

Interview of Roberto and Emily Lujano by Pam Laricchia

The following is a lightly edited transcript from Pam Laricchia's interview of my wife and I on her podcast, "[Exploring Unschooling](#)" in the Winter of 2016.

PAM: Hi everyone! I'm Pam Laricchia from livingjoyfully.ca and today I am here with Roberto and Emily Lujano how are you guys?

ROBERTO: We are doing well, thank you.

PAM: A short introduction. A few months ago Roberto approached me about translating my book *Free To Learn* into Spanish. We chatted about how we each saw the project, we worked out a plan we were both very happy with and he got to work. I really enjoyed working with him. We had e-mails back and forth and questions and it was really fun so I wanted to chat with him to learn more about his unschooling experience and his wife Emily has agreed to join us.

To get started can you guys share with us a bit about you and your family and how you came to unschooling.

EMILY: We are a family of five. We have Max who just turned eight in September, Archie who is about five and a half his birthday is in spring, and then Clementine is two—she just turned two in September—they were all born at home.

When Roberto and I were talking about it, I guess the homebirth is kind of where it all started. (Uh oh, I think something came unplugged, sorry, Clementine threw a ball and it hit the wires.) I wanted homebirth because I wanted, well I guess I never liked the idea of having a birth in a hospital. Seemed so cold, you know, I always kind of thought it sounded awful to have a bunch of strangers around and people going in and out. It seemed like such

an intimate experience to me and it did not seem to feel like that a lot in a hospital. I guess I have always been one to sort of question authority too or have a little bit of an issue with authority, so you know I do not, usually in the medical field you got to do what they tell you sort of a think and I did not want that so. At first Roberto was a little skeptical about it.

ROBERTO: Yes.

EMILY: Yes, it kind of scared him. When I first brought it up he was like oh no, what crazy idea do you have. **He had just started listening to some philosophy show (an online philosophy show) and I guess the guy had talked a lot about substituting fear with curiosity. So, he started being more curious about home birth and the more he looked into it he was like, "Oh yes we can not go to a hospital we got to do this at home."**

So he was fully on board, but sorry, long story short we were not here to talk about homebirth but my midwife, she is just this wonderful lady. And when we started going to see her she would ask us (when Max was born we did not know he was going to be a boy, because we did not want to find out) but she would ask about circumcision she was very much against that. She was not pushy but she would ask questions and wanted to see what we thought about it and then recommend us you know, information or things. She did not circumcise her son.

We also started looking into vaccines and she did not vaccinate hers and we did not want to vaccinate ours and she was also a homeschooler so. Just with reading and with the homebirth all of them were nursed (like Clementine right now is fussing because she wants to nurse it is like her favorite thing to do).

You know just the sort of all the decisions from infancy were about having a stronger bond with our children. Which we did not really get and something that we wanted and it seemed to all sort of, one thing lead to another, you know we wanted to have a bond and we wanted the homebirth and the babies to nurse and to nurse for extended nursing. We knew we did not want to spank our kids like we were spanked. But just having the bond as a priority. When Max was a baby we knew we wanted to homeschool because we did not want our kid being raised by somebody else you know, being away from us so many hours of the day.

We also had gone to some like meet-ups at my midwife's office after we had had Max just to you know hang around like minded parents. When I became a mother the first time I was really lonely. Roberto was still working full time. I did not really, I was just here all day with an infant. That was when we joined the meet-up, it was a way to get out and connect. My midwife was giving away some old books that she had, she had her own little library where people could borrow she had a lot of parenting books. One of the books she was giving away was *Summerhill* by A. S. Neil.

PAM: Oh yeah, I know that book, that is a cool one to get.

EMILY: It was kind of random and it kind of led us to John Holt. But also, just the type of parenting, like I said, the wanting to have a bond and have a REAL relationship with our kids that we never had with our own parents.

Unschooling made so much sense more specifically I guess, radical unschooling because you get to a point where you realize that where there is any sort of control there is no relationship. You cannot have a bond if you do not have a relationship. You cannot have a connection, a relationship is a connection, you know, they go hand in hand. Where there is control there just is no connection, there just is no relationship.

In any parent/child, husband/wife you know partners in anyway with control you can not have an open honest, trusting connecting relationship. We kind of went, we were really sold on the radical unschooling idea. Probably around the time that Max was about three or four we were getting into that.

ROBERTO: Because we saw the possibilities. Because I remember when she came to me and said "Oh, I am going to have my baby at home," I only knew that you had the babies at the hospital anything else was crazy. My parents found out they said that was crazy you should have it at the hospital.

For once I realized about the process about how homebirth made sense. And I started questioning myself, what else is out there that we do not know. And with that came the vaccination and circumcision and all that. **Not just saying, "Oh I do not want to do this," but really investigating and reading about a topic** and realizing that well circumcision is not necessary and well

vaccinations are more dangerous than people might think. It was just observation and just learning process that took us from one thing to the other, until we got to unschooling.

Because then we started questioning, okay we want to homeschool but what else is out there what can we do. And then we found unschooling and then we wanted to know more about unschooling and we found this conference in New Hampshire in was it 2013? Yes.

EMILY: Yes, Archie turned two while we were there it was in April.

