

How Not to Raise an Asshole With Melinda Wenner Moyer

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Yael Schonbrun: You're listening to Melinda Wenner Moyer on psychologists off the clock.

Before we get started, I just want to give all of you listeners out there, a heads up that this episode does contain a swear word. So if you have small people who you don't want to expose to expletives, uh, this might be a good one to listen to when they're not around.

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Diana Hill: I'm Dr. Diana Hill coauthor with Debbie on ACT Daily Journal, and practicing in seaside Santa Barbara, California.

Yael Schonbrun: From coast to coast, I'm Dr Yael Schonbrun a Boston- based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown University.

Jill Stoddard: And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of Be Mighty and The Big Book of ACT Metaphors.

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work. visit our offersPage@offtheclocksites.com. Hey everybody. It's Jill. If you are a clinician and have been wanting to learn more about act, I have an upcoming full day CE workshop through PESI called breakthrough act techniques and experiential exercises, a clinical roadmap to help clients overcome psychological distress. You can either join me live on Friday, October 8th, from eight to four.

Jill Stoddard: Pacific time, or you can watch on demand any time to register, just visit my website, jillstoddard.com and click on learn from Jill conferences and [00:03:00] workshops. I hope to see you there.

Yael Schonbrun: So I'm here today with Jill to talk about a new book, how to raise kids who aren't assholes, science-based strategies for better parenting from tots to teens. I got to talk to the author, Melinda, Wenner Moyer about this all important topic.

And I think it's a topic that brings up a lot of thoughts and feelings for parents. And so, Jill, I'm curious what your reaction to the episode was.

Jill Stoddard: Well, I have to be honest. I listened to anything parenting, I'm always a little bit nervous that I'm going to leave feeling super overwhelmed. Um,

Yael Schonbrun: Huh?

Jill Stoddard: because I hear what I should be doing. And I'm like, oh my God, I'm doing it all wrong. And then it just feels like there's so many things that need to change.

And that really was not the case. With this episode, I felt like all the suggestions and strategies were like tweaks you can make to things that you're already doing anyway. It's not a bunch of extra time and stuff like that. So just found it super helpful. And at the end I felt like empowered.

You know, [00:04:00] these are things that I can reasonably do. , at one point you two talked a lot about the use of rewards with kids, and I know this can be kind of controversial. Is it good? Is it bad? You talk about intrinsic versus motivation and it made me think of the episode you did with Russ Barkley on, children with add and ADHD and. What Barkley, what Dr. Barkley said is

Yael Schonbrun: Yep.

Jill Stoddard: in typically developing children, rewards can backfire which, which you talk about in the episode in some detail, but with who struggle with attention deficit disorder, the opposite has actually found to be true, that they need more rewards.

And in my own personal experience, I've really found this to be true with my seven-year-old son, that when he knows what the expectations are, and he knows what the consequences will be, it's much easier for him to, to regulate . And so

Yael Schonbrun: Okay,

Jill Stoddard: had me thinking about how [00:05:00] as parents, when we're listening to parenting advice, We kind of have to like try things out for ourselves that, you know, research tells us a lot of helpful information, but it's not necessarily a one size fits all.

Yael Schonbrun: right. A critically important point in psychology in general and parenting specifically, I come from a very academic background. And so I really value science. I really value looking at what the data says about what works and what doesn't in parenting and mental health and wellbeing.

And yet as you're pointing out. The science is imperfect and that's because humans are, are so varied And conditions are so unpredictable. And so we really can't know for sure what will work, what won't, what outcomes will be if we try X strategy or Y strategy. And we try very hard on this podcast to feature guests and books that.

Steeped in the evidence [00:06:00] backed literature. And yet it is really important to recognize that that's just one piece of information. The science is one important piece of information. And the other things that are important are things like your values, your knowledge about yourself, and what works for you, your knowledge about your kids and what works for them.

And so taking in that information, That researchers have collected about, you know, what we understand about how child development works in parenting strategies, how parenting strategies can impact child development is important, but that doesn't dictate what you do. And so, Jill, I love that you're making the point that, you know, you sort of contextualize it amid a lot of different kinds of information.

Jill Stoddard: And it reminds me of we do therapy. You know, we talk about evidence-based practice and that doesn't mean you take a treatment manual and apply it to every human, like a recipe, you take into account cultural factors. It contextualize it, like you [00:07:00] said, you know, sort of across the board when we're thinking about psychology.

I think that that's something that's, that is really critically important.

Yael Schonbrun: Right. So we hope you enjoyed this episode .

I'm here with award-winning science journalist and parenting writer, Melinda Wenner Moyer,

whose new book has the best title I think I've ever encountered. And that is how to raise kids who aren't assholes.

Science-based strategies for better parenting from tots to teens. Melinda is a contributing editor at scientific American, a regular contributor to the New York times and a former slate parenting columnist. How to raise kids who aren't assholes is her first book. And I'm curious to see how she'll top the title in her.

Next one, welcome Melinda.

Hi, thank you so much for having me.

Yael Schonbrun: I'm so excited and it really is the best title I've ever encountered. And I loved sharing with friends and colleagues that I was going to interview you because every single time I shared the title of your book, I get the response of, oh my God, I need that book. And I have so many questions. Has that been your experience?

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yes. I certainly had [00:08:00] that response a lot. I have to say, I have also encountered a few people who are very upset about the title. There was a librarian, I think, somewhere in Massachusetts who emailed me a few months ago saying like, I know that your book is getting good reviews, but I refuse to have it in my library because of the word asshole.

Um, and so, yeah, there's, you know, a little bit of that too, but I kind of expected that.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. I mean, it's such a personal take, but I was just saying before I hit record that I really love anything that can combine a little bit of humor and irreverence with science. And that is really what you do so beautifully. I mean the book is just packed with really solid science.

And you do such a really terrific job of translating some of this heavier science into really digestible, practical advice for parents who are wanting to raise kids who aren't assholes. So I kind of wanted to just start with the basic question. What do you mean by asshole? So you addressed this early on.

And when I shared the book with a contrarian friend of mine, [00:09:00] he noted that he thinks it's actually important for people to know how to be asshole, so they aren't walked on. And I think some people are terrified of having kids who aren't good humans while others are afraid of having kids who are pushovers.

So what's the outcome that your book is trying to help parents achieve.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah, that's a great question. And there's several, I feel like there's a couple of questions in there that I'll try to

Yael Schonbrun: Sorry.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: So, you know, it's interesting because I actually realized, I don't know if I define what I mean by asshole in the book anywhere I was thinking about that the other day.

