

# Episode 53. Kids and Phobias

Fri, 10/9 8:34PM 36:42

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

phobia, parents, fear, child, people, traumatic childhood, triggering, vomiting, incident, kids, normalize, threw, prevent, happen, scary, life, scared, talk, podcast, person

## SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Kira Dorrian, Future Focused Parenting



Future Focused Parenting 00:03

What happens when two parent coaches, one a Christian and the other an agnostic Jew, sit down to talk about parenting? They take their listeners from surviving to thriving. I'm Deana Thayer, and I'm Kira Dorrian. Welcome to Raising Adults, a podcast brought to you by Future Focused Parenting.



Deana Thayer 00:22

Well, hi, everybody, it's Deana and Kira here, Raising Adults podcast, with an important topic that maybe we don't always give a lot of thought to. I know we say so many of the topics are important, or they're gigantic. And but this one, I think, can really get back burned easily. It's not something everyone deals with, first of all, not necessarily universal, but also pretty poorly understood, and so often misunderstood. And what we're talking about today is phobias. And what's really great is the expert that we have as our guest today is my co host. So this is really nice. With Kira's background in mental health, and particularly as a hypnotherapist, a large part of her private practice was working with phobias and helping people through that. And this touches parenting because so many phobias are developed or started, that foundation is laid for that intense fear in childhood. And so it's important not only to talk about how to recognize because I think parents sometimes don't even know when it goes beyond the hey, I'm just a little bit nervous or scared. But also, how would you know when they might need some extra help, some professional help, and what even that can look like. And there's so much

misunderstanding around this topic. And I think just bringing it to light and letting people know that if you have a phobia it doesn't mean you're crazy, or something's wrong with you, it can be very normal, and something that our mind does as actually a protective mechanism. There's some actually really healthy ways about how our mind works when this happens. And Kira just brings a wealth of knowledge to this topic from her background in the mental health world. And so I'm really thankful that we can chat with her today. And I will say right at the outset; full disclosure, I've actually gone to Kira myself for work on a phobia. So I'll probably share a little bit about that at some point. And I will say just by way of launching in that my why is because I have a phobia. And so for me as a parent, I really wanted to be dialed in, and keenly sensitive if I saw that developing in an either of my children, so that I would know, hey, we need to intervene, but also so that I could be kind, because I think sometimes when we don't understand it, it just feels annoying or frustrating. And so I wanted them to, at least for sure have one person in their corner that was empathetic and not annoyed or confused.

K

Kira Dorrian 02:41

I love that you said that. And, and I think that is one of the benefits that actually being a parent with a phobia brings to the table. Because I think what I saw time and time and time again, is how frustrated parents are because they don't understand. And I get that I mean, if you're not a hypnotherapist or someone with a phobia, phobias look nuts, they look, they look ridiculous. And they look really, really invasive into the family and debilitating. And that's really frustrating. Because you're like, get over it. This is not a big deal. Why are you freaking out about this? And as a parent with a phobia, you understand the depth of feeling that comes with it. And that's kind of what I would hope our parents listening get out of today. I definitely want to talk about like, what is a phobia? And how do they happen? And how can you prevent them and what can you do as a parent, but more than anything, I want parents who are listening, to be able to start to unpack the reality of the experience that their child is having instead of what they think their child is having. Because they are not experiencing it the way that you think they are. And that's what gets in the way and actually can exacerbate the phobia. Parents not giving the kid what they need. And again, if you're not a hypnotherapist, or you don't have a phobia, how would you know like, that's not your fault. But actually, what I see time and time again is that the reaction from the parents exacerbates the phobia.

D

Deana Thayer 04:00

So they've inadvertently made it even worse.

K

Kira Dorrian 04:01

Right, because the kids aren't getting what they need. And it all comes down to this word that I've talked about when we talked about emotional intelligence, which is normalization. It's something that I think if parents just on the whole could work on normalizing life for their kids. It's normal to have fears, it's normal to get scared of things. It's normal to do badly on a test. It's normal to feel embarrassed, it's normal to make mistakes. It's normal to do great on a test. It's, like all these things are normal. And anytime we as a parent send the message that something that's happening isn't - when actually phobias are rampant through our world, they're quite normal - we make the child more concerned about what's happening to them and more attached to it because they're like, well, I'm, something's wrong with me. Instead of okay, what's happening is normal, which must mean I can work through it. Does that make sense?

