

# THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

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## Season 2 – Episode 19

### Motivating Our Kids - Top Tips

Hello and welcome back to the Resilient Kid podcast with me, Ashley Costello, psychotherapist, for over 25 years, helping and supporting families and kids out there. So, before we start, I just want to point you back to last week's podcast. And that is because it is a campaign, definitely a topic close to my heart.

And I spoke about last week. I spoke about Ted. If you've not heard it Ted as a name for a client and this client isn't mythical. This is a real client. And I spoke how important it is that we get supermarkets to remove paracetamol from open sale. One of the big reasons why we want to do this is apart from it is very tempting for teens if they are really, really struggling and they feel like there's no way out and they want to take an overdose. They can. Just take them from open sale. We don't have to ask anymore. There has been a massive reduction in uh, deaths since we reduced the pack size to 16. So now if you don't know in the UK, you can, you can only buy paracetamol in 16s.

And actually. What we found is that, you know, that massive reduction, I think it's something like 45 percent deaths by suicide by paracetamol have been reduced. However, because they are an open sale and now that's what we've done, because bearing in mind at the time, back in the 90s when we did this, they were behind the counter still.

But now they're saying as well, it's not such a threat. So now they're back on open sale. And actually, I think their medicine, we, A, we should really be, you know, checking on how many boxes or, I know you can only buy one, but you can steal as many as you like. One of the biggest reasons why I want to do this is because let's remove the barrier for our young people.

That's, sorry, let's add in that extra barrier for young people because research has shown us that if you are trying to take your life You will not, you'll not change method. You're not suddenly switched to something else. You won't go from

tablets to trying to hang yourself. You, you usually stay on the same method because remember, this is not on a whim.

This is when people are so, feel so under threat, feel so desperate that they are in that fight and flight to the extreme, so they will just follow the same trajectory. They know exactly what they're going to do and how they're going to do it. If they walked into your local supermarket and they're not there anymore, then the chances are, by the time they walk out, get, you know, get home, whatever.

They'll have calmed down a little bit, and they'll have thought twice about it. That's not saying that, you know, some people, they just will find a way. But the majority of people will not change the way, the method. So, if we can convince supermarkets to just put paracetamol behind the counter, we are saving young lives.

So please sign the petition. Okay, on to today's podcast. So, exciting about this because I do speak about this a lot and I hadn't kind of realized until I was with the family last week. How do we motivate our kids to behave? How do we motivate them, you know, if it isn't, This stick and carrot method. Yeah, so the reason that we have this, you know, reward punishment kind of scale and what we say is we either go towards a reward or we come away from punishment.

And that is, you know, that is well known that we do that. There is an experiment, in the thirties years ago by Skinner showing a level psychology. But Skinner did a little experiment with rats and there was a little lever. And what he did was either press the lever and the rat got reward. So, he got some food or it got an electric shock.

And he kind of did this with two groups to show that, you know, we either come away from. While we go towards the carrot and stick method and so in education and a lot of our parenting techniques Come from that and actually, we are not rats, the kids are not rats. So, there is lots and lots of kind of research out there and methods that we use that for me, it's out of date.

You know, it's absolutely out of date. So, for instance, in the classroom, we often reward good behavior with house points, sticker charts. I mean, whole schools, I go into lots of schools, and the kids always talk about the coins that they're putting in their house points, or you know, actually going around and collecting house points and stuff.

At all! Teachers' kind of treat the kids at the end of the week, and we do that, don't we, as parents? We go, you know, if you're really good, we'll give you a treat at the end of the week and stuff. And it's harsh, because when they do something wrong, we often take those points away. You know, I mean, you go to high school, it's worse.

They give them detention for behaviour that they don't want to see. In the book, when I was doing research for the book, I canvassed a local high school and on average, they have 5 percent of their kids in after school detention. That's not including lunchtime, just after school. And over 50 percent are repeat offenders or frequent flyers.

Yeah, what good is that doing? Now, I know that's moving on to detention for a minute, but it's the same thing. It's exactly the same thing. We are punishing kids for behavior we don't want to see. Does it work? No, absolutely not. Kids end up not caring whether they get a detention or not. It's not really shaping the way that behave. If we want to change kids' behavior, we've got to look at how we treat them, how we treat them when things are not going right.

