

# THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

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## Season 2 – Episode 21

### Supporting Our Kids in Regulating Their Emotions

Hello, and welcome back to the Resilient Kid podcast with me, Ashley Costello, psychotherapist of over 25 years, helping kids, teens, and families. Hello, hello, hello. How are you all? So, last week, I spoke about how we, as parents, as carers, as kids' champions, regulate our own emotions, because, you know, we are triggered, and there's various reasons for that.

Sometimes it's because it reminds of us of us as kids, you know, something our kids say can really trigger something in us. That kind of just, yeah, just, we lose it and, and that might be because when we were a kid, we weren't listened to. It might be when we were a kid, it was, you know, we were always told off for the same thing.

And we, we felt that was unfair and unjust, and triggers us as parents now. Or it could be that it triggers our feelings of insecurity around our parenting, you know, that we've failed as a parent and things like that. And so yeah, quite a difficult topic, I think sometimes, and we need to go easy on ourselves.

So, if you haven't listened to that podcast, go back and listen to that one because it really helps, at those times that we lose it, I think that's the biggest thing for me when I'm talking to parents is they feel like they're failing because they do lose it. And it's like, but we are humans and, you know, think about the 30 percent that I bang on about all the time.

It only takes us to get this parenting thing right 30 percent of the time and they'll still turn out okay. So on to today. Today's topic about the podcast is helping kids regulate their emotions. So last week it was helping us as parents. The adults in their life today are all about helping kids regulate their emotions.

So, this, this is a big one, isn't it? Right? Because I think we, I think we think once we've got them through the teenage years, then we're all right. We don't, you know,

we don't need to keep supporting them in this. And actually, hold on to your hats. It doesn't stop until they're, they're kind of early twenties for girls.

And late 20s for boys, because their brain doesn't stop developing until then you know, so they'll need that help. The part of our brain that really helps us regulate our emotions is just here in our forehead. It's our, it's our prefrontal cortex that doesn't finish developing until well into our 20s.

And. So they are always going to look for us, the more that we can regulate that, the more that we can help them walk through that, then the stronger that emotional management and regulation will be. So, we're in it for the long haul, guys. Sorry. So let me give you some tips. I'm going to, I'm going to break this into three things.

I'm going to give you. What you can do as a parent while you're trying to do this, right, I'm going to then give you the three stages to emotional regulation. And then I'm going to give you some top tips of how to do that. Okay, so first one. Pick your battles. Yes, there is times when we need them to do something.

I'm not talking about in an emergency or, you know, being careful crossing the road or anything like that. I'm talking about if they've had a really difficult day at school and they've come home, especially those neurodivergent kids, right? But if they have had a hard day at school, why are we getting them to eat every bit of broccoli?

Yeah. Don't battle when they're already not good because you are just going to send them over the edge. All right. To be fair, I've used that example, but for me, battle shouldn't be around the dinner table. Absolutely. Encourage them to try everything. Encourage them to, you know, be adventurous in their taste, but making them eat stuff, making them eat all, you know, you are just setting yourself up there because the more we control that kind of stuff, the more they want to gain that back.

And that is a dangerous battle ground. So, when I'm saying pick your battles round the table, don't, don't do it. Don't put yourself in it. I have just spoken to a mom and her little boy and they were great. And what we noticed is that his food was getting really beige, you know, pasta, no sauce, no nutrients, you know, things like Plain chicken, but not much else and actually what we did was deconstruct the food and so we had sauce in a little bowl and this will be a pain, especially if you've got more than one kid, but this was to get, like, get him back on track.

So, he had, like, a little pot of sauce, he had vegetables, he had pasta, and he had some garlic bread. And what we found is, he dipped in the sauce and he ate, he, he ate it then because it was like deconstructed. It wasn't all overwhelming, confusing with all these tastes altogether. He could choose those tastes.

Game changer, game changer for him. Anyway, back to it. So yeah, pick your battles. Don't go in full force. If particularly if they've not had a good day. So next one. Pick your timings. Now, this is important because I don't know about you, but for me as an adult, it's important for me that the kids don't just interrupt something I'm doing and demand something there and there.

So, if your kids, if one of your kids is on a call or they're playing a game with some friends, give them some warning that they need to come off. Expect them to respond to us immediately. That's unfair. All right, particularly if kids are gaming because. If they're playing a competitive game, chances are they're in that fight and flight state anyway.

So, you need to give them some time to come down before you want them to engage. So really, you know, think about when it is that you're asking them something. Check their basic needs. This is huge because I think After the toddler era, we kind of forget, you know, but the first thing we should be doing is, are they hungry?

