

Episode 56. Kids and Current Affairs

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SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Kira Dorrian, Future Focused Parenting



Future Focused Parenting 00:00

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 00:11

Hi everyone! Kira and Deana here with another episode of the Raising Adults podcast. And before we dive into our topic today, we want to let you know about something really exciting. Literally just a few weeks ago from the time of this recording, Kira and I filmed some amazing online course materials. And those are now available on our website. So if you go to Future Focused Parenting, got get that e-d in there, futurefocusedparenting.com and go to the shop tab, that's where you can purchase the videos. The other exciting thing about that, and then I want to tell you a little bit about what those are as well, is that if you're a podcast listener, you actually get a discount. So you'll want to put in the code Raising Adults, all in capital letters. So RAISINGADULTS all caps for 15% off discount on these online courses. And here are the three that we're offering. We have one that is both Kira and I really breaking down the facets of our parenting philosophy, Future Focused Parenting. It spells the word future. And you know me as the word nerd, I love acronyms. So it's six components, when put together really build a beautiful place to operate from as a parent. And so that one is both of us together.

And then we each did one individually around one of our areas of expertise as well. So Kira did an amazing course on emotional intelligence and really breaking down what does it look like to parent with empathy and to also help our kids understand other people's feelings. And that is, I got to sit and watch it, and I was even like, my business partner is amazing. So you will love it, it goes so much of a deeper dive than what we talked about on the podcast episode. And so it's really some helpful practical tools with a lot of tangible real world examples as well. And then I have an online course specifically around infant sleep. And what, what sets that one apart and I just want to be clear about is, it's really not a method of sleep training or something like that. It's really about a framework of principles that you can put into place that can help introduce some really gentle routine into your baby's day that can help your baby sleep better. And then of course, the nice side effect is it means the parents will sleep better as well. So that one also is an acronym, and it spells the word infant, appropriately. And so there's just six components there as well, that when you piece them together and layer them on each other, you can really help benefit from some better sleep. And what's great about the future focused fundamentals course, which is really like breaking down our philosophy is for our listeners, I think that the concepts aren't going to be new, but the way that we approach it step by step is going to be completely different than what you get on the podcast, because the podcast is pretty piecemeal, right? We talk about different topics, and how we apply our philosophy. But this is really a deep dive into the philosophy, and also really about setting up a parenting on the same page way of thinking, you know, we talked about that in an episode. But if you do have a parenting partner, or a co parent, this is a great tool for figuring out your values together, figuring out your whys together, figuring out how you're gonna tag team and work together to uphold those values, and really make your family system functional. So it's, it's great for our podcast listeners, because it will dovetail really nicely. But it's certainly not at all a repetition of what you get on the show. No, it's much deeper, and I think more comprehensive as well, because it's not just a why and then the topic. It's really the whole philosophy and how you put together all these different elements of being proactive and looking at your value system and parenting from intention and all of these things together to then apply it to anything that comes your way. Yeah. So if you're interested, go to futurefocusedparenting.com, go to the shop page, and we have a whole store on there now. It's all very exciting. And our ebooks are up there as well. So just be sure to check it out. And use that discount code Raising Adults for 15% off. Awesome. Well, I think I'll introduce this topic. And then I imagine we're probably going to hear more from you today. And I'll explain why in a moment. So we're going to talk about current affairs and news and how you address that with your children. How do you talk to them about what's going on, maybe right in your own community and what's going on in your country and what's going on in the world? And how do we address maybe even some of the harder things that come up because sometimes the news frankly, isn't all rainbows and unicorns. I mean, it can be hard things

that we hear about or read about or listen to on the radio or whatever. And, and so how we tackle this with wanting children who are informed and yet not totally afraid, is an important balance to strike. So we're going to chat about that today and how we've each handled it or not handled it as may be the case.

K

Kira Dorrian 05:15

Yeah, it's funny, I was actually thinking about it when I dropped the kids off at school this morning. And like, I don't know, I bet it's different even for my children than it was when Marc and Cienna were little because did they have lockdown drills, right? Deana shaking your head. No? Okay. So I'm going to share with our listeners something that like, it made me sad when I was dropping them off today, because it wasn't a new feeling. I'm aware that I have this feeling. But I have this topic that we are going to discuss today on my mind, and I'm dropping them off. And that same feeling comes up, they give me a kiss goodbye. And I tell them I love them. And my first thought every single time is, is today the day? Is today the day? And I hate that, I hate that I feel that way. And I hate that they carry some of that with them too, just by the nature of having a lockdown drill and being told what that's for, and why they might need it. And, and all of that. And I think that it just speaks to what really this next generation of kids are dealing with. And actually how important it is that we are conversing about it, I think, because it's not like it used to be. It's in their face. And so if we're not dialoguing with them, then it's in their face without us supporting it, which is not the same as when Marc and Cienna were small, and it was earthquake drills, right?