Like I don't give a clear definition and I think in part, because I am a science journalist and because I wanted everything in the book to be really rooted in science, I kind of went about figuring out what I meant by asshole, by looking at what the science could point me towards in terms of the traits.

That I felt were the antithesis of assholery. So like I thought of, I thought of traits that to me, you know, were kind of the opposite of, of asshole, of [00:10:00] assholery like generosity and helpfulness. That seemed to be, you know, the opposite of selfishness in a way. And selfishness to me was an aspect of being an asshole.

Um, and I came up with like, I kind of just brainstormed a bunch of traits that I felt like were kind of yeah. The antithesis of it. But then I realized like, well, I only wanted to talk about traits that I knew there was science behind in terms of what parents can do to shape them. So also limited me.

I mean, if I found a trait that I felt was interesting and related, but I couldn't find any good science on that. I wasn't going to include it in the book. So yeah, it's kind of a roundabout way. Like I really just, I brainstormed lots of things that I thought were like, this to me is an aspect of asphalt or the opposite of it.

And then dug into the science to see what, what the science could tell me if anything. But I feel like this there's a second part of your question. I don't know if I really answered your question very well, but, but yeah, there's this concern that I hear a lot that like, if we raise our kids to be kind and not assholes, then they're going to be pushovers.

They're going to [00:11:00] be walked all over. They're not going to be successful. And I think this is a really common concern. And I did talk about that a little in the book like that we can have kids who are compassionate and

kind, but also, you know, assertive and to stand up for themselves and don't get walked all over.

Like , these can both exist. And one does not sacrifice the other, and there's also really compelling research suggesting that kids who are kind and compassionate actually are more successful, that it doesn't make you less successful. It makes you more successful.

There's a study that I cited where they tracked , researchers followed kindergarten boys for 20 years, I think. And they, they found that the boys who were the kindest and most helpful in their kindergarten class ended up being the most successful when they were 25. And so there is, yeah, there's this idea that it's going to hold you back, but I think actually it really like gives you a boost forward.

Yael Schonbrun: That was what I was thinking of when I asked the question. But the other thing that I also just want to point out is that you say, and it's such [00:12:00] a great point, is that like everybody's an asshole sometimes like your kids are going to be assholes. So the book is trying to teach these more enduring traits and skills of, being kind and generous, not being a racist, not being a bully, knowing how to respond, to bullies, some of these more productive, ways of being in the world that are associated with more goodness than assholery, as you're saying.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah. And also, too, that the title doesn't make this clear, but I'm really thinking of how to raise kids who don't grow up to be assholes. Yeah. Because as I say in the book, kids are going to act like assholes a lot because they just either their brains aren't fully developed. They don't have the capacity for certain skills yet. Their frontal lobe doesn't develop fully until they're 25 and that's so important for impulse control and for planning and, and rational thinking and stuff. And, so much of what we consider like good quote unquote, good behavior is learned. It's cultural. And so kids aren't born knowing that.

So of course they're going to be doing all sorts of things that we kind of [00:13:00] interpret as bad behavior, but it's just, you know, it takes time to learn these skills and yeah. So it's, so it's really more like, right. How do you help kids develop these enduring skills that they will have when they're adults.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. And, and sort of set the stage or plant the seed for, for them to be great.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Exactly.

Yael Schonbrun: Okay. So now we come to probably my favorite topic because I write about working parenthood and a lot of the recommendations, in most parenting books, because parenting really does require time and effort and energy to do things like educate yourself and your kids be responsive.

Talk more. Um, and I'm curious as a working parent yourself, somebody who's busy writing and getting the word out about your awesome book, how you manage the parenting time and energy that's required, um, in order to support good hearted kid growth.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah, that's a great question. I mean, I will completely admit that I rely a lot on childcare. , my kids are at camp [00:14:00] right now. They are at camp for most of the summer. Um, so, but I also think that , you can teach kids a lot in a little time sometimes. And so we do right now, especially during the pandemic, we have dinner together every night, which is wonderful.

My husband usually works in the city and he used to come back really late. And so we wouldn't eat altogether, but we've been able to now for a year and a half and it's been wonderful. And it's amazing. Like just often at dinner, I will think of sort of one thing that I want to talk about as a family.

Maybe it's something that I experienced early in the day or is going on in the world. And like, we'll have a 15 minute conversation where I realized my husband and in talking to our kids about that issue. There's so much that we're communicating in that 15 minutes about our own values and worldview and priorities. And so like, I don't think, you know, I do, I feel like my book, one of the big themes is talk to your kids more and talk about hard things [00:15:00] more, but you don't have to be doing it 24 hours a day. Like you can do a little bit every so often when you have the time. Um, and if that's like, just in 10 minutes at the dinner table every night, I feel like that is really constructive.

And that's still something that a lot of parents I think don't do. And all you have to do is , just take advantage of those opportunities every so often it doesn't have to be all all, all the time and you can still, I think, really make a difference.

Yael Schonbrun: I love that answer because you don't have to do anything all the time.

And in fact, if you just do these skillful, thoughtful things a little bit, if you sort of prioritize quality over quantity, that you don't have to stress as much about, you know, what you are the time that you aren't spending, but just really show up for the time that you are there. And I think your dinner example is such a terrific one.

I love. all right. So I'm going to get into a bunch of questions that I collected from friends and colleagues who are all very delighted to hear about how they can raise kids who aren't assholes.

So the first one is an important one, but how do we teach kids [00:16:00] to take responsibility for their role in things?

So no more? I didn't do it. It's not my fault. He or she started it. What does the science say? What are your recommendations for how to respond and teach kids to take responsibility?

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah, that's such a good question. Um, well there's a couple of things that I think these might be more like indirect answers, but I think they can be really helpful for setting up the foundation of that when I was digging into the research on discipline and sort of engaging with our kids and instructing, giving them guidance related to their behavior, I read a lot about something called induction, which I'd never heard of before I started researching the topic.

And I thought it was really, really interesting and compelling. And it's basically this idea that right whenever you can, and obviously, again, this is not something you're going to be able to do all the time, but when you think of it to tie your kids' actions to their effects on other people, and this is something like, for [00:17:00] instance, and I think I use this maybe example in the book, um, when my kids leave Legos all over the floor, because I hate stepping on Legos cause it hurts.

And so when I asked them to clean up their Legos, now I will. Instead of, instead of saying like, please clean up your Legos, I will say, please clean up your Legos. Cause otherwise I'm going to step on one or you're going to step on one and it's really going to hurt.

And so pretty much any time I make a request of my kids, when I can think of it, I try to explain the reasoning and I try to explain, you know, how that request relates to other people's feelings and its impact on other people. And so I feel like there's just an emphasis really on like how. How, what they do and the fact that what they do can almost always impact another person.

