

Spin Cycle - Parenting Questions During COVID-19

Sun, 10/11 6:26PM 24:45

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

parent, kids, feelings, question, family, thoughtful, weekends, playdate, deana, home, listeners, snuggle, feel, long term impact, validate, tools, people, eat, reintegrate, toilet paper

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.



Kira Dorrian 00:19

Well, hi, everyone, and welcome back to Raising Adults podcast. Thank you so much for being with us today, and for continuing to listen to our show. We hope that it has proven to be a source of comfort to hear our little voices and that it continues to be helpful in your parenting journey. We're doing a little spin cycle today, we got some listener questions that were really about what's going on right now and the bananas-ness of...And so we just wanted to speak to that. We're really trying to make sure that the show itself is not all about COVID. Because goodness gracious, we're all, that's all we hear all the time all day long. But I also I think we really appreciate that a lot of us are as parents, are extremely impacted right now. And so a lot of the questions that are coming up, are directly related to this crisis. So we want to make sure that we get a chance to answer those too. So we're going to take just a few minutes today to answer those listener questions. Deana has, unsurprisingly, an incredible acronym for you today that will help

you survive COVID if you follow this acronym, so let's talk about the listener question. So we got, who, we have one from Claire, who asks, how do I differentiate between the days? And how do I set good boundaries around when it's school time and when it's not school time, and when it's work time and when it's the weekend, when all of the days are blurring into one another? And then we got a question from our coaching group that we're running that I think is really worth talking about as well. One of our members said, what is the long term impact on our children going to be? And that's just a huge question. So let's start with the easier one.

D

Deana Thayer 01:40

Yes. Yes, please.

K

Kira Dorrian 01:43

Deana, what do you think?

D

Deana Thayer 02:10

Well, this is really an interesting, yeah, this is definitely an interesting one for me, since I have olders. And so our weekdays and weekends are a little bit more clearly delineated, just because there's days where we're all working and doing school, and then there's those couple days where we aren't. And so our weekend is noticeable by what is absent. And that would be the online coursework or my husband and myself working. But I think with, with younger kids, probably a better way to delineate is by what is, not what's absent, but what's included. So maybe you recognize that each day is kind of running into the other and they don't look very different if you don't have things like school or those activities anymore, that used to mark time, but you can make sure to include special things that delineate your weekend. So what I mean by that, just a couple of ideas is maybe you purposely and during this time, there's no real negative impact to it, purposely bedtime is a little later on the weekends. Or we have family movie night, or tonight, when we got that Instacart order of groceries, we bought some special treats, and we're gonna get to eat them somewhere we don't usually eat. So these are like things I did also. When my kids were little, we did not eat in the living room. But during special times, it was like, all bets are off. So your weekends might be marked by those kind of special things. You know what, it's Friday, it's family movie night. You know what, it's Saturday, we get to bring popcorn into the living room, or today, we're going to all snuggle together in bed and stay and read a story. And it might be what you choose to put in that makes it look like you know, this is a different kind of family time, a different kind of togetherness, a different kind of relaxation, to also set up that mental break, which I think we all need right now,

any kind of a mental break from what can seem a little bit monotonous right now. So that's just a thought. Because for us, I think it's a little easier because the weekends are more noticeable by what's missing. But I think we can make a weekend look cool by what's included.

