

THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 2 – Episode 8

Fortnite – The Debate

Hello and welcome to The Resilient Kid Podcast with me, Ashley Costello, psychotherapist for over 20 years. I think there was a little bit of a glitch then. So today this wasn't what I was going to talk about on today's podcast. However, this weekend just gone, I sent out a newsletter telling people about how my son persuaded me to let him have Fortnite at 13.

I've never let him have it before and he did this whole presentation, which I will go into. However, the response that I've had from the newsletter going out from different parents has been amazing. So I thought it was really good to address it on the podcast and just talk about kind of the pros and cons.

And I am talking about Fortnite in particular, but actually a lot of the stuff that I'm going to talk about is around various games or different things that kids want to do and also how they persuade us as well, which is just brilliant. So to keep you up to date. If you didn't get the newsletter and if you didn't, why not get yourself on the free newsletter full of top tips and have a look at theresilientacademy.co.uk and get yourself on the sign up sheet there. So my son who's 13 years old we only bought him a playStation for his 13th birthday, obviously other consoles are available. But we bought it and it was a surprise because he'd had to switch before, but I am very, well, I am strict. I am strict with phones and computers and things like that because I study the brain, I know the impact that it can have.

And also for me, I feel like I have a responsibility to teach them how to use social media, how to use console, screens and things like that and for them to own that responsibility as well, because, you know, when I grew up, we didn't have that. We didn't, you know, we had a land line, we had a video, we have CD players, but we didn't have the constant streaming.

We didn't have computers the way that they are now, and we certainly don't have smartphones. So we've had to learn to be responsible with them. And I think because they've always had them, it's really important for us as adults to show

them how and when is appropriate to use them. And also to talk about the effects of that.

So, I'd only bought him the PlayStation for his 13th birthday, it was a real surprise. He had, like, a football game on it he had, I'm trying to think what other games he got with it, it was like basketball, things like that. Within a few weeks, he asked me could he get Fortnite, and I said no. Absolutely not.

And we had a discussion to why and, anyway, this summer he did a whole presentation around the pros and cons of Fortnite, which we will go into. And also... With any cons, he then had a counterargument to how he was going to be responsible for it. So it was just, I mean, you know, as a mom, I was proud at the same time as this was going to cause me, like, you know, this was a dilemma now that was being thrown into the mix.

But actually, I was really... Super proud that he had thought about it. He'd thought about what my objections would be and how he could overcome those objections. Now, he didn't just do this to me. I'm not just the, you know, the only parent and I'm not the only parent making decisions. He said, don't make a decision now.

I'm going to present this to Daddy when he gets in from work. And then you two can have a discussion and you can let me know like by tomorrow, which again was Uber, you know, responsible and realistic. And he didn't just expect me to give him an answer straight away, which was brilliant.

So let's just talk a little bit about, I want to talk a little bit about Fortnite itself and then kind of how kids can surprise us and also some of the reactions that I've had on emails and stuff.

So why is Fortnite so compelling? Well, A, it's free. They are very clever. You know, it is free. Yes, there's, you know, in app purchases and things like that. But it is one way of spreading the news that kids, you know, want to play it online together and things like that. So they're very clever in the way they do it. They talk about it in seasons as well. And they talk about new skins and updates and things like that. And they almost have it. You know, I remember when I was younger and Harry Potter came out and there was this massive, you know, queue at midnight, you know, the stores would stay open late, supermarkets would stay open late, so you could buy the Harry Potter at midnight.

And actually, that's what they do on Fortnite. It's very clever. They, they, you know, really push up the hype around it. So and they do various different seasons, like Battle Royale, you know, stuff like that. So I'm not going to get into them because I would not have the first clue about that kind of thing.

So there's a very much, treasure chest kind of thing. So you run around looking for those. Often in that chest, there might be a weapon, there might be coins, there might be health benefits, might be an extra life, things like that. But the surprise element really rewards kids. It gives them that dopamine hit.

You know, like you walk in and go, here's the chocolate bar. It's the same in the brain, you know, it is raising that happy hormone, that dopamine hit. So the excitement of finding that chest and, and then what is inside it is a strategy that the software developers use to reinforce the kid's desire to keep playing, keep getting the rewards, you know, so that's one of the features that make it really exciting.