D

Deana Thayer 04:51

Yeah, absolutely.

K

Kira Dorrian 04:53

So let's start by talking about what a phobia is. So a phobia is what I like to call a misassociation. So usually something happens as Deana said, when a person is a child, most common ages are two till nine, there are a couple phobias that crop up later in life. Fear of flying is one of them generally off of a bad flight, claustrophobia if you get like trapped in an elevator or something that can happen in adulthood, but predominantly the other phobias start when we're young. And what happens is, and this is where we kind of have to put on what I call a little kid brain. And this is part of the problem is that adults have their adult brains on and so they're looking at the situation and they're going, well, that's not scary. Why are you scared? Don't be scared, which oh, my gosh, when I hear that on the playground, I just want to like, yell really loudly and hug that child really close and be like, it's okay to be scared. But we've got our grownup brains on, we're not scared of that situation. Why are you? But when we put little kid brain on, we realize that they haven't seen the whole world yet. They haven't experienced survival yet. And so what happens is something happens, let's take arachnophobia as a great example. So fear of spiders. I'm three years old, and a spider crawls on my face, and I freak out and my little kid brain thinks to itself, I barely survived that the first time, I will not survive it again. Therefore, spiders equal death. And that sounds really extreme. But if you think about a three year olds perspective on what happened to them, that kind of makes sense. Now, we have an association between spiders and death. And what happens is, we get a fight or flight response to a spider. And that's what you're seeing with a child with a phobia, they literally are experiencing a death threat, this is going to kill me. Now we know that's

not the case. But when we try and help them, you know, by saying, don't be scared, we're undermining their experience. They're experiencing life or death. So what we have to actually do, and we're going to talk about this in a minute, is come at it from a different angle, a normalizing angle, like, it makes sense that you're scared about that because of what happened here. And now I'm going to help you break that down and unpack it instead of just trying to shut down your experience, which is just going to exacerbate it. Does that make sense?

D

Deana Thayer 07:07

It does.

K

Kira Dorrian 07:08

Okay. So that's what a phobia is. It's like a misassociation that happens when we're very young that turns something really similar into fight or flight, it's I've heard, it also is like a, it puts a post it note on something that doesn't need a post it note, like, so important. This is really important. But it's actually not that important. But it's because our little kid brain doesn't have the ability to decipher the difference between the two. So the reason that you cannot logic your way out of a phobia, like look, honey, it's not that high, you know, or there's nothing to be afraid of, you can't logic your way out of a phobia, because they're not having a logical response. They're having their reptile brain response, they're having a flooded response of life or death. Now, if you think about someone who's actually in a life or death situation, you cannot logic them out of that.

D

Deana Thayer 07:52

No, it's way too primal.

K

Kira Dorrian 07:54

Exactly. So in a life or death situation, you actually have to like bring them back into their body to be able to start to logic anything, this is exactly the same. So that's why being logical with your four year old about their phobia is not going to work. Now, this is true in adulthood, too. And it gets harder in adulthood. Because as an adult, we know it's not logical. So now we're frustrated, the people around us are frustrated, and we're frustrated going, this makes no sense. I know this isn't scary. And I'm having a life or death response to it. And so when I work with adult clients with phobias, that frustration is huge. So actually, I just realized I didn't say my why. My why around this with my kids, was that I, from my experience, feel like phobias are one of the most debilitating issues that kids end