Are they thirsty? Are they tired? Yeah. I always tell this story because there's a 10-year gap between me and my younger sister, excuse me. And when I got in from school as a grumpy Teen, she used to shout out, like, give that kid a donut and it became a bit of a standing joke because at five, she could recognize that I was hungry, you know and she, she kind of knew that unless I'd got in, had something to drink and eat, there was no way that I was like playing with her or really giving her any attention to be fair.

But, you know, it's really important to check in with them, so check the basic needs, but also check. How's the day? You know, how is everybody at school? Have they had a fallout with friends thinking like that? So, then you can help them regulate. But the basic needs it, you know, are really important. The other thing is get close to them as well.

So, getting close means that if they're small, you can pick them up. If you, you know, if they're like mine, taller than you, get, get physically close to them because

they'll innately respond to your nervous system. If you're nice and calm, they will follow suit. I remember my eldest being in a push chair in a busy shopping mall, and she was about two years old and wanted to get out.

She started screaming and crying. And at that point, I was heavily pregnant, couldn't carry her. So we were in this busy place, and if she'd have run off, I would have got no chance of catching her. So, I got down to her attention, you know, to her level, I gave her that full on eye contact, that attention and I started to hum and then take really big, deep breaths.

And it took a couple of minutes, but she calmed down. She absolutely, her nervous system completely you know, started to match mine very, very quickly. So, as. As your kids get older, you know, just start to exaggerate your breath. Now, I don't mean massive, like not, but just breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth.

And it doesn't matter their age, you know, you can do that. I've done this with older people who are having a panic attack. They will innately copy. And they'll calm down immediately. Okay, so they're the three things that I would kind of,

four things even, that I would think of as your background. And then we're going to move on to those three kinds of stages of emotional regulation. So, first one is to really learn to identify their emotions. Now, why is this important? Well, it's important because it helps them. So, if you name their emotions that you're seeing.

So, for example, like, oh, you look sad or while you look really excited, they then start to label them for themselves, the feelings that they can feel along with that label. Another way is really you talk about how you feel, you know, because it's extending their emotional literacy and, you know, we need that for sure.

They need that. Next would be recognize what triggers their big emotions, help them identify what gets them upset. So, it seems like when you don't get past the ball, you get really angry. Yeah. Because not only are you recognizing their triggers, you're helping them recognize it, but also it validates how they feel, you know, that feels unfair and unjust.

So absolutely, that's a really good one to do. And then teach them to regulate their own emotions as well. So, I've taught kids as young as Two and three, the hand model of the brain you know, and I use, of course, I don't use straight away

amygdala, hippocampus, prefrontal cortex. I will talk about guide dog, memory box, you know, things like that.

But it, it gives them a real insight into their own emotions and how their brain works. So, you can go back on the podcast. You can look in the book. There is a video by Dr. Dan Segal on YouTube free. Have a look it up, chat to them. There's. There is also a workbook on the website as well around emotions and brain and behavior and stuff.

And it's a fun little thing to just teach, you know, teach you all about it. But for sure, teaching them about that is really, really important. We are the only species, after all, who, who can regulate our own emotions. So, top tips here.

Sorry, trying to go through. Right, so top tips. The more that kids are aware of their emotions, the more they can regulate it. And that's not just now, that's for future as well. You know I love talking about future proofing our kid. It has a massive impact. Positively on their mental health, but also on the physical health, it will help with relationships.

They become easier schools' workplace. They're easier to navigate. You know, it helps lessen anxiety. They become more equipped, I guess, to, to deal with life challenges. So, here's some top tips. of why we should do this. And also, I'm just going to run through these to kind of help you. Regular exercise.

So, for me, this is important on two levels. First of all, stress hormones, such as cortisol, can sit and rest quite often in the stomach for kids. causing them to complain about, you know, stomach ache, things like that. Any exercise It doesn't matter if it's walking, dancing, team sports you know, just stretching yoga poses, um, boat pose.

So, kind of on the bottom, feet up and doing kind of as if you were doing row, row, row your boat. Really good for dispersing that. The cat cow poses downward dog. Always downward dog. Can't go wrong with that. Really help disperse cortisol and help regulate the emotions. Activity is massive if kids struggle with anxiety as well.

On the second part of why I, I think exercise is so good is that if you can get kids to do after school stuff, or even lunchtime, you know, a lot of schools do lunchtime clubs now as well, don't they? Is., they have a different friend group which means

that they can kind of compare and contrast their school friends and it really helps them put boundaries in with school friends because school friends are not always the kindest sometimes.

