

Navigating Social Media as a Parent

Cara Goodwin: The really scary thing is anybody can get on social media, call themselves a parenting expert and say whatever they want.

It doesn't matter if it's based on research or clinical experience . or any experience at all. They can say whatever they want and, there are a lot of people trying to sell products on social media as well, which, they have a bias to sell their products and to convince people that they need their products. , so I was seeing all of this misinformation. So my goal was really just to present what the research is actually saying.

Yael Schonbrun: That was Cara Goodwin on Psychologists Off The Clock .

We are three clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting-edge and science-based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships, work, and health.

Debbie Sorensen: I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in Mile High Denver, Colorado, author of ACT Daily Journal, the ACT Daily Card Deck, and the upcoming book ACT for Burnout.

Yael Schonbrun: I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston-based clinical psychologist, assistant professor at Brown University, and author of the book Work Parent Thrive.

Jill Stoddard: And from Coastal New England. I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard, author of Be Mighty, The Big Book of ACT Metaphors and the upcoming Imposter No More.

Debbie Sorensen: We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

Jill Stoddard: Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off The Clock.

Yael Schonbrun: This is Yael here with Debbie to introduce an episode where I got to talk to a parenting influencer, her name is Cara Goodwin, and her Instagram handle, which is very popular, is called Parenting Translator. She also has a newsletter and a podcast by the same name, and I think it's kind of a funny irony that I invited on a parenting influencer because we talk a good bit on the podcast about the dangers of, of influencers, right? Of people who use social

media to promote messages that lack nuance that aren't science-based. But the reason that I wanted to have her on is that she's the kind of influencer that I find extremely appealing because she is incredibly science-based and nuanced and thoughtful, and

I actually think that her position as somebody who's really engaged in social media is quite helpful because she offers, through our conversation a lot of tips on how we can consume social media in strategic helpful not harmful ways. Both as individuals, right, who are, you know, consumed by media because it's interesting and appealing to look at, but also in these important roles of parenting and, also educating our kids in how to consume social media.

So it was a really helpful conversation. Debbie, what were some of your main take homes?

Debbie Sorensen: Well, I have to just say that it's interesting to me because this has been a theme on the podcast lately, right? We did an episode a couple of months ago called Buyer Beware about pseudoscience in the wellness industry and influencers. Just in our previous episode that we released last week with Jessica Grose about motherhood, we talked about some of the problematic aspects of social media influencers who are doing parenting, and there are some problematic ones out there. I think in, in mental health in general, and well-being. Well in mental health and in the wellness space. And in the parenting space. Um, then we also have an episode coming out, I think in about a month or two with, uh, Dan with Daniel Simons and Chris Chabris about how to be on the lookout for, you know, when you're getting scammed a little bit, or when someone's selling you a false bill of goods, which is certainly we, something that we see in the social media world a lot.

But I think her voice is especially important for that reason because this is where people get their information these days, by and large. so to have someone who's actually. Looking at the science, who is lending a critical eye to some of the stuff that's out there and helping us spot pseudoscience and just be more savvy and aware.

I think that's incredibly important. And conversations like this always leave me feeling more empowered about what to look for, because sometimes it's a little, you know, it's hard to tell, and I think there are some people doing some really problematic things out there in terms of what some of the messages about parenting are.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, and she talks through some of the things to be really attentive too. She also talks about her mission, which I think is so cool that she's really motivated by a desire to share widely some of the science that is really powerful and helpful with parents who, who really are on social media looking for answers to difficult questions and who may not know how to digest the science.

And so here's this person who has taken it as a personal mission to do science-backed work and to share some of these actionable tidbits. even her title Parenting Translator, cuz her role is like somebody who translates. The research in actionable ways for parents in a broad range of parenting areas and I hope that people who are interested in this topic, not just from a parenting point of view, but also just how can we consume social media with the hope of accessing good nuanced science-backed information because cara has a lot of really terrific insights, both in what it takes to generate that kind of social media, but also how we can look for social media influencers who are doing that kind of work.

How we can sort of be tuned in for what to look for, that, that, that would suggest like, don't pay attention to this person cuz they're kind of spouting garbage versus somebody who is, um, using science to offer helpful actionable tips.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. And I often recommend to people the Emily Oster episodes that we've done, and of course Emily's books as well, because she's another person who, you know, there are all these controversies in the parenting world, and she dives in, she's like, let's see what the data says. You know, is this particular theme harmful or not?

