not what most kids see being modeled. You know, I play with kids. If I'm at a party, I'm with the kids or the dogs or both. Um, to see an adult still be silly. That is not something that a lot of cultures, including ours, really embrace. You know, there's a place for it, but not, you know, don't play with your food. Well, yeah, play with your food. It's okay. Um, I think that the concept what I, what I was really seeing in China when I first came in was and I went many cities and I was speaking at universities, public libraries, elementary schools, high schools, a wide variety of different environments. I would always ask for a volunteer to write their name in Chinese on the dry erase board, and everybody volunteered for that. And I didn't have to tell him what the what it was going to be. But I needed a volunteer. And everybody's hand went up and I would look at a name that was now written in Chinese and think, why did I why did I start this? And then I would take the dry erase and turn each character into a character. So there

would be a dinosaur, a gorilla and a banana, whatever. And they would clap politely. And then I would say, who wants to help me make up a story? And no 1 in 14 days raised their hand.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:26:19] Because it's not being taught to improvise. It's being taught to repeat. And that's why I was so happy to see them nine years later by the book and print it in Chinese, because maybe there's been some realization that we need to actually teach our people creative problem solving.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:26:39] Yeah.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:26:39] And don't get me started on our education system, especially today. Um, but I feel like we need to teach our children problem solving and creative thinking and, um, not to just memorize and repeat back. And I feel like that's a needed element in anyone's education, wherever you are.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:27:02] Yeah. I have the privilege of teaching at several different levels in higher education, and I'm currently in the middle of teaching my undergraduate class, and sometimes it's a little challenging, um, that it's like around paper writing, right? Like, well, what's the requirements or what's the thing that I need to the rubric. Right. And I'm like, I just want you to explore and enjoy this topic. And that seems to be a challenge because I think of what they're told in many other classes. So, yeah, if any of my students are listening to this, hi, we love you. But yeah.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:27:38] I used to, I used.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:27:39] To I know we're about out of time, but as a parent, we used to we I grew up this way and I started off until I was corrected by someone who used to be, eat your vegetables and then you can have dessert. And I equate the same thing about read for 20 minutes, and then you can play a game or watch TV. It's like that sets up an attitude that there's.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:28:02] This.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:28:02] Isn't really good for me. I just have to do it. And if you can kind of flip that and make it, if they see you read, if they see you enjoying it. It's not a chore and I feel like we need more people having books. Always.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:28:16] Always, always. Sure.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:28:18] Two more questions. Your latest book, Just a Banana, which I'm brandishing on the screen at you here.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:28:23] Yes. You have one too.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:28:24] Yes, it's delightful. And it really encourages people to just look at things in different ways. Can you tell us a bit about the process of how you came up with this. Is my brain in a book?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:28:37] I mean, it's really it is. And it's you know, Workman did this. It's the same size and format as oops, let's just just gatefolds they call them the flaps and really nice thick paper. But yeah, I'm always I it's what I do and I photograph things and draw on them. And I had had a pullout in a book I was working on that just had me said, don't forget to play. And it was all bananas. And my wonderful editor at Workman said, can you just do a banana book? And I thought, sure, and this is it.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:29:07] Indeed. Indeed. It's just I read it just before we recorded and, uh. Yeah, just it's silly.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:29:16] It's silly, but I had the pleasure of reading it to a lot of kindergarteners in Wyoming last week and was pleased to see that they liked it. So that's always the seal of approval. If kids are laughing at something like that, they're supposed to be laughing at.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:29:31] Yeah, indeed. And if I could ask, what are you working on next?

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:29:35] Um, I have a book that I'm doing called Rabbit's Feet.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:29:39] And It's feet, which is already confusing for children, and it's sort of, uh, waiting for Godot for children. It's about a boulder and a cactus who want to be closer in the desert to each other. And a rabbit who overhears this conversation and decides to help. Don't know where it came from, but it does teach doing the right thing without getting any credit for it. Because it's the right thing to do, and I feel like it's the right moment for a book like that. And it comes out in the spring.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:30:06] Excellent. I cannot wait to read it.