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Deana Thayer 06:31

Oh, yeah, earthquakes and fire drills at the Montessori. Now, Providence, they've always done lockdown drills. So for my kids that didn't start until first grade, lockdown drills. But when they were like pre K and K, no, none of that. And I think now, you know, it starts even in preschool for a lot of places.

K

Kira Dorrian 06:46

Yeah. So my why around this, and I am very vocal with my kids about current affairs, we're very careful about how we do it. But our kids are quite informed about what's going on, and have been really since a young age. And my why is really, I think, out of necessity, because of exactly what I said. It's in their face, whether we like it or not. And I want to make sure I'm the one talking with them about it, that they're hearing things from me to help demystify what's going on, that they're hearing our point of view. But also, you know, we've talked about this, Dave and I are really good about helping them see other points

of view as well. And that's important, I don't want them to just have this skewed one sided view that Dave and I happen to hold, I want them to know that other people think differently. And we have to engage with those ideas and try and see it from their point of view. And unfortunately, the news and current affairs are just a fabulous opportunity for that because we are, especially right now, just so divided here in the States. But as I mean, the whole world right now feels really divided. So I think that was a huge part of my why was that I wanted to make sure I was kind of in control and in charge of that. So that I felt like they were getting a healthy way of engaging with what was already kind of in their face anyway. But I also think, for our family, and I would venture to guess this is the same for maybe some families of color, and a few other minorities out there. You know, as Jewish people, we sort of have to have some hard conversations a lot earlier than other families, I think, you know, my family are Holocaust survivors. And so the kids have had to have that knowledge from a very young age, partially because I didn't want them to find out about it in school and come home and be like, hello, what? How have I not heard about this? But partially because it affects questions they ask about their family, you know, there's certain things that just come up as a result of their questions that bring us back to this really hard conversation about, well, this is a part of our family history, and something you need to know about. It speaks to you know, why Dave and I are worried about certain things like I was thinking again this morning after I dropped them off. I was thinking about Pittsburgh, because that came up in a conversation with some friends over the weekend. And I remembered, I don't think we ever shared this on the show. But I remember I called Deana, right after Pittsburgh happened, and we were talking about it. And I was saying I'm scared. Because I'm really out in the world now with this podcast as a Jewish person. And Deana asked, well, do you want to stop? Do we need to shut the show down? And it was such a huge conversation to be having and to be thinking even along those lines. And so I think, you know, the kids are smart, they pick up on things that Dave and I are talking about and worried about. And this is this massive part of their family history. So a lot of hard conversations happened in our home early on anyway. And to me some of the current affairs stuff is really no different. Does that make sense?

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Deana Thayer 09:50

It does. I obviously am not Jewish. So I haven't had some of those same issues. I think where we've had current affairs intersect on a personal level has more been that my kids don't look like me. And that's been really interesting. But I'll, I'll talk about my why first. And then...

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Kira Dorrian 10:08

Wait, can you explain that? Because people who don't know you...

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Deana Thayer 10:11

Yeah, so that is, so most people who are long term listeners know that I'm divorced and actually my kid's dad is Filipino. And so my kids are brown, and I look pretty Norwegian, which is what my heritage is. And we would sometimes in the news, when they would hear things about people being discriminated against based on their skin color, we'd get questions from them about that, and occasionally about the fact that we don't match. Uh, we would, it's a shame, maybe. But I think in some ways, it's really good that children have to grow a filter. Because we were presented sometimes with very bold questions that an adult would never have asked, like, are you adopted, and which, again, that one even frustrates me on a different level. Because it's like, I, I'd be fine with that, adoption is so beautiful and lovely. But even at our own school, I've had some other students say, oh, I didn't know Marc was your son, because he doesn't look like you, or he's brown. That's really, that's happened a lot. So when things in the news like that would happen, we'd sometimes have to have conversations and also explain that our family is this really amazing composition. But it's, it's true for those of you haven't seen them, they just they don't look Caucasian, the same way that I do. I look very, just Caucasian. So sometimes we even have a little intersection there. But my why was interesting. And I've admitted here and said all to you all as well, that I think you'll hear more from her because I actually just didn't do this when my children were younger. In terms of I didn't really talk about the news or current affairs. I just didn't volunteer. And it came from something that happened to me when I was younger, well not that happened to me, something I did. And this is vulnerable. But I think it really lends context, so I want to share it. But what happened is I made a misstep in terms of oversharing. And that really affected me and impacted me all the way into my own parenting journey. And so what happened is I was babysitting, and I let slip about a crime that had taken place, which I won't go into, because it truly was horrific. But I said it in front of the children that I was babysitting, and the mom called me later, and rightly so, and asked me about that. But I was so horrified and felt so bad. And just so you know, it had a happy ending. I still got to work for that family. I think they saw my genuine remorse and that it truly came from a place of naivete, not maliciousness. But because I had made such a grievous misstep as a teenager, it's stuck with me forever. And I think my, my overt and maybe too intense concern against oversharing led me to under share for a lot of years. Now that my kids are older, I mean, we absolutely talk about current events. And I couldn't agree more with you here, I felt like it was also a great place to do a couple of things. One is impart our own opinions and values and like how do we look at this? And in our family how do we maybe look at it through a lens as a Christian? Or how would we look at it through a biblical lens, but also what are other people thinking? So having those conversations was really helpful. But I also think it was important just in terms of them not being sheltered, for lack of a better word. We, we have, I think, in our area of the world, a pretty great situation, or compared to most of the world in an affluent society. My kids are in a private school, I think that can be a little bit