And so that they're starting to think about themselves more in relation to others and the impact that they have on others. Um, and I find this to be really useful to also just for getting my kids to comply. Like [00:18:00] there's always, they often have the why question like, well, why should I do this? And when you can make it clear that it will actually, because it actually directly impacts somebody else in some way, they're much more likely to be like, oh, that makes more sense and do it.

So I think that's part of it is sometimes, I think our kids don't want to take responsibility in part because they don't get that they have a responsibility if they don't make that connection all the time. And so the more that we can make that connection and explain, well, actually, you know, here's why really you do have a responsibility here, um, and talking about impact. As something to consider in addition to intention, like, yes, I know you didn't intend to hurt that person, but, but they were hurting on the lesson. And this is, I think really important when it comes to preventing bullying. Um, the research on bullying is so interesting because there is research suggesting that some kids really do not understand that what they're doing is hurtful.

there's just the, again, they don't always make that connection. They may not have the skills to kind of put themselves in the other person's shoes [00:19:00] and recognize like, oh, that what I said could be hurtful. So the more we can have these like explicit conversations explaining here's how doing that or saying that might hurt another person.

It just helps them fit all those pieces together and recognize almost an advance of doing something like, oh, let me think about how this might actually affect my friend.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. And I think not only helps them think about how they're going to impact somebody else, but also how they're going to be rewarded or face consequences from their own behavior within that relationship. So for example, your kid leaves their Lego's out and you're hurt, but then you're also grumpy and you're less likely to want to give them a warm-hearted hug

because you're kind of grumpy because your foot is hurting, that's going to impact them.

Not only because they care about you, but also because they're not going to get some of the things that they want from you as a parent. I'm not saying that you would necessarily do that, but I will say that I sometimes do that because I get really grumpy. And so I'll share with my kids, you know, You may not, mean to wear down my patients, but like [00:20:00] when you help out more, it helps me have more to give back.

So like, you know, we're community members and the more that we can support one another, the more that we all benefit. And so there's this real social exchange knowledge that gets born out of that. And I think that is really useful. I mean, just in terms of raising kids who aren't assholes, it's useful to teach them how to be members in a community, how to , participate in ways that are good for the world, but also serve them in the long run.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Absolutely.

Yael Schonbrun: Possibly you've already answered this next question. , but I think this gets to something that you talk a lot about in your book, and I'd love to hear You talk about it a bit here, which is how do we teach our kids to better consider somebody else's perspective and how their behavior or tone impacts others.

And what I'm thinking about is how you talk about theory of mind, which I think is really helpful as a parent to be just, you know, aware of that concept.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Right. Yeah. I know. I talk about theory of mind quite a bit in the book and it, yeah, it just came up over and over again in the research. I was like, wow, this is clearly very important.[00:21:00] Yeah, what I found really interesting about the research on theory of mind is that, our conversations around feelings are so important and our, and, and like what we allow our kids to experience with regard to feelings really is important for, for, for the foundation of, of theory of mind.

So, um, This. Yeah, this is in the chapter on generosity and helpfulness. Actually. I don't know, maybe this isn't exactly answering your question, but this is, is related to that. I feel like, um, that when we let our kids experienced their feelings, if they're upset, let them be upset. I feel like a lot of parents, we

want to, um, quash those negative feelings, like when our kids are, are sad or afraid or, or angry, you know, we were like, stop yelling, stop crying.

It's not a big deal. Like we almost shame them for having those big negative feelings, but the more we can allow our kids to have those feelings and also just talk about feelings and, and [00:22:00] talk about our own feelings, talk about other people's feelings.

Um, that is a really important precursor to the development of theory of mind. And I think the link there is in order to be generous and helpful. Do good in the world. We have to be able to recognize other people's feelings and we have to be able to have this vocabulary and this sort of understanding of, of anger, what anger means and what it looks like and what fear means and what it looks like.

And then from there, once we have that understanding, that's when we can actually, you know, take the step to try to help somebody who's feeling negatively in some way. Talking about and allowing our kids to have feelings is like a really important foundation for taking responsibility and for taking initiative to help other people.

Yael Schonbrun: Right. Because if you understand how somebody else is feeling right, you can sort of connect my emotions when I'm feeling that way is really uncomfortable. And so that person looks like they're angry. So they must be feeling really uncomfortable and I might have a sense of how to be helpful to them. So that [00:23:00] that perspective taking is so important for me.

The ability to be kind to be generous because you can have a sense of what might be helpful for the other person. And that actually segues nicely into the next question, which I love. One of my colleagues gave this, which is how do we teach them that we, parents, are human too. We have feelings that count.

So those eye-rolls and other forms of rudeness, lack of kindness, do sting, but how do we do it in a way that doesn't parental buy our kids, like expect them to take on a role of caretaking our emotions.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah, I've thought a lot about this. Um, over the past year, as I worked on the book and I, I reckon I realized that I, as a parent would often shield my own feelings from my kids. In a way. I, it was probably like a protective thing. Like I didn't want to burden them and I still, I feel like you don't want to burden your kids with what, with necessarily your problems.

But I found that I didn't always share what I was going through or what I had experienced over the course of a day. [00:24:00] And then when I did start doing that, it really changed kind of how my kids perceived of me as a human being. Like, I think they might. Had this idea that adults don't really feel things so they're just like, almost like robots.

Like they're so good at, at, um, going through life and they're like experts at things. And therefore, like they don't, they don't get sad, they don't get scared. And I think it's really helpful for kids to realize that even grownups feel sad and scared, because first of all, that then normalizes those emotions for our kids.

Like it it's, it shows them, wow. It really is. Okay. Like even mom gets sad and scared and, and so it's okay if I get sad and scared. Um, and that's really helpful. And also I think, I think that when we show that we're kind of vulnerable and fallible too, and we make mistakes and we're still growing that also normalizes the mistake making, kids sometimes think adults like never screw up and we never [00:25:00] do anything wrong and we never get into, I don't know, like, I guess I know we get into arguments if they've heard us, but they think sometimes that we don't, we don't screw up. And I think it's really helpful sometimes to tell our kids, you know what, guys, I really messed up at work today. And let me tell you what happened. And then let me tell you what I did afterwards to sort of make reparations or try to fix it. Um, and so in that, in just that kind of exchange were both normalizing the fact that it's okay to make mistakes.

Everybody does it's, you know, we can learn from them. , it's actually part of being human and also we're modeling what we would want them to do in that situation. And when we say like, and then I apologized and I asked my coworker, if I could help, you know, fix the problem and work on it with her to, to solve, to solve the issue and in doing so, like we're, we're showing them here's, here's how you might handle this kind of situation yourself in the future.

