

THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 4 – Episode 1

Future Proofing You Child/Teen - A Toolbox - pt 1

So how do we future proof our kids? Well, let me tell you, I think because of my niche, because of the TED talk, because of how the resilient kid was born, lots and lots of people kind of think that resilience is something that kids just get through adversity and if you know me at all, you know that I say that is bull.

Yes, of course we can do that, but why wait for that adversity to hit? Why not try and build their resilience beforehand? Because it can be done. Resilience is made up of building blocks and tools So let's build it now before life's adversity hits. welcome back to the resilient kid podcast with me, Ashley Costello, psychotherapist of over 25 years. So this next series of like mini-series of podcasts is all going to be around how you have a little toolbox in your pocket to help your kids.

Because it isn't just going to be, it's not just those kids are born with it, those are not. So let's have a look at it. And it's going to take a little bit of work, I'm going to be honest. And I know that's controversial because sometimes as parents we think, oh yeah, well, they'll get that at school or yeah, they'll do.

And actually it's not, sometimes it's down to us. And it's important that we kind of have these toolboxes at the ready. And. Yeah, it takes work. And I think that's a, that's really hard to hear as a parent sometimes, you know, and I, I hear a lot. My kids are very, very different from each other. Are they both resilient?

One is absolutely more resilient than the other. However, they both, can get through the hard things. Does one need more support? Absolutely. They are also younger, that person. And also, for me, they both need support during hard times. They both need us as parents to walk them through that. So why not put some tools in your pocket?

So you can. So you absolutely can walk them through the hard times. And let's hope it is just relationship breakup. Let's hope it is just, and that sounds really

harsh, doesn't it? But actually. We want them to go through those things. It's a rare day when they meet somebody young and they're still with them, tens of years later.

Because it's all practice fighting with your cousins, it's all practice , falling out with friends', all practice for the workplace for their boundaries, what they'll stand for, what they will stand against. So let's get into the kind of things that I want to run through over the next , month, this lovely month of April about the kind of things that is really going to help your kids build their toolbox and you build that for you so that you've got it ready when they need it, but also things that you can do in the meantime., One of the first things that I would say is have a little, chat. Now, this doesn't matter if it's around the table, if it is in the car wherever it is, you know, but what are they good at? What are the, things that really help them thrive? What are the things that you have noticed they're good at? Because it's very easy. And I'm talking to any age group now, but particularly with teens, they're very quick to I'm good at nothing. I can't do that.

Let's have a, really open and honest conversation around what they can do. Now, why am I asking you to do this? Well, I think it's really important that we have a look at their qualities, their abilities, their attributes, even, which, you know, when we know what we can do, it contributes to our well-being, to our success in life, because often we have this negative connotation.

I can't do this, especially when it comes to schoolwork. I'm no good at this. I'm not, I'm not a good artist. I can't do maths, things like that. Literally

the education system sets us, up to think that we have to be good at everything. And then if they're not, they feel like they're lacking and actually we, we don't need to be good at everything.

, The, the positive thing is it tries to give us a wide experience and expose our kids to lots of different subjects so that they can then choose what they're good at or so that they can see and they've got that exposure to see whether they are good or not. So that is the positive side.

The negative side is we have taken that to the extreme. And what we do is we really go towards the results. We look at results rather than effort put in, rather than the experience of learning about different things, or just the experience of learning. You know, we don't learn in a very positive way at the moment in the UK.

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So what do I mean by character strengths? Well, these are very, these can be very different things. We can have character strengths. We can have social strengths. We can have cognitive strengths, emotional strengths. Physical strength.

There's lots of different ways. So I want us to think about that and just explore this for a moment. So

let's have a look at character strengths. So these are kind of our ethical qualities. Now the character strengths will often get from you as parents. Do your kids know what your family values are? And I've purposely just left a little blank space there for you to think about that.

What do I mean by this? Often, our children come up against our family values when they're in trouble. When we have gone, don't do that, that's not what we do in this family. But actually, have you had an open and honest conversation around what you do believe in as a family? So for instance, I'll give you an idea.

Our family values are, no lying, and these might seem obvious, but

the kids, sometimes if you don't spell it out, the kids don't always know, because particularly if you've got neurodivergent children, you are asking them to pick up the subtleties rather than spelling it out. So no lying. We are an inclusive family, so we stand against racism.

We stand against excluding people. So there, you know, we stand. We don't like the what's the word we are. One of our values is not to steal one of it. And that, you know, that sounds obvious because, you know, do your kids steal? Well, let's hope not, you know, but they might, their friends might. You know, what, what kind of things do we stand for?