up with. They really can get in the way of them living a full and happy life. They don't want to travel because of whatever the phobia is, they want to travel but they can't, right, or they don't want to live in certain parts of the world, because they're spiders that you know, just things like that, where you're like, you can just see people wanting to live this really full life. And phobias can be really debilitating. So I just, I had that, I was lucky that I had the experience and the tools to know how to spot a potential phobia trigger, and then what to do with it to help my kids hopefully not have any. So the next thing I want to talk about is how to spot a trigger. So what causes them? So there's two types of phobias and I want to be clear, this is from my experience and my work in private practice for over a decade now. I am not a psychologist or a psychiatrist. And so these are my opinions based on my experience. So two things cause phobias. The most common is what I call a triggering incident. So if something happens, I am five years old, somehow I managed to get on to my roof. I slip. I don't fall off the roof. I slip and what do you know I grew up to have a fear of heights, fancy that, probably forgot about the thing when I slipped. I have this weird fear of heights that I can't figure out. We get back to the triggering incident, it's like well, of course, you have a fear of heights, you almost fell off a roof. Right? But we often forget these things right? And they seem big at the time but small to our adult brain, which is why we have to stop using adult brain, we have to use kid brain when we talk about phobias. Okay, so that's the most common. There is, however, a slice that I've seen of phobias that are caused by a traumatic childhood. So if a child was really abused, or had a, you know, let's say alcoholic parents that were very unpredictable, we sometimes see a phobia in any situation where the person is out of control. So crossing bridges, flying, elevators are really common for people who have traumatic upbringings because they are no longer in control. And they're kind of at the, they're beholden to something and someone else. And their childhood, when they were beholden to something or someone else was very scary and unpredictable. So in those, it's not one, one isolated, triggering event. It's more the whole milieu in the backdrop of... and so now if I'm in a situation where I'm not in control, it brings all that up. Yes. Okay. I'm like, right back in my childhood, feeling completely unpredictable. You know, an experience that I can't, I don't know what's going to happen. So I'm scared. Which makes a lot of sense when you kind of go that way. But they are less so I would say like, probably talking like 80, 20. So 80% are triggering incidents. 20%, and lots of people who had really traumatic childhoods don't have phobias, it shows up in other ways. Heightened anxiety is really, really common for traumatic childhoods, again, because it was so unpredictable. If I worry enough about it, I'll be able to figure it out and prevent getting hit or prevent, you know, and so they then struggle with the anxiety later in life. So those are the two types. So the main one I want to focus on today is the, the triggering incident. And so let's talk a little bit before we get to triggering incident about the different types of phobias. Here we go. It's a long list. So we have claustrophobia, which is fear of small spaces, fear of heights, fear of spiders, or snakes, fear of needles, fear of deep water, fear of bridges, fear of flying, and then my

personal favorite, which I'm going to spend the most time on today, emetophobia. Emetophobia is a fear of vomiting. And it is a sneaky little guy who, emetophobia is so interesting, because it doesn't always show up as an obvious fear of vomiting, it is most often showing up as social anxiety. So I get a lot of families that come in for kids who have severe social anxiety, or adults who come in and are like, I just, I'm really uncomfortable going into like big groups of people, new restaurants, I don't really love leaving my house. And what we discover is that what they actually have is a fear of vomiting. And that's why they don't want to go out into the world. So super interesting. My favorite phobia. The other really interesting thing about emetophobia is that people who have it think they're the only person who's ever had it. It's very common, they feel very alone and no one talks about it. And actually, it's the most common phobia out there. So...

D

Deana Thayer 12:50

Am I allowed to pipe in?

K

Kira Dorrian 12:51

Yeah, do.

D

Deana Thayer 12:52

Because this is mine. So that is absolutely true. And the other thing I see that you didn't mention is a large population of emetophobics also have a fear of public speaking. And the, really what comes with that is, it's this fear of being out of control, and that I might embarrass myself by vomiting in public. So you get these people who don't want to be around other people, don't want to be ever in the spotlight up on stage, anything where the focus might be on me, because what if this terrible thing happens, and everybody sees it? But the other thing you said that is so true, is it's not discussed. It's not oh, I would, I would say it's even not one where people like, oh, well, that's really normal, like fear of enclosed spaces or fear of heights, where that's pretty common. I don't, I don't know, I think people think they have the phobia a lot and actually don't have it to phobic level, they just are not a fan. But those are fears that I think we almost are like, oh, those are acceptable ones. But when you think of these more fringe ones, and this is a great example. It's like, what? You're afraid of THAT? And then that adds to the isolation, you feel maybe reluctance to get help. And to the idea that I must be the only one who feels this way.