K

Kira Dorrian 04:11

Yeah, I mean, you just basically said what we're doing. And we have as I've mentioned on the show, we have a weekly family night. It used to be on Thursdays, we've moved it to Friday specifically for what you just said. It was like we need to mark that the week is done. Our family nights have run on a theme for a while. So you know we draw names. So we go in a rotation of four weeks, and everybody gets their name drawn. And they get to pick based on that theme. So for example, we did a month where it was going out to dinner and everybody whose name was drawn got to pick where we ate. And so we decided that while we're in this, it's about movies. It's like well, what else can you do? So the person, we get, we have a movie night, every Friday night. It's the night we do frozen pizza. It's just like, I never thought I'd be excited about frozen pizza. But I am, because we're not doing any deliveries. So I'm, so we have pizza and a movie night. And then we just started a new round of family night and Dave came up with karaoke dares. So we now start with like, our karaoke dare. And then we eat pizza and watch a movie. And so that's been hugely, hugely helpful. And then we also do something called tools down. And Dave, and I've always done this with each other, like, when, when's tools down? Meaning like, when are we done working, and we're focused on each other, and computers go away. And so we have tools down, it's like tools down at three o'clock every day, the kids are done, they're done with school, I'm done with work, you know, we all work to kind of get to that. My husband obviously has to go a little bit later than that, but that they, they know there's like this end time, tools down, and it kind of, it marks that, that time for them. And then on the weekends our kids get, they get to, it's more about us, we get to sleep till eight o'clock, they're not allowed to wake us until eight o'clock. And so that eight o'clock sign goes on the door. And so it's those little things. It is those little markers in time that kind of help kids recognize something is different.

D

Deana Thayer 06:01

I love that. We do something similar. It's not tools down. But if we're at a meal, or we're, well, when we used to be able to be out and about somewhere, we did what we call the phone stack. So everyone would stick their phone in a pile on the table or whatever surface we were at so that nobody was going to be looking at their phone while we interacted together, whether we were playing a board game or whether we were eating a meal. And so that's cute. The tools down reminds me of the phone stack.

K Kira Dorrian 06:24
Oh, I love, wait, wait, the phone stack. I have been working with you for so many years now. And you still say stuff that I'm like, oh, that's brilliant. It's really good. I love it.

D Deana Thayer 06:37
Okay, I have to actually give my ex husband credit for that one. He's, he's done that for years. And, and does it during his time with the kids as well. And then it's kind of leaked over and now it's across homes. Everyone knows what the phone stack is. So kudos to Miller on that one. And but please, you must explain a karaoke dare. What is this?

K Kira Dorrian 06:57
Oh, it's brilliant. So it's, um, you know, we all, we all sit in the living room. And then we dare each other to sing a song along with Alexa. And, and it's adorable. So we just did our first round on Friday, and I had to sing Castle on a Cloud.

D Deana Thayer 07:12
Oh, lovely.

K Kira Dorrian 07:13
From Les Miz. And then I had an extra dare because obviously my song was super simple. So Dave was like, you have to sing Castle on a Cloud, you have to be on your knees sweeping. And, and you have to work in the words married at first sight, because that's my favorite show. Um, and so I say like, there is a lady all in white likes to watch married at first sight. That was how I did it. And like my dad, we just reintegrated with my dad, which was oh my gosh, like he was downstairs for five weeks facetimeing us because we were so worried the kids had been at school and exposed. And finally we're all back together again. And that has been epically wonderful. And it was extremely teary and beautiful when we reunited, and so he had to sing Old MacDonald. So it's brilliant. It's been, it's been fun. We're getting creative. You know, we're getting creative with how to, how to make it through.

D Deana Thayer 08:11
I can vouch for the epically awesome part. You guys, Kira sent me the video of her kids hugging grandpa for the first time after so long, it literally made me teary. It was the best.

K

Kira Dorrian 08:21

Oh my goodness, it was really special. And we're, we're very aware that we're very lucky because a lot of people are not, are not there yet. So very, very grateful that he's with us.

D

Deana Thayer 08:30

Or don't have one nearby where, after a set time, maybe it felt safe to reintegrate. And because I know I'm really missing my parents. I haven't seen them since Christmas. And so you know, meaning my kids haven't seen their grandparents in a long time either. So absolutely. It's a challenging time in different ways for, for different families. So should we dive into this more challenging question where the honest answer is we don't know. I mean, there is this element. And, Julie, what a great question. And how thoughtful of you to be thinking about that. That is a future focused question for sure. And I do think, and Kira, I really want to hear from you as a mental health professional, I do think people in the mental health world are going to be looking at this for quite some time. But it's true that there's some element of uncertainty where we can't really know the full fallout of this until we follow this generation for a while and see, see what the impact is. I think it's really more about what are our responses like in the meantime? And are there maybe things we can be doing to mitigate, I don't think eliminate is probably an appropriate word here, I think there is going to be impact. It's really, what is that going to look like? And how severe will it be? But are there things that we can do as a parent maybe to mitigate that and to navigate these waters to the best of our ability?