ROBERTO: It was radical unschoolers and I remember getting over there (we drove over there) so it was about 1200 miles by car.

EMILY: From Atlanta.

ROBERTO: Yes. Georgia, we live in Georgia it took awhile. But I remember getting there and feeling so at home you know. Feeling like I arrived to a place that I wanted to be and everybody was like, you could feel it, the connection with everybody. I felt like this is the place.

EMILY: A sense of belonging.

ROBERTO: Yes.

EMILY: Before that point it was like we felt just opposition with anybody that was around us. Or just people feeding into our own fears. When you go to these sort of unschooling conferences you do not get that which is really nice.

PAM: I know I ended up driving from Ontario down to South Carolina to go to our first conference because yes, I just needed to see people face to face who were living this way.

EMILY: They do not make you feel like an alien. Or too idealistic or whatever people say. **I was telling Roberto the other day, when he was talking about all the things we just got this sort of snowball we just started questioning everything it sort of started with home birth but it was like—I was telling him the other day—it was like we started this own sort of like radical revolution in all our lives in our own family. Like we just started realizing all the ways that other people make decisions for us and we allow that. Or,**

let the status quo run our lives. Rather than really critically thinking about everything we do and why and really making a decision just for ourselves you know, and not anyone else and wanting to have that example for our kids, to decide things for themselves and not for anybody else.

PAM: That is funny because what I was going to say was the same thing. I loved what Roberto was saying about when you start questioning everything and the point is not, as you said there too, Emily, it is not to make the opposite choice, it is the critical thinking piece, right? It is the investigating and seeing what really makes sense for you and following that. And how you are modeling living that with your children and helping them to pick up those skills.

Can you give us a little bit of an update on what your kids are enjoying at the moment? I love to hear what unschooling kids are up to.

EMILY: Archie and Max are both a lot into watching YouTubers and Max is really into to a game, well no, he watches like videos and YouTubers playing it is called Five Nights at Freddy's or they also call it FNAF. He got really into that. We still have a bunch of drawings that Roberto did for Max's birthday in September. There is still like these huge like posters he made they are all over the walls. They are all the different characters from that online game. They get into watching YouTubers play those games but then that leads to watching them play other games and then some of the games they try themselves.

ROBERTO: Max got into doing the game but in real life.

EMILY: Oh yes, we play it in the house a lot of times.

ROBERTO: We turn the lights off. We use the flashlight.

EMILY: And make the house all scary.

ROBERTO: We play Five Nights on Friday nights it is really scary. He has some moves and screeches and sound affects that scare me. I know it is just acting and it is just Max, but he does scare me.

EMILY: Yes, he gets really into it and gets us into it. He pretends to be the different animatronic you know, characters that are like coming for you. He was really into Minecraft before that. Very much into Minecraft, usually playing and building like crazy, but also YouTubers that he likes to watch.

ROBERTO: Also a video game called Little Big Planet.

EMILY: Little Big Planet. We have a PlayStation he is really into Little Big Planet. It is a very creative game. He likes games where he can make his own costumes and create levels and things like that. So, he does a lot of that and he has a lot of apps and games on his phone that he likes to play. He has always liked reading. He likes comic books a lot, different kinds, he just look at all the different kinds if we go to a bookstore or library and pick out ones that he likes and reads them.

ROBERTO: When it comes to reading he likes the books that have like illustrations, like the comics. Or graphic novels, I think are his favorite.

EMILY: Archie is also very into watching things online and stuff and he plays Little Big Planet too and he has recently gotten really into Minecraft. He liked it when Max played it but he has gotten more into it now. He plays it by himself.

ROBERTO: He is into trains.

EMILY: Yes, has always been very into trains. Yes. He has been collecting all the Thomas trains for years now. He has tons of the wooden ones and then track master ones which are like battery powered.

ROBERTO: He can tell you which one is which just by looking at their faces.

EMILY: He can name all of them. You could hide every part of the train and just the face and he would, and there are hundreds of them. I mean it is incredible, they come out with new characters you know, more to buy.

ROBERTO: He will basically work for trains. (laughs)

EMILY: Yes. Yes, he is very into them. They love just climbing and jumping.

ROBERTO: Jumping on the beds. (laughs)

EMILY: A lot of times they'll will just take a break from sitting in front of their computers or games for hours and just go jumping on the bed or running around the house or playing, like Roberto said, we recreate the games in real life. And Archie and I sometimes we ride bikes together, you know. We try to go out some to.

Max lately, well for about a year he was like really not wanting to get out, just wanting to stay home and...well that goes to a different subject of Roberto and I having to deschool. We are still struggling with that, we have been doing it for years. (laughs) Probably about four years or so since we have first been getting into the unschooling it is something we are still working on. But that was hard, we have been struggling for a year when Max did not want to get out.

It is always hard when you are in all these different sort of homeschool groups where they have all the different fieldtrips and things going on and you feel like you are doing something wrong you know, when your kids do not want to do any of the what you think are really fun activities and learning experiences and they are just are for about a year so they haven't been into doing any of that very much. I get all worried because that is what I do. (laughs) I am trying to talk myself off that ledge over and over.