And often I find, you know, some of these. Are pretty hot, polarizing kinds of topics, but she's kind of a voice of reason. And I think it often comes down to that thing that we've talked about so often on the podcast, which is that, you know, as long as you're within reason, you're not doing anything majorly agreed.

Just like a lot of it, like there are so many ways to be good parents and a lot of the things that we stress about, it's like probably doesn't have that huge of an impact. And so I find it very reassuring and validating. And as I did with this particular conversation that you had with Cara.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, it really is very similar to a lot of the conversations that we've had with other guests, including the recent conversation that you had with

Jessica Grose, that there are lots and lots of right ways to do parenting and to do any of our most important relationships, and that is what the data shows clearly.

And so when people get all hung up on one right way and that if you're not doing it this way, you're, you know, screwing people up and you're, you are a bad person, that we need to take a big step back, look at the data for reassurance and sort of come back to what is. What is working for us and what isn't working for us.

and, and I really do think science is so helpful in that way, it can really reduce our anxiety and give us something to kind of hang our hat on when we start to get into that, , anxious place of that, you know, is, is, am I doing this wrong? We hope you get a lot out of this conversation with Cara Goodwin and please share with us any thoughts that come up as you're listening.

I'm here with Cara Goodwin, who's the founder of Parenting Translator. She's a mother to three young children, and she's a licensed clinical psychologist with a specialization in child clinical psychology. Before Cara had her second child, she spent her days doing research in child psychology and neuroscience, assessing children for developmental problems, doing therapy with kids of all ages, and training parents on how to use the most recent scientific findings to help their kids.

After taking some time off to be with her kids, she became desperate for intellectual outlets. When the brink of the pandemic and pregnant with her third child, she decided to start an Instagram account @ParentingTranslator and a website parentingtranslator.com with the purpose of taking scientific research and translating it into information that parents can use in their everyday lives.

This Instagram account has taken off with considerably over a hundred thousand followers, a newsletter, a podcast, and she's also the author of a kid's book titled, What to Do When You Feel Like Hitting: A No Hitting Book for Toddlers. So I'm really excited to talk to her today about science, social media, and some of the specific parenting tips that she offers through her work.

Welcome, Cara.

Cara Goodwin: Thank you so much for having me.

Yael Schonbrun: So, as I said, we wanna sort of cover a few bases, but I wanna first admit that this is a little bit of me-search because I'm somebody who really struggles to do social media and yet I really appreciate social media being done

well, and your Instagram feed is one of a handful that I just really, really love for a number of reasons, but I bet that they're reasons that you're very specifically aiming for.

So I wonder if you can articulate what you are trying to accomplish with Parenting Translator with the social media account that you have.

Cara Goodwin: I was a psychologist before I became a parent, and when I kind of entered the parenting world and then entered the parenting on social media world, I was really shocked by all of the misinformation out there. , and you know, The really scary thing is anybody can get on social media, call themselves a parenting expert and say whatever they want.

It doesn't matter if it's based on research or clinical experience or any experience at all. They can say whatever they want and, , there are a lot of people trying to sell products on social media as well, which, they have a bias. To, um, to sell their products and to convince people that they need their products.

So I was seeing all of this misinformation. So my goal was really just to present what the research is actually saying. So there's so much research out there on parenting and child development, but most parents don't know about it. There are not great resources to access this information.

And even if, you know, parents had the time to kind of delve into these research articles, which most parents don't have. They're very technical terms, it's hard to kinda figure out what the takeaway message is and with my training, for my PhD program, I'm able to kind of translate the research for parents.

So my goal is really to break down the research for parents, but also help them to understand how can this apply to my everyday life? , because research is interesting, but a lot of us wanna know as parents. Okay, well then what does that mean? I do in this challenging situation today that I'm facing.

Yael Schonbrun: I love that so much about your social media feed is that you not only give a really digestible, concise summary of what research studies say, but you also offer, this is what it can look like. But I also think it's really important that you point out like everybody is individual and what research findings typically show is like on average or in this sample.

And so you do a really good job of sort of contextualizing the research and I really love that about your work.

Cara Goodwin: Yes, that's definitely what I'm aiming for. You know, I think, I have a lot of people who will comment on my post, you know, this doesn't apply to me. And I'm like, of course it doesn't, you know, it doesn't apply to everybody. Research only shows us, , for the most part what works for the average child. And you know, even as somebody who is.

