

Spin Cycle - Natural Consequences

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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 00:23

Hey, everyone, it's Kira and Deana here with a spin cycle today, and so we're going to answer a listener question. And we love when you guys do this. So if you end up listening to an episode and it sparks a question, or you just have something you wish we had addressed that we haven't yet, please reach out to us. Even though we at Raising Adults are all about trying to plan and be prepared, we like when a random question comes in, because then we can address it. And who knows? For every question that somebody was brave enough to ask, I'm sure there were a lot of other parents with that same question. So please do that. And if you have those, you can find us at info@futurefocusedparenting.com. And we do have one today. So today on Raising Adults, we get to hear a question from Julie. Will you read the question for us Kira? And then we'll jump in?

K

Kira Dorrian 01:08

I sure will, okay. So Julie says, I have a son, who for the most part is a very good listener. But when he's not, I struggle to find appropriate consequences. I believe in natural consequences. But sometimes I struggle to identify one and I was hoping to hear your take on that. Also, I sometimes worry I'm overdoing it with the punishment, and I'm trying to figure out how to establish fair ground rules that are age appropriate. Great. Great question, Julie. And so what do you think Deana?

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Deana Thayer 01:36

Well, I think one of the first things is whenever we can remove the battle, we always advocate that. So let life be your child's teacher. And so when possible, and it sounds like she's already doing this, which is wonderful, you let the natural consequences fall. So if they choose not to bring a jacket, wow, it's sad that you're cold today, but you chose not to bring a jacket. Maybe you'll do something different next time. Or they don't get ready in time and don't have shoes on, those tootsies are gonna be cold. Things like that, where you can let life be the teacher. And the good news is, you know, she has a five year old, but this can happen really well even later on. So if you don't keep your phone charged, and it's your alarm clock, wow, when you can't get up in time, and now you're late for school, that's a bummer. So I would say one of the first things, and again, to reiterate, it does sound like this is where she's already leaning, but look for is there a way life can do it instead of me? So we're not fighting or having a battle of the wills. Anytime you can do that that's preferable. And then I would say where it's not as obvious, that's when you find what matters to your kiddo. What are the things that are important to them? Or that they really enjoy, that you might be able to limit, or even eliminate for a time as a loss of privilege? And let that be your consequence.

K

Kira Dorrian 02:50

Yeah, I totally agree. I think that, you know, sometimes life will dole out the natural consequences. Sometimes I find I have to dole out the quote, unquote, natural consequence. Like a great example is, I think I talked about this on an episode. But there was a time when one of my kiddos was being destructive with their things. And so they lost their things. And that, life wouldn't have done that. I had to sort of say, you know, the natural consequence of you not valuing and treating your things carefully, is that you don't get to have those things for a little while. But I love that she touched on, because you hear this all the time. And it's something you and I are just driven crazy by other parenting philosophies and books out there that are all theory and not tangible. And I think this is a great example of, there's all this stuff out there about natural consequences. But what no one's talking about is, well, what do you do if there isn't one? Because

sometimes they're just isn't.

D

Deana Thayer 03:39

Yes, sometimes there's not something that will match exactly.

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Kira Dorrian 03:41

A great example is hitting, like if one kid hits the other, the natural consequence is that I smack them? No, that's not what I want to do. So look, at that point, we're moving into, you used this great word currency, like what's your kid's currency? So for mine, it's television. So taking away a TV privilege is like, the be all end all. And they will do pretty much anything to avoid it. So if I have to give a consequence that isn't natural, I'll usually say I'm so sorry. But you're not going to get your show privilege today.

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Deana Thayer 04:11

You know, and you touched on something else that's great when you said you have to sometimes dole out the natural consequence. I think with younger children, it also might mean that sometimes you as a parent have to explain the consequence life gave them because they might not make that connection. So even though it was truly a natural consequence, they might need a little explanation around that. Oh, you're feeling chilly? Well, it's because you didn't bring your jacket when I gave you that option this morning. You chose no, even though I suggested it based on the weather. So that's what happens when we choose things like that. So they might need to understand how to connect that choice with what comes with it. And I do think they need a little guidance on that. So when you say dole out, you might have to actually pick the consequence like with removing the toys, right? But it also could take the form of explaining the natural consequences just so they get to see what that's about.

K

Kira Dorrian 04:59

I love that you said that, thank you for saying that because that's, that's so important, that little piece, because if they don't put those two pieces together, then actually you've missed the opportunity for them to realize they've had a consequence. And it's so easy for kids to put that on you, especially their moms, I feel like, you know, like, you did this. It's like, actually, you did this, you know, and just that, just that gentle reminder of I gave you these choices, you made your choice, especially for kids that are like, they know their own mind, and they're really clear on their choices. That's okay, you made that choice. But let me help you understand the fallout of that.