PAM: I love that "substitute fear with curiosity." That gets you asking questions, I wonder why, I wonder why.

EMILY: I try to remind myself that a lot. So, Clementine she is also into trains like her brother Archie. She always wants to play with him with the trains. A lot of times that creates a bit of a conflict but yes she loves them, she really likes the trains and the cars. She likes to paint and draw and she likes to be read to. Max liked to paint when he was Clementine's age a lot too he would always want to paint. She has just gotten into that and she loves to be outside. Max did too when he was this age. Archie too.

That was Archie when it was spring and summer still he would go

outside and collect worms. He would just like to go out and dig in the dirt and collect worms. He was definitely more outdoorsy, he will go outside with me and do stuff. So Clementine loves to be outside, she loves to go out. I think also because she is the youngest we try to be going out and doing things regularly outside with the boys, so from the time she was born basically she is used to going out and doing things.

Especially because Roberto was here since he took a sabbatical intentionally to be with us. We were able to get out and do things makes it easier to have another adult when you have a baby and two little kids. So she is always used to going out and doing things so she loves to get out even if it is just to go to the gas station or the store she wants to go you know she does not want to be left. She is very active she love to, she is very fearless, like she'll jump off things, she'll climb things that are way high. She just wants to do it all and she wants to do things herself.

ROBERTO: We are trying to encourage that.

EMILY: Yes. I regret, very much I was very overprotective with Max and being my first I just wanted to do everything for him. Help him do everything, you know. Not realizing how detrimental that was to his own confidence and self-esteem. The control was definitely a big thing I had to learn to let go of when we started down the unschooling path.

ROBERTO: It is a process. It is a process we are still trying. Subconsciously we still keep on doing it.

EMILY: Well, you have all those voices in your head, you know. With all the different homeschool groups. We are in all these sort of holistic groups and sort of natural living type groups so you have this ideas that I personally agree a lot with and then a lot of things that my kids are into or that they want, go against all these sort of ideas. So it is like, you know, I have to remember to trust them and not let all the other voices take over.

PAM: That was something I found too, especially those first two or three years. As I learned more and transitioned like you said there are other groups that I felt connections to you know, and even school groups, because my kids were in school before I found out about homeschooling and took them out. It did take a while to

transition I still got some things out of those groups but then after a few months or year I slowly kind of dropped off.

As in, I did not want those messages, they were not helping me anymore and it was not about going silent, it was that I eventually found other groups that also made sense and were in the direction that seemed to work better for me and the kids. Like you said, it is like oh but these are the kids I have, these are their interests and what they want to do. These things over here, this kind of information is helping me build that.

Where as the other stuff every time I hear it, it has me questioning myself or feeling like we are not doing enough or something, so yes. I totally remember that. Plus, sorry to say, you will probably always be going through these processes. As your kids get older things are going to come up that haven't come up before. So you are going to have new things to question yourself about. It is like "Oh gee, I never thought of that, how am I going to see that now through this new lens?" Even ten years later, even now my kids are young adults and I still see there are expectations on people at every age.

The next question, which we have kind of been talking about right here, which was how did you build trust in the process of unschooling. So we have talked about learning about it, thinking critically about it, seeing our own kids and what works with them and seeing how they are learning and figuring things out for themselves. Is there any other little pieces you would like to add of ways that you guys developed trust in that process of unschooling as you learned more about it?

ROBERTO: Yes, I think like you said it is observation. You know because to a lot of people think a kid in front of a computer is just wasting his time and he is just getting isolated all day long. But if you really take the time and sit down next to him and start seeing what he is doing and what he is learning and then start talking about the things they are doing and why, then you realize that during those four or five hours he is learning.

He is gathering a lot of information and he is learning and he is

communicating with other people or he is making money or he is collecting money to buy certain things in the game. So, it is a process that if you do not really go deep into it you will miss it and to you it will be he is in front of the computer all day and he does not do anything.

EMILY: He is just zoning out he is just vegetating. (laughs)

ROBERTO: He has acquired a lot of observation and involvement to realize those things.

EMILY: Yes. (Baby cries) Sorry there is a fight between Archie and Clementine at the moment. She went into the room where all his..(Roberto is going to help) He has a room where all his trains are and he wanted to shut her out and she was heart broken. (laughs)

Roberto and I were talking about this, well we were talking about it months ago and then we were talking about again before the call because it is a question about trust and I was bringing up to him that conversation we had a while back about, I was telling him you know, you are in all these different homeschool groups and you try to drag your kids to the events that you have tried to convinced them to go to you know. Then you see the other kids that are into it and your kids are not and they are like can we just go, you know. (laughs)

Or you just see what all the other parents are talking about the different, the curriculum they use or their kids are into this or taking classes in this or that and you feel like, you start to feel like—I hate to sound so negative—but you feel like such a loser. You feel like I am doing everything wrong and there are so many things I am not doing. Or, you know, why can't I get this right.

You are not trusting the process and you are not trusting your kids, but also, like I told Roberto, I realized it is because I do not trust myself and I never have. And that was/is the biggest hurdle for me. And I still struggle if I did not have kids I'd be beating myself up everyday. Even if I did not have kids I always was that way, just extremely hard on myself.