Undeniably obsessed with research and I read it and I really believe in it. You know, there are things I do with my own children that run counter to what research would suggest. Um, and that's, because you know, we don't always fit into the category of the average child. Um, so a lot of it, is know, using the research as a tool that can kind of give us some guideposts when we're feeling really lost, but also knowing that, you know, having confidence in yourself that you are the expert on your own child and, and trusting, you know, as cheesy as it sounds like, trusting your own intuition to some extent, that, um, you, you really do know what works best for your individual child and your, particular family.

Yael Schonbrun: That's such a great piece of wisdom in general about research because it, you know, whether it's about parenting or, or mental health or wellbeing in some other facet that we can use the data to, to give us a guidepost or to give us one piece of information, but then we need to compliment it with what we know about ourselves and our own unique context and and priorities.

And I think that is something that. We need to talk about more in the research world is that research isn't sort of the end all, be all. It's one important piece of information that we can use to make good decisions for our, for the kinds of lives that we wanna be living.

Cara Goodwin: Yes, definitely. And I think, you know, It's important for parents to know that on social media a major red flag is when an account says that this is the only way to do it. Or even worse, if you do not do it this way you are causing some sort of harm to your child or some sort of damage.

Um, I think, you know, the social media accounts that you should really rely on are the ones that don't give you as clear cut of an answer, which unfortunately is not as satisfying. But, the ones who say, This is what works. But like there are also limitations to this and, and this is like, you know, you have to keep in mind, that it may not work in this way for your child.

So when you see social media accounts that don't, don't give you a clear answer, that's actually the ones that you should really believe because they're acknowledging that parenting in particular is so complicated and there's so

many factors, and so when you see an account acknowledging those factors and not saying, you know, this is exactly what you say to stop a tantrum because you know, we all know if there was a magical phrase to stop every tantrum, like.

We would all be saying it a million times every day. And we wouldn't deal with toddler tantrums anymore. So, when people are acknowledging that this is hard, this is complicated, I think that's when you should realize this is an account I can trust.

Yael Schonbrun: A hundred percent. I'm actually reading a book called *Messengers: Who We Listen To, Who We Don't and Why* by Joseph Marks and Stephen Martin and they get to exactly that point, which is that we tend to believe people who are really confident and who pitch us a message that is very black and white.

But unfortunately, that's exactly who we should not put our faith in. Those are more the people who are selling something that probably is a false bill of goods. And we actually recently released an episode on pseudoscience where we talked about the same thing, that the simple message is often the one that goes viral.

And it's often the one that is like very, very far from the complex complicated truth because the truth is parenting being alive you know, raising children, doing, complicated things for our wellbeing. These are not black and white. They're not gonna have a black and white answer. There's not gonna be a panacea, there's not gonna be one phrase that kind of solves it all.

And so to be wary of it, I think is really wise. The other thing that occurred to me is that I was going through your social media feed before we got on, and I love the example, you don't follow research hook line and sinker you adapt to your own needs, but you did a post about how far apart kids should be spaced and you admitted like that.

You know, that wasn't what worked for my family. So even though the research does highlight some findings of like the ideal, optimal way to space your kids, that wasn't actually what my family did. And I love that.

Cara Goodwin: Yes, definitely. Um, I think, you know, you can look at the research, but there can be factors that are more meaningful for the research. And what I said in my newsletter is, you know, for me it was. You know, based on a combination of a lot of factors coming together. So my age, thinking about my own family that I grew up in and, you know, thinking about what worked best

for my personal timing, you know, I wasn't really considering what does the research say about, a 18 month gap versus a, you know, 48 month gap.

I was thinking about all these different personal factors that had nothing to do with research.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah, so you can look at the research and decide, you know, that's not the most important thing for me. There are other things that matter too, and that's not, that's not a bad thing, that's just a human thing. We each have to figure out what works well for us. And, the research, the science can be a part of how we make our decisions.

It could be one piece of information that we use to guide us, but it shouldn't actually be all of it because it doesn't account for our individual differences.

Cara Goodwin: Definitely.

Yael Schonbrun: Do you have other tips for people who look to social media for guidance and how to be wise consumers of social media?

Cara Goodwin: Yeah, I would say I have a few more if you wanna get into that.