K

Kira Dorrian 09:42

Yeah, I mean, I don't want to sugarcoat things guys, I think the fallout's big and I think it's bad. I don't think, I don't think we can overestimate the impact this is going to have on our kids and I think a lot depends on how privileged your family is, and how happy your home is, you know. I think kids who are in happy homes where they have enough to eat, and they're warm, and they have parents who love them, and are, you know, on the whole, doing a really good job to navigate their feelings, and blah, blah, blah, those kids are going to come out a lot better. And kids who are hungry or whose parents have to keep working, that can't work from home. And now we're trying to figure out all those things, and kids who are in abusive homes like this is, I mean, truly, there has never been a greater example of class distinction than then this. In, in my own personal experience of like, wow, this is so dependent on what those homes look like. I think for the families who are really genuinely caring about their kids' feelings and emotions, which I would venture to guess is all of our listeners, I think that there's stuff that's going to be hard. I think kids are gonna probably experience some fear around reintegrating. What that's gonna be like, can I really go to that playdate? Can I really hug my friend? I think we're gonna see things like

we did, probably with kids who grew up in the Great Depression. You know, there's a, there's a real feeling of scarcity starting even amongst people who are not financially impacted. There's no toilet paper, there's no hand sanitizer, you know, that, that feeling of even in our home, we're like, you know, we're limiting snacks, because we can't guarantee next week we're going to get those snacks and things like that, I think will, will have an impact. Saying that, here's the good news. I also think for families that are being thoughtful about this, there could be an amazing positive effect of families having been brought closer together, families feeling better connected, families being more creative, families slowing down, and really getting thoughtful, when we do kind of go back out into the world, about what do I want to put back in. Maybe I don't want to put back in all those activities, maybe I don't want to put back in, you know, X, Y or Z. So whilst I do think we cannot ignore the long term impact this will have on our kids that maybe isn't positive, I also think there could be some amazing positive stuff that comes from this if parents are being thoughtful, which I would venture to guess all of our listeners are.

D

Deana Thayer 12:20

So well said. I loved a couple of things that I just want to piggyback on. I agree that re-entry is going to be a whole new challenge. This is a challenge and re-entry will be a challenge. And I love that you articulated things like, is it really safe to go on a playdate? I feel, I've said this a few times to my family members, I feel like we're essentially being taught to be afraid of each other right now. And that feels really sad to me. And for kids who haven't been alive very long, they have no way of knowing that we don't just do this every few years. You know, adults who've been around for decades know this is a super anomaly. But if you're five, you don't know that. And you don't know, will I turn eight and then all of a sudden everybody has to stay home again? I mean, so they just don't have a frame of reference. And I think that's where this is very troubling. But I agree with you that there is good to be had in the midst of that, even though there's so much hard. Like I do think of the families where school was their safe place. And that's been taken away. And so there's so much hard in that. But I know there can, for the families where there is warmth and security, there can be so much good and positive. And I know that as we, at some point, do this slow re-entry to whatever that new normal is, it is a great opportunity to be thoughtful about what goes back on our plates. And I know for me, and I think this word gets thrown around too much. I don't particularly care for it for that reason, but about being present. I've come to understand that in a different way during this time. And I think we do toss it around too much without really thinking about what it means. But the meaning for me has been just amplified about, when I'm with my daughter, talking about a lecture she watched on zoom, I'm actually thinking about the conversation I'm having with her, not all the other things I need to be doing, or that in 30 minutes I have to leave for an appointment. So presence has been a gift during this time for me and I think that's

