

THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 2 – Episode 13

How Does Low Resilience Show Up In Our Kids

Hello and welcome back to the Resilient Kid podcast with me, Ashley Costello, psychotherapist for over 25 years, author, podcaster, speaker, we have it all. today I wanted to talk to you about how does Low resilience show up in our kids because it can come up in many different ways and I want to look at it in more detail because in short, it's, a response to stress and that's our cue as parents and as educators to what we can do to recognize it and then build resilience.

And that's, you know, if you have listened to one of my podcasts, that's my biggest, biggest thing I've been going about is resilience isn't something you're born with. It is something that we can build. So, if we know the gaps, if we know What they're missing if we know how lack of resilience shows up for them, we can do something about it.

today I want to go through some of the stuff that I've put in the book because I think it's really important for a couple of reasons one because not everybody reads, I am an audiobook girl all the way. So, podcasts and that's one of the reasons why I did this podcast is because A. It's short, sharp burst off but also B. Because people, you know, sometimes haven't got the time to sit and read.

today I want to talk about how it shows up and I've, in the book, I've, put archetypes of different kids. Now, you might recognize yourself in some of these there's, quite a lot of detail, I'm gonna split it into two. So, I have quite a few architects. I'm trying to think how many off the top of my head.

But what I'm going to do is I'm going to split them off today and we're going to talk about it and give some real-life examples. Okay. There won't be as much detail as in the book, but I will certainly try and give you a good overview. So, let's get started.

The perfectionist.

Now, these children and teens fear failure. They have unrealistic high expectations of what they can achieve and become almost paralyzed and sometimes overwhelmed because they've got to do it perfectly. Now, the way I see this because sometimes, and this, seems to affect, not always, I don't want to generalize, but seems to affect more girls than boys.

And there's a reason for that. But if we're watching, like teachers often love a perfectionist in class, they get really neat and tidy and everything's nice. But often what I find in my, from my side of the classroom is that they often don't fulfil their potential because they're too worried that they're not going to do as well as they'd like.

They limit opportunities because they don't think they're going to be the best. They get frustrated when they get things wrong, and, this can manifest in either bursting out crying or anger, get really cross. And sometimes it means they completely abandon what they were doing. So, if they're doing some homework and it's not going right, right, well, that's it I'm not doing it at all.

Other times they might restart over and over and over, especially things like projects, you know, if schools are really good at giving small pieces of homework and then you'll get big projects on a topic. And that's when I feel like the pressure sometimes starts to build and they want it perfect.

Now, they'll often stick to what they know. that's, you know, the same food, same activities, same friends and struggle if they change. And that is because, like I said, they often miss those opportunities because they don't want to face that challenge because they think they're going to be no good.

Because if you're really good at something, why do you want to start kind of back down here where you're not as good and you're learning again? over time, it can limit their confidence and their personal growth. Mistakes and failing at things help us grow as human beings. And that's kind of the message for me around a perfectionist.

I do a lot of work about teaching kids to fail what it looks like. I know in classes we use the first attempt in learning, F A I L. But I, I always say it's unfinished business. I like that. It's a lovely, you know, phrase. It's just unfinished business. Yeah. really be careful if you, if you spot one of your kids being a perfectionist,

because it can really hit their, you know, self-consciousness, their, their self-esteem can be quite low.

have a look at that. I'm going to give you a little example here. So, Nandi was an amazing artist. Alright, she was a student that came to me. She was studying art at college at Sixth Form and had been chosen for an exhibition for school artwork the year before. She had a good reputation, highly recommended.

She was brilliant, in short. Within three months of starting a new course, she'd become anxious, continually procrastinated with her artwork and became really emotional, having outbursts that were affecting the whole family. Now, when I met her, we talked through what was happening. She began to recognize the pressure she was putting on herself and realized that she hadn't finished a piece of artwork because she was worried it wouldn't be up to her usual standard.

Now, for me, it wasn't just about talking it through, but it was getting Nandi to recognize what she gets out of her art, besides really, really good grades. And she talked about freedom, being able to lose herself in it, being able to express her emotions, whether it felt good or bad, that connection to something bigger than herself.