PAM: There is always something else.

EMILY: Yes. **It is an I am never good enough, I am never doing anything right, I am always failing somebody, always failing myself. I got that message mostly from school, you know.** (laughs) I was not the star student. I just was never a good fit in school. I never finished things on time or finished things like everybody else did, never made the grade sort of a thing. I still, I have that voice inside me all the time and I still struggle with that and I was telling Roberto, that is what, that is the biggest hurdle, that is the thing I have to break.

Just like they say if you do not love yourself you cannot love anybody else. It is the same with trust, if you do not trust yourself then you are always going to be questioning, you know the fears will always take control. Because if you cannot trust yourself, then you cannot trust your partner, you cannot trust your kids. You are always looking for the negative you are always looking for what is the ulterior motive, you are always looking for what is not, what is lacking, you know. Or what is not, what is supposed to be and not. If you are doing that to yourself then you are not trusting yourself. So still struggling with that but knowing that you know, it is all my own stuff like the whole deschooling processes is. It is all your own stuff.

PAM: That is just such a great point Emily because that is exactly it. So often we find that so much of the deschooling stage, it is just so much about us, isn't it. It is so much of the work that we have to do—that we are choosing to do. (laughs) And our kids are usually pretty darn good and in fact that is what I used to talk about when I talked about coming to unschooling as a hero's journey.

I always think of my kids as a guide because when I was struggling most I would say okay just relax, that "substitute fear with curiosity" and just watch them. Just specifically tell myself not to try to control anything, just watch them and it would always manage to bring me back and to realize, you know what, they are okay. I am just still doing my work. That is a really great point, thanks Emily.

EMILY: Oh, thank you. Yes. I notice when I let the fears take over and I forget that my ultimate goal (and Roberto and I both) our ultimate goal with unschooling is the goal we have had since they were born is the connection that we, it is foreign to us we did not

have and we wanted that different in our own family.

ROBERTO: That is our biggest trouble because we are used to following a certain path and this is all new for us. Even when you talk about connection we did not have any connections so it is very difficult to emulate that to our kids because we did not have it.

EMILY: We still are like what is that exactly. Are we connecting with them? Are we connecting with each other?

ROBERTO: Is this connection?

EMILY: Is this connection? Because we do not know what that feels like.

ROBERTO: We are like, what is this?

EMILY: We are aliens on this human planet. (laughs)

ROBERTO: What is this thing they call love? (laughs)

PAM: All the big questions. (laughs)

ROBERTO: It is relearning. We are learning, like you were saying. They know this, they know more about the process than we do. So we are relearning from them.

EMILY: They have to remind us constantly.

ROBERTO: So the only obstacle in this process is really us.

EMILY: Well, our conditioning, the horrible conditioning. But yes, when I let the fears take over and I find myself trying to control again in whatever manipulative way I am doing, then it is animosity with Max, he just gets angry and he does not want to be around us and he goes further into the screens. *(Sorry Roberto is going to step away from a second, Clementine is crying. She is in that room with Archie and I think there is another conflict.)*

I see the loss of connection like immediately as soon as the fear and control, just like when you can feel anyone else's fear coming out of them and, you know. Roberto and I struggle because we are both high anxiety people we are just very anxious and it comes from

you know, our upbringings. And when you are around somebody like that you know, it is uncomfortable.

So when our anxiety is going up and our fears about things you could see that he (Max) just wants to escape from that, just like anybody. Yes, they feel it just like we can as adults too, we feel. You know either (where like Roberto and I) we feel somehow responsible for the other person's anxiety, which is not the case, but you know.

We were also raised to feel responsible for other people's feelings and to put ours second. So, you know, I do not want that for my kids of course, I want them to not feel like they have to do things to manage my anxiety. So it is either they start doing that or they feel like a sort of a guilt because I am upset about something that they are doing. And then I remember, I do not want them to feel like that. I do not want them to ever feel like they have to do something about my feelings.

Then I remember oh this is not what I want, this is not what I want between us. I do not want that sort of second handedness, that sort of codependency, that sort of, "put your feelings aside, do not trust what you want and what you feel, because mom or dad are upset about this or that."

ROBERTO: That in the end really confuses them. Then they will start to do things just because, to make you feel happy or instead of rather because they want to do things.

EMILY: Or like we see from a lot of other parents that are in different homeschool groups that we are in, that we do not want our children to ever feel like or (I guess I shouldn't call them ours) but you know, Max and Archie and Clementine. We do not want them to ever feel like they have to ever hide anything from us, especially not something that they like or that they want to do or just their feelings about anything. We want them to always feel like they can be completely open with us.

You know, you have people telling you, "Oh you have to be a parent, not a friend." We both find that to be complete BS. (laughs) You should be their best friend, you know. You should be their first friend, their example of what a friend really is more than anything.

We see with other kids, they then end up hiding things from their parents. Because they feel, they feel that shame that is being misplaced you know, that is being placed on them, their parents have an issue with. Then they just learn to hide what they like and hide what they want to do. That right there, to me, when I see that, it's like, oh that is the opposite of connection. That is what pushes me, you know.

