

THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 2 – Episode 1

Summer How to get the best out of your kids for the holidays

Okay, hello and welcome back to "The Resilient Kid Podcast"! Wow, yes, I missed you, of course, of course. Let me explain why we had such a gap between season one and season two. That is because I released the book. I wrote the book, and actually, the edits were far harder than actually writing it. But because of a fabulous editor, Erin Chamberlain, she just really got the best out of me, so it took quite a while. I had to throw all my focus on that. But I'm glad to say that it's released. You can have a look in the show notes to get your copy. We're back, Karen, as well, just in time to talk about everything around us: summer holidays.

Now, some of you will have been on summer for a little while, and you might be rocking in a corner because you've already had enough, and it's barely August. And some of you may be absolutely thriving and loving being off, loving not having that routine of school runs and drop-offs. So today, I really won because I thought long and hard about what would be a really good first podcast back. Actually, I thought in the middle of the summer, what about top tips to help you through the summer and also just to give you that real boost if you are struggling?

So if you don't know me, I'm Ashley Castello. I'm a psychotherapist with over 25 years of experience, and I work with kids, teens, families, and even some adults. My role and job in life are to really help families get through something that they're struggling with. So let's crack on with the podcast. How is your summer going? Have you settled into some kind of routine that works for you? Or are you at that point where you're wishing the kids were doing less screen time? Are they fighting with each other if they've got siblings? What's going on for you?

So let's go through and talk about how we can really tweak summer a little bit, make some adjustments, put some structure, put a little bit of boundaries in there, and just really help you and the kids thrive this summer. So the first question I want to ask you, and actually Dr. Lauren Markham from "Aha Parenting" talks about making a priority for yourselves in the summer. So what would be your priority? Is that to spend more time outside? Is it to see more of the family? Do a little bit of travel? Think about what is your priority and get the kids involved in this. And if you're already halfway through, don't worry. Yes, the kids might resist a little bit, but just, you know, over dinner one night, get them around the table, chat to them, talk about what is improving, what's working, what isn't, what can you improve, what would they like to do?

For instance, at the time of recording, we are literally, my eldest has been off already for a good three or four weeks, and my youngest, it's his last day of school. So what I do is tonight, we'll sit round after dinner, and we will chat about, "Give me three things you want to do over the summer." And that could

be something like, my eldest wants to catch a train to go and see her grandmother in Scotland. Now, I might not initially think, "Oh, do I really want to catch a train that way?" But actually, I know her older cousin will be going at some point. I can make that happen between the two of them. If I take a drive for five minutes and drop her off at the cousin's, drop them off at the train station, near there it is, get on, get off, grandmother will be at the other end, so that's an easy one for me to make happen.

Now, if the younger one puts wanting to go into Disneyland, that's absolutely not going to happen. However, what I might say as a compromise is, "Well, let's go to a theme park, absolutely. That's much easier and much less expensive than Disneyland." So what I kind of get them to do is write three things and a priority. So for instance, one of them might say, "If we take the eldest one, she might say, 'Yes, she wants to catch a train to her grandmother's.' Another one might be, 'Spend more time with your friends.' Another one might be, she wants to go to rugby camp." And then, "Okay, what's a priority?" Now, I already know because I've had tentative conversations with each of my kids individually. And actually, their priority is to get out on their bikes more. They've suddenly, at the age of, you know, nearly 16 and 13, discovered their bikes again, and they are loving the freedom it brings and just that being able to go anywhere pretty much on their bike. So that's their priority. If I can incorporate that in one of the activities, then absolutely, I will do. And that could be something like going on a bike ride purposely, or it could be, we're going to visit somewhere. Let's all go on our bikes if it's a doable distance. So think about what's your priority. Is it, you know, like my kids, getting them out on the bikes? Is it getting them outside? Is it meeting up with family or friends? Or maybe you want to do a bit of traveling. So think about what the priority is, and that will really help when you're making the plans and does that fit in with your priority, or is that kind of coming away from your priority?

So once you've got your priority worked out, what I want you to do is think about boundaries around time that their children are going to spend. So for instance, if your priority was spending more time or getting the kids to spend more time outside, and maybe you want to say that's going to be every single day, then that's fine. The reason I picked that is because we know the more time children are in nature, the healthier and happier they are. Science is just trying to catch up at the moment around why nature is so good for us. We know ourselves, don't we? If we go out, we always feel better if we've been for a walk, things like that. But science is just catching up now. So we know that it calms down our nervous system. We know that trees release chemicals that really boost happy hormones, things like that. And for me, I'm always a big one. If the kids have had a bit of a meltdown, let's get out for a walk, even if it's only five or ten minutes, even if it's walking around the block, sometimes it'll be a case of, "When? Let's walk to the shop, get a little treat." Or, you know, "Let's have a purpose if they are resistant." So yeah, so really think about what your priority is, and then let's have a look at boundaries. So it could be time on screens. We know that's important for them to relax and for them to chill, but we also know that we don't want them to have too much time on screens. So what boundaries are you going to put in place? For instance, is it going to be, "You're allowed an hour of gaming a day"? For me, personally, with my kids, I actually make the use of screens educational in the summer. So what we do is the kids, I think I've mentioned it before, but the kids absolutely love it. My eldest in particular. And we got it when she was doing exams, and she loves it. I think it's fantastic. It's called Seneca Learning. And it's Seneca Learning spelled S-E-N-E-C-A Learning. And what I've got to do is do some maths. My youngest one has got to do

some extra reading. So I've set it up so they're getting a lesson a day on that, and they really enjoy that. But actually, what I find is they will do that in the morning, and then they don't want to do anything in the afternoon. But I don't mind, because I know they're getting some educational stuff in there. Now, you might be thinking, "Oh, God, that's just so mean." But actually, they do really enjoy it, and they are still getting the educational benefits. So think about how much time you want them to spend on screens and maybe have a compromise. Maybe there are certain things that they do on the screen, like some educational apps, that kind of thing. So think about that. So I want you to think about what kind of boundaries you want around that.