The way she talked about her art and her craft was way beyond her years, and I couldn't understand why she was so good. We also explored her fear of not being good enough, and the pressures and expectations she was putting on herself. Now, it's not always about talking through that, but actually... One of the side effects of Nandi not doing her work and actually going through and procrastinating was that she was having these emotional outbursts because before, art was the way that she expressed herself.

She put all the feelings into her paintings and drawings and things like that. And so, it was about recognizing it for her, but also talking to her parents and teachers about their expectations because often kids view of our expectations are not always the same as what we expect. And sometimes we unconsciously put expectations on our kids without knowing.

So, it was about everybody being on the same page, but just allowing Nandi in this process to just almost go back to the art rather than the grades. that's kind of an example of the perfectionist and what I would say to you about the perfectionist is

if, you can recognize your, you know, your son or daughter, your child, is that often, when we do avoid things, that is because they're in fight and flight.

That is because they are in stress. have a look and certainly comment under the, under the podcast if, you know, if you are recognizing that in your kids. let's have a look at the next one.

this one is the comfort zone.

this is a little bit different because these kids don't fear failure. They fear success. I find, and again, not generalizing, but in my experience, this is a lot more boys feel this than girls. this is different from the fear of failure in so much as they worry about other people's view of their success.

They might not work as hard as they can. They might stop working. They can say they didn't try rather than fail. They hate the thought of extra attention. Success might bring sometimes. And just be aware that I'm giving you a list. But actually, it's not necessarily to hit all of these. It might just be, I'm trying to give you as many examples of this as possible.

So, particularly, teens worry about isolation from their peers. Singling them out to be different than, than friends or classmates. And you know, that can lead to embarrassment. Now, for teens, that's the ultimate. Like the quickest way to kick off fight or flight that stress releasing hormones that we have is embarrassment for teens, for sure.

And kids can become anxious about being taken down from that lofty position and where others might have put them. And that's whether they want it to be placed there or not. if you've, you know, if you've got a student who's really, really good at math. And then you move to equations and they're suddenly not, they start to feel the stress of that then, okay?

It's quite, it's, I'd say the similar thing about this, the comfort zoner and perfectionist, is they both can limit their potential. And they both can procrastinate. These kids excel at self-sabotage. often to the verge of success. Sorry, often on the verge of success that they will come up with reasons to quit.

I'd stop. I don't want to do it anymore. watch out for those self-destructive tendencies. Sometimes these kids will turn out, they'll turn to unhealthy behavior

and risky behavior. And sometimes peers that they may not necessarily choose to hang out with. Just to derail their own success.

Yeah. Okay. let's move on to the next one.

This is the critic.

Now, these kids talk about themselves negatively. Everyone has that inner voice. And occasionally it might be critical. But if it keeps saying bad things. It can have a real lasting damaging effect on their self-esteem. So, things like, I'm no good at maths.

I'm no good at art. I'm no good at languages. This is often seen around school subjects. Where the culture is very much, you're either good or you're not. that negative self-criticism can be seen in lots of things, such as friendships. They don't like me. I'm a rubbish friend. Yeah, it's not necessarily just around topics.

We all know body image is massive for negative self-talk. I'm ugly, I'm fat, I'm too short, I don't like my nose. All of these voices can be a way of protecting themselves from social pressure. Saying it before peer does are worth a bully. Sometimes kids speak negatively out loud because they need reassurance from adults in their lives.

For example, an adult might say you're not fat or you are good at maths and where they hear critical comments. we all need that reassurance now and then. What I would say on this point is. I try not to comment on kids' appearance. Because that elevates it in their mind that that's important to you.

And actually, we don't need to comment on there. What I always do is if I have a student that is like this, then I always get them to look at the evidence. You know, be a little bit of a detective. Okay, have a look. But when you did fractions, you were really good. You know, really look at the facts.

Rather than just what their comments. Get them to look at the facts. Because... What I find is that when critic kids don't do well in one thing, it can often become an all or nothing and rubbish at netball when actually they lost one game, you know, and that that globalization of thinking can really chip away at their confidence.

And their confidence to try new experiences. A few years ago, as an example, I had a student who loved art. In every sense of the word, she was great. And she was creative, enjoyed painting, drawing, things like that. And she did a self-portrait. And the teacher came along and corrected the eyes for her. From that day on, that child thought she was no good at art.