K

Kira Dorrian 14:09

Yeah. I mean, you nailed it. That's exactly right. And, and it's my favorite part of working with someone who has this phobia is being able to say actually, that's the most common phobia I see. And it's like the relief of oh my gosh, I'm not alone. There are support groups on Facebook for this phobia for people who find each other and are like, oh my gosh, there's others like me. But it's such a fascinating one, because the trigger is almost exactly the same. And the fallout is immeasurable. I mean, this to me is the single most debilitating phobia out there. You get people who don't want to, they don't want to be social, they're social, but they don't want to be social. They, it completely shuts down their life. I had a client once who came in, 40 year old person, and just had lived their life, their whole life in this little bubble and finally came in to see me and was like, I'm not here to fix it, I don't think I can fix it. I just want to get some coping tools to maybe just live my life a little bit better. And we figured out what the triggering incident was. And in two sessions, we fixed it. And he like traveled to Hawaii and he eats in all these new places, he's like out living his life. And that really struck me, this feeling of like, oh, my goodness, I don't want my kids to deal with that, right. And if I can spot it, and I know what they need, because they're getting what they need in the session with me. And it's not, I'm going to tell you right now, I'm going to like ruin all the fun. It's not hypnosis that people need. It's actually the normalization. They need what they didn't get when they were small. So I have a theory that if children in a triggering incident actually got what they needed, we would prevent phobias. So I want to arm parents today with what do you need to do if you spot a triggering incident, so I want you to know how to spot it, and what to do. That's not a guarantee. But it's probably going to help you significantly prevent or minimize what could have turned into a huge phobia. Okay, so let's talk about each of them and what the triggers are, so that parents can kind of keep an eye out. So let's start with claustrophobia. Most common is in childhood getting accidentally locked in a small room, closet, or a sibling, you know, in their playing, and it could be an accident, could not be an accident, also getting shoved under a blanket. So again, in play, siblings are playing, one shoves one under a blanket. And there's suddenly a feeling of what if I can't breathe, I can't get out. It's the loss of control, right, I am no longer able to care for myself and I might die. And so again, the brain goes, I barely survived that the first time. I won't survive it again. Therefore, small spaces equal death, I must never be in a small space. And I've seen claustrophobics who can't even sit on the inside of a booth, they always have to be on the aisle at a play, you know, those kinds of...

D

Deana Thayer 16:45

There has to be an escape route.

K

Kira Dorrian 16:46

Exactly. And again, like it seems small, but actually how debilitating whereas if you can just not have that worry, you can go to the theater anytime, sit in any seat, right?

D

Deana Thayer 16:56

Think how much that rearranges your life.

K

Kira Dorrian 16:57

Completely changed it. I mean, it's, it's, it was my specialty, because I loved it, I love getting to be a part of people's lives getting so much better so quickly. Okay, so claustrophobia, fear of heights, often by a fall or a slip in a high spot. So the roof's an extreme example, it could be a fall off the big toy at a playground. And that's important, because parents, I think, don't handle this well in our modern society. And the thing I'm going to teach you, which is actually what you would do for almost every phobia, could be done at the big toy and again, could prevent fear of heights, hiking and slipping and coming to the edge of a cliff, any kind of tumble off a table, a couch. Now, if your toddler tumbles off the couch, I don't think you have to worry about this. But using this little step by step technique I'm going to teach you is probably not a bad idea, because you just never know. Fear of spiders is usually, which I talked about earlier, or snakes, that there's some incident where the spider is sudden, usually on their person, or just in some way really scares them. And so again, you're going to want to use this technique of normalizing fear of needles, almost always from a bad hospital experience or a bad blood draw that, I always ask people if they've had any major surgery. So oftentimes, kids who've had surgery at a young age have a fear of doctors or a fear of surgery, or a fear of needles, because whatever happened in the hospital was so scary that they then, it latches onto the needle to go, there was a needle there, therefore, needles equal death, blah, blah, blah. Fear of deep water again, an almost drowning or a really bad scare in in the water, or a traumatic childhood. Because again, it's open space, you're very vulnerable and anything could happen. Fear of bridges, as I said, most common for traumatic childhoods, and sometimes from a scary incident. And a bridge could also be linked with fear of heights. But that one I don't see as often happening from childhood unless it was a traumatic childhood. So that's kind of important to know. And then my personal favorite, emetophobia, which almost always, almost always, and this is going to blow people's minds. Fear of vomiting is almost always caused by a child seeing another child vomit, not their own vomiting experience. And this is because when we have our own vomiting experience, we get some signs that we might throw up, we feel yucky, our tummy hurts. And so whilst it feels out of control, we're not always shocked or surprised that it's happened. When it happens to someone else, it looks like it happened out of nowhere, like that just, that could happen to me any moment. Right? Especially if you have a child who