Well, for me, it's kind of kindness. Absolutely. And compassion and having respect for not just us as parents, but respect for each other. Respect for things in the house, you know, their property and respect outside of the house. You know. Really? You know, good manners are a big thing for me. And this is something that was passed down from my mom.

You know, when we had a parents evening when I was at school, yes, of course, my mom wanted me to do well. But it was more important that they said I was

respectful and I, you know, I was a good student and I had good manners that I was polite student. That was more important in my family than the actual results.

Now, I think sometimes as parents, we think that if we Don't put our focus on results, then the kids won't get it. And actually, my mum never focused on the results. I still went to university. Still work for myself. And for me, it's about the effort. And that's what I focus on. I don't focus on the results.

My eldest, really competitive. She does. However, that's not what we focus on. What we focus on is the effort that they're putting in. So that's kind of the first one is that character strengths, then social strengths. These are the kind of interpersonal skills and abilities that work with Communication, work with relationships, teamwork, leadership, all those kinds of things.

Like how good are your kids at that, you know, are they good at opening up? Are they good at talking to their friends? Are they good at communicating with adults? That's one of the struggles that I see a lot of my clients have. Not all, but lots of clients who maybe aren't confident and they are not communicating with adults in the outside world.

And what I mean by this is they're not even ordering their own milkshakes. They're not ordering when they're sat with a family eating dinner, in a restaurant, they're not doing their ordering for themselves. And these can be 14, 15-year-olds, that's down to us. They will not be able to do that if we keep taking away the opportunities for them to practice this.

So have a look at social strengths because it's not, you know, it's not all about the character strengths. There are social strengths as well. So how well can they work on that? You know, ask them around the table and we'll come on to some ideas around how we can do this. But, you know, ask them, okay, if I was to ask you to lead a group today, what, or talk about in the third person, you know, if there was a leader of the group, what kind of skills do they need?

Then ask them to fill the gaps. Ask them to fill the gaps. What kind of skills do you think that leader would need? They come up with those. Have you got those? Okay. If you haven't, how can we get those skills for you? How can we support you in your developing those skills? Next one, cognitive strengths.

Now, these are like problem solving skills. These are the analytical critical thinking, how they learn effectively. So how, let me give you examples. So how creative are they? How curious are they? Now, again, school do not lead with curiosity learning. They are very much around, learn for exams , but there is no reason why we can't help develop them.

Now. I know as I'm going through these, it sounds like a lot, but it really doesn't have to be. This could be a conversation between you and your partner, between you and their grandparents. What do you think about this and a conversation with them? That's all that's all it would take.

How Logical are they in their reasoning when they're arguing out now You can do little things that will help build these and we'll come on to them but have a think, you know have this in the back of your mind emotional strengths. So these are related to emotional intelligence and self-awareness, that how aware are your kids, how aware of themselves, self-awareness, and how aware are they of others?

So for me, this is probably one of the most important because having that emotional intelligence, having the awareness of others around them, you know, being aware that if they take the last biscuit. That's it, it is the last one. Nobody else has got it. Being aware that somebody else in the house is going through a hard time or somebody else is upset and responding to that, not just ignoring that, , these are really important and probably the biggest piece of work that I do with my clients is around these emotional strengths.

How good are they at self-control? So when they're angry, do they blow a gasket? Do they , kick off? Does everybody else in the household know that they're upset? This is also stuff like how optimistic are they? What's their mindset? Is it, oh my God, I can't do everything. You know Is it they are negative?

Do they have that? Because let me tell you, and this is where I'm talking about negative. If their mindset is quite negative, you can bet your bottom dollar. Their talk is self-talk in their head. You know, that, that conversation we have with ourselves is around, you know, can you do something, what you look like, what your friends are like, all that.

That also can be very negative if they, if they are openly negative thinkers, you can bet your bottom dollar that they are negative self-talkers. And that is horrible. It's horrible to hear the kind of things that some of the kids talk about themselves. And

then. Kind of how adaptable, how flexible are they also comes, in emotional strengths, because it's really important and I'm not talking about if they're neurodiverse. , if your kid is neurodiverse and they struggle with, we're going to go to grandmas at five o'clock and then that changes.

I'm not talking about that. I'm on about how adaptable are they generally around changes of plans, how adaptable are they, , moving house, transitions, , and if they're not. Whether they're neurodiverse or not, we need to put in plans for that. You know, we need to prep them for that and really help work on their adaptability.

