

# THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

---

## Season 2 – Episode 6

### Navigating Friendships in Primary Kids

Hello and welcome back from me, Ashley Costello, psychotherapist of over 25 years at The Resilient Kid. So, lots of exciting news this week. Everything has just come all together at once. So Last week, you heard I was interviewed by the lovely Kim Smith about being on the female entrepreneur hashtag.

I also 100 campaign. And next week, I'm going to the House of Lords to celebrate. Got my invitation this week, which is beautiful for lunch and big celebration on International Women's Day. So that's the first exciting thing that's happened. Secondly, Private GP practice actually reached out and asked me, could they put me on the preferred list, gave me a referral, was just really, really lovely, really excited that they have got lots and lots, which is so sad, isn't it?

Lots of under 13s that are struggling at the moment with anxiety and just nowhere for them to go. CAMHS is absolutely overwhelmed at the moment. Even just the systems and processes in CAMS, let alone the workers. Oh my God. Yeah. So, people are reaching out privately to GPs, and people like me.

And so, how lovely, because that's, you know, it's difficult to get on those lists. And yeah, it's a big thing for, The Resilient Kids. So just kind of really, really appreciative of that. And then lastly, I'm literally hot off the press this morning. I was recommended , this podcast.

Thanks to you guys. And girls, and people have been identified as a parenting podcast to listen to and recommended. So yeah, I woke up to that being a good to know online magazine. So I was really pleased, really pleased. So hello. How are you all? I feel like it's been quite a while because I haven't recorded in a couple of weeks because I had the interview with Kim already done.

So we sent that off for editing and stuff. And yeah, so I've not actually sat down and done this for a couple of weeks. So it feels like ages since I've seen you, heard

you, spoke to you. So, what are we getting into today? So, when I did a little poll at the beginning of the year saying, what do you want to listen to on the podcast?

What do you want help with, support with, top tips, all that? First was anxiety. We did a little series on anxiety. And the second was friendships. Oh, what a meaty topic to get into. I am going to separate it up again in the fact that we're going to do primary today, I'm going to do teens later on and the role that friendships take in in schools and extracurricular and things like that.

But actually I think as a parent, friendships are that pain point, aren't they? Because you think, oh, thank goodness, they've got a lovely group of friends and then something happens. Yeah, there's some drama. And they come home and they're upset, they feel left out, things like that. And it's really difficult to know how to handle it for the best.

Sometimes their parents are friends with you and so the kids are arguing or the kids are picking on each other, things like that, and your mates with them is really, really, minefield really difficult. But what I will say to you is resilience, building skills are essential for helping kids and us navigate those friendship struggles.

I know the challenges of course, but what I want to do is kind of take you through a little bit of the kind of things you might see and what we can do to help them. Okay. So for me, friendships play a really important vital role in the lives of everybody, but primary age children particularly.

It shapes their social development. It shapes their emotional wellbeing. It's how they start to learn boundaries. Now, years and years ago, what would happen is we would live in our extended families. I certainly would see my cousins almost daily but definitely, you know, four or five times a week. And I was probably, I'm trying to think, was I third eldest?

Yeah, I think I was third eldest out of 10. And that's just on mom's side, you know there was, we actually had, I think, nine on, the other side of the family who I would see, I would say kind of once a month, maybe. So, having that cousin set, you know, if you imagine like a rabbit or a badger set where you've got those cousins around you, it's how you learn boundaries.

It's how you learn to make friends. It's how you know how to take fire a joke. It's all the underlying dynamics. We don't have that anymore. And so our kids are

going out there and learning for the first time some of the social skills that would have been honed in that extended family.

Absolutely. So you can see why they struggle because your cousin's not going to fall out with you for long. Your mom, their mom, their parent is not going to let them fall out for long. And so actually, it's how we cut our teeth on these kind of dynamics around friendships. We just don't have that practice anymore.