hasn't thrown up a lot, and they see it happen and haven't ever yet, right. And they're like, Oh my goodness, someone could just vomit out of nowhere and they haven't experienced what that little person was experiencing, a little tummy ache, starting to feel kind of funny. They just saw it happen out of nowhere and the child is embarrassed. And so now this is a scary, humiliating experience that could happen to me at any moment. Therefore vomiting equals death and we can get this severe response to the idea of vomiting. Now occasionally, it happens when a kid has had a really, really bad flu, or norovirus or something where it's like, over and over and over again, and they just can't stop. That's another way that it can show itself. So I actually was trying to get my school to send home a flyer when a kid threw up at school, because here's the other problem. Your kids often don't come home and go, hey, so and so threw up at school today.

D

Deana Thayer 20:25

Okay, thank you so much for saying this. Because I've been sitting here for, I don't know, seven minutes probably, thinking, I don't know if I agree with that you can prevent it. Because if you didn't know that that happened, how would the parent know to respond appropriately. So I always think there's like a little loophole where you can't be sure to prevent it for everybody. But I also thought, I don't want to say that because...

K

Kira Dorrian 20:45

Right, so here's how you prevent it. Here's, you tell your children, if somebody ever throws up at school, please tell me about it. It's so simple. If you ever had kids throw up at school, just make sure you come home and tell me.

D

Deana Thayer 20:54

Because I know I didn't share that. And that was what it was for me. And extra special because they threw up on me. Right? So that was festive. But I think, I think if you don't know, as the parent, what happened, how, you don't have a way to use the amazing tools. So I love that you would encourage that. That's why I was mouthing, yes.

K

Kira Dorrian 21:14

It's super simple. But how would you and again, parents, not your fault. Like you're not a hypnotherapist, you don't know this. So that's what the whole point is today.

D

Deana Thayer 21:22

And we often talk about avoiding mom guilt anyway. But parents, you really shouldn't feel guilty for not knowing what you didn't know, if you didn't know something happened, you can't feel bad that you didn't ask the appropriate questions and handle it. You didn't know about it.

K

Kira Dorrian 21:35

And here's the other thing. It's also like, let's say it happens, and your kid doesn't tell you and you've done everything right. You also hopefully after today will have the tools to spot it and know what to do. So it's not like oh, it's that's it, it's over. We'll never escape it. No, now we can recognize it and move on to the next step. We may have missed the first, that's okay. We didn't prevent it. But we can be diagnostic and we can fix it.

D

Deana Thayer 21:57

We can approach it now with a positive and really strategic model.

K

Kira Dorrian 22:03

Yeah, exactly. So here's what you do, folks, your child falls off the big toy, or they come home and they say, so and so threw up at school today. If you take nothing else from this episode, take this, please never tell your child that they're okay, not to be scared, and not to worry about it. Because you are undermining what's happening for them. So when they fall off the big toy, our desire as parents is to be like, you're okay. Don't worry, you're fine. There's nothing to be scared about. And that comes from this beautiful place of love. But here's what happens for the child. The child goes, I am? Because I don't really feel ok because my heart is racing, right? Because of course, if you fall off of something like, tell me one adult who wouldn't have a racing heart, whose body would not feel different because they fell off of a big toy. This is so important, right? Because even the child who isn't physically injured is emotionally...