Also, when your character is killed on Fortnite, because it is a shoot them up type style battle, which is the sole reason really why I didn't want him to have them. But when your character is killed, you get to see the health bar of the person who killed you. So, you'll see that your opponent might be close to dying out of the game as well.

So, it feels like that near miss, that's quite compelling, isn't it, for kids. There's also a technique that they use in lots and lots of games. And as a, as somebody who studies neuroscience, I cannot but help admire the researchers and the software developers, because they really do look at the brain.

And see how the game and different elements of the game impact neural networks you know, happy hormones and things like that. And it's often why when kids are losing, they go into a rage or they get really upset and things like that. So. But they're very, very clever at working out. So that kind of near miss really like helps the urge to keep playing because I nearly got it.

I nearly got it. So it's, it's very like gambling, isn't it? It's very like getting on those slot machines, you know, and we know, Oh, next time, next time, next time. So even though you might lose frequently, you've got so much potential and actually. The fact that you don't have to wait too long to start the next game they come in sharp, sharp bursts, you know, of 20 minutes you know, so it, and it, and time for kids is not real, is it?

So those 20 minutes pass very, very quickly. The other element, and is an element of resilience as well, is the social draw. It's that social component. You can play with a friend, you can play with a squad of friends, you can play with your next door neighbour. I know my son plays with our our nephew, who is, is quite a bit older, but lives in Manchester, so quite far distance.

But it means that they get to connect on that level, even though they've got such a gap in ages. And I... you know, a gap in physical distance. So it's really lovely for them to have that. And it is such a massive draw. And also, you know, I hear a lot like, you know, we'll play at six o'clock together. And so then everything becomes about that scheduling of that time to play, because if you can't play now, then you're going to miss you miss out with your friends and different things.

You know, it's like, it's the old fashioned knocking on and they're not in. You know, when you're knocked on to play with you know, to play out with a friend and they're not in, it's that disappointment and stuff. So, you know, they've done really well in that kind of thing. And also there's certain elements of the game where you can team up with a friend.

So again, you've got that adrenaline of the battle. You've got, you're playing in real time with your friends. And actually. They, yeah, it's addictive. It's got to be addictive like that. They have everything in the game is led to be an addictive. So that is the downside. So yes, it's sociable. You know, yes, it's making them feel happy because it's hitting those happy hormones.

But you ask any parent who's trying to take a child off Fornite when they're in the middle of a game and the meltdowns that they will have. Absolutely. Yeah. It's addictive without a doubt. So it is important to set limits, you know and you've got to try and make sense the amount of time that a child has and work out their balance.

So, yes. They're seeing friends interacting them, they're participating in a extracurricular activity, you know, rather than kind of just sitting on the couch. So yes, they're, they're chatting, but what I would say to you is get them also to do activities outside in real life with friends. So, yes, it's great that they can be.

You know, active and chatting to friends online, but get them to encourage them seeing friends in real life, encourage them to do after school activities or

extracurricular activities, particularly physical ones. It's really important that if you've got a gamer, they do something physical outside of the house as well.

Make sure they're keeping up with, you know, homework and academic classes you know, and also build up those positive relationships within the house and that they're getting enough sleep. So my son is not allowed his, so I'll tell you about kind of the pros and cons that he was talking about and also what my worries are.

So yes, absolutely. You know, my worry is that it is addictive. There is a violence, you know, there is guns. We never had guns in our house. I think he got super soaker last year off somebody or a nerf gun last year off somebody outside of the family. Because, and that's the thing is, you know, when they're shooting people, our brain doesn't know the difference between real and imaginary.

And so you're almost setting that pattern up in the head. So that was my biggest thing. Now, when my son did his PowerPoint, you know, he talked about this. He talked about, you know, the ways to limit that, that he talks about addictive qualities because we talked about it. And he said, you know, I want to be social with my friends.

I do feel like I'm left out with my peer group. But actually, I understand what you're saying that it can be addictive. And so the way he wants to combat that is that he will limit the time on it. So if he gets on his PlayStation, he's not necessarily always playing that game that he'll limit his time actually on that game.

And he'll limit his time in the week. So during the week in a school week, he does not go on his PlayStation. He does not also go on it on weekend mornings. And this is because, and this is trial and error because, you know, that's parenting. And that's also kids learning. That's how teens particularly learn is trial and error.

