

THE RESILIENT KID PODCAST

Season 2 – Episode 2

The Family Pot

Ashley: Hello and welcome back to the Resilient Kid Podcast with me, Ashley Costello, and psychotherapist of over 25 years. It's great to have you here, great to be back.

So today, we're talking about the family pot. This is Season Two, Episode Two. What is the family pot? Well, it's kind of a hypothetical but practical idea around who puts in what and who takes out.

So if we take the average family of four, who is putting in that family? Who is contributing to the wider family? If we think about the family pot as a resource, as something that can be drawn on when we need something, something that needs to be filled up, that's our family pot. We all contribute, and we all take out to various or lesser degrees.

Now we can do this in several ways. We can add to the family pot financially. For instance, whoever's earning the money or bringing the money in, that is contributing to the family pot - keeping the house running, the lights, the food in the fridge, those kinds of things, money for going out. Who is contributing financially into that pot? Now that could be you on your own if you're a single parent, it could be you and a partner. Very often, the kids, even teens, are not putting into that pot, but they might be able to contribute in a different way, and I'll come on and tell you about that.

We can also practically contribute to the pot by doing things like chores around the house. Actually, for me, one of the really good ways that kids contribute financially is to help out by doing chores that then free us as parents, our carers, to be able to get on with work. So I'll give you an example of that as we go, but it's a really good way. So who is it that is contributing practically? Who's doing the washing, who needs washing done, things like that? Yeah, you get the idea. Okay, so how else do we contribute? Well, we contribute emotionally to the pot as well. Who's there for each other, who's there to listen when the kids come in from school, and they need to tell you about a difficult day? Who is it that kind of puts the kettle on if somebody else is feeling down? That's emotionally contributing. So think about every time we contribute, there will also be somebody, it might be us, might be the kids, who take out of that pot as well. Okay, so let's kind of get into it. Now you know how we can contribute to the family pot, let's give you real-life examples and how it really helps the kids understand because what I hear is lots of clients at the minute saying, you know, the kids take me for granted if they think money grows on trees, things like this. This family pot is to stop all of that. Okay, so let's

take an example of my kids. So I have two kids, both teens, one who's just left school, one who's still at school. So they're around 13 and 15-ish, and they take from the pot in very different ways. The older one, she will probably, you know, she probably goes out more, but she actually earns her own money, so she's not taking financially out of the pot that much, to be fair, apart from the usual, you know, clothes, makeup, and her after-school extracurricular activities. My son is younger; he doesn't really have his own money apart from he just cut the grass. So just kind of a heads up, both my kids contribute doing chores I don't pay them for. They do something extra; they get paid for it. His thing is he cuts grass every week for a Fiverr, so he has that to spend when he goes to town with his mates, things like that. But he doesn't contribute to the pot financially. But both of my kids will do chores, which means that frees me up to do work or do other things. So they're contributing time. So I can't pay for time, yeah. I can't get that back. So if I've got, say, for instance, I've got a late-night client, and I'm going to be on Zoom, one of them makes dinner. That is giving me that time back. So that is so cool because it means that they can contribute something that actually helps the family financially through time, rather than putting, you know, £10 in the pot for something like that.

So, if we take both of my kids, the youngest will, um, his extracurricular is quite expensive; he does acting, so it's, you know, considerably more expensive than, say, my eldest who does rugby. So we pay a one-off yearly fee for her rugby, we pay monthly for the acting lessons. Now the way that we work it is because he needs more of a, he needs more lift, he needs more, um, money financially, and also emotional support as well. So when he's finished kind of doing a show, it's full-on; he's shattered; you know, we have to make sure he's got packed up, he's getting plenty of rest, things like that. So he would probably take out of the family pot. Andy's younger, the younger they are, the more they take out of the family pot. So he would take out quite considerably in comparison to my older daughter because she is older, she doesn't need as much, and also, um, her extracurriculars are not relying on us because it's around the corner; she can kind of take herself to and from there most days and when she has to go. So can you see how it can seem really unbalanced? So you might have an adult that financially puts in the pot; you might have kids who take out of the pot. That is what we're talking about is who's putting in and who's taking out. Now, when I discuss this with families and I discuss it with kids, I say to them, "Okay, what is it that you need?" So on a Sunday, we set expectations. And I've got like a whole podcast in Season One around expectations, so if you're not sure what I mean, I will give you a brief overview, but go and check out that one. So on a Sunday, we say, "Right, who needs what this week?" And for instance, it might be my youngest needs a lift to his acting class, but he's also got a rehearsal, so he needs a lift twice this week. He's then also arranged or he wants to arrange a friend coming for a sleepover at the weekend. Is that okay? That is absolutely okay if it's convenient, but it is still taking out of the family pot. You've got to check the bed in; you've got to, you know, watch this kid eat that's coming to stay over; what are you doing, you know, things like that? So it's still taken out of the family pot. So it's around what is the expectation for that and what extra work is it going to be for