D

Deana Thayer 22:54

Because they're now hearing, the fact that that just startled me or scared me is invalid.

K

Kira Dorrian 22:58

Yeah, don't feel bad. Yeah, exactly. And that's what I really don't like about "you're okay," I

prefer "are you okay?" This is teaching them to do a body check. Am I okay? So the little thing that I do, I do it with my kids and I teach all my clients this, is when, when you, something happens that you're like, triggering incident, Kira said on the podcast that this is a triggering incident. Just leap in and say to your kiddo, are you okay? And they might say yes. Which actually I find most of the time when you give the child the power to say if they're okay or not, they're like, actually, I'm fine. But if they say no, please believe them. Because it means on some level they're not. And you may look at their body and go, their body's fine. But just trust that somewhere inside of them they feel funny. Something's not right. So what you do is you say, oh, okay, well, let's check you out. Can you wiggle your fingers? And you get them to wiggle their fingers. Can you jump up and down? You can jump up and down. Can you hear me say I love you? I love you. Can you see my silly face? And you make a silly face. And then you say, okay, looks to me like your body's okay. And your body survived that. How cool is that, that your body knew how to survive that big scary thing? And please, please honor that it was scary. Even if you don't think it was scary. Yeah, you know what? That looked scary. Like, that makes sense that you're scared. But wow, your body is so strong and so capable. It survived something scary. Now what happens in little kid brain is little kid brain goes, yeah, it did. And then you say, you know what I think that means? I think that means you'd survive it again. And they go, yeah I would, and we prevent a phobia. Does that make sense? As opposed to, I fall off the big toy. I feel really funny and scared. My mom says you're okay. Don't worry about it. Don't be scared. And I go, but I feel, I feel funny. And I think I almost died, and I don't, I don't know that I'm going to survive that again. And now it's all internal. They're not vocalizing it to you. So now we develop a fear of heights phobia, as opposed to, my needs got met in the moment. It was normalized. It was nurtured. It's back to those three Ns. It was named, yes, that was scary. Right? It looks, I say to the kids a lot, it looks like your body didn't get hurt, but your heart got hurt, or your brain got scared, right, like acknowledging that we're not just our physical being. So name it, normalize it, nurture it. And this is how you prevent a phobia. So with emetophobia, there's one extra little piece, which is all the steps I just said, and then talking about throwing up is a sign that your body is safe. That's really important. This is where you twist things on heads for emetophobes. The idea that throwing up feels gross, yes, I concur. Okay. But it is a sign that your body's working perfectly, because it's trying to get out something dangerous. So actually, if you didn't throw up, it would be a sign that something was wrong. So the fact that your body knows what to do, means it is in perfect working order. And so if it's a another child that threw up that you're processing, you're like, thank goodness that Jack, Jack's body knew what to do and took care of him. What a strong and capable body he has. And you're flipping it on its head. Yeah, it looks like it came out of nowhere. But did you know most people get some clues, they get a little tummy ache, you know. And I think people have a fear of like giving a kid a phobia by being like, here are the signs that you're gonna throw up, but you're empowering them. There are normal things that are cues that tell us our body's doing its