Yael Schonbrun: I love that. Cause it's such a nice setup for growth mindset teaching of everybody makes mistakes and we all have an opportunity to grow and learn from them. And you know, I'm not just expecting you to do it. I'm doing it too as a model. But also [00:26:00] because this is what good personhood looks like?

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And I, as you know, from the book, I talk a lot about growth mindset in the book. Cause I do, I find that research really fascinating and compelling and I, and I just, yeah,

Yael Schonbrun: So, maybe I can just pause and ask you to explain what is growth mindset versus fixed mindset and how do we parent in helpful ways around mindset.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yes, that's a great question. Um, so a lot of this comes from the research of Carol Dweck at Stanford. She's a psychologist. And, so, okay. think as parents, a lot of times we think in a fixed mindset, which is to say we will, we want to praise our kids for being smart or good at something. So if my kid does well on a math test, I might want to say like, oh, you're so smart.

You did so well that math test or, oh, you're so good at math. Um, and these are very natural. I mean, I feel like I was. By [00:27:00] parents who used fixed mindset language a lot. And so that's that's praising for skills or smarts is kind of puts kids into a fixed mindset. And we'll talk about the implications of that in a second.

But to contrast that I'll explain what a growth mindset is. And that is, um, that is fostered by praising kids for effort and tying effort to outcome. So on that math test example, I might say like, oh, you did so well on that math test. It must be because you worked so hard or you studied so hard. , and so with a fixed mindset, the problem with it is that when we praise for smarts or skills, then kids kind of start to think of smarts and skills as completely fixed.

Like you either have it, or you don't, you were either born smart or born good at math or you weren't, and there's not a lot you can do to change that. And the problem is like, let's say. Saying to my son. Oh, you're so good at math after getting that good grade on the math test, let's say like two weeks later he gets a bad grade on a math test and then he's, what's he going to do with that information?

He might think, well, gosh, mom must have [00:28:00] been wrong. That I'm good at math. I must actually be bad at math. And because they think in that fixed way, they then might say like, well, what's the point of really studying then? Like, why should I even try? I'm just not good at math and never will be good at math.

Whereas in a growth mindset, um, if you're praising for effort and you're tying effort to outcome, then kids see challenges and failures, not as evidence of their ineptitude, but just as like a brief blip on the path to success. Like, oh, I, I need to fail. I need to be challenged in order to grow in order to learn.

And when I talk about challenges with my kids, now I talk about them as challenges, make your brain grow, like hard things, make your brain grow. Um, and so then they will become much more resilient in the face of challenges. Like if they then don't get a good grade or they just, or they just don't do anything well, at first they don't see it as like, oh, this means I'm just bad at this thing.

It's just like, oh, I'm not good at this thing yet. And I need to keep practicing. Um, and there's [00:29:00] really, there's one study. Actually. I feel like illustrated this so well that Carol Dweck, did that I could describe,

Yael Schonbrun: yeah, that would be awesome. Yes.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Okay. I love talking about studies, especially ones that are just so amazingly illustrative, like this one.

So, um, I might get, uh, I'll try my best to get this accurate, but, um, so Carol Dweck and her colleagues invited kids into the lab and gave them all, um, IQ tests. And then she split them up into three groups to the first group. She said, you did really well on this test. You must be really smart at these problems.

The second group, she said, you did really well on this test. You must've worked hard at these problems. And then the third group was like a control group. And she just said, you did well on this test and didn't give them any feedback. Um, then in the next part of the experiment, she gave the three groups, um, a choice.

She said, okay, now I'm going to give you some more problems and you can choose. Would you like to have the hard problems where you might not do very well, but you'll learn more. Or the easy [00:30:00] problems where you'll probably do well, but you may not learn very much. And it was so fascinating because she found that the kids that had been praised for being smart at the problems, they predominantly wanted the easy problems and you can envision, like, they now think of themselves as smart.

And so what do they want to do? They want to protect their reputation. They want to do well because that's, you know, further evidence of them being smart. They don't want to get the problems wrong because then that messes up their

whole fixed mindset with the kids who she had said, you, you must've done well.

Cause you worked hard at the problems. They were much more likely to want to tackle the hard problems. And I think with the control, the third group, it was pretty much kind of split. Um, but then I think that really also the interesting two follow-ups to this was. So there's another follow up to this where she gave all the kids hard problems to see how they did on them or how, how they, how they worked on them.

And she found the ones that had been praised for being smart. [00:31:00] They were much less likely to persevere. Like they quit sooner. They just, when, when they encountered a hard problem, they were like, I don't want to do this. Whereas the kids who've been praised for working hard at the problems, um, those kids were much more likely to persevere and keep trying.

And then the final, like I think the final thing that was fascinating was she found that the kids who had been praised for smarts were much more likely to lie to their two other kids afterwards, about how many problems they got. Correct. Because again, they were in this, like, I must protect my reputation as smart over anything else.

And so they were much more likely to be dishonest about how they did. So I just thought that whole study was so fascinating and illustrative.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Mindset research in general is so fascinating. You know, we have mindsets about many things, including intelligence, and anytime we can set ourselves up to parent around growth mindset and whatever the area is, like personality growth, , interpersonal growth, intelligence growth. It has this ripple effect [00:32:00] because doesn't matter where you start. The idea is if it's growth mindset, you can always go somewhere with it. And by being willing to encounter challenges and learn and pivot and, and, figure out what you need to learn and what no longer is serving you, that really helps our kids to move to a different place.

And if they want to get to a place where they're more skilled than when they began, which is usually what we want, we want them to feel that ability. And so, you know, when you set yourself up, as you're describing, like to parent around praising effort, not what you can actually do in that moment, you really help

your kids develop that mindset of, you know, just depends on how much I want to work or how much challenge I'm willing to take on.

And if I'm willing to, then I can go places with this.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Yael Schonbrun: I'm actually reading this really terrific book. Peak by Anders, Ericsson. It's co-written with a science writer, but it is transformative because it's really all about deliberate practice and deliberate practice.

Isn't that comfortable, but if you're willing to do it, like [00:33:00] there's basically no limit to what humans can achieve, whether it's, you know, instruments or science or chess, or, um, he has this really interesting, longitudinal study about memorizing digits of numbers and how initially when they first started this research, the longest, string of digits that people could remember, it was like a few dozen.

And then through this growth mindset kind of set up and deliberate practice that came out of it, that people are now able to do like hundreds of digits in a row because they figured out the strategies. It's not like memory has grown, but it's that the mindset allows them to figure out a different approach.