insulating. And so it was just important to me that they weren't in this complete bubble. But admittedly, due to that early misstep, I didn't talk a lot with them about this when they were younger. And Kira asked a great question before we started recording and asked, well, how did that go? And the truth is, we didn't watch TV. And I only let my children watch videos that I had pre screened, essentially, and we didn't listen to the radio. And so actually, it went okay, because I wasn't fielding a lot of questions necessarily about things that had happened in the news. But I also wasn't volunteering. And I could have done a better job of just giving them some framework for what was going on in life. And I just didn't do it. Because that, that event really impacted me. I felt terrible, and that, I carried that for a long time. It just goes to show that things that happen even a long time ago, and we talk all the time about being aware of not only experiences you've had and things you've done, but also your family of origin and the whole know thyself, being able to take a personal inventory, what things about you and how you're wired, or about how your parents handled things might you be carrying. And, and for me, that mistake I made I carried. I mean, I think it's an interesting time to be a parent. Like I was just thinking about the conversations we've had to have like since the election alone, I mean, just to bring up a current affair. That is a continuous bone of contention for both sides right now, right? Everybody's angry with everybody. And it's just such a mess. And it comes up at dinner parties, and you know, everyone's talking about it. And so I think it's, that's partly why we want to have conversations with our kids about it so that, you know, they're not just internalizing all that stuff, and not getting a chance to ask the questions. But I will say, I mean, I've been at your house, Deana, where your children were a part of a very lively discussion about right after the election, and were welcomed into that. So I know that that's something that must have shifted at a certain point for you, because they are so well spoken about these things, and passionate about them and able to engage. I remember, right after the election, and this is going to come as no surprise to our listeners. But Dave and I don't vote Republican. And so right after the election, some friends came to visit from California who voted for President Trump. And we had had conversations about this in our home. And I remember Rhys asking, do you think they still love us? And it did prompt this whole conversation about, of course, they still love us, and we still love them. And you know, we need to be able to dialogue about this. But it doesn't threaten the love between us. And so when they came to visit, Rhys asked, like, do you still love us? And they were like, of course, we still love you. Like, Rhys asked, what made you choose to vote for President Trump? And our friends gave some very, you know, thoughtful answers about that. And so I think that, you know, diving into current affairs can be such a, it's important, but I think it's also like what we've been saying, a really great opportunity to help them open their eyes to all the different ways that the world functions and all the different places where we agree and disagree, and try and create a more understanding next generation, which right now is challenging. It's a tall order.

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Kira Dorrian 16:59

Yeah. Cuz our generations not doing an amazing job about this.

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Deana Thayer 17:03

No, the modeling isn't fantastic here.