And then the last one is physical strengths. So, these are the physical fitness, their coordination. And again, some kids are better than others. Are they prone to give up easily? How flexible are they?

Those kids who, if you put a puzzle in front of them, do they give it up quite easily because they're tired and things like that? Now, the reason I talk about physical strengths as well is because it's really important that we look at all of the strengths.

So we've got character, social cognitive, emotional, and physical. So your child is going to be good at least one of these, and you can look at the gaps where they're not. It's really important for their self-esteem, their confidence, for their own motivation, and it's not just that, oh, if you do this, I'll give you, we want internal motivation.

We want them to be able to do it. Engagement for them to engage with others, community, and , those around us. It also helps their performance, whatever that be in, , that can be something like football or dance or rugby as well as academic performance, , and also productivity, , Some of the, some of the strengths that we've talked about really gives them that wanting to finish that problem solving rather than giving up.

Because I think often as,

as parents, we want to stop them hurting, we want to make life easy for them. Of course we do. We love them. We don't want them to find it hard, but we're, we're robbing them of an opportunity and that's not future proofing them. When we rob them of an opportunity for them to grow, for them to build their confidence, to

build their strengths that we're talking about, we are robbing them of the opportunity to grow as people and we are not going to be around forever.

So it's really important that we do that. The earlier they learn these skills, the better for them in school and in the workplace. And not only will they be more resilient, not only are we future proofing them, but they'll be stand more confident in who they are and what they stand against.

So building those relationships, you know, have you ever Been on a date or you've had a , old partner and you think, God, I wish you'd have just told me that. I wish you'd have just, , had that open communication instead of just ignoring it. That's what we're building out. That doesn't, you don't suddenly get like a software upgrade at 22.

This is built from a young age. So we need to be aware of that and we need to help them build it. And it just helps their overall well-being. So, how do we do this with our kids where we're not sitting down and lecturing them? Well, one, we talk hypothetically. You can talk about a friend. You can talk about what kind of, like I said before, what kind of Skills would it take to be a leader? What kind of skills would it take to be that celebrity? You know, and that doesn't matter if it's a YouTuber influencer, you know, what kind of skills do you think they have? , you can talk to them about who do they admire, you know, so talk about those celebrity people.

Talk about what kind of skills they have thinking that you've got this in your back, you know, in your back pocket. And in fact, I might even get the beautiful and lovely and I am forever grateful for Chantel for it to be in my life. So those listeners who don't know Chantel is my VA. She's amazing.

So when I come up with air brained ideas, she goes, okay, this is what we need to do to put me in action. She's the one who keeps me on task. So what I would say is I'm going to ask Chantel to maybe do us a quiz. and we'll put it in the show notes. And once you've done the quiz, we'll send you out a little pack of how you can do this.

So in the newsletter on a Saturday that goes out on a Saturday, I usually do little points that kind of give you tip little tips from the podcast, but you've got to listen to the podcast to get the full thing. So, but what I might do is give you some tips. If you fill out the quiz, you can find out what your child or teen is.

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And then we can send you some extra info on how to do that. Okay. So yeah, how to do it. You can talk hypothetically. It doesn't matter if it's a friend, a celebrity, whatever. We can talk about roles, like what kind of roles. We can talk about people in the community that we know, or people that they admire.

That can be a teacher, a sports coach, whatever. You can talk around the table. You can do a specific exercise. Now, you'd be surprised at how many times I have said this, and parents have said to me, my teens won't do that. Now, this doesn't have to just be with teens, by the way, this is for everybody, but, and I'll go, have you tried?

Now, the way I do it is we get a playlist on; you know, we'll get up one of the streaming platforms. We'll all add some songs to the queue. We'll all get a post it notes and a pencil and we'll, you know, have some snacks and a drink on the table. And we'll go right, write down three things. Where you think you, you are physically strong or three things that you do well out there in the wide world when I'm not with you.

So you can do that kind of thing and make it a bit of a, you know, Saturday night thing where everybody's just chilling. But don't just expect them to sit down and do it cold. And what I mean by that is. The playlist, the snacks, they all help. , it's like somebody knocking on your door and saying to you can you tell, can you give me three physical attributes that you have that you really like?

You'd be like, who are you and what are you doing at my door? So set the scene for them. If somebody knocked on that you knew and you had a good relationship with and they were brought it up in conversation, you'd probably answer those. So let's set the scene for them. Let's get the snacks out. Let's put the music on, , get them, , a drink at the table and make it fun.