And I just as a side note, I have a saying here. It's not when things are going, right? It's when how do we handle when things are going wrong? And that is not, you know, me, I'm all about the 30 percent if you don't know about the 30 percent it is. We only need to get parenting malarkey right 30 percent of the time and our kids will still turn out okay based on research.

We only have to, listen again, get this parenting thing right 30 percent of the time and they'll still turn out okay. So, it's not about that. It's not about me going, why are we doing this? Why are we doing that? Why would the reason I'm saying this to you here is that as parents, if we want to shape our children's behavior, if we want to influence their behavior, we have to look at when things are going wrong.

How do we deal with that? So, for instance, I'm saying, you go to a shop, you buy something. Great! You go to a shop, you buy something, and something is wrong with it. How that shop then deal with you makes you then think, I'm going to go there again. Or not. Yeah? So that's what I'm saying. Really think about how do you deal with the kids when it goes...

I was gonna say tits up. I'm gonna say it's my podcast. When things go tits up, when things are out of hand, the meltdowns, the whole malarkey, the moods. How

do you deal with that? Now, I want to give you two things that I need you to think about. When kids flip their lid, when they have that meltdown, they cannot, cannot access parts of their brain, okay?

So, if we think here is our fight and flight, and here is our experience, our memories, and here is our logical thinking, where we make good choices. Our logical brain. Now, our, as adults, Logical brain does not finish, did not finish developing until into our 20s. And if you're a guy, I'm sorry, it's late 20s.

All right, early 20s for, for girls and women, but late 20s for guys. So, when they flip their lid, when we're nice and calm, everything's fine. Everything's connecting. The communication is going round at lightning speed. It's amazing. Yeah, they can regulate. When they're having a meltdown, they flip their lid.

And this part, our fight and flight is no longer in connection with experiences, past experiences, and also our logical, emotionally processing brain, okay, because it's not fully developed yet anyway. So, think about it. At the time the kids are acting out or misbehaving, they're not in full control of their brains.

It is offline, alright? How you deal with the children. irrespective of age, can send them straight back into fight and flight. That fight and flight that got them probably in trouble in the first place, particularly in schools. We need to be teaching our kids to regulate their emotions so that they do behave better, so they can process it, so they can walk it through.

Those who have meltdowns, more often are the ones with low resilience. They're the ones who are not going to be able to manage their emotions. They are going to be more sensitive to criticism. They are going to be very sensitive to not only criticism, but rejection. So, think about that. If you're a teacher, an educator, if you work in a school, if you're a parent, why is it?

So, for me, I'm a massive advocate of us walking our kids, you know, in the book I always talk about walking the kids home. Walking each other home. But for me, it's about how do we walk them home at those times? We connect with them, connect first, worry about the discipline. They're not gonna get, they're not gonna get away with it if you don't tell 'em off in that moment.

In fact, if you tell 'em off in that moment, not going to hear you, you ask them, why did you do that? They'll lie, you know, you're backing 'em into a corner. Their

brain is trying to pull anything they can because you are expecting You stood in front of me expecting an answer. And actually, their brain is just trying to survive at that point.

It is in, it's in a situation, they are trying to survive. You are now, they're feeling under threat, perceived or not. Whether it's a real threat or it's just a perceived one, does not matter. They feel. under threat. So, you're stood there looking for an answer. They'll pull anything out. They don't mean, they're not purposely often choosing to lie.

Their brain is just trying to give them something because you're stood in front of expecting it. So, let's connect with them. Walk them through the process, right. After they have calmed down.

Connect. Help them calm, even if that's just sitting with them, even if that's getting them a glass of water, even if that's asking them, You, okay? What can I do? Yeah? Reconnect with them. You can sometimes, I have sat with kids and just sat, said nothing, just be there, be next to them. Our nervous system will start to regulate theirs really, really quickly.