K

Kira Dorrian 17:06

So how do we talk to them about these things, I think that it's really important that we are thinking about the kid version, without pulling punches. So it's sort of like what we talked about on the grief episode, we need to say the word died, right? We don't want to say pass away, or something kind of fluffy. We don't want to make it fluffy. But maybe we're not going to give all the details about how someone died. So same thing with the Holocaust as a great example. So my children know that there was this huge event where millions of Jews were killed. But they don't know about the gas chambers, because they're eight, they don't really need to know about that. But they do need to know the framework of what happened, why it happened, and how that pertains to our family, our family dynamic, and also why we have some fear right now, because of what's going on in the world. That there's a history there that lends itself to how we feel as we move through the world as a Jewish or mostly Jewish family. So I think, I think that's the first thing is, is not being, not shying away from these topics, but thinking about framing them in very clean, concise and simple ways so that you have the ability to answer the questions, but you're not giving so many details that it's overwhelming. You know, things that are a great way of thinking about it is, but what are, what are the details that would show up in a dream or a nightmare? Let's avoid those. But the framework is important for them to understand. So same thing when the cabinet trial was happening that brought up some conversations in our home about sexual assault and the me too movement. And so, you know, we did not describe rape in detail. But we explained that sometimes the situation arises where a person is taken advantage of with their body and their bodies not being treated as their own. And that can feel really scary. And this is the way that you need to be prepared to protect yourself. So I think it like I said, it's about taking the over arching concept and having a conversation about that without all the gory details. And those details will emerge as they get older. So, for example, when we first started talking about the Holocaust, it was in these simple terms, there was a man named Hitler. He killed a lot of Jews. He did, and a lot of other people because we also talk about that. But later down the line, as questions started coming, it came out that my grandfather had a wife and a two year old son who were killed in the camps. And that detail was really hard on my kids, they were really upset about that particular detail. So it was important that it had a trickle effect that it wasn't like, here's every piece of information that's horrible that you need to

know about right now. It was like there's a framework, and then as the questions started coming, they're engaging with each more horrific piece a little more slowly. Does that make sense?

D Deana Thayer 20:01

Yeah, that actually reminds me of a lot of the topics we've addressed, where it's an ongoing conversation that unfolds over time, and as they're more developmentally able to handle more and more information.

K Kira Dorrian 20:13

The one thing that I will say, and I don't know what this is, look like in your house, but the one thing that we have chosen not to talk about with our kids are school shootings. They have lockdown drills, they're, they're told why. And we've sort of left it at that, because it is one area where, you know, there's a big difference between having a major concept out there like anti semitism, and someone could come to your school and shoot it all up, right? That, there's a very, very big difference between their day to day engagement with something. If they had questions, we would absolutely answer them. But it's, that's been an area that felt so close to home, that it was like, I just want to protect them from that as long as possible. But with some of these bigger issues that affect the country, or affect politics, or the world, those are the things that we've really leaned into, to help them think about it.

D Deana Thayer 21:02

Well, and I think that makes perfect sense. There's, it's okay to decide, and it might be something different in your home, but it's okay to decide for your family, you know, this one we're not going to volunteer information about. We'll be happy to answer questions if and when they arise. But we aren't going to put in this seed of fear in their minds, and have them possibly going to school scared every day. And I mean, that can breed a whole host of side effects. So I think making some strategic choices about, are there topics that you're just not going to go there, or at least not for now. Makes perfect sense to me.

K Kira Dorrian 21:38

Yeah. And I think it's a lot like what we said on the sex episode, you know, we cannot bury our head in the sand about these things and think that, okay, I just, I'm never going to talk about it, right. Like, I'll just keep putting that off and putting that off, because I think you said so perfectly, if you don't talk about it with them, someone else is going to. So it has to

come from us. And I think sometimes parents really underestimate what kids can handle, and, and how much they see. Like they know, they can see when we're stressed or scared or processing something big. And I think that it's just really important that we let them know, they're welcome to be a part of this conversation. Because if you don't do it, someone else is going to. So I think, you know, parents shy away from the sex talk. They shy away from talking about female menstrual cycles, I see that a lot like people are terrified to talk to their kids about this. And it's like, but God forbid, your kid gets their period. And you haven't had that conversation.

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Deana Thayer 21:38

Yeah, like, am I dying?

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Kira Dorrian 21:52

Yeah, exactly. Let's please have that conversation. So I think it's about that, like figuring out what are the, what are the first simple steps that feel good? How do we kind of ease into some of these things? Because it's a beautiful thing to expose your kids to the world we live in, and the complexities of the world we live in. And I think this is probably one area where the faith paradigm is so great, because you know, we've talked about this before, but in our house, there's a lot of like, I don't know, it's madness, the world makes no sense. You know, we can't comfort our children with something in the way that I would assume a faith paradigm can. And I think what you said is, is spot on, like current affairs are a great opportunity for us to impart our own values and talk about why we believe the things that we believe, but then also this fabulous opportunity to flip that and go, and did you know people believe the opposite of that? Isn't that fascinating? Like, let's think about... and we do this a lot like, we were talking about the detention camps for kids. That did not go down well in our home either. The kids were obviously devastated. And so we were talking about it, and they were really angry and upset, like, families belong together. This is ridiculous, blah, blah, blah. And we were saying like, look, we agree with you. But I want you to think about why someone might make this choice. What are the reasons behind it, because it's not a random decision. There is someone out there thinking this is a good choice. Let's try and understand what they're thinking. We don't have to agree with it. But it takes away this idea that it's like some, you know, a-hole out there, that's making this decision, and it makes no sense and they're an idiot. As opposed to looking at, we really strongly disagree with this. But we want to understand why they're making the choice that they make, so that we can work to fix it in a way that creates an actual conversation.