PAM: That is like the clue, that is time, something, something is happening here for me. I think what in the end—because I remember those times too—it was later on when the stress was not there, you know, whatever was feeling disconnecting in the moment, and explaining later on that it was my thing and even explaining age appropriately just, not age but whatever level they are at, to explain a little bit about where that thought of mine or that expectation of mine came from.

Because then we understood each other a little bit better. They knew more about me and it was also an example to them you know, so that when they felt something was off that, like you said, it was okay for them to tell me why they felt off, even if it was something that I did that triggered something for them or whatever.

But yes, it was really amazing to me how insightful they were even in just short little conversations like that over the years. And then they were able to start pointing out to me when and even why something seemed to be going off the rails at any point.

EMILY: They really are amazingly insightful.

PAM: So, those conversations, I mean we wouldn't typically have them in the moment because in the moment is it is hard to think at those points, right? When you see the clue that they are reacting somehow it is like, "Oh okay, you know this is not something I want to push, something is off here."

And then you know take some time to think about it but then go back to the conversation later. That, I found that really helped. (sound of a child running up) "Hello, Clementine."

EMILY: We have ear buds she couldn't hear you but yeah she was saying "hello."

PAM: I was wondering when I said that. Haha. You know what is really fun is how our conversations have already lead to the next question...again.

The next question was, what has been the most challenging aspect of moving to unschooling so have we kind of covered that or is there something else you would like to add there?

EMILY: I think it is pretty well covered, but the deschooling for Roberto and I and all that encompasses is still happening, it is a struggle and it is still a struggle.

PAM: Okay, let us move on to the next question then.

I wanted to talk to you a little bit about the translation Roberto, because you have also translated Teresa Graham Brett's book *Parenting For Social Change*. So I was wondering what inspired you to start translating books, that is cool?

ROBERTO: Well I always read a lot of parenting books but specifically this one by Teresa. It just hit a nerve and I could identify myself in the book and I could identify how I was raised and my parents and the way my family raised me.

But also, I started reading it and saw a lot of the things that happened when I was little and I wanted to communicate those to my parents mostly. So I wanted them to read the book. So I started translating it and I remember I talked to a friend of mine, Teri DeMarco, and she said oh well you know, if you are translating it I know the author and I can get you in contact with her. I was "Oh, that is great." And then met Teresa and then I just translated the book and then we put it out there. It was a great experience because like I said that book hit a nerve and it was so important for me. It was a moment that I needed that information.

EMILY: Yes. It is a beautiful book. Like he said, he was almost just translating it really, he was translating it really just for his parents and himself. And then he was able to get in touch with Teresa through Teri.

ROBERTO: While I was translating, one of my big readers was my dad. Because he very good at grammar so he would be reading the book you know he had to read it because he had to check the book.

EMILY: It still did not seem to have any affect. (laughs) Except to push them further away but.

ROBERTO: Yes, it did have that effect. But I just wanted him to read it so that was my, I did not say, "Okay dad, I want you to read it." I just said, "Hey dad, can you help me, you now, checking the book for grammar and content?" And he said, "Oh yes." Some things he would disagree about.

PAM: I love that you, you know when that was something that you wanted and when you were hoping this might help, but you know to not, I can just tell in the way you are talking about it that it was good to not have expectations on him.

Because you do not have control over how he takes in that information or what he does with it. But you still found a way to make that connection with him to say hey can you help me by reading this book through for me and it just created an opportunity, right. It just went where it went and that is just really, really cool.

ROBERTO: And once I finished this book and it was published I, you know, I quit my job in 2015 and I mean, I am going to talk about it right now because it kind of makes sense.

EMILY: That was kind of one of the reasons you started translating the book because it was like, alright I want to do this and I have the time.

ROBERTO: Because I quit and I said to myself I want to do things that I have never done before and I want to do that.

EMILY: And that you are passion about it.

ROBERTO: Yes and that I am passion about it. Because one of the things about unschooling is you do what you are interested on, what you are passionate out.

EMILY: Yes, follow your interests.

ROBERTO: And at that moment, work was not what I was interested in or what I was passionate about. I couldn't in good conscience go eight hours a day to a job that I was not enjoying any more and then come back and tell my kids, well you know you need to do what your passionate on or what you want to do. You know, I couldn't do that. So I had decided to just take a year off that I am going almost two years now, which I was not expecting but.

EMILY: Your saying it felt really incongruent.

ROBERTO: Oh yes.

EMILY: In the environment at your work too.

ROBERTO: The environment at my work was totally the opposite that I was trying to create at home.

EMILY: It also did not encourage your kids to look for, you know, it was the opposite of the kind of environment that you wanted them to put themselves in.

ROBERTO: And it was taking a toll on me because I was starting having a lot of pain, like back pain. And I would get here and I was very sleepy. I would take naps, you could tell that physically it was manifesting in me. I had to stop doing that. I remember getting here and I was so exhausted, exhausted that was the word.

EMILY: Kind of from faking it all day.

ROBERTO: Yes, from faking it all day, but when I quit and then I started doing things here and I started translation. And we started we lost the time and days. **There were times I did not know what day it was or what time it was and I did not care. And at the end of the day I was so tired but it was a different tired. It was a tired that you go to bed and like smile before you go to sleep.**

EMILY: He was much more relaxed. It was a more fulfilling tired. Not a beat down tired.