It's important that we recognize that friendships are how we learn our social skills. So, such as how to cooperate, how to take turns, and not just taking turns on who's playing with what, whose turn is it on the bike, things like that, but also conversational turn taking, you know, that to and fro pausing, allowing other people to speak.

Empathy is a really big one. If you have a very, very small friendship group, how are you exposed to those situations that empathy might come into play? And contrary to popular belief, you can teach empathy. And actually, I have a lovely little client at the moment that we're working on those empathy skills.

And I find that the smaller the family, The smaller the friendship group, the less exposed they are to those experiences where they can, you know, empathize. They can learn those skills. And then also, I think the major one for me is conflict resolution. Now, all of those conflict, empathy, cooperation is going to help them later, when they're older, what I call future proofing skills, that when they're in a job, they learn how to cooperate as part of a team, they learn to be empathetic, they learn to manage their conflict in such a way that everybody goes away from the table happy.

And I find that conflict resolution is often the hardest skill for kids to pick up later on as we've all been in those teams and we're in those situations where somebody just comes in throws their weight around and that's it. And, actually then you're left like, how do I deal with this? And actually those conflict resolution skills start in the playground. So it's amazing how much they learn now that really helped them when they're older.

From my point of view, from an emotional point of view as well, I love the sense of friendship, bringing that belonging, that support, and that's what fills our kid's happiness bucket. It helps with their self-esteem, you know, so it's, it's not all bad,

is it? You know, there is times when kids come home and they're talking about their friends and they just light up, don't they?

And that is a beautiful thing to see. So what kind of struggles do we see? Well, for me, it's kind of the biggest one I would say that I see, this tends to happen with girls more than boys. Girls' friendships or female friendships tend to be around emotions and a lot of big emotions. So lots of clicks, lots of leaving out people.

There's definitely power play much early on in female friendships than there are in boys. and what we see in, young guys. Conflicts can arise from different opinions, misunderstanding, competitions, and that really doesn't help because then that starts to build that tension and that kind of discord between the group.

And actually, peer pressure, come with me, you know, leave her out, leave them out, is really difficult, isn't it? And the fear of being left out can often see young people going towards or agree, not necessarily agreeing, but going along with peer pressure that might be different to their own values, their own beliefs in that moment.

Because the fear of being left out, that really kicks in in teens, and we'll talk more about that in the teen episode. But that, kind of peer pressure that they're under, and not to be left out, not to be the one that isn't included. Yeah, it just hits to the core of their little human beings, for sure.

So what can we do to kind of A. Build resilience in navigating this friendship? So we'll look at that in a second. But also as well, I guess I also want to think about as parents, how do we identify that they're struggling? You know, sometimes they don't come home and tell us like it's great if they do and it's lovely, but you know, I find some young people don't come home and say what's going on for them because they don't want us to wade in with our big feet and try and sort it out.

So we'll come on to how we do that, but actually identifying so think about. You know, what's the chat when they come in from school? Is there talk about friends? Are they stopped going on consoles that they normally go online with others? Are they, have they stopped that wanting play dates?

Things like that. Are they stopped messaging because, you know, there is some primary kids who, you know, and no judgment, you make your own decision around phones, some primary kids, you know, year six is particularly hard with the

WhatsApp groups and snapchats and stuff, you know, where the struggles don't finish at the school gate, they come home and it's still there.

So, you know, have a look at those kinds of things. Also, the other thing is, , have open conversations about difficulties that you've had with friendships. You know, I have often spoke, not in detail, and I usually don't mention the person, but I will say, you know, I'm really struggling. I've got this friend at the moment and this is what's happening between us, you know, and I don't go into mega detail, but I make it a norm that it's not easy to get on with everybody all of the time.

And then I think the third thing that I would say to you is when they do open up and they do tell you that they're struggling, really validate what they feel because. It's very easy and I see this a lot in teachers and teachers say this to me when I talk about friendship dynamics with them is your kind of, you know, you go, oh, don't worry, it'll blow over, you know, or things like don't be silly, you know, just learn to get on, get outside, play together, you know, and we do dismiss them at that age.