And actually, that comparing contrast really helps. So really helps with kind of moving those stress hormones around the body. But actually, really cool. If you know, we've, we've got friendship issues. Breathing exercise. So, there's lots of breathing exercises out there. I think I've put two or three in the book.

You can scan the QR code and you'll see a few more. You can look on YouTube. There's really some really lovely ones. I do hot chocolate breath. I do finger breathing and square breathing star breathing. You name it. There's loads of different ways. The principle of these is to breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth.

When we breathe in through the nose, we're calming down the amygdala and the quickest way possible. That's our fight and flight centre. So really, you know, teaching kids to do that. Yeah. Is, is really good is, is just, you know, is the quickest way to calm down and it's the quickest way to calm down panic attacks, no matter the age. Get the kids to create a list. So when, when they are at that point where they're going to flip the lid, that's not the time to ask them to make a list, but when they're, you know, maybe afterwards or at a time when they're chill or their bored, you know, get them to write a list of things that when they're upset what they can do. So, to give you kind of examples, um, I would put on there, go for a walk or go for a run.

You know, listen to music and actually I get some of my teens to make a playlist for when they're angry, when they're sad, when they want to be happier, things like that and bounce on the bed or trampoline. I know some of us won't always want that, but. It really helps disperse those cortisol stress hormones. Meditate.

Now, this is not I'm going to get him to sit up the side of a mountain cross legged meditation can be as simple as breathing exercises. It can be just focusing on one thing at a time. And, you know, sometimes just, you know, when you're baking, just that stirring is really meditative. It's therapeutic, isn't it?

Having, having a bath or a shower can just make us refocus, you know and that's how meditation is, you know, it's not, it's not doesn't have to be a big thing. I do relaxation. I do relaxation tracks for kids. For that reason, but there's lots of guided

meditation out there where they just like, you know, they can just sign the bed or put the headphones on and listen to stuff. Draw a sketch or doodle.

So really going just to help them calm down uses a different part of their brain and colouring in. It's a form of meditation as well. Drawing, because you're just focusing on one thing, really helps calm our brain. Speak to a friend. You know, and that's not going on the game console, that's just, you know, FaceTime a friend have a chat, message a friend. Talk to an adult.

Now that doesn't have to be you, if they're cross with you, encourage them to ring their grandma, or their auntie, or, and don't be precious about, you know, what they're saying, because it doesn't matter. Let them just, as long as they are calming down. Amazing. So, for me, it's kind of, I hope those have been useful.

The list the examples of the list, I think. You know, a really good so that you can start them off, but get them to, you know, get them to do it so that when they feel upset that they can start to, you know, regulate themselves and for sure, the checking basic needs, picking your battles, things like that's really important to get your kind of the prelim stuff, right? And then getting them to learn, identify and recognize their own emotions will really help them in the long run. So just a reminder.

Us as the adults in kids' lives, be aware that once they have flipped their lid, right, because a lot of this is really good to help them. But there's two things that I need you to know. One, it takes a good 30 to 45 minutes for their nervous system to reset after they've had a meltdown, flip their lid, whatever you want to call it.

During this time, we need to connect with them. We need to hear them. We need to maybe give them space, depending on how your child reacts. It's not about giving them the consequences there and then. Wait until they are calmed down. Because you're not going to get anywhere at that point. You're more likely to be triggered yourself.

So, give them some time. Give them some space. Get them to calm down. Help them, you know, regulate those emotions. Walk them through it and then whatever has upset them or if they're in trouble or they fell, fell out with somebody, then give them that time and space. So be respectful, then talk to them about, okay, well, you know, that's not acceptable.

You know, the consequence is, and I always say, what do you think the consequence should be? Let them take that. But yeah, kind of helping them. Walk through how they're feeling, identifying it recognizing what's triggered them, and actually helping them learn how to regulate their own emotions by making their little checklist, um, is, you know, will really, really help.

So, I hope that's been useful for you today. We're going to take a break over Christmas and come back kind of the end of Jan. with new, exciting topics, if there is any topic that you want covered on the podcast, drop me an email [Ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk](mailto:Ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk) do that as soon as possible, because I will be, even though we're having a break, I will be recording fairly soon.

And that's why we're kind of having the break so I can get some in the bank for you and go through the kind of list of topics. So, feel free to drop me a line and let me know. But do you know where I am? You can always drop me a line anyway, if you want, if you want some top tips, have an amazing Christmas holiday, however you celebrate the break, get some rest and really enjoy spending time with family and your kids.

Take care, everyone. Bye for now.