ROBERTO: Yes. But then, going back to the books, you know **I started looking at the books that really made a change in my life and then I started asking myself well you think you could translate all these books into Spanish and make that much impact and I was, "Yes!**

I think I can do it.” So, that was how I got to your book. And that was how I got to two more books that I translated and I have another one I am working on. And it has just been great.

PAM: That is awesome. Yes. I love that story it is cool when you give yourself that time right to discover what is it that I would like to do. And it is not like you need some big passionate answer or something it is just like, oh gee you know, how did you start, oh I'd like my dad to read this book. You were not even you know, talking to the author yet or anything. It was just something you wanted to do that little step by little step took a year and now you have done a few books and you are doing more. That is really cool.

ROBERTO: Yes and it is kind of a slow process for me because I read the books and I really need to like it, you know, so you can get involved with it. You know because you can feel it, feel the passion. So to translate just any book, that does not really work, for me.

EMILY: He really only wanted to translate things that he was into. Because really just the process of doing it is what you are getting out of it, it is more just the enjoyment.

ROBERTO: Yes. The enjoyment and the learning. Because I read in English and I get some out of it but when I translate into Spanish I get filled. I get filled, that space in my brain, I would say in the Spanish version. (laughs)

So when I talk to other Spanish speakers I have the vocabulary and I have the sentences and the idea in Spanish already there in my head. I do not have to start thinking how do I say this.

EMILY: And how we communicate with your parents, although we have kind of given up on that.

ROBERTO: Yes, yes. For all these books I still have my dad as a beta reader and send him this thing across there and he reads it so.

EMILY: The only problem is sometimes he actually tries to change the ideas. It is like, ah okay.

ROBERTO: Yes. He will say I do not agree with this author and he should say this and this and that. And I am like, "Dad you should probably write your own book." (laugh)

EMILY: Write your own book dad. This is not the idea this author is trying to get across. (laughs)

PAM: Oh that is fun. And true to form, leads us nicely to the next question.

What I found really, really interesting about the translation process because, got French *Free To Learn* was out last year and Spanish one by the time this podcast airs the Spanish book will be available. I have been working for over a year now, Hungarian translation is going to be coming out soon. But as you were talking about, it is not about translating the book itself word for word it is really about translating the ideas right. Because, so when you take an idea in English to Spanish, you may use very different words entirely to try and get across that same idea. And I find that really fascinating. I was wondering if you could share an example from *Free To Learn*.

ROBERTO: From *Free To Learn* this is a word I was struggling with and I left it as unschooling. Because there is no other translation of the word unschooling other than they call it without school. There is a translation for without school but for unschooling there is none.

There was a struggle because I was talking to some of the beta readers and they were suggesting using Spanish but at the same time you can not do that because the word it is recognized here and it is also recognized in Spanish speaking countries. So if you change the word to something Spanish it would get lost.

EMILY: Also you said the other words, the other words that you could translate they were already sort of groups using those words and they were not exactly unschooling.

ROBERTO: It was not for the same movement, stuff like that that had

a different meaning and different philosophy. Unschooling is unschooling, you can not change that because it comes from here and it should keep its philosophy every where you go. So I guess that is not a good example but..

EMILY: That was the ultimate example when he was..

PAM: That was what I was going to say.

ROBERTO: (laughs)

EMILY: He was like, I am trying to think of an example and I was, well we had conversations several times about the word unschooling because a few people were trying to encourage him to use a different word or create basically a Spanish word or Spanish translation for that word. Make it Spanish like, own it in Spanish, and it was like, well, it really just did not translate because the word itself is a very particular philosophy and you would lose the philosophy when you changed the word. The word really represented the philosophy and like you said, it was already a word that was know in other languages and used as unschooling.

PAM: We had the same kind of conversation when we were working on the French translation too. They ultimately decided to stay with the word unschooling and just have a little footnote as to different ways that it could be translated. But yes, it is like the ultimate question, right?

ROBERTO: But then there are other words, or other idioms, that those ones sometimes cannot be translated to Spanish. Sometimes it is a total different idea if you translate it to Spanish it would sound foreign, crazy, you would say "what?"

EMILY: Sometimes Roberto is talking to me and he will use like an idiom from Mexico and he will basically translate it and I am like I have never heard that saying before. And I am like, "What, what is he saying?" And he is like, "Oh well in Mexico in Spanish they have this saying." (laughs)

PAM: It means this..

EMILY: Yes, and I am trying to think of it in a similar idiom but it is not using the same language.

ROBERTO: With the beta readers we have people from Peru and we have people I think from Venezuela and somebody from Spain and so it was different. Some people would not know what my translation meant, you know, the phrase I used.

So what I would do was always go back to the idea. What is the idea behind the saying or the idiom and I would just use the idea. I would completely take that part off and just put the idea, explain it basically. So that no matter where it was, if it was in Venezuela, Peru or Spain they would get it because it was already explained.

PAM: I had the two editors working on the French version, one was in France and one was from Quebec Canada. They ran into phrases like that too, like that French phrase is not going to mean the same thing to me as it does to you, so they would then go back to the idea and come up with a way to say it that the same understanding would happen in both countries or people with the background, language background either from Canada or from France.