Also, we know that if we have too much choice, we become very overwhelmed. We've got the whole summer. What on earth do we do? Now, if your children are younger, actually, that can be okay because you can, you know, almost take them along with you with a trip that you want to do, or they can give you some input. But sometimes, with the older ones, it's that whole, "I don't know. I don't know." And then you'll suggest something, "I don't know." So actually, with this, if that's what you're experiencing, I want you to think about, why don't you create some ideas for the summer? Now, what you could do is write them down on lollipop sticks, on bits of paper, and then have them in a pot, and then when the kids come to you and go, "I don't know what to do," go, "Oh, hang on. Let's pick something out the pot," and it can be absolutely anything. Or you could do it like on a jar. So I've got a friend who has got it written on lollipop sticks, and she's got four kids, and they take it in turns to pick out of the pot. So maybe think about that, something like that.

And you know what? It's the summer holidays, chill out and do what you want. But we know that's not always good for children. We know that we do actually need some kind of routine and rhythm in our day. It doesn't need to be strict. It doesn't need to be something that you need to stick to every single day, but just some kind of rough rhythm around, "Okay, we get up around this time. This is when we might do a big outing. We're always going to have lunch around this time." So think about that, maybe, if you can't face doing a routine, because I know for a lot of parents, the thought of it just feels overwhelming. But what we do know is that children do actually thrive on routine. So maybe what you could do is have a little discussion with them, a little family meeting, and say, "Okay, what's our priority?" For instance, one of mine is that I know if we don't get out for a walk first thing in the morning, it won't happen. As soon as the day goes on, I just won't have the energy. It just doesn't happen. So that's one of our rhythms is we always, always try and get out first thing. Now, I'll be honest, not every single day, but probably six out of seven. So think about what your boundary is around time. How much do you want them on screens? How much do you want them outside? And I guess the thing to think about here is just where the children are at. So, for instance, I'm going to make an assumption here that your children are in primary school. It might be that they're in the first few years of secondary school. But I'm making that assumption. So think about where they're at, and if you're concerned about where they're at academically, and you're concerned that they've fallen behind, maybe the summer is a really good time to do some extra tutoring. Now, I say that, and I can already feel a little bit overwhelmed because we've just got over doing home schooling, haven't we? So it's a bit like, "Oh my goodness, I can't face that." But actually, the tutoring doesn't need to be like it was over lockdown. The tutoring can be something like getting them to do cooking and getting them to weigh out ingredients

and doubling recipes and halving recipes. Just all of those things to make maths fun. So think about what would work for you around tutoring. And the other thing to think about is time with your children is so precious, especially as they start to get older. You know, once they hit teenage years, they don't want to know, do they? They just want to go off with their friends. So maybe think about what kind of things you can do with them. Maybe get them to cook. We've got a bit of time in the holidays. I know for a lot of people listening, both parents might be working. So it's a bit of a juggling act. But maybe think about, you know, is there a time when you can maybe come home a little bit early and you cook together? Maybe it's even making some soup together and then freezing it. So at least you've got a meal when you come home late at night and you can't be bothered to cook. But you've got something that you've made earlier in the day. So think about what you want to do with your children.

Okay, let's talk a little bit about back to school because it's only, what, six weeks away. And so many of us are just thinking, "Oh, I don't even want to think about it." But actually, we do need to think about it because it's going to be here before we know it. So think about the following things: What can you do now that you know it's only six weeks away? What can you do now to make life a little bit easier when it comes to that first week back? Because let's face it, that first week back is going to be tough, isn't it? I always find that first week is where everything falls apart because we're back to routine. It's all feeling very strange. It's the kids back to school. You've got to be organized. You've got to be up early. You've got to be out the door early. So start to think about, "Okay, what can we put in place now?" So, for instance, could you do like a little mini practice run? Could you practice getting up in the morning and practice getting out the door? If your children have been staying up late, start to bring bedtime back by 10 minutes every few days or so, so you can gradually get them back into the routine. You could practice the route to school if they're walking, cycling, scooting, practicing that. And also, you know, practice going to bed a little bit earlier. So think about those things.

The other thing to think about is school uniform. So many of us think about it at the last minute, and then suddenly, we're thinking, "Oh, my goodness, it's only a week until school starts, and I don't even have the uniform. The shops have sold out. There's nothing left." So think about that now. Think about, "What do I need?" Check what you need, check what still fits. And then, you know, it can feel a little bit overwhelming, and you think, "Oh, I can't face going to the shops." But actually, if you can face it, it might be easier to go to the shops now than it will be in a week or two. And then at least, you know, you're not having to battle with the crowds, the shelves being empty. So think about that now. And I think, you know, it's really hard because as parents, we want to protect our children. We want to make sure everything is perfect for them. But the reality is, in life, things don't go perfectly. So maybe also think about what are some of the things that they are going to struggle with? What's going to be hard for them? For instance, if your child is going into a new school, that's going to be really tough, isn't it? So think about what could you put in place now? Could you arrange for them to have a little walk around the school, a little tour around the school? Or could you connect them with some other children that are going to be in their class, that kind of thing? So think about what could you do now to make life a little bit easier when it comes to that first week back?

I hope you enjoyed today's podcast. We'll be back next week with another episode of "The Resilient Kid Podcast." So take care, and I'll speak to you soon. Bye-bye.