Quickly switched their interests elsewhere and actually it's really difficult to get them back. As adults, we often see it from our point of view. We think let's make it better. Let's put it on display. When actually the child often takes away the kind of feedback that I'm not good enough. Nothing was ever said.

overtly about their artistic abilities. And I'm sure that teacher would be devastated to think what they've done. However, that then becomes their critical internal voice, you know, and it was on their behalf, you know, to really defend the teacher. They see it and just thought, how can I improve this?

And they rubbed out their eyes and drew them again. Instead of giving the child feedback of, guess what? If you really like the way that you've done this, but if you just change that bit, and notice the difference. So yeah, be aware of, be aware.

The projector.

Now these kids blame others. You've heard it, you know, they blame the teachers, the siblings, the parents, the friends for anything that's gone wrong.

And it's hard, isn't it? Because we want them to take responsibility, but actually it's a sign that they don't have the confidence to be able to. Sometimes it's because they don't want to feel the shame. It's easier to deny or blame others than admit we've made a mistake. It can be because they don't want to be seen, start again, it can be because they want to be seen as an expert and don't want to be embarrassed that they don't know.

I often see this in little kids where, actually I was going to say mostly in little kids but it isn't, I see this in teens as well, but what happens is they don't want to disappoint the adults around them. They become adamant, thus where black is white, that this is how it is. And often they don't have the capacity to manage their feelings, they'll either ignore or blame those around us.

The next one, the conservative. I was gonna give you an example then, but I don't wanna give you an example of everyone or this podcast be really, really long. But if you want more of an example, give me a shout. I will put another one together.

The conservative, these kids are resistant to change.

They shy away from trying new things. It doesn't matter if it's new food, new activity, going to a new place. Children like this are less adventurous. They often struggle with their confidence. And they do really need to know what's going to happen when they get there. They need to know what time are you leaving?

Who's going to be there? Where the toilets are? Where's the exits? Those kinds of questions will come up for children like this. They don't want to fail, and they don't know what is expected of them either. The safe option is often to stick with what they know. This trait limits their life experiences and opportunities to build confidence.

Confidence doesn't happen overnight. We have to build it like resilience. We have to build it step by step and that comes with practice of new things. They have an inflexibility, often, which can cause wider issues for family. They want to sit in a certain place, use a certain cup they don't like getting in a car, you know, things like that.

Also, transitions tend to be difficult for... Conservative kids and what I would say to you is look out if your child is quite resistant to change and there isn't any other reason for it, then really look out for stuff around changing classes, end of year and moving up, say, in extracurricular, like if they're doing gymnastics in the moving upper level, because it's those kinds of times that they react disproportionately, I guess, to the situation.

They have unexplained meltdowns, meltdowns even, and that's why we see it. That's how we see it. It's suddenly they're having a meltdown. You're like, why? How did that happen? I'm going to do the last one for here because I just, I don't, for me, the podcast has to be short, sharp, you know, enough to take the dog for a walk and back or things like that.

I'm going to do one more and then I'll do a podcast next week as kind of a part two.

This is the worrier.

These kids worry excessively, often worry about all sorts of things, many of which is out of their control. So, for instance, I seen this hugely when the war in Ukraine happened with kids in the UK who just couldn't handle it.

They were really, really worried and it was how do we talk to them? I even went on the Jeremy Vine show on Radio2, to chat about how do we talk to kids about it? But think of the other things, think of other big things like climate change. You know, I get a lot of young children talking about climate change because we, you know, they listen to the news.

We talk about it. And they worry about. You know, really big things, as well as everyday things like are you going to get me from school? Despite never forgetting to get them, like you've never forgot to go and get them. Things like what if there has to read out loud in class? Anxiety is like a runaway train once it starts around one thing, and it can very easily transfer to things and kids if they're not given the tools to manage it.

Children and adults alike, you know need to have strategies to manage that anxiety. And once they do, resilience will improve. Resilience is like the antidote to worrying excessively. I'm gonna finish with a little real-life example. So, Jay's family came to me when they noticed Jay seemed to be worrying a lot.

Often about small things. Worried about being collected after school. Even though they've never been forgotten, but this worry began to permeate other areas. When I worked with Jay, they told me of their grandmother's death not long before our meeting. They told me about the need to know who was collecting and when.