job, right. We talked about the immune system as superheroes in our house, you have all these superheroes inside of you, your superheroes are like, get out, get out, get out. And that's what we want, because that's how you stay safe. So even though it looks really scary, it looks like it came out of nowhere, Jack probably had a few clues. And thank goodness, his body knew what to do. So I have a question for later. If these things didn't happen in advance, and you've got maybe someone who's older, preteen teen or just your child, and the other people around them aren't handling it well. Do you have tips for other people who see maybe a phobia or a phobic reaction? How can they respond in a way that is helpful and not horrible? Because often the responses are really not great from what I've seen. Oh, they can be awful and, and I think it comes back to the normalizing of, you know, he sees this differently than you do. Right. So I remember once, Rhiannon had a thing about water once because she almost drowned when she was two. And we were in Hawaii when she was five. And she did not want to jump in this pool. Like she wanted to jump in the pool so bad. But she did not want to jump in the pool. And it was this push pull and somebody in the pool made a comment about it, like oh, just push her in. And I was like, oh, no, she doesn't actually experience water like you do. She almost drowned when she was two. So she has a phobia that we're working through. But thank you, right. So I think it's like, if you normalize it, if you are clearly okay with the fact that your kid has this thing that you're working through. Yeah, that's gonna model it really well for everybody else, how they should be handling it. And in terms of handling it. So let's say you weren't there, you didn't know. Or you were there and you missed it. And you only realize later like shoot, that developed into it. Oh, I can, I know where that comes from. Right? First and foremost, if you know where it comes from, you're in great shape. Because that's so much easier when we understand what the triggering incident is. I'm a huge fan of hypnotherapy. It's very effective. I used to work with kids as little as nine, that was my sort of threshold. And there are lots of amazing practitioners that work with kids all over the world. It is extremely effective. And it's not woowoo. I mean, it depends who you go see. I'm not woowoo like at all. And really all you're doing is, is essentially figuring out the triggering incident, and then taking the child or if you're an adult, the adult to the triggering incident and giving them what they didn't get in that moment, which is what again, I'm hoping parents will be empowered to know what to do in that moment. But all you're doing is name it, normalize it, nurture it, help them see it differently, right, like that. Actually, the fact that you lived is a sign that your body's amazing and capable and protective. And then the phobias go away. So hypnotherapy is amazing. But if that's not your jam, then you just want to look for someone who specializes in this. There are lots of amazing practitioners and non hypnotherapy practitioners as well that are out there who specialize in phobias and have the support. Certain phobias are better for exposure therapy than others. I'm not an enormous fan of exposure therapy. I am after we've had a session, that's what they have to do is like okay, now you got to go like up the Space Needle. Um, but I think that it's really about changing the framework of what's happening.

This is not a bad thing. Your child's not doing anything wrong. They're not being obnoxious. And if it's impacting your family, that's actually quite normal. And that means you need to go and get some help and do something. Don't let it fester. The longer this sits with the child, the bigger it gets. So if you know your kid has a real phobia, go get some help soon. And don't just wait around for it to get better, because it's probably not going to.

D

Deana Thayer 30:08

And I would just add a couple things. And one is let them do what they need to do. Like I, I have one child who has the same phobia as me. And I just am very open and fine with that child doing what they need to do if they need to step out of the room or plug their ears or whatever it is, to just leave room for that and not make fun of it. Here's the other thing I would say on the, on the side of here's something to avoid, is sometimes people will make fun of this kind of a fear, it's a, it is kind of a different one. And so for a while we had other family members who would like pretend to gag around this child. Not appreciated, it's not funny to them. And you can actually trigger an incident, a phobic incident by doing things like that. So if you think you can kind of joke them out of it or whatever, I would like to dispel that myth. That will not work. And it actually is really invalidating and doesn't make them feel good at all. So there has to be a lot of room for letting them do what they need to do, their own coping skills. Sometimes that is removal or getting some space or whatever. There has to be room for that. But also being aware that, be kind. And it's a bummer that I should even have to say that but I've even seen that about other I think more common phobias. I know my cousin got trapped in a sleeping bag headfirst when she was little, and now is quite scared of enclosed spaces. And people will joke with her about oh, are you sure you want to get on that elevator and stuff? That's not helpful. So this is something that is very serious, especially to that person. And so they really appreciate when other people take it seriously, too, and leave room for their feelings.

K

Kira Dorrian 31:53

Yeah, I mean, I think you know, mental health is at a really fabulous tipping point at the moment. But we really need to think of it as any other type of diagnosis. So you know, if I don't know, it's not the same, and I want to be really clear, this isn't the same. But if your kid has asthma, you're not gonna make fun of their asthma, you're not gonna be pissed that their asthma affects your family life and, why can't you get over your asthma? You're going to go get them an inhaler, so that they can move through their life as normally as possible. This is exactly the same. So trying to break apart this idea that you're fine. Why are you not fine? Think of it like asthma. They're not fine, something happened. And it's scary.

D

Deana Thayer 32:35

And that inhaler, or in this case, the tools, you give them the tools to work with it. Don't take away their tools, and certainly don't belittle them for needing them.