I find translating just really fascinating. I love when people are interested in doing it. That is why when I talked to you, the beta reader stage is a really important stage because that is when you can see people from different areas how they take in the words. It is fascinating how different it can be even with everybody reading the same language, isn't it?

ROBERTO: Yes.

EMILY: We had a lot of good conversations.

ROBERTO: Yes, I would talk a lot about it to her.

EMILY: He would come to me and it brought up a lot of interesting conversations, and getting into more the dissecting more the idea.

ROBERTO: Emily helps me on all my translations because sometimes I do not get the idea so I get her to explain to me what it means or what she understood.

PAM: Thank you, Emily.

EMILY: No, no. Well, thank you. Thank you for your work. We,

Roberto and I help each other with everything.

PAM: I wanted to touch back, you were talking a little bit about leaving your job a while ago Roberto, and I wanted to get back to that for a bit because I love the fluid nature of how we make income to support our unschooling lives and you know to help bring all of our lives more into alignment with so they are not draining in such a way that you know you are having body pain and exhaustion you know having physical symptoms from it. So ,it can definitely change over the years the different ways that we come around to meet both our personal and our family needs together and as they evolve over time too.

I was hoping you could share a little bit about how you made that choice and how you managed that transition from work to home. And then later we will get to your new upcoming transition.

ROBERTO: Yes. Well like I said I decided in March of 2015 that I had enough of work.

EMILY: We had been talking about it. Like flirting with the idea of him taking some time off.

ROBERTO: For like about a year or more. We did have a cushion so that we could make that choice and it was just the right time.

EMILY: And we do not have, we hardly have any debt, which makes a huge difference. A lot of people live with a lot of debt and we were not.

ROBERTO: Yes, we did not have any debt and I used some of that money that we had to pay off the only debt that we had which was the house.

EMILY: A little while after he stopped working we made it so we did not have a mortgage. A lot of people thought was crazy. Why would you take your retirement and pay off your mortgage? But it was like we'll pay off the mortgage but at least we will still have a house.

ROBERTO: In my mind, what I was thinking is I still want to get us as low as possible in any bill I have to pay. So, if I cannot get a

job, like work part-time then I can pay food and bills.

PAM: That is again what you are actually looking at your own situation, right? Instead of what people are expecting you to do you can play around and see what really works for you personally and be comfortable in making those choices.

ROBERTO: Yes.

EMILY: Oh yes his parents freaked out.

ROBERTO: Everybody freaked out.

EMILY: They freaked. Do you want me to not elaborate?

ROBERTO: No. That will be another podcast. For another podcast.
(laughs)

No, but we got everybody, even our friends told me oh that is reckless. Why would you do that, or maybe because they did not see the value. But I had already seen the value a long time ago.

EMILY: Even if they were gentle about it they were like oh! you could see their fear. And that is really what it is, they are putting their fears on you and to you. Like they would entertain the idea for a second in their minds and it was wow, I could never do that. It was basically how they felt about it they were putting it on you, you know.

PAM: I remember when we were telling people that well I'd left work and then a few months later I had discovered—because I had more time to actually research things and then I found homeschooling then I found unschooling. But I remember thinking because people's reactions were really quite, almost over the top. They thought what we were doing was so risky, right?

EMILY: So fearful. The reactions are so fearful.

PAM: Yes, so fearful and it is such a huge risk and they couldn't imagine doing it. Then I realized as I thought about it, that, you know, it does not. Am I missing something because it does not feel as risky to me as everybody else seems to think it is. And then I realized I know so much more about MY situation and the research

and stuff I have done, I have more information about this particular choice than they do. So what they see as risk, was a lot less risky to me because I understood it, you know. Also sounds a lot like what was going on there too.

EMILY: Yes, that is a really good point like you were saying, am I supposed to be afraid, am I supposed to be worried about this. You would start to doubt it because like you said you did not feel it, you did not. But that is a really good point that like I do not feel the fear because I have more information and these particular choices that I made for myself.

Which in itself is scary. We are not trained to make decisions that are only for us and that go against anything that appear risky to everyone else. But yes that you know so much more about your own particular situation. And when people are responding to your choices they are thinking of it from their situation and from their choices and what they know. Which just seems so obvious but it is like you do not think about it and it is like yes that is true.

ROBERTO: Yes, but also at the same time you do not want to explain the WHOLE situation to them over and over.

PAM: Oh, you do not want to explain because you do not want to convince them, you just say, "I am good." We know what we believe we are going to get out of these choices too, right? When we are choosing unschooling, when choosing different job choices, you know that kind of stuff, we know where we are going with it. We see where the future and what we are going to get out of it where as they probably do not have much of an idea.

ROBERTO: Definitely, one of the many reasons was it was not to do another job, that I knew for sure, it was not to do anything else but just spend time with my family and my children because I realized that I was working most of the day and that I came home tired, cranky and then I had to go to bed because I had to get up the next day to go to work again.

EMILY: And all your good energy was being spent somewhere you did not want to be.