, don't make it really heavy. If they can't answer, give them examples. Share yours, share yours. If that is the only tip you take away today, make sure it's that one. Share your strengths and share the gaps in your strength as well. So I know for me, my character strengths. The, the kind of integrity, the, the values that we have, we've already shared our family values.

So maybe that's where you start, you know, that's where you start because you'll actually be surprised at what else they come up with. Okay. The, my probably area of gaps that I would need to, to build on would be the cognitive strengths. Now,

the, the kind of intellectual abilities. Absolutely. The, the analyzation I'm red hot on.

However, there is some times where I go. How do I do this? I want to do this, but I don't know how to do this. And this is my idea. How do I execute that? That's why Chantal comes in. Thank goodness. So, you know, it's not about having them all. It's about, okay. I'm, I know I need help with that. So it's, it's recognizing that with them as well, that they're not going to be good at everything.

So just start off slow. Just start off slow and, , pick one of them. Having the conversation around what your family values are, what you stand for, what you stand against is really, really helpful to, to start building this for sure. So having a snippet of a conversation in the car, I'm building upon that, things like, because, and I've said this before, but anything that works side by side, rather than faced on, , if you're in the car , or are walking the dog or whatever, they are more likely to tell you stuff.

So things like when you went through that thing. with your friend and you really struggled with that. What could I have done that would help you better? Or things like asking questions, and you can, you know, sometimes you can write all these questions down and just put them in a jar in the middle of the table and everybody answer.

Things like, do you know when your grandpa died and I was in the middle of helping Nana and was there anything that I could have done at the time or now that would help you manage that better, manage your emotions better, , because we're doing two things there, aren't we? We're saying A, as a parent, I don't always get it right.

That's important for them to hear and B we're saying we see you at the time we were so backed up in our own grief at the time we were, you know, helping the family and doing all the things for everybody, but I still see you and if this doesn't matter if it's like five years later, you know, was there anything because what you're saying is I can learn from this and I've reflected and you're modelling that for your kids.

Sounds brilliant. You know, that is really, really good. Do things like that to start to talk about their strengths, , that was talking about emotional strengths and

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things, but just have those wider conversations is really, really important. So I hope for the first part of our toolbox, that was useful.

I hope it was I'm going to run away now and leave a message for Chantal. She's going to kill me. She's got loads of work to do. And I'm like, oh, let's do a quiz on this. But I think it'd be really good for us to do that. I will, this is one of those ideas that I've come up with now and I have to give it to Chantal to sort out but let's see.

So yeah, let's give it a go. So yeah, have a look at that. Have a look at what's going to come out. And you can tailor your language for the younger ones. You can absolutely tailor your language for the younger ones. So ,, get a piece of paper, get crayons, whatever. Okay. What am I good at?

Get them to, you know, draw what they're good at. Get them to, you can write out what they're good at. Okay. Get them to start practicing their social skills. You know, talking, asking in a shop for things, saying hello to people that you know, safe, trusted adults, get them to talk to them give them problems to solve.

At the moment I wish I could show you on camera, but we've got a big jigsaw puzzle on our table. I'm recording this on the 2nd of April, probably go out today. But if you had to look at my socials yesterday, my kids made a dinner for, for me and Dave last night. And actually on the end of the table is a jigsaw.

We put a jigsaw out and this is about emotional management. Believe it or not, not just problem-solving skills. Whenever there's exams coming up, whenever one of them is going through a hard time, we get a jigsaw out. Why? I hear you ask. That sounds random. Because. As they walk past, .

They can't resist the putting another piece in. It just gives them that mindful moment for just a little bit while they forget about what else is going on, while they forget about the stress of exams, while they forget about boyfriend girlfriend trouble. And as a family, it brings us around the table because we go, oh, I did that.

Oh, did you see this bit? Oh, and it's a really lovely thing to do. Especially when you're really, really busy, especially when, as everybody's really busy. And you wouldn't think that teens, bearing in mind minor, 14 and nearly 17, can't help it. They cannot help but get it out. And I don't come out and go, oh, here's the jigsaw because everybody's going through stress.

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I just, very what's the word? Stealth. By stealth, put it on the table. Start to do a little bit walk away and you'd be surprised at how many times during the day they walk around to do it. Okay, that's me out for this episode. Hope you're going to enjoy this and the rest of the series on tools to future proof our kids.

Okay, lots of love from me and the cat and my family to yours. Take care. Bye for now.