Is what was happening. He was getting up at half six to play on the PlayStation when we were all in bed. So he wouldn't eat, he wouldn't have breakfast, and anyone knows that him, he eats all the time, like he has got such a bound of energy that he burns that. And he wouldn't eat, he would just get up, go straight on it, and actually he could have got like a good hour, hour and a half before we were kind of up and around on noticing by the time we had our showers and stuff and coming downstairs, he could have had a chunk, a real good chunk of time on that.

So actually we said no. And what I found is when we said you're not allowed on it so you may go on it in the morning, but you're not allowed on it before nine o'clock. If you, if you do something before nine, you can read a book, you, you know, you can, you can start your homework, whatever, but you're not, and actually what we found is he slept in.

A lot more and he needs that sleep because he has a very busy week. So actually just need that lie in and he usually gets up now about half eight. So it just goes to show, you know, we've give that little bit of a trial didn't work. We changed it and it has worked for his benefit and ours.

So yeah, always do the trial and error and that is part of the thing that I say about him having it, that was one of the conditions, you know, there was certain conditions that we put in. One was it was limited. Two, he always asked so that we kind of had a conscious awareness of, of his timing because they don't, you know, kids, teens don't have a conscious awareness of time.

You say, how long have you been on that? Oh, 10 minutes, probably been an hour, you know, so there's that. Also that he doesn't, now he doesn't go in on it in the morning, he doesn't go in it during the week. If, say, on a Friday or, you know, a Thursday night, my nephew might come over for tea, I don't mind if them two play on it together for an hour, but he has to ask permission for that.

So they're, you know, they're for me really important to be able to monitor it and also the biggest thing for me and and this is what I'm getting reported by parents is that behavior often becomes an issue with Fortnite. So they'll say, you know, they get like. Say you say I've got 30 minutes to play this game every night, and then, you know, they're either they get really angry when they've got to come off, or they're getting really insulting with their friends because they've missed something.

Yeah, so that, so that kind of positive connection with their friends online can actually turn quite derogatory and a negative experience. So be aware of that. And also be aware of anybody else joining the game that are not friends with them. That's part of my deal with my son is that I need to know who you play with and.

Or if you've added another friend to play, then I need to know about it if you're in conversation with them. So he doesn't have the chat, chat function on. So if there is somebody playing, they can't talk to him. You know, because these games,

Roblocks, Fortnite, have been used to groom kids. And, you know, so we have to be uber aware and take responsibility for kind of checking in on that.

Because... You know, they, they won't know they won't see it. We will see we will, you know, see the red flags there. So yeah, also for me as well, I think, setting those clear limits, but actually doing it in a way that is kind. So because I think often we'll see behavior escalate because if you think about it, they're in a battle situation, there is, you know, they're battling.

So because our brain doesn't know the difference between real and imaginary, often we go in, you know, the kids will go into that fight and flight, you can watch them. You know, they go into that fight and flight, they're waiting for somebody to jump or shoot them or whatever, or somebody's come around the corner.

They're also then on high alert because they're looking out for the. for not only people who might get them, but looking out for these treasure boxes and various different things that they go through on Fortnite. And so they're in very high alert. If you come in the middle of a game and then say, right, come on, dinner's ready.

You know, they're likely to be already in that heightened state. And so actually for you to then just go pull the plug, you know, I don't mean literally, or you might do, but for you to go, like, stop now, that's very hard for them to come down. So because they do, you know, them kind of in 20 minute slots, I always say at the end of this game, you need to, you need to come off now, or dinners, don't start another game, dinner's going to be in 10 minutes, you know, things like that.

If it is that he's playing it around that time, but I always say, you know there has got to be because there's no pause on these games. So I always say it's got to be a time limit And if there is any kind of negative behavior or tantrums then even if it's only You know, I know lots where there was a lot of reports of primary kids playing Roblox and having such meltdowns when they had to come off, you know, for me, what you've got to think is that is a competitor for what you want their behavior to be.

That game is vying for their attention and then that game is much more exciting than us without a doubt. So I always say that if there is any negative behavior after the game. So, for instance, if it's they have had you know, a bit of a meltdown or they won't come off or anything like that.

Okay, that's it you are not playing for 24 hours.