either me or dad? You know, so we have to kind of think about that. We might say, "Okay, I'm going to work late, so I can't do dinner on Tuesday night." And that's my expectation. I want somebody else to be able to do that, and it could be the hubby's in Manchester working, so he's going to be late on such and such tonight, so he's around. Just looking at the expectations for the week, what everybody needs, and can we accommodate all of them? Sometimes it's a yes, sometimes it's a no; you know, we're too busy at the weekend; you might can't stay over or can you get a lift with somebody else because you know we're busy. Okay, or move that works so I can take you there. It's things like that that in an expectation kind of chat that we usually have on a Sunday.

After dinner, we go right, what does everybody need this week? Can we do it? And I usually end up writing it out because I'm quite a visual person, and I just need it written down, or I'll forget, and we go okay, let's try and work this out. Now, that's your expectation/needs conversation for the week. However, what are the kids putting back in that family pot or the hubby or your partner? What is it that they're putting back in the pot that will help you and resource you to give you some capacities to be able to help them? So for instance, yes, okay, your friend can stay over on Saturday night, however, I need you to clean your room and change the bedding. Okay, now he's 13; he has been changing bedding since he was about 10. Yes, he might need a little bit of help. All the kids, most ages, from five, six up can strip a bed, making it a little bit different; we do the Inside Out methods, don't know about you guys, and but so he can do that; that's not an issue for him. If he wants his friend to stay over, when that's done, then yes, but if it isn't done, I'm not going to be running around doing that; the friend just doesn't stay if he wants it, he'll do it. He's putting in the family pot to be able to get his friend to stay over. The other thing is things like hanging out the washing, you know, putting in practical stuff, chores around the house. And again, chores are really important for kids, you know, doing jobs around the house really important for that sense of belonging, that sense of need, as well as that pride and life skills, of course, but actually, the kids doing practical things around the house free you up for there for you to be able to do other stuff, which is more fun stuff, let's be honest, usually, and that you can help. So, you know, after dinner, sometimes we'll go right, everybody help clean up, and we'll watch a movie together or we'll play game cards or a board game or whatever, but everybody helps. That's everybody contributing to the family.

When you have your little discussion around who needs what during the week, you'll realize, and the kids will realize who's taking more out than others. So, for instance, my son, when we had this conversation at the beginning, he realized how much actually of time and our capacity he is using up, so we asked him to contribute. Now, if, of course, it's not going to be equal, but it's important because then they don't take us for granted and also for them to understand there is that give and take because if not, our capacity and our time go, we haven't got anything left. We haven't got capacity or resource left in the pot to be able to give it to them, and that's when we end up rowing, that's when you end up getting angry with each other, things like that. So, there is that, you know, kids giving time instead of finance, which is great, but also that very practical element of

helping. So it could just be things like my daughter, so for instance, she wanted to order something, and she was like, "Can you order this for me? Can I have this?" And I thought, I think it was a pair of trainers, and she was like, "I said, yeah, absolutely. We'll get you a new pair of trainers; you definitely need them. Let's get them ordered; you have a look at what you want." Now, I'd already taken her to a shop, and she didn't really like them, so okay, we'll look online and see. Now usually, what it would have been is she just said, "I like these. I'd have ordered them. Blah, blah, blah." She's 15, nearly 16; she doesn't need me to do that; I can give my card over; I know that's done, and I'll get the email to say it's confirmed. So that means that 10 minutes I'm freed up. It's the hassle of it more than the time for me, so of course she can do something like that. It can be something like, you know, nip into the shops, so you don't have to do it, and if it's only a few things, it can be cleaning the bathroom, it can be making dinner. Yes, of course, the younger they are, the simpler the dinner is, but actually, is there anything wrong with, you know, say, the teens just putting a pizza in for everybody and making a salad? And if they're younger, what about sandwiches? Can they all make sandwiches or toast, you know, spaghetti on toast, scrambled eggs on toast, things like that, having a lighter tea that night and just frees it up. And I'll tell you one thing that my kids like about making dinner for everybody, and they do various different things, is that on the night they make dinner, they don't clean up. They don't help clean up; they don't lift it. They literally take the plate out; that's it. In fact, they rarely do that; we take it. So if you've got that kind of our rule, and that if you make tea, you don't clean up afterwards, so they love that that they get away with that.