ROBERTO: And **I was thinking well you can not live life four weeks at a time, because I would have four week vacations. No, I have got**

to do something right now, I do not want to wait until I am 65 to get all this money, that will be worthless then.

EMILY: That was something we had come to every time we would like start to be fearful of should we do this should we not. Or when we would, after we made the decision it was like well we could say for sure that if we did not do it, if we did not take this time when he really felt like he needed to and wanted to and you know everything was in him was pushing him that way, if he did not when he was older he would regret it but he was most likely not going to regret doing it.

We did not know, it was a leap of faith I guess (I do not want to use the word faith) but you know it was like jumping off of a cliff, you know jumping blind folded but we knew that he would regret not doing it so. That was something we had to remind ourselves of also all the time.

ROBERTO: I saw it as an investment. They say that in order to get money you have to spend money. So, I thought to myself it is an emotional investment in order to get your kids later you have to invest emotionally in them right now. And that means being with them and listening to them and connect with them. And not later because later they will be grown and it will be very difficult to connect if you do not connect right now.

And how are you feeling, are you in a more comfortable place now as you are choosing to go back to is it full-time work? That you are moving on to, you were telling me about a new job and I thought that was cool too.

ROBERTO: Yes. Well it has been almost two years and I, well first of all I am kind of low on resources, so that is also one of the reasons that I am deciding to go back.

PAM: Yes, that happens.

ROBERTO: Yes, but I have done a lot and I feel like I am going to do more with them. There is a more solid relationship with all of them, especially with my two year old. I have been home since she was born and I have been at home every day for her whole life. So that is going to make a big impact in her life you know just having

her father here everyday.

Like I said it is an investment. **Yes, I am going back to work but I am going back to work in a different way. I have learned a lot about myself with all the books I have read with all the things I have learned I am more aware of myself. So, when I go to a working place it will be different.**

PAM: Oh yes. I think I can just imagine the mind shift, just the totally different perspective that you are going to bring with you, right? And the connections that you have with your kids that you are going to be able to you know, come home to and be comfortable reconnecting and building on those, you know what I mean. So yes it sounds like you are in a completely different place now. Which I think will make a world of difference even at work for you as well as at home.

ROBERTO: Yes. I have had the opportunity to find a company that this family invented so they are very flexible with their schedule and also allow you to work at home and that is what I was looking for. That was one of the reasons I quite my previous job because they were so very, they were not flexible at all. That was a big part of what I wanted to do.

PAM: Wow it sounds like you found a great place. We will see when you actually start there, but it sounds like you knew what you were looking for, knew what would work better for you. So, that sounds wonderful I wish you guys the best of luck with that.

ROBERTO: Yes, and this time I am going back but I still in the back of my mind I know that I want to get out soon.

PAM: So, you are going to go and save up, you know, try to save money while you are there so you can take another sabbatical, is that kind of the idea?

ROBERTO: Yes, that is what I want to do. I want to save a little bit and then just come back and just keep doing what I have been doing. I would like to get more into translation and I would like to find other ways of making some income, rather than going and spending all day in a place that does not really fill me up as much as when I am at home.

PAM: Yes. No, I mean that is what I like about thinking of it as ... the fluid nature, I guess is the best that I can come up with to describe it. But yes, you know, as you are even working at that job which is more amenable to your family set up but also thinking about other ways that you can be, other income streams that you can be developing at the same time that maybe can extend your next sabbatical even longer etc. It is all about playing around and finding what works for you and in each step, it seems is just a little bit better mesh, a little bit better mesh, as you learn more about yourself and stuff. Does that sound right?

ROBERTO: Yes. It has given me confidence in doing things. Like one of the things I did while I was in this two years at home. I built a house in the back yard, small house by myself. So that told me a lot about how I work because I had to basically do the house but I had to undo it a few times because I did not do it right. That taught me a lot about how I work, how my mind you know works. The most recent I had to install a water heater myself because the installation was just way too expensive and I couldn't really afford it. And then I had to go back and learn about how to do it and find the resources and just do it myself. All that just gives you confidence to do things, so I am a different person now.

PAM: And you will continue to grow I am sure. That is the cool thing with unschooling, we always talk about how it is life, right? And as we figure that out, we figure out so much about ourselves and our own lives too, along the way. So, I think that is really awesome.

I want to thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me Roberto and Emily. She is off with the kids right now?

ROBERTO: Yes, yes she is. I do not know what happened but they are out there in the back yard.

PAM: Oh, awesome. Say thank you for me.

ROBERTO: I do not think she is coming back, but thank you so much it has been a pleasure. Thank you so much.

PAM: It was great to talk to you both so glad to learn a little bit more about your unschooling experiences. Before we go, where is the best place for people to connect with you on-line if they are

interested?

ROBERTO: I guess Facebook.

PAM: Maybe they may need your translation services.

ROBERTO: Yes, I think the best would be my Facebook page just [Roberto Lujano](#) they could contact me there. I do not have a, I was working on a website for my translation gig but I still haven't finished it.

PAM: No problem I will share the Facebook in the show notes.

ROBERTO: Yes, thank you.

PAM: Terrific. Thanks so much, you guys have a great night.

ROBERTO: You too Pam, thank you very much.

PAM: Thanks, bye.