Anybody who knows me and has, and has chatted to me about this before, I'm not into punishments, but I am into natural consequences. So one of the things that I do, I do this with if kids don't go to bed, or I recommend this, if kids don't go to bed on time, then you take that time off the next night. So if they're messing around for 15 minutes, then they go to bed 15 minutes earlier the next night.

Same with games. If you don't come off in a reasonable amount of time, I'll start the timer, and that is you losing that time the next allocated screen time. If it is bad, and it does not matter if it's a one off, do not get comfortable with allowing them, Oh, it was just a one off, they're tired, this, whatever, we make excuses.

At the end of the day, we have a responsibility to give them the responsibility for playing these games. So, for me, it's very much around having a very clear and frank conversation with the consequences if the rules are not adhered to. So for instance, if my son doesn't come off straight away, then the time will get taken off.

If there is any, to be fair, he doesn't have a tantrum, you know, he's 13. Not that that mitigates it, but actually that he, if he doesn't, if he does have like a bit of a, Oh, it's not fair. Or, you know, or just, just give me 20 more minutes or whatever. If it is that it's no big impact, then of course, like if I can do that, then, and it's not a big deal, then I will.

But if it's, if it's not asked nicely, or if there's any negative connotations with his behavior, absolutely not. You don't go on the station now. You don't go on the PlayStation for the next 24 hours. But if you know me, I often go. That wasn't cool, dude. Right. What are we, what is the consequence of that behavior?

And I will give him the responsibility of that. Two reasons. One, they're in control of it to they're much harsher than me usually with consequence of, of, you know, negative behavior or undesirable behavior, shall we say? So, you know, that is that is kind of the Fortnite. debate Roblox. There's many games there's many games that I don't let my kids play.

I, there's many games out there that have similar because, you know, the software developers are amazing. Of course they look at neuroscience, of course they look at you know, how they can get kids into into coming back and coming back. You know, I've spoken on here about Insta and how that works, particularly for young

girls in withholding the likes for a little bit so that you'll come back and check it again and check it again.

And then they dribble those likes through. And it might be that in the first 30 seconds, you've got a hundred likes, but you won't know that for 20 minutes because they'll just let them through. That's how it works. So, just moving on now to the response that I've had. And I've really really loved this.

So, I've had one who said to be honest Ashley, your son is persuading me to change my mind. We've heard so much about the addictive quality of Fortnite that when it launched that my kids were banned from it. Now I'm wondering if I'm wrong. And actually, do you know what I would say? Is that And I'm not going to name this mom but you'll know who you are, but what I would say to you is for me, I'd always said no, I'd always said no, because I know the background to it.

I know the addictive quality to it, but actually If I say no to everything that my kids want And then where are they going to learn the safe boundaries of stuff like that? And actually they're going to learn it with me I felt that my son had really considered it. He also knew if he had put the time and effort in that that persuasive argument, I might not say yes, but actually the fact that he was taking my barriers to him having it seriously, then I would more likely think about it.

And actually, I think. You know, where else are they going to trial this? Now, if he wanted I'm trying to think what that game is. The, the car game, it's a car game where you can shoot and stuff. And it's like age 15, I can't think of what it's called, but anyway, if he wanted that, the answer would be absolutely no.

You'll probably know the one, but one of them has prostitutes in and you know. Things like that. So absolutely, it's not age appropriate with Fortnite at 13. I think it is age appropriate for him. Do I like the guns in it? Absolutely not. Of course, I don't. However, it is I, the worst thing you can do for a teen is socially ostracize.

That's like worse than anything for them. You know, everything in their DNA is to attach to their peers, to belong to their peers and pull away from us as parents. That is the survival of the species. So I also knew there was an embarrassment. There was a social aspect there that me withholding it. Now, if I thought it was serious danger, of course I would hold it.

And actually, if he didn't do it responsibly, I'd take it off the table. So it is about allowing him that trial and error. And that is what I would say to this mom as well is have the trial and error. See how you feel about it. And also put in rules that make you feel more comfortable in allowing them. So for instance, mine can't play during the week.

They are limited on Fortnite. They can't play early morning because of the sleep aspect for me. And when I say I give them a 10 minute warning, if they're not off, there is a consequence to that. And if there is any behavior issues, then again, there is a consequence to that. So absolutely let them have a little bit of a...