That's more workable.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Wow. I need to read that. That's really cool. I remember. Reading about his work, I think in Angela Duckworth's book. Um, yeah, that's fascinating. Okay. Wow.

Yael Schonbrun: I think I read it because of her book actually, when you read one book and you're like, oh, that sounds really interesting.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yep. Absolutely.

Jill Stoddard: We've had a number of guests who want to offer you our listeners discounted access to some of their fantastic [00:34:00] programs. So if you want to learn powerful practices for happiness, calm, and wellbeing, we have several offerings from Rick Hanson. If you want app based behavior change, you can check out Judd brewers apps for anxiety eating well and smoking cessation.

Or you can learn how to be a calmer parent with mindful mama mentor hunter Clark fields. So go to our website off the clock, psych.com and visit our offers page where you will find access to free courses and discount promo codes.

Yael Schonbrun: So kind of related to that is this question of how do we approach rewards with our kids so that we don't end up with kids who aren't motivated.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah. Uh, really interesting for me to dive into the research because my perspective certainly shifted over time with the more research that I looked at, because we had been using rewards for my son. We had set up, we'd worked with a psychologist and set up, um, a points system for him [00:35:00] where he, whenever he did something like pro-social like that we really appreciated, you know, it was nice to assist her.

He cleaned up his room or whatever. We would give him a point or we would give him however many points we wanted sometimes five points. If it was something really good, we would say, oh, I'm giving you five points and we would write it down. And that would, that would translate into, um, each point was one minute of screen time and 1 cent for his life. And, um, and then, you know, we were using this and then I kept kind of like coming across articles with headlines that were like, rewards are gonna ruin your kid. And, and I, and I, I was like, huh, I should probably dig into this some more. Um, because I'd done like a cursory look at the research and I wasn't really convinced that rewards were bad.

Um, and I think as you say, I have a nuanced take, I think rewards can work well in, in some situations. I think the idea that like you should never, ever, ever, ever, ever reward your kid is not necessarily like, you don't have to go that far. And I think, I think, especially when you're, when you need your kids to do something that they really [00:36:00] do not enjoy and they really don't want to do, then rewards can be appropriate and be helpful.

Um, but

what I, when I dug into the research, especially, um, Edward DC's research, what I found was if you're using rewards to, um, encourage kids to do something that, you know, on some level could be intrinsically satisfying. Like even cleaning your room can feel good when you've cleaned your room. Like, it

feels you feel like you've accomplished something or it's something, you know, you've done for the family too.

Um, when you're rewarding people for something that they can find somewhat satisfying on some level, then they start to feel controlled. Um, and I mean, you can, you can imagine like we're rewarding. Cause they do feel like we're kind of controlling them. Like they feel like, Hey, I'm being sort of manipulated like by my parents to do this thing.

And when people feel controlled kids or adults, they, they then are less intrinsically motivated to do that thing. Like, as you can imagine, when you feel like somebody is forcing you to do something, it makes you not [00:37:00] want to do that thing as much because it's just, you, you know, it feels not good to be controlled.

And the research really shows that this does happen. Like if you, whatever. So many studies, but essentially like whenever he would have adults or kids do something that they kind of enjoyed like certain kinds of puzzles or drawing and then would offer some portion of that group, like a reward for doing that thing.

And then after offering the reward would rescind the reward and see what they enjoy doing that thing on their own. Again, he would find that after offering the reward, people were just less interested in doing that thing. And that included kids drawing, like once kids were rewarded for drawing, then when they were given the opportunity to draw later, they were like, nah, I don't really want to anymore.

And, and so it's really kind of, yeah, it's it made me reconsider the reward system I used for my son. Um, we don't use it anymore that isn't to say that I [00:38:00] will never use a reward, but. I realized, like having this be such a big part of how we engage with our son seemed like it might be detrimental.

And we did start to see things where he would be like, well, I don't want to pick up my flip flops if I don't get points, but I get points for this. And I realized like, oh gosh, I don't know that this is, this is very constructive anymore. Um, so yeah, so I've definitely come down now on the, um, like I'm going to be pretty careful about my use of rewards.

I'm not going to use them all the time because I think they do, they could undermine my kids' intrinsic motivation for doing that.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. And I think that's what I love so much about your summary, which is, you know, they can be useful at times, especially if your child is really not into something, but if they already enjoy something, just, you know, have a light hand with the rewards, it's not like it should be necessarily forbidden, but you want to sort of be thoughtful about whether you're sort of interrupting the enjoyment that they would just naturally have by connecting it to [00:39:00] something that they're going to get for doing it.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah.

Yael Schonbrun: So I'm you had said that, you know, some of the things that you had been rewarding, your son for were like being kind to his sister. And I had a few questions that came up from colleagues and friends about sibling rivalry, which you go into great detail about with a wealth of research findings, so first, um, how do we go about as parents curbing sibling fights when siblings are obviously the easiest person or people to take frustrations out on? So for many of those that I spoke with the observation was that siblings can be super kind to friends and teachers, but then come home and have a super short temper with their brother or sister.

Um, and I'll note too, that I do a lot of couples therapy and I think that this is true too, in romantic relationships. It's like, we can be nice to everybody except the people that are closest to us. And so how do we, as parents go about managing.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah. I really enjoyed speaking with the researchers I spoke to who studies sibling relationships and sibling conflict, because they [00:40:00] really normalized conflict. Like they were like, look, it is so normal. Like there is not a sibling relationship that is, does not involve conflict. It's inevitable. So if your kids fight, this is not a sign that you're doing anything wrong, it's just like completely natural.

But we can, as parents help our kids learn how to resolve their conflicts more cooperatively. I think they're always going to have conflicts, but what we can help with is helping them resolve them in a way that's, you know, teaching them good, good skills in terms of conflict resolution and, and so, okay.

Well, I thought the history on this was really interesting. it used to be, I guess, that psychologists would tell parents, like, just let your kids figure it out by themselves. Like you hear them fighting, just ignore them and let them work it

out. And that will teach them how to resolve conflicts. You know, they'll, there'll be learning on their own.

And, and then researchers started actually like watching what happened when, when parents did just ignore siblings fighting and they found, [00:41:00] gosh, you know, funnily enough siblings do not resolve their conflicts in a constructive way most of the time. Which of course any parent could have told them, so most of the time, like the dominant child will be the one that wins quote unquote wins, and often through coercion or even physical force. An that

Yael Schonbrun: weighing really,

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Exactly. That's not what we want our kids to be learning about conflicts that the best way to resolve conflicts is through bullying.