If we're in the same proximity, so it doesn't have to be a big singing, big dancing, you know, I always talk and I'll talk next week when we do the emotional regulation, because I'm really, I think it's really important as we fly towards that December dates about keeping our emotions in check, helping the kids walk through their emotions, regulate their emotions.

But one of them is if you exaggerate your breathing, they cannot help, but innately copy you. They don't even know they're doing it. So, I'm not talking about, you know, I'm talking about Okay, tell me what's going on. How are you? How are you doing? What can I do for you? Yeah, and sometimes depending on how they react, I might say to just breathe with me.

Just breathe You don't have to do anything else. Nothing else is expected. Just breathe. Okay, so for me When they are melting down, when they have flipped their lid, you don't have access to that part of the brain. They do not have access. So, think about that when you're telling them off, when they flip the lid, how you're going to deal with it.

And then the other thing that I would say, when we look at that kind of punishment reward for behavior that we don't want to see, if we're saying to them, if you do this, if you do this, if you do this, we'll give you this treat at the end of the week. Well, one, where's their internal motivation? To want to learn, to want to behave, to want to help out.

Because they're always looking for this reward. And we know that when they go for a job or university, no more stickers, don't get any stickers anymore. I think they should. Might be nice. You know, you turn up for work, you get a sticker. Woohoo! Also, you get bored. There is no reward for getting out of bed and going to work.

There is. The wage. That's not always a reward, is it? Most of us don't get paid enough. You know, you look at nurses, their motivation is not just money. You know, it's gotta be that internal. To go to school, can't pay your kids to go to school. So, for me, if we dangle that carrot for kids... Then where, where is their internal motivation to want to behave, to want to do things for you?

It's not there. We, we need to be building those neural pathways for, and for them to want to do it themselves. And I'm going to come on to more about that in a moment. But the other thing is, you know, if we think about sending kids to the room, and I'm not saying, listen, if you need to take time out, go upstairs, come down when you can.

That's, that's fine. But go in, get on the naughty step, get in detention, get out of my sight. That was, that is a phrase that my mom used to use a lot. Get out of my sight. I can't look at you. I don't know what it would have been for, wasn't very often, but it was a phrase. It was absolutely a phrase when I was growing up.

Everybody used to use it. Get out my sight. Those isolation punishments can not only lead to embarrassment, which is gonna kick off that fight and flight again, but also shame. And those kids who can't keep a lid on it, you know, for various reasons. Then what are we teaching them? They're not worthy.

They're not good enough. You know, where is their, why are we kicking their self-belief? Most kids ICU display aggressive behavior have very low self-worth isolating them away from others. It's not gonna meet their needs.

All behavior that is often we would see as undesirable is because that kid has a need. And we're not meeting them as they adopt around them because ultimately them and us just need to be seen and be heard.

So,

for me, I want us to think about how do we manage their behaviors? How do we encourage them to want to behave? All right. Because if, if we're saying we all want to be seen and heard, that's what makes us human. Kids who act out, have a, you know, flip the lid, have a meltdown, whatever you want to call it, are simply asking for help.

So, this is how we do it. Dr. Jodie Carrington. She's great. Really, really like her. She's American. And whenever you see her, she lives on what used to be an Indian reservation. So, she always, always says thank you for that when she comes online. It's really lovely. It's a really lovely thing to do.

What she says is, let's not think about attention seeking. So, so a lot of people, especially older generations would look at the kids that are flipping out and go, oh, they're just attention seeking. Yeah. They are connection seeking. Replace that word attention with connection. And then it's up to us.

It's up to us as adults to connect with those kids in our care. See past their behavior to what they need and then teach them how to express it appropriately. Okay? Now, contrary to widely held beliefs, kids do want to behave. They do want to behave for you. Right? I find, I go in schools and I speak to kids about teachers.

And for the majority of teachers I meet, they're amazing. They work damn hard. And they make a difference. They do make a difference. The teachers that the kids tend to favour are usually friendly, fair, and a little bit strict. And I have asked lots and lots of kids this. And, you know, I'm going to be honest, my nieces and nephews will say, Like, they love coming to ours.

And their parents will say, But why? You know they're a little bit strict. But they know where they stand. You know, with, with parents, they know where the boundaries are. With teachers, they know that they're safe. They're in a safe pair of hands. Right? Fair. That means admitting when we're wrong. Do you know what?