Yael Schonbrun: Yes, definitely.

Cara Goodwin: So something else I would suggest would be when you see an account, something that's a red flag is people kind of randomly bring in references to the brain. Brain development, brain functioning. I, you know, I love neuroscience. My dissertation was actually on neuroscience. I'm fascinated by it, but I think it's very important for people to know that it's really hard to apply neuroscience findings clinically. Meaning that Neuroscience, the research we have, we need a lot more research before we know how that applies to our everyday lives.

So an example is, you know, there was a recent study that was in the news that that. You know, headlines were saying social media changes teenagers' brains. , and, you know, social media makes teenagers more sensitive to peer pressure. And what they found in this study was that teenagers showed differences in brain responses to social rewards.

So teenagers who use social media more frequently show differences in response to so social rewards, but, Do we even know if that's a good thing or a

bad thing? Like maybe it's good to be more responsive to social rewards. Um, we also don't know if social media caused those brain differences. You know, it makes even more sense to think that kids who are more responsive to social rewards are more likely to check social media more frequently rather than social media causing that brain difference. The media can misinterpret this to be these kids, it's harming their brains, but it's like we don't, we see differences and that's really interesting and we need to do more research to understand those differences.

But we can't say that, you know, I've even seen things that. Such and such will cause irreversible brain changes and it's like, whoa, whoa, whoa. We don't know any of that. , so when you see like random references to the brain that's a sign to be a little on guard.

Yael Schonbrun: Wait, I wanna interject quickly because in another book that I was reading, I'm really interested in like these unconscious biases that inform how we intake information. I've been like diving into many books on this topic. Another book that I was re reading recently called The Invisible Gorilla talks about this as brain porn.

And when advertising or media has any references to the brain, especially if they use sort of jargony kind of language, we tend to buy into it more because we think, oh, that must be really true. But what you're saying is it's often the opposite because it very feels very clickbait and very compelling to a reader.

And the reality is the brain is so complicated and there's so many bidirectional effects. And you know, there's very few studies on the brain that are randomized experiments where we really can't tease out cause and effect. It's mostly correlational.

Cara Goodwin: Exactly, and it's mostly small samples just cause it's so expensive to do these brain scans and so it's, it's very important information for us to have for more research, but it's really hard to apply it in our day to day lives. Something else to be wary of is anything that, really, you know, just being very aware of how you feel when you're interacting with different accounts.

And I think this is a really important skill cause it's something we should, as parents, you know, try to teach our children or eventually teach our children, for those of us who have younger children. So thinking about. You know, going through your social media account and who you follow, what's, what accounts make you feel better, which make you feel worse?

A tactic that a lot of people use on social media is shaming parents, you know, saying that you're doing this, it's harming your child. You know, I've seen a post that says, you know, yelling at your child is as harmful as physical abuse. And buy my course to figure out how to never yell at your child again.

And it's like, of course that's gonna make any parent, you know, I would guess 90% of parents, maybe more, maybe 99% have yelled at their child at some point. And anybody's gonna feel terrible seeing that. And think, oh, I need to buy this course so I can figure out how to never yell again. , and you know, I think it's very important to be aware of what makes you feel bad.

Even as a child psychologist who's aware of all this research, like I'll be reading something. And even when I know, I'm like, I know research doesn't say yelling is as bad for children as physical abuse, but even reading that I'm like, this makes me feel awful. Um, and anything that creates that feeling of shame and then especially when it kind of then segues into, and buy my course, you know, then be very wary.

Yael Schonbrun: That's a good tip. But I do think that, yeah, and anything that's that black and white about a pretty common human behavior, if you're being told like you should be ashamed and never do it. Just have a lot of skepticism and don't buy the course.

Cara Goodwin: Yes. Don't buy the course. , and you know, anything that says research shows or science proves And doesn't cite a study. Ask, ask for the study. And if they don't give it to you, it's probably a sign that they don't know. It's not really based on research. You know, I saw a post this weekend that said, science shows that nature and exercise are more effective than therapy.

For treating anxiety. And you know, I commented on the post, I said, could you please cite the research? You know, there was no response. and there was no research cited. And I think it's very important when you see claims like that, that say, research says look at, look and see if there is actual research cited. And if not, ask for the research and don't believe it until you actually see that there is research underlying this claim.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. I love that. I love that you commented and posted and asked. That's actually something that I tell friends of mine when they're going to a therapist to ask about the therapy approach and ask what the evidence for it is. I just think it's a good, as consumers, we should ask, if somebody's saying this is science-backed, ask for what kind of science, where, where is that science?