**Barney Saltzberg:** [00:30:09] Thanks, thanks. Thanks for taking the time.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:30:12] Indeed. Welcome to today's 33rd page or something extra for you, our listeners. Today in our interview, we touched on wearing glasses and how kids might feel about needing to wear glasses. I came across this article written a few years ago in GQ of All Things by Drew Magary, talking about his own childhood and how embarrassed he was to wear glasses and all the baggage that came with that. And then he writes from the perspective of him as an adult and his own child. Thus, when I got news decades later that my own son needed glasses, I did what any sane parent would do. I projected all of my childhood hangups onto him, and grew deathly certain that wearing glasses would work out the exact way for the boy, as it did for me. I saw his future so clearly. Him crying all the way to the optometrist. Him picking the most expensive frames in the joint and then never wearing them. Him breaking them within a millisecond, or even trading them for a mini koosh ball keychain. Him shooting his lenses out with a Red Ryder BB gun and him hearing endless corrosive taunts of four eyes. What does that even really mean? I saw it all. Even now at 42. I wear contacts most of the time and remain slightly more self-conscious walking around in regular glasses because I irrationally feel like an effing dork with them on like a mean librarian. But one of the pleasures of having children is discovering that they do not always, and in fact, rarely, need to, trail in your exact footsteps. The boy was jazzed to get glasses.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:31:50] This is because he's seven and seven year olds love it when you buy them stuff, but also because he said he knew he had problems seeing the eye chart during his school exam he wanted to see. This is the correct way to feel. And my son didn't have all the baggage of 1985 getting in the way of that desire. There's also the wonderful fact that glasses are now cheaper in years past, and thanks to a certain store that I'll refer to as Warby Parker in the space, along with even more affordable online outlets that sell soup to nuts glasses for so cheap. I'm genuinely suspicious of their wares, but at least you can get a functional pair for less than the standard \$800 that big lens tries to charge. The dead in me approves wholeheartedly. Anyway, the boy goes with my wife to Barbie, picks out a pair of black frames for under \$100. They arrive a few days later. He tries them on. They work. He can see he actually smiles when I take a photo with them on. When he takes the frames off, he tucks them back into his case carefully. Not like how I throw mine at a hatstand when I'm done seeing for the day. He takes them to school the next day, wearing them only when class starts and comes back saying he liked them. He did not break them. He did not trade them for gum. It's a miracle for now. So now it's my turn to see things a bit more clearly. I see the boy shooting his hand up more readily.

**Dr. Dipesh Navsaria:** [00:33:10] To answer a teacher's question, I see him in a lab, pouring glowing liquids from one beaker to another to create a cure for leprosy. I see him walking outside in his new specs, looking at like birds that never caught his blurry eyes before. I see far later than I should have that just because he and I share blood. That doesn't mean we have to share fates. It's an important reminder that sometimes how we adults react is not

necessarily how kids will, and we should be thinking about them. And that's today's 33rd page. You've been listening to the Reach Out and Read podcast. Reach Out and Read is a nonprofit organization that is the authoritative national voice for the positive effects of reading daily and supports coaches and celebrates engaging in those language rich activities with young children. We're continually inspired by stories that encourage language literacy and early relational health. Visit us at [reachoutandread.org/podcast](https://reachoutandread.org/podcast) to find out more. And don't forget to subscribe to our show wherever you listen to your podcasts. If you like what you hear, please leave us a review. Your feedback helps grow our podcast community and tells others that this podcast is worth listening to. Our show is a production of Reach Out and Read. Our producer is Jill Ruby. Lori Brooks is our national senior director of external Affairs. Thank you to our founding sponsor, Boise Paper, for making a difference in local communities like ours. I'm your host, Doctor Dipesh Navsari. I look forward to spending time with you soon. And remember, books build better brains.