I made the wrong call there. Of course, you can, right? And that's not saying no, no, no, yes. That's not letting them peck your head to the point where you then say yes. I'm not talking about that. I'm saying if you get it wrong, admit it. That's being fair. That is absolutely being fair and giving them good role models.

So, for instance, if at a time that they're melting down and you flip your lid, you start shouting, that's it. I'm sick of this. I've had enough. You know, get out my sight, blah, blah, blah, whatever it is. Right. Then make sure you make that up. Apologize. Admit responsibility, take that accountability and say, do you know what guys?

I'm sorry. I was stressed. There's no excuse. I flip my lid right now and I'm sorry. I shouldn't have shouted at you. That doesn't take away from the fact that maybe they shouldn't have done what they were doing.

But admitting it, having boundaries in place, helps the kids know where they're at. It helps them feel safe. Okay. Give you an example. Have you ever been out with like a big group of friends and you know, there might be loads, but you've all got kids, blah, blah, blah. But some kids will play up for some people and not others.

So, I know for me, for instance, um, my, when I used to, when my mum was here and she would babysit the kids for us while I was at work or whatever and I was getting in and I'd be like, hi guys, you know, are you all right? I've missed you today. And I'd be chatting to my mum and stuff. And then the kids would start playing up.

Mum said to me, oh my God, Ashley, they've been as good as gold all day, but they're trying to reconnect with me. Where have you been all day is really what's happening. You know, yes, we've had a great time with our nan, but where have you been? I want the attention, because I'm sat having a coffee with my mum, chatting about the day, catching up with, you know, what the kid's been up to, what she's been up to, if they've been okay, you know, anything to report.

And they're like, hold on a minute, you've been out all day and now you're having a coffee with her? Course they're gonna, course they're gonna misbehave for me then, because they want that connection. They want that connection. I'm massive into eye contact. And as the schools get bigger and bigger, that's harder.



It is harder, but it's really important that our kids are seen. So, whether you're in a classroom, whether you're a parent, really try and connect. Give them the eye contact. Give them the attention they deserve. And as you start to do that, you will notice that engagement that you want, behavior that you want, will all start to happen.

At home, I try to be there when the kids get in. Now, it's not always possible. Sometimes I'm working, sometimes I'm kind of in between clients. I'll run down and go, you, okay? Have you had a snack? Have you had a drink? Are you okay? I'll give him a kiss and I'll say, listen, I'll see you. But most of the time, I do try, when possible, to be there when they walk in.

And the reason being, there's two things, is one is to make sure they have had a snack and a drink. We don't know how much they eat when they're out and the quickest way to get in fight and flight, quickest way for their bodies and brain to feel under threat is not eating. When we eat or drink, we are telling our brain that we are safe.

So that's the first thing. The second is I want to just connect with them. They've been out of the house like, you know, six to eight hours depending on what's happening. I want them to, you know, tell me what's the chat at school. What's What happened in class today? Are they struggling with anything? Now, some kids are walking and they'll tell you everything.

Some kids are walking and tell you everything's fine. Can't be fine every day. We connect, even if it's only for a small time. Then that really helps them.

It really helps them when times are tough. So that they can come to us and they can really trust that we're there for them, that we can listen. So, we want to walk them through situations. We want to connect first. We want to walk them through situations. This is like, you know, metaphorically holding their hand through the situation, helping them regulate their emotions, allowing them to problem solve with us while they feel safe.

Because, you know, remember, the brain, as clever as it is, it doesn't know the difference between real and imaginary, which is brilliant for us as parents because we can use stories. We can use examples of other people to help our kids walk through that. That's why stories and metaphors have worked for thousands of years.

So, what I mean by this is there's quite often, I will say to my kids, let me tell you about this and I'll tell them about somebody else. And it might be something along the lines of, so, so my eldest is 16 now. So, alcohol is now starting to, you know, be a part of their, you know, if they go to parties, there's likely to be alcohol there. So, I will walk them through situations, not scaring them or anything like that, so that they know in their brain, those neural pathways are already set up, even though it's about somebody else, what to do. So, what to do if they get stuck. So, it's not just about me going, if this happens to you, if this happens at this.