just one cogent example I could think of, but there are little gifts to be had here and we don't want to ignore that. At the same time, I think it is scary in all different ways. And your point about the snacks. I couldn't agree more. I had never, it wasn't sheer terror, I want to be clear, but I hadn't really felt panicky during this whole thing until the day where I visited three stores within 24 hours and I couldn't find toilet paper. And it truly did feel scary. That's an actual need. What happens if I can't get something I actually need? That feels yucky, you guys, I didn't enjoy at all, and I think there just has to be room for all of that. Right? This is yet another experience that is and, and there is not a right or wrong. There is not well, you can't be simultaneously scared and optimistic. Oh, yeah, yep, you can. Sometimes for me, it's depending on the hour. I feel very nervous about my future, and then I'll feel okay. Or I feel scared about what's happening, and then I feel grateful for the time with my family. And we're in such a situation right now of just having to hold both, or, I'd say more than two, holding multiple things simultaneously, or sometimes shifting between several, depending on what kind of day you're having. Right? It's so crazy.

K

Kira Dorrian 15:49

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think you're right, the gift of presence, the gift of time, the amount of times that I've just said yes to a longer snuggle, or yes to a snuggle, or yes to a story that I'm aware, like, wow, I actually have the time for that. And that is so fantastic. But you know, we are also holding at the same time the question mark around what this is going to look like. And, Julie, I wish we had a better answer for you. But I think, I think, Deana, you nailed it. It's like we're holding both, we can hold that, yes, there's going to be a negative fallout. And yes, that stinks, that we don't have control over that. And as a future focused parent, and also a control freak, the fact that something happened to my kids that's this big outside of my control, and I actually can't fix it, is devastating. And at the same time, we have to take the tools that we have and say, all right, so what do we do? What do we do with it? What do we do? And I think there's actually so much that we can do. And I would say the one little piece I want to add and then I want our listeners to hear your awesome acronym, is this: never has your why but more important than right now. And I think looking at this time and asking yourself, what's the why for right now. And that's going to be different for all of you. And that's okay. But take the pressure off of the why being everything. You can't do everything right now. You cannot, you cannot successfully work and homeschool and parent well. And you know, be creative and do that amazing project, like, you can't. So you have to look at the why for now, when I come out of this time. What do, what do I want to have achieved that matters to our family? And that might be education, or it might not? Right? It might be that you're like, actually, I really want to lean into homeschooling and do that well. Or you might say, actually, I'm okay if my kids don't get the education they need so that we can have a calm and happy home if it's causing stress. So really, this is a time to hone in on your why for right now and

lean into that really, really hard because at least you'll come out the other side of this feeling like you did this the way you wanted to. It gives a sense of control. And a sense of, I can control what I can control and all I can control is my family right here, right now.

D

Deana Thayer 17:54

And can you please just, however that needs to look right now, please take care of yourselves? The research shows time and time again, it isn't spending more time with them or being away from the office that kids ask for. The highest percentage of things kids say they wish were different in their house is their, their parent wasn't stressed. And especially right now we are in a season where it's not only more likely that you will be stressed, but I think more likely that it will be evident to your children. And so the importance of that awareness, and some carving out of strategic self care is really extra important right now, so that our uncomfortable feelings aren't leaking out onto our people. And I know that is so different for everybody. And I completely get that some of your go-to forms of self care may not be available to you right now. But I just want to implore you to find something little that you enjoy, or that gives you a break or a mental, just a mental reprieve and do that. Because that's a need, literally, our children need to see that, that we're not, I think we need to be real, don't get me wrong. I'm not asking you to just stiff upper lip and all that. But that we do need to be careful about conveying a lot of anxiety and stress, because they can definitely pick up on that. With that in mind, of course, being the word person that I am I wanted to just give this a little framework. And so I've come up with something and again, it's not a panacea or the perfect answer. And I was honest, earlier in the episode, my overall answer to what's the long term impact? We don't know. But here's the things you might be able to just latch on to and do right now that could prove helpful and also for me, I even feel helped by having clarity and some action items. When I'm just, I don't even know what to do and I'm doing nothing, I actually feel worse. So might, it might help give you just a couple things to grab on to. And this acronym spells GIVE. That was also on purpose. I think we're in a time where there's a lot of taking, there's a taking of our emotional energy, our mental energy, there's literal taking when people are hoarding toilet paper or whatever it might be. And we need to make space for some giving, giving extra time to our family, giving room for our feelings. And so the word GIVE is on purpose. But these are just four verbs that you can think about doing as a parent. So the first one is Guard. What I mean by this is guarding your children's minds and hearts. And I think a really, there's probably myriad ways to do this. But a real practical way to do this right now, is being a gatekeeper for what they see in the news. And that is extra important during this time. It doesn't mean there shouldn't be actual facts shared, which I'll get to in a moment, but you are the gatekeeper. You are the fence, essentially, that decides what gets in and what gets out. And maybe not just what, but how much. So it doesn't mean that you maybe don't ever try to get a little update for the day, but maybe that's not in