K

Kira Dorrian 32:43

Yes, well said. Thank you. So I hope that was helpful. This is just like, is a like, dip a toe into this topic. I really can't believe that it is 33 minutes or something already. What I will say, one more thing about emetophobia because as I said, it's my favorite. Do look out for social anxiety. Because I think with most of the other phobias, it's pretty obvious what they're afraid of. But this one is sneaky. So if you have a child that's really struggling with social anxiety, or suddenly struggles, this is the other thing I see where out of nowhere they don't want to go school anymore, out of nowhere they don't want to go play anymore. That is probably worth saying, hey, did anybody throw up at school recently? Ask. Because if you get a yes, oh, that's probably what you're seeing. So if people have questions about this, I know it's a huge topic. Don't hesitate to write in [info@futurefocusedparenting.com](mailto:info@futurefocusedparenting.com). And I hope it's helpful. But normalize, normalize, love them, normalize. Love them. Normalize.

D

Deana Thayer 33:38

And did we mention normalize?

K

Kira Dorrian 33:39

I think we did.

D

Deana Thayer 33:41

I do have a quote today. And this is a little bit more about generic fear, but just a good way to think about it. And I'm so glad you talked about the, "hey, and then you could do it again next time." So you've removed this, I won't survive it again. So this is exactly kind of touching on that. And I didn't even know you were gonna say that. So this is by Henry Ford. And I am going to insert gender neutral language because girls get phobias, too. One of the greatest discoveries a person makes, one of their great surprises, is to find they can do what they were afraid they couldn't do. And that's empowering, right? And your little system, your cute little system is empowering them to go, oh, this was totally normal. And I can totally handle it if it happens again.

K

Kira Dorrian 34:22

Yeah, it's I mean, like I said this, my favorite part of my work was working with kids and watching them transform like that. And suddenly they're out in the world living and taking that with them into their adulthood. Like, oh, if I could get over that. What else can I do?

D

Deana Thayer 34:36

Yeah, thanks, Henry Ford, because these people are now doing things they thought they couldn't do. Because some other fear was preventing, I mean, whole facets of their life. I mean, wow, yeah, it's impactful.

K

Kira Dorrian 34:46

Totally. Well, thanks for listening everyone, to me just like ramble on about phobias. And especially if you don't have kids with phobias, but it's interesting, I think, I mean, I personally find the whole topic just so fascinating.

D

Deana Thayer 34:56

And I'm really hoping that listeners who maybe don't think they have a child with a phobia will now know how to spot it or might say, oh, I actually have seen some of these little red flags, and I want to pay attention. So I hope many people listen, even if they don't think it's directly applicable. That's my hope. So we're glad that you were here. And I think it was great that you rambled on because you just have a wealth of knowledge about this. So hooray for that. If you haven't lately thought about writing us a review, I'd like to encourage you to do that. It's so helpful with podcast relevancy, which means how fast can people find us and we want other people to know that this podcast exists. And so when there are positive reviews, and five star ratings, we pop up quicker, and then other people can get great intentional parenting advice. So that's our hope. Please consider doing that on whatever podcast platform you're listening to us on, we really appreciate them and they do make a difference. It's not just for your health, it's, it really is helpful. And we just want to say also that we appreciate those of you who've done so already. We're so thankful because we do recognize that even something small like that, it takes time and we just thank you for taking the time to shout us out or say what you've appreciated about the podcast. We are so glad you are with us today and we look forward to bringing you more great content next week. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer, and recorded in Kira's laundry room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



## Future Focused Parenting 34:57

Enjoying these transcribed episodes of Raising Adults? Consider receiving the Future Focused Parenting newsletter, where you'll receive sneak peeks, parenting tips, special offers, exclusive early access to podcast information, and more! Simply go to [bit.ly/raisingadultspodcast](https://bit.ly/raisingadultspodcast) to sign up. You can also connect with us on social media! We're on both Facebook and Instagram: @futurefocusedparenting. Our channels include podcast episode announcements, so you'll never miss new topics. We look forward to sharing more Future Focused Parenting content with you!