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Deana Thayer 05:32

Yeah. Because they, you're right, sometimes the blame can get shifted, or well, then you should have still brought my coat. Instead of, I gave you the option. And this is what you picked. So I think this is so great, too, because it's a foundation of a life lesson that goes all the way through, where understanding that when you choose something, you choose the consequences that come with it. So you don't get to just choose something in isolation. There's things that come with those choices. And that is the foundation or the building block of starting to understand that choices have gravity.

K

Kira Dorrian 06:03

Absolutely, good and bad, right? It's what you say all the time that I'm saying yes to this, but then I'm also saying yes to this. And I'm saying no to that, right? So if I'm saying yes to choosing to not take my coat, I'm also saying yes to being cold. I don't know what you did around this, but I, I tried to give sort of at least one depending on the age, at least one kind of like, oh, I'll come in and save you. So you know, oh, I don't want my coat. I would have the coat in the backseat. Once. Be like, oh, you're cold? Yeah, that's probably because you didn't you know, especially when they were like three, four years old. Like, okay, I'm gonna have the coat this time. Next time I'm not, and then I wouldn't the next time, I would always follow that through. What did you do?

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Deana Thayer 06:44

I'm just grateful you said this. The reason I'm grinning from ear to ear, which our listeners can't see is this happened just today.

K

Kira Dorrian 06:50

What?

D

Deana Thayer 06:51

So, yes, with a 15 year old, I had to give a grace pass. So we have a, just a policy, it's not a rule, because he's very close to no rules. But a policy that you get three wakeups per trimester if you oversleep your alarm, and then that next time, I'll just leave you. I gotta go, I got things to do. I might be recording that day, or I have to go to work. And wow, that's a bummer. You're gonna have some makeup schoolwork. And he doesn't drive yet, so he can't save the day for himself. So he's only had one so far. And then last night, he said, my phone is almost dead. But I really like to fall asleep with music. Will you wake me

tomorrow? And I was half asleep. So I just said yes. But then this morning, I said, so I'm curious if you think that wake up should count today. Because that was a choice you made knowing where your phone was, that you chose, I'll put in my headphones rather than charge it. And which by the way, I can't express the irritation with that new thing where the charging cable is the same port as the headphones. So I understand there is some frustration there with that new situation. But it was interesting. He thought he should get a freebie. And I really thought that because it was his choice...

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Kira Dorrian 08:05

Oh, totally.

D

Deana Thayer 08:05

He looked at it and was like, my phone might die in the night because I'm choosing to listen to music. And I'm still saying, Mom, will you just come stand in the gap? But he wasn't really seeing that. And we kind of talked through it. And so I did end up, I said, I'm gonna give you grace on this one, because we didn't talk in advance about what our policy would be if you choose something and ask for a wakeup. But my concern is if every time you know that that doesn't count, you'll ask me for this kind of help all the time. So today, it's not going to count. But in the future, if you make a choice that requires you to ask me to wake you, it's going to count against your three for the trimester. So it's just interesting that you said that just today.

K

Kira Dorrian 08:37

But I love it. Here's what I love about that. And and, you know, look, it's, it's tough. I think when you see, I see myself as a strict parent, I don't know if you feel the same.

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Deana Thayer 08:47

Oh, for sure.

K

Kira Dorrian 08:48

Okay. So it's really tough when you see yourself as a strict parent to, how do I want to say this? I think when you're seen by the outside world as a strict parent, not everyone gets to see what's happening within the context of that. And what you said is exactly what's happening. I think for a lot of us, myself included, things come up all the time, where I'm like, wow, you didn't know that. And I didn't know that you didn't know that. And I'm not

going to punish you for that. That is not your responsibility. But what happens now is we have to have a conversation, set a policy and then moving forward, it is your responsibility. And to me that takes the sting out of being quote unquote, strict. It's not like you're, you know, a dictator. And it's not like it's my way or the highway. And I do think that a lot of strict parents go too far in that direction. We talk about those extremes all the time. To me, it's the strong boundaries, but room for my mistakes, their mistakes, us just stumbling onto life giving us something we haven't talked about before, and having some patience and grace within that to go okay, this is no one's fault. But what do we do moving forward? And that, to me, is the difference. It's like that, that isn't strict. I don't even love that word, because I don't think that's what we're doing. But I, you can be perceived that way from the outside world. So moving into the second part of Julie's question, in terms of what's the appropriate amount of discipline, I think that having that mindset is really important that it's like, if this is something that we've discussed, that's a rule in our family or a value in our family, and your child's going against that, we have to discipline. We have to say, hey, that's not okay. This is going against the foundation that we've set up that you know about. But when stuff happens that is unforeseen, then you don't have to be disciplinary. And in those moments, you're allowed to sort of have that dialogue, as long as you're clear next time, I will be.