front of the kids. Or maybe you say, we're gonna do that only for 20 minutes, or whatever it is, but you are the guard for your children. It's just something important to keep in mind, the impact of what they see and hear, can really reach far and long. The I stands for Inform. So as I said, this goes hand in hand, you're guarding against too much scary information. But at the same time, it is important to give relevant and age appropriate, accurate information. Misinformation can be just as damaging as scary, true information. So sit your kids down, and depending on the age or the questions they're asking, maybe this is in response to their questions, but don't be afraid to give them appropriate information. And keep it, you can keep it short. And you can keep it away from anything scary, but they deserve to know what's going on. Keeping children entirely in the dark, actually isn't kind in many ways, and especially for kids who are curious and are old enough to know what's going on. Now, if you have a one year old, this is not applicable. But for those who have kids who are old enough to engage with some information, we do encourage parents to be the main source of information, not media. The V...oh, Kira and I talk about this all the time, but it's highlighted right now, the importance of validation. So V is for Validate whatever your kids are feeling right now, it's okay. If they think the sky is orange, okay. Yeah, I see maybe a little orange tint to it. I mean, just validate, okay, this is, this is a time where no, all bets are off in terms of navigating feelings. There's grief, there's loss, there's fear, there's sadness, there's anger, there's feeling cheated, resentment, you name it. All of that frustration can come out and might be expressed at different times and in various ways. And while we still want to pull apart feelings and behavior, and we're not saying tolerate bad behavior during this time, or inappropriate behavior, but we are saying really give room for feelings and validate those all the time. Validate, validate. And then the E is for Expect. Well, what are you expecting? Well, there's a couple things. One is to expect those big feelings and validate them. And don't be surprised by them. But I think we also want to be careful to expect some setbacks as we go forward. Right now, we're in a really unique time. So we can expect that it's going to be challenging, but I think even as we add, maybe especially as we reemerge into whatever that new normal looks like, please expect your children to possibly do a one step forward two steps back kind of thing. Expect what Kira said, expect maybe that child who is a little afraid of the playdate, or isn't sure if they can hug their uncle. And I think when we as parents can remove at least the surprise from the things we're seeing, we're better able to navigate it. So if we're seeing something and we're like, oh, that's really hard to see, but you know, I expected that, it's just that little bit better. So we want to encourage families to guard those little minds and hearts, inform them, appropriately validate their feelings, and expect some setbacks in the coming weeks and months. There it is.



Kira Dorrian 24:07

I love it so much. Thank you, Deana. It's fantastic. So thanks for being with us today.

listeners. We're going to wrap up. This is one of our longer spin cycles, but we hope it was helpful and it's good for us to be talking about it too. Like we're all, we're all in this together. Right? So it's good to, it's good to get those questions out there. So if you have other questions, whether they pertain to COVID-19 or not, do send them in: info@futurefocusedparenting.com. Thanks so much for being with us today.



Future Focused Parenting 24:34

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 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!