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Deana Thayer 24:26

Yeah, that makes sense. And I think it's important in terms of just even the recognition that there are people who disagree on myriad issues, almost everything. But what I love that you just said right there that I wanted to just jump on for a second is also then the assumptions that can come with that where we're really in a divided place right now in our world. But what comes with that, then is the assumption that oh, this person disagrees with me. They must be a bad person or uninformed or an idiot or fill in the blank. We get into this place of characterizing the person rather than characterizing, hey, I really disagree with that argument they're making, it doesn't mean they're overall a worthless human being.

K

Kira Dorrian 25:09

I just love that, like, that's so true. And it's so important that we are encouraging our children to see the world that way. Because that will lead to the next generation, having better discourse and having better just conversations and an approach an empathetic and understanding approach in a way that our generation is miserably failing at right now,

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Deana Thayer 25:30

I'm glad you brought up the empathy thing, too, because what it reminds me of is how you always talk about separating feelings from behavior. And I think in this case, we have to be able to teach our children to separate an opinion or a belief from the person, those things have to be able to be pulled apart. Another thing that I've actually learned personally, but I imagine it might apply it to some of our listeners, so I want to mention it, is that we're not all naturally inclined to be news hounds, and really interested in what's going on in the world. Some people are very interested and will have even the cable news outlets just kind of on in the background in their home, or they're constantly reading online or on their phones, and just really staying up to date. And it's very interesting to them, what is going on socially, what is going on politically. And for other people, that's not the case. And what I learned is that it's really important to educate yourself, because you may end up with children who are interested, and they are going to bring you questions. And you don't want to be ill equipped to field those questions or to have discussion with them or be able to carry on an intelligent dialogue. And this really hit home for me because I had a daughter who was interested in journalism. And as she was learning to write with a voice for news, she became a consumer of the news and became quite passionate about it, and actually did her junior thesis on why young people should consume the news, even in this era of fake news. And how important she felt that was that they still get informed. And even when there's things that might be false, how to separate

out good sources and still be a consumer of the news. And so what I quickly learned is that in my house, you are not going to get by with not knowing what's going on, you have to know. So I just want to encourage parents that it's, it is important to be informed. And you may have to go a little bit outside of your own comfort zone, or maybe even explore some topics that aren't of huge interest to you so that you can be helpful in in being a kind of a mentor and a coach for your children about how to look at these things. Because they may even be more interested than you are. And so it becomes really important to help guide that dialogue.

K

Kira Dorrian 27:35

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I hope it's been somewhat helpful to think about how we can talk to our kids about some of these things that are huge and hard and to think about it from exactly what Deana just said, like making sure that we ourselves are informed, especially if our children are showing an interest, and making sure that if we have littles that we are talking about it, but framing it in ways that are more broad strokes, allowing them to engage with the topic, but without the nitty gritty details. And then as those questions come in, they get older, starting to fill in those details slowly but surely. But most importantly, I think the main message is also making sure that you are having these conversations so that you are the one guiding it, so that you are the one processing with them. And kind of controlling the narrative in a way that is positive for your family, positive for your children and, and really is going to benefit them and hopefully the world.

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Deana Thayer 28:30

Yeah, again, it's that proactive approach. You don't want to be on your heels because they're asking you a question because they heard it from a friend. So you have a really special opportunity here and you're uniquely poised to be a presenter of facts and ideas and information. And to be that first and most important teacher again, like we always talk about.

K

Kira Dorrian 28:50

So be sure to check out those videos we talked about and use that discount code Raising Adults to get 15% off of the online courses that are now available go to futurefocusedparenting.com. We, you may have noticed have been more active on social media lately. And so be sure to follow us @FutureFocusedParenting on both Instagram and Facebook. Thank you so much for listening. We just love all of you and are so grateful that we get to talk about parenting every single week. We love it. We love it so much. Next week is our last episode before we break for the holidays. We will take a break from the

week of Thanksgiving all the way through the new year. So next week, we are going to be talking about the holidays and all the different nuances of that and fun things to be thinking about with your kids and especially if you're visiting family and dealing with family and mixed faith families or not it's going to be a doozy. It'll be so great. So join us next week before the break and thank you for listening.



Deana Thayer 29:54

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 30:01

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