And actually. I am not saying that it is the biggest issue in the world. However, it is important that we validate , how our kids feel, whatever that is in the moment. And then once they've kind of, you know, talked it out, then you can move on to the problem solving. But actually, I think sometimes we get quite impatient because there is a lot, especially, I think, with, more female dynamic friendship group. I love nothing more than if a boy is included in those friendship groups, because actually it just balances it out a little bit. But I think it's really important that we just validate their feelings. You know, the experience they're having in the moment. Yes, of course we can normalize it and we can say that it's not going to last, but actually just in that moment, just hear them reflect back to them, what they're saying.

Okay. So yeah, I think that's a really important way of us being able to identify that. So the next kind of thing I wanted to talk to you about particularly was the resilience section. Okay. So how do we promote resilience that will also help with friendship struggles and we'll give you some top tips.

Okay. So encourage that positive mindset. If you're an educator, we would talk about growth mindset. And actually , I was talking to somebody the other day and he was saying the biggest Google search for growth mindset happens in August and September, just before we go back to school.

And actually. But I find that quite funny because we want it to be a positive environment for a classroom, but how much of that continues through the year. So positive growth mindset is that, what we talk about as mistakes, what we talk about. And just to, just to bring up a teacher that was talking to absolute fabulous teacher in a local primary school who said she doesn't have rubbers, erasers in her classroom because there is no, you know, we make a mistake.

We just cross it out and move on. We, she does not want to foster that perfectionism kind of mindset. A mistake is an opportunity to learn. It is unfinished business. That's the kind of growth mindset we're talking about. Praise effort. And, and the perseverance rather than the achievement, the reward, yeah, help them reframe negative experiences.

as an opportunity to learn and to grow. So to give you an example of reframing I can't think of one off the top of my head now I've said that an example of reframing would be when we take what they've said and ask for evidence. You know, we say to them, okay, you're saying everybody hates you.

Who did you play with at break? Does not everybody hate you, do they? Or you can't do this, but you've already done some. So look at, look at how you can reframe and look at the positive. This is not like being toxic, everything's lovely, but taking those experiences and really drawing on them, so how they can do it better in a different way.

We're a little apart from looking for evidence, and I've spoken about that before on the podcast, another thing is. I do is get them to score themselves out of 10, being high, one being low. And if they score themselves at, you know, a kind of four or five, okay, how do we, how do we get you nearer the 10?

How do we, how do we add a couple of more points on there? How do we do that? And reflect that and get them to problem solve. And that kind of brings us on to the next bit, that real get them to. Foster problem solving skills for themselves instead of us trying to solve their problems. Encourage them to really, you know, brain dump around how they can solve the problem.

How do they get from , a six, five, six, two, eight, maybe, you know, it doesn't have to be a 10. Break down problems into manageable steps. I talk all the time about the ladder. So, okay, we're at the bottom of the ladder now and that might be

they want to get primary school age. It can be anything from pen license to the next level on fortnight, you know, whatever it is.

Okay, well, let's not jump from here where we're, you know, at a one or a two to the top of the ladder. Let's have a look at what's the next step and then what's the next step after that. And breaking that down into small chunks really helps them not only wire the brain for problem solving, but it gives them that more positive go to outlook, rather than the negative, I can't do it.

It gives them a strategy. to be able to do that and implement their own problem-solving skills. So, yeah, really breaking it down into manageable steps is all kind of resilience and building that resilience. So, for instance, if they want a new friend, okay, how do they do that? How do we make a new friend?

Is this somebody they've identified they would like to make friends with? Let's say it's Sam. Okay, well, we don't just run up to Sam and say, do you want a play date at my house tonight, and then we can have a sleepover, you know, okay, we'll smile at them. What's the next step? Okay. Maybe ask them a question in class, you know, or choose to sit next to them at lunch and ask if you can play.