So. Then researchers kind of turned to, okay, well what's another way that w how could parents help their kids get along better, or at least resolve conflicts better. And they, they looked at kind of refereeing and, or arbitrating, which is when parents, and I feel like I still do this a lot, because it's often like the simplest thing and we're in a hurry and we don't have the patience, but it's when we kind of just hear a conflict happening and then jump in and resolve it for the kids.

You're wrong and you're right. And, you know, give the Teddy bear to your brother. End of story. Like stop fighting. The [00:42:00] problem with this is first of all, we often in doing that are minimizing their negative emotions. We're basically saying stop fighting, stop yelling. Like I don't want to hear it.

Um, and this gets back to the idea of theater, shaming kids, or, or belittling their emotions, which is not really a good thing to be doing, but also, like we don't always know who's quote-unquote “right or wrong.” And, and we, and when we side with one kid over the other, we can, you know, fuel more sibling resentment, or even, you know, he just, it's not, it's not always the best way to handle conflict either.

So what is the best way , researchers have actually done now clinical trials on this approach known as mediation, which is pretty much exactly what it sounds like, which is, when you hear your kids fighting. I'm going to preface this by saying, this sounds really complicated and impossible to do in the moment.

And it's not something I do all the time because we do not have time all the time to do this, but I have found that doing it has helped my kids kind of learn how to do on their own. Sometimes. Like they will actually sometimes do this on their own now. [00:43:00] So, um, you hear your kids fighting and then you might go into the room and first like, acknowledge that there's a fight going on.

Like say I'm hearing some really angry voices in here. and, and you might say like, okay, I think you're fighting over this Teddy bear. I'm going to take the Teddy bear for a minute. Let's all take some deep breaths and take a minute to calm down. And then, and then I want to talk about this. And so you might need to give them a few minutes to calm their feelings.

Basically you want to get them to a place where they can actually talk and engage and listen, and then you essentially ask each child to. Tell their side of the story, like what happened from your perspective? How do you feel, how did, how did this make you feel? and you kind of give each of them the opportunity to air their, their perspective, their feelings.

And this is really helpful for helping kids develop theory of mind. Cause you can imagine one sibling, you know, thinks there's only one way to look at this and it's the way it happened to me. But then they hear their sibling tell a different perspective and it helps them realize, oh wow. you know that my sibling [00:44:00] had a very different take on what happened and has very, you know, has feelings about it that I didn't recognize.

And so this is helping them, you know, take another person's perspective and then once you've let them each kind of tell their side of the story and you sort of helped help each child see what the other child. Then you essentially try to help them brainstorm a cooperative solution to the problem. Like what could we do right now that would make both of you happy or, you know, would, would resolve this in a way that would be okay with both of you.

And sometimes kids will come up with like crazy ideas, but,

Yael Schonbrun: Buy two of everything!

Melinda Wenner Moyer: exactly. Yeah, no, I know exactly , yeah, I can't remember. There was one where, like my daughter was like, let's buy 80 Teddy bears and then we will never fight over them. And I was like, well, I think that that's not a good solution.

but yeah, then you kind of let them brainstorm and you come help them come up with something that's kind of cooperative. And it can take a little while, but I have been surprised at how well my kids have figured out how to do this.

[00:45:00] After going through these motions a few times, then they will sometimes they'll get those, by starting to have a conflict.

And then they'll both kind of pause and say like, What if, what if I let you have that for three more minutes? And then you let me have it for five, you know, and they'll start trying to negotiate it. And it's amazing to see because it's like their feelings don't escalate. They're actually trying to problem solve to prevent the conflict almost.

Um, so yeah, there's been clinical trials done if this approach and the trials have been really compelling, like they suggest that when parents teach kids, this approach, those kids are then much more likely to, uh, resolve their conflicts. Cooperatively. It's much less likely that the older kid wins every time.

Um, and, and the parents are happier because it's just a much more pleasant household after that. So that was a really interesting research that I found.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, I think it's really cool. And my mind always goes to the parents, including myself who think, but I'm never going to have time to do that, but I liked that you [00:46:00] started off by saying like, you don't do it every time, but the few times that you've been able to do it have had a big impact because there's, been, an opportunity to have that learning.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Right. Right. And you know, it's interesting too. I feel like this approach you can use between parent and child as well. Like if you come up against some kind of. Um, while we're like, your kid doesn't want to do something that you've asked and, and you can't figure out like how to get past it. Sometimes this is a great way to deal with it too, is to say like, okay, so what's your concern?

Like, why don't, you know, why don't you want to do this? And then they say how you know, what their opinion is. And then you say, okay, I understand. And here's my concern. Here's why, like, you know, your kid doesn't want to brush his teeth and he's like, well, I just hate brushing my teeth. And he explains why.

And then you say, oh, I can totally understand. I don't really like it either. But here's my concern is that you're going to get cavities and then you're going to have to go to the dentist and get it filled. And, and you both like kind of air your

own sides and then you try to brainstorm, well, what's a way that we could do this.

That would make you happy. And maybe your kid's like, well, maybe if you play my favorite song [00:47:00] while I brush my teeth and you know, and so like this kind of mediation technique can work really well between any members of the family. It works well between married couples. Like it's, it's a, it's a technique that can be very, very helpful to learn.

Okay.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, I think it's, it's so powerful. I mean, it fits into collaborative problem solving, which is inevitable. Parent, child, treatment approach. And, and I think the reason that it's so useful as what I'm always telling couples that I work with is when we jumped too quickly into problem solving, we sometimes aren't solving the right problem.

So this kind of problem solving approach mediation is very intentional about first, just hearing one another, like, what is the problem from your perspective? Cause I may have a different idea of what the problem is, but if we really understand where each person is coming from, and feel validated and heard, then we can do more effective problem solving together.

And it actually, the other thing I always like to tell couples is like, anytime you can orient yourselves as the two of you versus the problem, like get on the same team of let's together, [00:48:00] solve this problem. Then it's a much more effective stance than me versus you

Melinda Wenner Moyer: I really like that framing. Yeah. Yeah. And collaborative problem solving. I it's funny. Cause I, I started reading about that after I wrote the book and I realized like, wow, this is, yeah, this is fantastic. And now I use it. Um, but it is quite similar to the mediation technique that is, that has been developed for siblings.

Um, yeah. I, I, I wish now that I. Put more of the collaborative problem solving technique into the book. But I, as I said, I really only discovered it after the fact, but I think it's fantastic.

Yael Schonbrun: Well, it can either be in your second edition or in your next book.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: There you go.