Can I look at it? Um, and you don't have to read all the primary studies, but it is helpful to know sort of what sources people are drawing from when they're giving you advice.

Cara Goodwin: Yes. And I think it's also important, kind of the, most concerning thing I see is when people do cite research, but it is not, it's a misinterpretation of the research study or it, um, is a very, you know, limited or flawed research study that we can't really draw that conclusion from. An example I've seen of that is there's a very popular parenting account that says, you know, timeout is very harmful for children.

It's as harmful as abuse. And they cite a research study saying this timeout is harming your child. We see differences in brain functioning and they cite this research study, which is actually a research study of college students playing a video game where in the video game they are socially isolated. Like they're left out of the game, and the college students show activation in a brain region that is also activated for physical pain, but it's also activated for a lot of other things.

So it's like not even clear that social isolation equals pain. Even in this situation with college students, that has absolutely nothing to do with timeout. And it's kinda like you can't apply this research to time out. Um, it just is way too much of a stretch and, you know, but meanwhile, they're saying brain science proves that.

Timeout is harmful, here's the study. But you know, you have to go and look at the study and say, whoa, whoa, whoa. This has nothing to do with timeout. So I think that, you know, unfortunately, we have to be even more wary as parents and, and look at the actual study they're referring to and think, does this actually make sense in light of the situation that I'm dealing with?

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. That's such good advice. So you, I think, and Emily Oster, I would put in the same category. Cause I think you two both are really good at sort of myth busting when a media headline comes and people are sort of panicking. You're really good about showing, about talking through what the methodology is, how to interpret it, what the limitations are, and then, what we should do with whatever information has come out of a research study.

Do people send you pieces that are unsettling to them and does that give you inspiration for your posts?

Cara Goodwin: Yes, yes. So I have a lot of people sending me research articles and I, I love getting it cause I'm like, a lot of times I don't see these research

articles, especially if they're in other countries. , In, in media, in other countries. So it's very helpful if people send me articles and say, you know, what is the research here?

Yael Schonbrun: I guess they might even just send you the media headlines and then you go and pull the primary study sometimes, right?

Cara Goodwin: yes, yes. Most people send me the media headlines and they're like, please tell me this isn't true. You know, it's something, some sort of outrageous claim. And will say, please, you know, tell me what is actually going on in the study. And most of the time what the issue is correlation does not equal causation.

Meaning that you know, the media is saying, you know, social media causes brain changes. But, like I explained in the social media study, these are just linked. And, there are a lot of other reasons these two factors could be linked. And it doesn't mean that, you know, social media is necessarily causing these brain changes.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Yeah, totally.

One other thing that you had mentioned when we had spoken earlier that you do is craft a peer review process for your work, much like academics do, and I think it's really cool that you do that for social media and for your newsletter. So I was just curious if you could talk us through how you go about doing that in a more business kind of setting where it's not just implicit in the structure of how the work is done like it is in academia.

Cara Goodwin: Yeah. Unfortunately, I don't have as much of a structure to do this as we do in academia with, peer review and journals. But , I mostly just find an expert on a topic, and I particularly like to do this when it's a topic that I don't feel I myself am an expert on. So, you know, for example, I did a newsletter on White Noise and I found A psychologist who specializes in sleep and asked her to review the research.

Cause she's more familiar with this research than I am. Um, if it's a more medical, medically related topic, I would choose a pediatrician. , I think, you know, I feel qualified to, you know, look at the research and break it down. But a lot of it is knowing as a pediatrician clinically, what would you recommend and this how you would interpret the research as well.

I think it can be very helpful. Um, I would love if there was a more systematic way that I had of doing this, but you know, as a nonprofit organization, I'm basically relying on people to volunteer their time. So, it's kinda, I kinda have to take whoever will agree to review my work. So at the time it's basically me just finding other experts to review the work.

Yael Schonbrun: But I love that you do that. I don't think it's, um, I think it's cool that you are creating some ways of doing checks and balance to what you do. Recognizing that we all have limitations in our knowledge base and in sort of how and biases and how we interpret things. And so to recruit people who are willing to kind of be that check and balance, I think is a really clever and resourceful thing that you're doing.