You know, what are they interested in? What the kind of things that you might have in common, you know, before you jump to that top of the ladder of a play date. So really think about that problem solving skills because it also helps when we come to conflict resolution. The next one is really thought about that emotional regulation.

And kids can easily, very easily get overwhelmed when they've got those big feelings, those big emotions going on. What is it that you do as a family that really help calm that down? Now what I would say to you is, you know, I've got some, some of my little clients doing yoga now. Shout out to Mini Me Yoga.

If you, if you don't know it, go and check it out. Amazing program. But also, you know, I have for instance, I've got clients who have like a little list on their wall in their bedroom that if they get anxious or overwhelmed or angry, things like that, they'll pick something off the list to do.

And that might be something like colouring, drawing, writing, listening to music, having a bath, going outside for a walk going to their pets, you know, petting their cat or dog. You know, whatever it is that they have at home and the quickest way

to calm down that feeling of fight and flight is to breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth.

And when we think about friendship struggles, you know, often there is a lot of fear, a lot of anxiety around it. And so. You know, just giving them that simple thing that they can do to keep themselves calm while this is going on. And so it doesn't tip into that big feeling, that big dramatic side, then absolutely, you know, but you, we don't teach that.

We, if we teach it as a family. You know, and there's lots of breathing exercises and stuff that you can do, but literally breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth several times, calm that area down. So, you know, have, get your kids to do their go to little list of what they want to do.

You know, I've got, and I'll probably talk about this on the teen podcast, but I also get them, you know, the teens to make a. Playlist of their favourite songs, you know when they're feeling sad when they're feeling happy when they need a bit of a pick me up What what's on their list, you know, we don't always want to be listening to oh, what's the name?

This is this Billy Eilish Yes, Billy Eilish comes up a lot on that list but actually if we're feeling down how long do we want to listen to those kinds of songs, you know? Do we want to get ourselves out of it? Okay Let's have a look at a playlist of that. So absolutely love Billie Eilish. However, there are certain songs that can keep us in that frame of mind.

And we really want to promote you know, moving, shifting out of that state sometimes. So also give them an opportunity to take on challenges. You know, this is really important, I think, and it doesn't kind of, you know, it's thought about age-appropriate ones. Okay, but give them an opportunity where it's not easy to succeed, because that works against you.

But actually, quite often, they can succeed with a bit of effort, and they can do it independently. You know, talk about the effort, talk about that, that they're, you know, real fostering their own sense of competence and confidence. So for me, this would be around setting goals. So say, for instance, they wanted to get in the next level of the swimming group or they wanted to get they wanted to type.



So I've got a few kinds of primary clients now who have started typing. So it used to be the pen license, but actually. You know, some of the, some of the kids that are struggling with, say, you know, fine motor skills are finding it really difficult. And so we're turning to typing as a way of them keeping up with their work, which is brilliant.

And there's lots of free touch-typing programs, especially for kids now. So, you know, have a look at how fast did they want to get, how, you know, efficient do they want to get? Okay, well, what are you going to do to get to, you know, if you scored yourself out of six, what are you going to do to get in it?

Work a practice once. You know, one more time a week, maybe practice at home as well. You know, things like that. Setting small but achievable goals that really help build their confidence. Because that confidence also stems that it goes back to the playground where they're confident to speak up. They're confident to put in those boundaries.

Things like that. Another one is kind of the support network. Big up your teachers. You know, big up your TAs, your sports coaches, your dance teachers, things like that. Big them up, talk about them. You know, what have you got in common? What has your family got in common with them? So that you're almost handing over that.

Once you start talking in a positive light, and it doesn't just have to be that it can be extended members of the family as well, where we talk about you know, those extended members cousins, aunties, things like that. So that they know that they can go to them as well as you, you know, building up that support network, having those relationships and trying out.

Those skills, those friendship skills, those, you know, to, in and from in the negotiation of relationships really, really helps in the friendships. world. And also as well, I think if they've got cousins or people of the same age, they can talk about their own struggles with friendships with them. And there's that kind of sense of connection and belonging within not just the family, but within the community.