Yael Schonbrun: Okay. So here's another question that's really relevant for a podcast that's focused on clinical psychology, which ours is, but I'd love to hear your thoughts on how parents might be on the lookout for when the function of asshole behavior is related to something requiring more support, like severe anxiety or depression, as opposed to more normal child development

Melinda Wenner Moyer: [00:49:00] yeah, well, I am not a psychologist, so it's, uh, hard for me to feel comfortable giving clinical advice. , I mean, what I, what I keep hearing when I feel like when I've asked psychologists this question, whether it comes to anxiety or, um, you know, any other kind of, experience or behavior, like I keep hearing like, well, if it, if this is making it hard for your child to lead their daily life, then.

That's when we recommend that you talk to somebody else or you talk to your pediatrician or get a referral. Because right. I, I think, I think that's one of those really hard questions is like, when is this normal? And when is it not? And what's the point at which I need to be worried versus just saying like, oh my kid's just being an asshole.

Like they're supposed to be. Right. Right. And I mean, I think it's a, it's a question that it depends on the child. It depends on so many things but yeah, my, my [00:50:00] understanding of this, and I think you probably could answer this better than I could because cause you are a psychologist, but it's like when it really is interfering with daily life and the ability of like your family to function in a healthy way, that's when you might want to get help.

I don't know. I mean, I would be curious actually, to hear your thoughts on this.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. I think your answer is spot on, which is that it's really a question of clinical impairment and also what you understand about your own child.

Um, and I do think that your book is so great because. A lot of myths about what normal development looks like to rest. And I think that sort of what we sometimes get caught up in is things that really are very typical for a three-year-old or a seven-year-old or, you know, a teenager can be annoying or look like asshole behavior, but really they're just a part of normal development.

Our kids are supposed to push against us. They're supposed to fight with their siblings. They're supposed to. Lose concentration. They're supposed to not be that [00:51:00] motivated for things that don't feel inherently fun for them. And so, you know, just because it's annoying or exhausting or even sometimes disturbing, like you, you have some chapters about like kids, you know, are going to look at pornography.

Or they might say a racist comment, but if we sort of understand the nature of normal development and the fact that they're going to get exposed to some things, it can sort of set us at ease and help us distinguish between what is more concerning and needs, the help of somebody who's more specialized in treating, a mental health disorder versus, you know, we just need to be having more conversations.

And sometimes it can be useful to just start with, let's start having more conversations and get more information about how my kid is doing and how much, whatever the thing is, is interfering with their day to day functioning. And based on that information, decide whether or not to read it.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah, that makes so much sense. I th yeah, I do think one of the things that I feel like I kept learning over and over again, digging into the research is parents often [00:52:00] have expectations of their kids. Are impossibly high in terms of, of behavior. And as a result, sometimes we interpret their challenging behavior as like intentional or, you know, like they're trying to defy us when really, they just don't have the skills that we think they have, or they don't have the knowledge that we think they have.

And so, yeah, when kids make, um, you know, a racist comment, um, it's often like they don't really understand what they said and what it means and the gravity of it. And that's when we can have a conversation and explain, you know, without shaming them, because they probably didn't intend to be so hurtful, but explain, you know, why it's actually a hurtful comments, um, and give them that context and information.

And yeah, I mean, I feel like, um, there are a lot of times, I mean, yeah, In my own family where my husband and I sometimes have differing opinions on what a behavior means. And I feel like I've, I've definitely come. I don't know. He probably would probably kill me for [00:53:00] talking about it, but like, I've definitely, I feel like I now almost always like really trying to figure out what's going on from my kid's perspective, more than I used to.

So like, I'll give an example. I have a seven year old daughter and last year, as I said, we were eating dinner together for the first time, um, as a family and in a long time. And yet every time right before we served them, Pretty much 30 seconds after we would say, okay, dinner's ready.

My daughter would have an enormous meltdown about something and it would be a different thing, a different trigger everyday. But, and my husband got to the point where he was like, she's doing this on purpose. She's trying to make us angry and ruin our dinner. And then, and I was like, I think that she's just really tired and hungry cause it's 6:00 PM.

And you know, she's had a big day, the kids were in school actually most of last year, but it was a school where they were outside a lot of the day. And it was hard like, especially in the Wenner, I mean they would come home so tired. And so I started interpreting those [00:54:00] difficult behaviors in a more sort of compassionate way, like realizing I don't think this is on purpose.

I don't think she's trying to ruin our dinner. I think she just does not have the skills and ability right now to hold in her big feelings and she's tired and hungry. Now one of the big things I've learned digging into the research is that , we sometimes have to manage our expectations and check our expectations as parents of what our kids can actually do.

And that helps us understand why they're doing what they do.

Yael Schonbrun: I love that that starts with curiosity , as opposed to jumping to, they should be able to do this to just being curious of why are they not able to, like, why are they melting down before dinner? What is going on? Really leaning into just wondering together with your child, you know, what what's happening for you there?

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Right. Right. And then you could go into the collaborative problem solving, like at another time in the morning when she's fresh, I could say, Hey, you know, you, I know you've been having some trouble before dinner. Um, what what's, you know, what's going on and then try to figure out, and maybe we could come up with a oh, [00:55:00] what if, what if we gave you a banana at 5:00 PM?

Would that, and see what works and see if that would solve the problem. Yeah.

Yael Schonbrun: So here's another question, which is so omnipresent for parents about screen time.

So this is from a friend when I enforced limits on screen time or anything else. My six-year-old says he has the worst life ever, and he's going to move to another house best response to this.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yes. Okay. , I think it is hard, especially when we are, Imposing limits or, or we're saying like, it's time to get off your screen right now. I think that's when we see a lot of really challenging behavior, because that is such a difficult transition. I actually wrote a, I read a newsletter as well.

And one of my newsletters a couple of months ago was like, why is it so hard to get my kid off of a screen when it's time to put down the screen? And I mean, I think again, perspective taking as a parent, thinking about what is the child experiencing in those moments can be really helpful. Like it, [00:56:00] if, if you're watching this incredibly engrossing like wonderful thing, and then suddenly your mom says like, turn it off.

It's time to go do something that you don't really want to do. Like take a bath.

Yael Schonbrun: We're having a dinner that you don't want to eat.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah. I mean, anytime an adult has to transition from something they love doing to something they really don't want to do. Like that's hard, but it's so much harder for a kid. Right. Who does not have that really developed frontal lobe and impulse control. so I think, you know, we have to figure out ways to , make that transition easier.

Sometimes it could be like making sure that you're not transitioning from some, from a screen to something bad, but rather like a screen to something fun. You can try to figure out ways to make that transition easier. And you can try to figure out ways to just ease the ease, the jump.