I love it.

Okay, so now I actually wanna get to a little bit the more obvious me-search part of it because I, I do, uh, as a researcher myself, know how to interpret the research and, and sort of bring that eye to social media.

But what I don't know how to do is create a really compelling social media feed. And so I wonder if you can talk through some of the things that you think about that help to be appealing to audiences because research is kind of dry. It's not inherently exciting for people to absorb, and somehow you make it really engaging.

And so I'm wondering if you can, I don't know if it's like proprietary, but if you can share some of your strategies for those of us who maybe have some content that we'd like to share, but don't really know how to go about doing it.

Cara Goodwin: Yeah, so I've learned a lot being on social media. When I first started I would just screenshot an article and write a very dry description of it. And I realized that wasn't the most appealing for most people, cuz most people are like, I do not get excited when I see an article. Like, I'm such a nerd. I do.

Yael Schonbrun: I've totally done that, like screenshot the abstract and then I underline like the take home message. I'm like, why aren't people liking this? It's so interesting.

Cara Goodwin: Yeah. It's, it's hard to remember what's interesting to those of us that are, you know, really in the academic researcher world versus like the average person who is not into this stuff. so what I found is trying to be as clear

as possible, which, it's such a balance because I wanna be as clear as possible about the take home message, but also mention the limitations.

Cause there are always limitations, even the most high quality. stuff It's like, you know, even with the most clear take home message, it's still like, this won't work for every child or, you know, this is a sample of people. Most samples are, you know, white, higher socioeconomic, you know, there's al always limitations.

So, trying to come home with a, or try to have a clear take home message, that is summarized. You know, so the people who are just interested in the take home message can kinda skip ahead to that part. Um, and I call it the translation in my post. But whatever you wanna call it, you know, just make sure you have, what is the take home message?

Like, if you only take one thing from this, what would it be? , And then also, you know, thinking about topics that most people are interested in. And that may not be, you know, what you are interested in as a parent. Asking your followers or you know, your audience, kind of what are you interested in and trying to figure out what topics.

They honestly like surprise me, like what people are actually the most interested in. And I also try to alternate more exciting topics with, um, like the more dry topics that I'm like, this is really important information to get out, but it's not, you know, gonna be as hot and interesting as, you know, some of these other topics like screen time is always one that's a hot topic.

But I just did one on, you know, vitamin D for breastfed babies. It's like, this is, this is boring stuff, but it's important information to get out there.

Yael Schonbrun: What's the take home on vitamin D for breast bread babies?

Cara Goodwin: So it's an interesting controversy. So it's most pediatricians recommend that babies need a supplement. But there's new research that came out that only 20% of parents actually follow that guideline of giving a supplement to their breastfed babies.

, but there's new research that came out that mothers taking a high supplement of vitamin D actually helps. To deliver vitamin D through the breast milk to the baby. So it's kinda an easy solution, but always, always talk to your doctor before trying that is the big take home message. Like, this is what the research shows. But please discuss with your doctor before you try.

Yael Schonbrun: Interesting. So what have been some of the surprising topics that you've addressed that you didn't expect would engender so much enthusiasm in their response?

Cara Goodwin: Yeah, that's a great question. One of the topics I addressed was, making your child apologize. , and I think that's actually, and that ended up getting a lot of engagement. It's a hot topic because a lot of people on social media say, you should never make your child apologize because then it's not genuine.

So looking at the research though, um, apologies are really important for repairing relationships and, um, Uh, children forgiving each other and moving on. Um, so there really is no, and there's no research finds no difference between a forced apology versus a spontaneous apology in terms of repairing the relationship.

Um, I think that if you feel like you wanna tell your child to say I'm sorry, and, you know, it's an important skill for learning how to repair relationships and move on. The research also shows that using a process they call making amends can also be really helpful, even more helpful than an apology for repairing the relationship.

So I, at the, at with that post, I said, the take home message is, , you know, if you want to ask your child to apologize, that's a great strategy, but also encourage them to make amends because that can be even more effective, so that that research tended to have a clear take home message that could be applied to your everyday life.