You know, the wider community for sure. And then I guess, the other thing I would say to you about before we move kind of back into solely the friendship just around resilience is, you know, friendships are not easy. And sometimes we have to work hard at them and that takes reflection about our own behavior.

It takes, sometimes it takes a bit of perseverance, you know but it also takes boundaries. And I think, you know, I've said earlier that boundaries are learned quite often with family or close members, siblings, things like that. And actually Yes, resilience can really help, but actually, sometimes it's a, it is for me around teaching these skills so that when it comes to friendships, they know their boundaries, they know their own self-worth, as well as.

working hard at that relationship. So, so it might be, they're not the friend for them, but that they feel confident because we've put in, you know kind of help with the emotional regulation, their problem solving the challenges and that positive outlook that can really help when it comes to conflicts for sure.

So let's move on. To how we help them, kind of top tips, kind of, you know, how do we, how do we really help them? So, for me, one is definitely foster that open communication. Allow them to have that space where they can talk. I find straight after school is a really good way, whether it's in the car, whether they come in for a snack, things like that.

Really good way of just chit chatting about the day and I might just go, what's the chat, you know because quite often it's like, oh, what, how was your day? Yeah, it was good. What do you have for lunch? Oh, pizza, whatever, you know, and that's all you get, but actually what's the chat, what's going on with everybody, you know is a really good way.

Did anything interesting happen today? So giving them that opportunity to just open that conversation with you, give them an opportunity. To improve their empathy skills. Now, I think I was in a home the other day and the TV was on when I first got on and there was an advert for children in Africa who were really struggling and they were like, oh, turn it over, turn it over.

We don't want to watch that, you know, it upsets them. But actually talking through that and things that kids can do to help really helps with that empathy. I think sometimes we hide kids away. So, yes. Of course, we want it to be age appropriate, but we do hide away those empathy style. So, for sure, you know, don't use it as an opportunity to teach.

Encourage problem solving skills, encourage that kind of resilience building, and be really kind

of supportive of, I was going to say supportive of that support network, but be encouraging for them to you know, think about who's in their support network. Who do you know in school? Who's their favourite teacher? Who's, that's not necessarily the same as this one that I'm going to talk about though.

Who's the teacher for? them to go to if they're struggling, if they're upset, if they've hurt themselves. They might be all different people in that, in that school. Who is the person that they can talk to if they were struggling about at home? Who is it in the family? That they can talk to if they're upset about something and who, which friend helps them with those kinds of struggles.

I think it's important that we identify that with our kids because we don't often, we just think, oh, well, they've got friends. So thank goodness they're all right. Who would help support them if they're feeling left out? You know, is there a, is there a lunchtime supervisor, you know, we used to call them dinner ladies or gents who can help them with those friendship skills, you know, if they're, if they feel they're being left out or God forbid, they feel like they're being bullied.

So, yeah, really have, you know, have that conversation, hopefully, you know, in the car, around the dinner table, have that conversation. And yeah, I think for me, I think it is about building those friendships, giving them that open opportunity to talk and be careful about judging. Oh, yeah, because, because, oh, well, that wasn't very nice, was it?

And then they take it that we don't like them and they're probably friends again in 10 minutes. Do you know what I mean? So be very careful about judging and be very careful about getting drawn into those parent conversations around other kids. That kid just might be struggling right now. And if you're having those conversations, you're in a sense, affecting the other parents and that kid might just be struggling.

So, you know, really be aware of your chat around your children's friends as well. So, I hope that was useful. I hope that there has been some meaty information in there to help you. If you want any more information, drop me a line at [ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk](mailto:ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk) can always comment under the podcast Follow me on insta or Facebook always happy always happy and there is nothing I like more than going into my emails and finding feedback on the on the podcast I absolutely love it.

## Transcript

And I'm double so it means that I can give you more content as well. So take care, everyone. Lovely to be back. And yeah, I will see you next week for the teen podcast. Bye for now.