When we unpacked all these feelings, it became very clear that Jay was worried that something might happen to mum or dad. We talked lots about grandma and worked through the grief and anxiety around that. And then we made a plan with mum and dad and the teachers to ease Jay's worry about being left.

Now that is a little bit of a bigger deal. You know, for them because they had the grandma, but actually coming up with a plan to deal with the anxiety, giving them some tools for when they start to worry will really help. I have just realized I think I've only got one more archetype. let's do it. Let's do it. Why not?

This one is the sensitive.

These are kids who are sensitive to their surroundings. Burst into tears for no apparent reason. That doesn't mean it's not important. It just for us as adults, we can't see it often. They feel overwhelmed. They don't have the tools to process these big emotions.

Yeah, and manage them. Now, when I talk about big emotions, we often think about primary kids, but teens get overwhelmed all the time. please don't think that any of these are just to the, to the younger ones, they're really not. Often ask lots of questions and that's usually a need for reassurance.

Yeah, they get overwhelmed easily by noise, smells, lights, sensory. Now, if you're neurodiverse, that sentence just there can be massive for you, for your kids. However, it hits most kids when they're stressed. have a look and see or get help and advice if you think that bit is big, very big for your child, and if there's something else going on.

But often we find it when kids get stressed. Emotional regulation is the key to build in resilience in sensitive kids and it's kind of really important that we give them those tools.

And real-life example, Noah was struggling when his family came to me, older brother being a very happy girl. Love is mom. Didn't know what to do this time around. She tried many things, but he would often cry over what seems like the smallest thing and they couldn't understand it. You know, is His older brother was quite hardy, wasn't sensitive at all, no, would worry a lot, especially over change, easily overwhelmed, especially on days out.

Any adult shouted or raised the voice, he would get really upset. Well, I'm in for days. my job started with mom and dad. Became clear when chatting that they both had very different ways of disciplining the boys. What was working with the older brother wasn't working with Noah. And we looked at a more gentle approach with natural consequences rather than punishment.

Built in lots of emotional support ahead of transitions and change. Being prepped about what it looks like leaving the house, where they were going, things like that. We also looked at his own boundaries and needs. And actually, what happened is Noah blossomed, he occasionally burst into tears, but, but actually mom and dad now recognize his needs ahead of the time.

Acknowledging a sensitive child and their needs, and their needs are probably going to be different if you've got any other children, and giving them tools to be able to freely express themselves is key. And then they can start building resilience and manage their stress. as adults, if we examine our own life, we can see the examples that I've talked about playing out as well.

We might give up on a task. We might avoid. a task, not take an opportunity through fear of failing or lack of confidence. I know for me, absolutely, I will, if I'm stressed, I will avoid, I would rather clean my own toilet with a toothbrush than You know, sit down to do something that is scary. I had to do a talk for a big company a couple of weeks ago, and for the two weeks leading up to it, I was avoiding writing that speech.

Right up until the day before, pretty much. I'd, I'd wrote the framework, I'd done some work with a speaker coach shout out to Catherine Sandland who's amazing. I was avoiding it and it was purely because I hadn't spoken in front of this crowd before and you know, I was starting to feel a bit of imposter syndrome and I was sabotaging myself; you know?

Absolutely. Until I got a grip the day before and. Went out there, speech was great, had a great day with them and it's absolutely brilliant, but you know, I've done stuff like that millions of times, but it doesn't say that that fear failing or that, you know, lack of confidence just in that moment. You know, you can lack confidence sometimes in just one thing, even though you, you might be really good at others.

as adults and as kids, watch out because we tend to keep to the same old routines because that is safer and it helps keep our anxiety at bay rather than take on the challenge. But actually, it's the challenge that helps us grow. do we want our kids to play it safe or? Do we want them to take healthy risks?

And we can help them with that. We can take it step by step and help them. My guess is that as parents, as educators, as kids' champions, which is how I think of you are, we want to give them the tools and guide them into a building, not only confidence, but resilience as well. Let me know below if that was useful, how, if you recognize those archetypes in your own kids, if you recognize it in yourself, in your friends, you know, pop, pop a comment underneath and yeah, I love, I'll email me at ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk I love, love, love the emails that I get. I often get replies to newsletters a lot and I just think it's brilliant. always feel free to drop me a line.

Take care. Bye for now.