D

Deana Thayer 10:40

I agree, because there isn't a reason they should be penalized for something that hasn't been created yet. And I think it, it also prevents from going too far into where it's just super legalistic, because if I was going to be technically legalistic, and by the book, anytime I wake him, whether it's asked for or not, whatever, it would count. Instead of saying, wow, this exact scenario really hasn't happened before. We get to talk about it. And so I love that Julie asked about that, because her question about whether, whether she's going overboard, how to know kind of when, that's such a good distinction you're making about when it's worth intervening. And we've talked about that before, if it's an actual moral inventory type of thing, or it's going to bump up against your family values and they're actually going against something that you've said, as a family this is important to us, then of course you intervene. But on other things, or where you haven't created a policy yet, or maybe it's something that's truly amoral or a preference, or they're doing something that's frustrating you, but it's not wrong, I think that's a hard one too, right? Where we have to look at it in the moment, especially with younger ones. Are they actually being defiant? Or are they just being a kid? And that can be a hard one, too. And I think it really can be tempting to step into too much discipline for just being a kid. And so we have to watch for that line, too.

K

Kira Dorrian 10:47

Yeah. I love that you said that. Because this crossed my mind the other day. I think I'm sometimes surprised when I see parents who are, it's like they're angry with their kids for being kids. And I think when we choose to have kids, we're choosing to have kids, and kids are annoying, and loud. And they make bad choices, because they don't know they're bad choices. Yes, sometimes they make bad choices, even though they do know what a bad choice is. And so like in terms of having reasonable expectations, they're going to do these things. And I say that to my kids all the time. Like, yeah, you, you messed that up, that's okay. That's what you're supposed to do. That, that's how you learn in your adulthood not to do that again, like, I'm not upset with you for messing up. But I also have to make sure that you learn something from it. And so I'm going to take TV away today, or you know, whatever it is. That it's not from, like, I'm angry with you for being a child, it's, my job is to teach you. This is part of how I do that.

D

Deana Thayer 12:49

Yes. And so it's really challenging, though, to not intervene sometimes just when we're frustrated. So I think also parents have a job here to check themselves. And this is also a great opportunity. Just one more thing I'll mention, I think it's a great opportunity to talk context, because you might be feeling really frustrated that your child is being loud and raucous, but you realize, we're at home, and they're not bothering anybody else. But it could give you a great chance maybe even later at dinner, to say hey, it was so fun watching you play and be so crazy this afternoon. Just a reminder, we don't do that at church, or at school, or whatever. You might be able to have a conversation about, there's a time and a place for that. And I'm so glad that home is a safe place for you to do that. Just a reminder that that kind of yelling and shouting, we'd really want to save for home and not somewhere else. So I love that. It also not only has the parent check in and make sure they're not just giving into frustration, but can lead to a learning opportunity for the child.

K

Kira Dorrian 13:43

Yeah, I think there's questions one can ask themselves in that situation, right? Is my kid breaking a family value? Or a rule that we've put in place that's important to us? And then is my kid being a kid? Now that doesn't mean that oh, well, they're being a kid. So whatever. But do I then need to come at this? Like, I think for me, there's a really big difference between you, you deliberately disobeyed me, makes me frustrated, right? And I'm gonna have bigger feelings about that, than you made a bad choice. Kids make bad choices. And now we're going to talk about that. So asking yourself, you know, is my kid just being a kid? How does that then shape how you handle it?



Deana Thayer 14:21

Yes. Okay. I love that. You talked about asking yourself questions. Can I add one more to the list? Oh my gosh, it's worth asking. Do I think my child's making this decision out of ignorance or out of defiance? Do they not know the rule or they know it and are really breaking it on purpose? Such an important distinction to make because one leads to a conversation to help them know, that's a teaching moment, versus a discipline moment if they're rebelling.



Kira Dorrian 14:50

I love you. Will you be my mom? Yay. Well, Julia, I hope that was helpful and other people listening. I hope that helps you too. Don't forget, as Deana said, you can write in anytime info@futurefocusedparenting.com. If you have any sticky situations you want to work through with us on a, in a private one on one session. We love coaching so don't hesitate to reach out for that too. Raising Adults is produced by Deana Thayer and Kira Dorrian and recorded in my laundry room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 15:16

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