Now, so there's lots of things that they can do, you know, whether it's hanging out the washing, whether it is, you know, making a phone call on your behalf. So for, I'm not on about ringing the bank, but like for instance, I will say, "Ring Nana, tell her we'll be there on, you know, such and such time," and it's just while I'm doing other things, and so that it helps, you know, it's all putting into the pot, absolutely. Emotionally, think about your children and how who takes out of that pot. So I've had a client recently who is absolutely fabulous, it's brilliant; parents do really, really well, but one of their kids was really struggling and real anger issues for various different reasons, but they're absolutely taken out of the pot because you're drained after dealing with that, you know, walking them through that emotional regulation is really difficult at times, and there's not a lot left for you, there's not a lot left of your capacity or your resource left to give them either, other kids, or your partner, or even, you know, yourself. And so sometimes we have to be aware of what drain there is on that family part emotionally and address it. And so I often say to the kids, you know, things like, knowing that, you know, one of us is working, you know, bring us a coffee just out of the blue, you know, or text and say, you know, "Do you need anything?" Things like that, checking in with each other, "How's your day?" You know, because we always don't, we say to the kids, "How's your day? How are you?" Things like that, but actually, what we end up doing is not, you know, they don't often ask us, and actually, that's really important, you know, is there anything I can do for you? Um, just little things that they can put in, you know, giving you a hug and kiss goodnight, "I love you," is all emotionally putting it in the pot, especially with each other

if you've got sibling kids. I've got two, I know plenty who have got way more than me, you know, and it's about them getting along, helping each other. That is emotionally putting it in the pot. I am not saying, you know, it's not other times like my mom's generation, she was the eldest, she brought up the others, it's not like that; they are just looking out for each other. If one of you, you know, if you're doing something and one of the kids can't find the shoes, can one of the siblings help? You know, it's all emotionally contributing to the part. And the reason why it's so important for me is because, a) it is that contribution, yes, it's life skills as well, but actually see for me, it's building that resilience. It's contributing to the people around you, building our mental health, building our life skills, but building our resilience as well. Of course, I would mention resilience, and but yes, so, so important.

So I guess what I want to do is I want you to have a little look at what your needs are as a family and who is taking out of the pot more and who is contributing more. Now, heads up, chances are if you are the main caretaker for your kids, you will be contributing more. However, you can readdress that balance with your partner, if you have one, and and our kids. So have a look who's taking out and have a look what we need to fill that part up so there is a resource to go right round the family. And it's not just left that the main caregiver is, you know, scraping around the bottom of the barrel. So it could be things like, can the kids make dinner? Can the kids run errands for you? Can they help with the washing? Can they, you know, how often do they display affection, and that can be just positive conversations, asking your welfare, things like that, it can be hugs, it can be, you know, making you a cup of tea or coffee, things like that, help you, you know, so helping around the house, very practical, it can be time elements, can they help each other rather than you having to do it, and also, you know, think about who's taken out and what are they contributing in.

I think it's really enlightening; it will really help them. Well, it'll help you readdress the balance, but also, it will help them realize, you know, having those conversations around who needs a lift, who needs PE kit, who needs this, who needs that, they'll realize how much they take, and that taking for granted is less likely for sure. And so good luck with that; let me know how you get on. I would love to hear your conversations and your questions, of course. If you've got any questions at all, you can email me at ashley@theresilientkid.co.uk; you can comment under the podcast or YouTube video, depending on where you're streaming this from. And you can also check us out on Insta or Facebook page. But I would love to hear how that conversation has gone, and um, are the kids starting to contribute more? I would love, love to hear it. You can also get more of my ideas and help with if you have a look up the book, "The Parent's Guide to Raising a Resilient Kid," available at all good bookshops or Amazon. Amazon has got it on offer at the minute, um, and they are pushing it themselves, so it's on offer there. So have a look at that, and or for the summer, we have the "Parenting Guide to Raising Resilient Kid" course, um, which is on half price in the summer months to help all you guys out there. So take care; hope you and your family are doing well. Sending lots and lots of love, and I'll speak to you soon.