I'll tell them story because we take on stories so much easier. You know, you can talk about bullying. You can talk about anything in a story. Guess what I heard today. And that really sets up their brain. You're future proofing them as well. So, for me, it's all around

the behavior that we want. It's about how we How we react to that behavior, okay? So, connect with them first. Help them calm down. Now, this is hard if you're angry at them, if they've done something bad. You know, if they, they're... But what I want you to do is let me, let me give you an example, but let me walk you through these points first.

Connect. Calm down. Once they're calm, then you can have the discussion about, that is not appropriate. That behavior is not appropriate. It's not acceptable. Okay. Now, for me, punish, it's not about punishment. It's not about reward. It's not about punishment. It is about natural consequences. That's different.

Natural consequences. If you don't turn up for work, you don't get paid. Easy, right? It is what would normally happen in the real world if they didn't do something or if they behave like that. So, for instance, an example would be, I want you to come off the iPad in five minutes, or I want you to come off the iPad at seven o'clock.

Any time after seven o'clock, and you need to say this before, don't say at the time because they're in the middle of the game, they're not focusing, you become a threat because you want to take the iPad off. And that's seven o'clock. So beforehand lay the expectations. And if you haven't got the book, if you've, if you've got my book, there's a QR code and it talks about family meetings and expectations, and it gives you like how you can do it.

And it's, it's works really, really well, right? Lay these expectations out before, but, iPad, I need you to come off at seven o'clock. They know any time after seven o'clock then gets taken off screen time the next time, so it's their choice. It's not up to me. It's not up to me to come in and take the iPad off at you at seven o'clock, but just know that at seven o'clock, I'll have a look at how long it is before I see you off there.

And if that's 20 minutes, then that 20 minutes. gets taken off tomorrow's screen time, if you have screen time like that. You can do that with bedtime, various different things. So that's, you know, one way you can use natural consequences. That's not a punishment because now it's their choice. It's not our choice.

It's your choice to stay on that. You are choosing to take that time from tomorrow. So that's one. The other thing that I was going to say to you was,

when we talk to kids, set them up for that internal motivation. So, when you've done that, then do this. So, when you've tidied your room, then we'll have dinner. When you've brought your washing down, then you can watch TV. That is not, do your exams, I'll give you money. It's just simply two words, when and then.

But it sets up their brain a priority list. When that's done, then we can do that does not always have to be like a really singing dancing. It's not like when you've eaten your dinner, you can have dessert, but just know that when, and then sets our brain for that priority list. And for us, the priority list is the first thing that we need.

So, what is it that they want afterwards? So, when we've had dinner, then we'll go for a walk with the dog. Yeah, talk. Think about the language that you're using when we want to motivate our kid's behavior because they do want to behave. They do want to behave. So, they want to please you. They want to please you, whether you're their parent or their teacher.

They don't want anyone to think bad of them if they do. Their self-esteem is low. Their resilience is low. So, we need to look at that. Okay, that's it for now. I Hope that was useful. Really think about when they misbehave, they're asking for help. The first thing we need to do is connect with them. The second thing we need to do is help them calm down.

The third thing. We need to do is then address the behavior. Tell them what you're hoping for. Tell them what you expect. Often, we go, you shouldn't be doing that.

Okay, well, what, how do I behave in that? Tell them, tell them what you're expecting. Before, when the kids were little, before we would go out, I'd say, you know, we're going to go out for dinner and there is no getting down from the table when we're at a restaurant.

So, we will take things with us. to play to that but there is time so you're going to have to just sit there for a little while and yeah if it was a long time or if they were waiting of course we'd take them out for a walk you know and things but for the majority of time they have to know what's expected and then they can, they can do that.

You know, they can't live up to your expectations if they don't know what they are. Next week, it's going to be about emotional regulation. So big one, big topic. How do we regulate our own emotions? How do we help them? How do we walk them through that process of emotional regulation? Take care, everyone.

Lots of love. From my family to yours. Speak to you soon.