You know, a trial and error on that and also I had another message. I'm just looking it up now. That said absolutely love this and thought I would send you these images because they would make you make you smile. So, this particular listener, reader has wrote in and her son had prepared a presentation.

But what I really love about this, let's call him Billy, what I really love about Billy is, and I've got some images that mum sent through to me, is she'd come back from working away. Billy had poured her a glass of wine, prepared a little cheese plate, then he'd gone, popped up on her suit, right, and gave a presentation of why she should purchase something quite big, a big thing for him.

And do you know what? It is. It really warms the cockles of my heart that kids understand the pros and cons, because let me tell you, teens have this amazing, amazing ability to assess risk far faster than us as adults. Now, the only. Negative to this is there is a part of their brain that seeks reward, which is why Fortnite and games like that work so well.

But this, this reward center outstrips the risk for them. The reward will always win for a teen.

The fact that they see and try and win us over with presentations and, you know, glass of wine. I didn't get that. I'm just saying but, you know, good on Billy for doing that because I just think it's so amazing. You know that the kids are really thinking about it and they're thinking about the risks, they're thinking about, you know, the benefits, the features, the benefits, you know, these kids are going to rule the world one day and these kids who have who have sat down and thought of how they can do that is just amazing and I love it because it's not then, you know, if you have said very You know, realistically, no, you're not having this and this is the

reason why and you've had an open and honest discussion then and then they've come back with something like this.

You can't help but admire them. Now, the answer is not always going to be yes. And I need to ask this mom. Did he actually get the purchase that he was after? I strongly suspect. That he did. I also one of the, one of the comments that she made is, I think our boys have the measure of us. And they absolutely do.

You know, I know for my son, there would be nothing less. And I, and I think he thought, I'm going to risk it anyway. Not sure whether she will say yeah. But actually, the fact that he thought through all my objections, is just amazing. And well done for Billy. I absolutely hope mum purchased them for you.

So, you know, there's, I think we underestimate, particularly in teens, we underestimate their ability. And actually, if you can have open and honest conversations, keeping that communication going, then why not, you know, you, we can change our minds as parents and we can change it back. And I don't mean that as in, you know you're misbehaving.

That's it. You're never having a Fortnite again. No, but. You can change it back and go, do you know what? It's not working for you right now. So this has happened with Roblox with some of my clients in that they've had Roblox and they've, you know, they've had it, they've limited it. The behavior just was escalating, escalating, and they just said, you're not ready for that now.

And they took it off the table. You know, and you can return to that again in six months, you know, or whenever, but actually you're the adult, you're the one that's responsible and we have to teach them the responsibility as well. So yeah, I just really wanted to share that because. As much as we have all this out there and, you know, there's lots of negative connotations with games like this, there is also very positive stuff.

But I think what gives me hope is these kids are super impressive. They have got it going on. Do you know what I mean? And for me, it just gives me such hope that these teenagers, if they are trying to persuade us, You know, at 12 and 13 to purchase something big like Billy's done or for my son Finn to categorically change my mind on a game that was an absolute no go for me, then I feel like there's hope.

There's absolutely hope because can you imagine what they're going to do like in the future? It's just going to be amazing. So the future is definitely bright for our teens, I think. So that's it for today. I have been Ashley Costello, psychotherapist at The Resilient Kid. If you don't know, I am working on The Resilient Teen book.

Those who are looking, you know I've already got The Parents Guide To Raising A Resilient Kid, which is more of a generic for any kid, for any parent educator that can really need to help in hand spot the gaps of where their kids aren't resilient and, you know, practical tools to fill those gaps.

At the moment I'm writing the resilient teen. There is a new coaching program coming soon, so listen out for that. If you want to know more or be on the wait list for the Resilient teen then please, you know pop along to theresilientacademy.co.uk and put your name down on the wait list and you will get, you know, any of the opening offers when the book is released.

And have a look, check out any of the links under here. And remember, there is always a transcript if you need it, as well as audio, or if you want to see me in person. And then you can look at the YouTube channel as well. So you might listen to this, but then you might also want to see it or read it.

And we make sure that we do that to try and bring everybody in and be an inclusive learner. So take care, everyone. If you have any comments or you want to get me to address something that you're struggling with, then please do drop me an email at ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk so that's ashley, ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk take care everyone and lots of love.