Maybe you give them warnings, like, okay, you have three more minutes than you have two more minutes and you have one more minute so that they're prepared and it's not coming out of nowhere. It turn it off. Right. The second, which you can imagine, like for kids who are in the middle of a show, You don't want to stop it when you're like in the middle of a show, you want to know

[00:57:00] what, you know, I don't want to turn off a TV show until it's done so you can understand, like, this is really hard for kids.

So I think in some ways, again, it's like, you can kind of brainstorm this is hard for my child, for whatever reason, what are the ways we could make this easier? Um, and with just general limits, I think having again conversations about here's why we need to have limits on this.

Here's why it's important. Um, some of my sources suggested having a family meeting and talking about values surrounding screen time and priorities, and what's important to you as a parent, as well as what's important to your child and having, again, like this sort of collaborative discussion of what are the limits going to be?

Why does it matter? Why do we care? Um, what do we hope to get out of screens and what do we not want to have happen? Just having more of these conversations and making it feel like a little bit collaborative can help too.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. And that collaborative problem solving is so all-powerful. I'll share a personal example that happened recently, which is one of my kids was sneaking technology into his room and I caught him and I was pretty angry. But we ended up, me and my three [00:58:00] kids discussing why, why do we have sort of a household limit on, on technology in our rooms that, you know what what's important about that, And for me, it's about, you know, I want them to not fall prey to some of the addictive qualities of technology, which are going to be things that they have to handle.

So I want them to have screen-free time where they can find interesting, enjoyable things. I also want them to have time where they can be bored, cause that's where creativity often comes from. And they said that they understood that, but they thought that I was being too stringent about the amount of screen time and that it would be easier for them to abide by the rules of no technology in their rooms.

If I could lighten up a little bit, and we negotiated and I gave a little bit and they gave a little bit, and I won't say it's been perfect, but it's actually been much better. And that buy-in on both sides was great. And it also just felt good cause we came to an idea together.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah, that's fantastic.

Yael Schonbrun: Alright. So I got a question for you about preteens and teens, on the [00:59:00] technology front. So what does the research have to say about parenting strategies in the age of screens, especially for teens where you really can't avoid the devices.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Right. , I dug into a lot of the research on the effects of screens and social media on, on kids and teens. And I, I will say, there's a lot of really, really scary claims that are made about, about screens and social media. And I think we have to be careful about how we interpret those really alarmist claims because the research is kind of mixed.

Especially when it comes to teens and social media. I think one thing we can say is active use of social media, where you're posting and you're sharing, and you're connecting with friends that is actually associated with good. Outcomes and teens who are surveyed, the pew research center has conducted surveys of teens who have said, you know what?

I use social media and I feel better after I use it. And I feel like I'm connecting with my friends, especially during the pandemic. , and I feel like it doesn't [01:00:00] have a negative impact. So I think that kids can use social media in ways that is, you know, constructive and productive. , but passive use of social media where like you're just scrolling through and you're seeing what your friends are doing.

And you're, you know, having that FOMO feeling of like, oh my gosh, there was a party without me or whatever that is that kind of use of social media is associated with more negative outcomes. So, you know, the question is how do you get your kid using social media more actively less passively? I think again, having conversations about what. The research suggests might be useful and talking about how, like, you know, we know that if you're just kind of scrolling through and looking at what your friends are doing, it might make you feel down. And what if you use social media more this way? Like that might be helpful. Um, but like one of the big takeaways I found from the research on how to, how to manage screens in general and technology with kids that I thought was really interesting.

Was it being more of a mentor rather than a monitor or a limiter can be really [01:01:00] helpful where in general, and it does sound again, like more work in a way I think, but if you can engage with your kids with technology, use, use it

with them, learn about new apps or new social media, platforms with them, explore with them, , play video games with them that.

Is really associated with kids getting into less trouble online, stumbling across like using porn, less like all sorts of really good things. Because again, I think when we're using technology with our kids, we are, those are conversations that we're having while we're doing that are sharing our values and sharing our concerns and like teaching our kids how to responsibly use screens, , and sharing our priorities.

And so that kind of relationship with, with your kids and screens, being somebody who's. It was just down, getting dirty with your kids, figuring out, what does this app do? And let's play with it together. Let's figure it out together. That can, that can be really, [01:02:00] really helpful rather than like just being a limiter or just being, you know, saying like, you cannot use this because the fact is , even if we limit our kids from using screens at home, they're going to go to friend's houses and they're going to have access.

And if they haven't been taught the skills and the, responsible use of these screens at all by us, because we've just limited them, then they're going to enter into these situations and make mistakes and, and stumble across things. We don't want them to, and maybe treat people in a not very kind way on, on, on social media.

And so they're going to encounter it. So I feel like the more we can help them through that process together, the better they will be.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. I mean, to me that just reflects so many of the messages that you've given. So many of the different content areas of we might. It's not appropriate or not comfortable to talk about. And so we avoid it, but then we don't give ourselves an opportunity to either teach or to learn along with our kids.

How to talk about racism, how to talk about sex, how to talk about bullying, how to talk about being a good friend. [01:03:00] And so, even though it's uncomfortable or maybe especially because it's uncomfortable, really the most useful thing is to allow ourselves to be uncomfortable and enter into those conversations and teach, learn along with, connect, clarify our values and, and that's, a really consistent theme throughout your book

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yes. Yeah. Have those awkward conversations.

Yael Schonbrun: Well, maybe that can be the title of your next book.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yeah. Maybe.

Yael Schonbrun: Melinda, it was so good to talk with you and I, I wanted to give a plug for your newsletter, which is terrific. And it was so cute because when I was posting to elicit questions from friends and colleagues, one of the commenters was Carla number. Who's a past guest on the podcast who has a terrific book of her own, how not to lose your shit with your kids. And she said that your newsletter is one of her favorites and also her husband's favorite. So, Can people just sign up through your website?

Melinda Wenner Moyer: Yes. Yes. There is a up on my website. Which is Melinda Wenner, moyer.com. Um, but yeah, you can sign up there and it's called is my [01:04:00] kid, the asshole, which is like a play on the Reddit meme. It's like, am I the asshole? Yeah. So I had to, I had to put asshole in every possible title, like come up with.

Yael Schonbrun: I love it. Well, it was, it was such great to have you, and I know that you've been really busy with the book launch. I just really

appreciate you spending some of your time with us and sharing your wisdom and a really recommend that people pick up the book, because even though we've covered a lot of topics, there's so much more in so much more depth that we weren't able to get two topics that are really important for parents across the developmental spectrum.

It's a research rich and fun humorous book that, is just terrific.

Melinda Wenner Moyer: well, thank you so much.

Diana Hill: thank you for listening to psychologists off the clock. If you enjoy our podcast, you can help us out by leaving a review or contributing on Patreon.

Yael Schonbrun: You can find us

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