Yael Schonbrun: I love that because that's such an important skill for relationships. I do a forgiveness in men's protocol with the couples that I see, so who have come in for affairs or other kinds of betrayals, and it's so effective in terms of repairing a really deep rupture in a relationship. Obviously it's not a panacea either, but it is sort of this, this way that you can show through repeated action that you care and you wanna kind of make it up to the person. That's a way to rebuild trust and connection. , so I love that you're teaching it to parents that this is something you're teaching parents to teach their kids that this can be a way to help, you know, what inevitably happens in relationships, which is, you know, we rupture, we repair, and we repeat.

That's a part of the relationship cycle.

Cara Goodwin: Yes, definitely.

Yael Schonbrun: When you see misinformation sold as science on other people's social media channels, what's your general approach to it? Because I can imagine the people whose channels that you follow that are very popular that might be misrepresenting science also probably follow you, like it's not such a big world and it's so public.

So how do you sort of maintain diplomacy but sort of get the information that you think is really important for parents to have out there in a way that feels consistent with, you know, your brand, for lack of a better word, with your brand, but also, does the job of trying to correct what, what has been misrepresented.

Cara Goodwin: I think, you know, when I first got on social media, I would be too afraid to call out these big accounts because they seem to have so much power in the social media world. , but you know, as my following has grown, as I've kinda gained more confidence in this world, I've started calling out some of these accounts and I think that, , the response I've gotten from parents has really encouraged me to keep going.

You know, a lot of parents are like, oh my gosh, this just took so much shame away from me. I saw this and I was so upset. And then this really helped me to realize that, you know, this wasn't what I thought it would be. , so I tend to call out situations when I. think that This is causing parents unnecessary shame and is, or, you know, a, a post that is misinformation that could be leading parents away from evidence-based approaches and towards things that don't work.

So, you know, anything that I'm like, okay, the research is really strong on this. I feel like I have a place to kinda call this out. And, you know, there's a lot of examples that I see almost every day that, you know, are creating shame in parents and make parents feel like I'm doing this all wrong.

One of the most common ones I see is there's this claim out here that parents should never say good job. And it's like there's, there's nothing ever been proven wrong with good job. I mean, it's not the most informative thing you could say to your child because, you know, it's not really giving them any information about what you're praising them for, but there's nothing wrong with us it.

And I'm like, what parent hasn't said good job to their child? I mean, at least occasionally. , and just, you know, something like that that makes parents feel like they need to be careful about every word that comes out of their mouth or they might be damaging their child. , you know, it's really a lot more

complicated than that and just, Thinking that if you just stick to a particular script that you know you're going to avoid any sort of parenting mishap.

Yael Schonbrun: Totally. Yeah. I mean, I'm just like, when my, When my kids were really young, I was so worried about all of those things and now I feel very re much more relaxed. I think it's partly because my kids are older, but I've also just realized that any one moment where you say something or do something is one moment out of many and you realize that over time, that you know, if you praise your kid for being smart, like it's okay.

They're not gonna develop a fixed mindset just cuz you said it a few times, you're you're gonna probably accidentally, I've, I have accidentally said that to my kids, like, I think they're so smart. I don't know how smart they are, but I'm proud of them.

Cara Goodwin: I have too. It's so funny cuz one of my most popular kids or posts is about don't call your kids smart. And, and that how you wanna encourage a growth mindset by praising effort. And I call my kids smart. Like I slip up. Like, I, like even, I think like the week I posted it, I called one of my kids smart. was like, I'm like, it's, we all, we all make mistakes and it's not about what you do. You know, even occasionally it's about what you do most of the time and just thinking about, okay, if I can try to do it right, at least, you know, most of the time, then I'm doing okay.

Yael Schonbrun: A hundred percent. And I think that's, you know, so I was just thinking about like some of the research on kids you know, being exposed to arguments and like, yes, it is true that if we expose our kids to really disrespectful arguments repeatedly, That's not gonna be great for them.

They're gonna get kind of anxious, but it is actually okay for your kids to see you fight with your partner. It's better if you do it respectfully, but it's also not the end of the world if you and your partner have a disrespectful argument that you, neither of you is proud of, so long as you know that isn't the way it usually goes.

And even better if you kind of own it with your kids and say, Ooh, I made a mistake. You know, I'm gonna try to make it right with, with your other parent, and I'm gonna own that. I need to do better. That's such a great way to model. So I think sometimes when, when the research shows that a certain behavior isn't particularly helpful as parents or as partners or, or in other, any other domain of life, we can sort of take that to too much of an extreme as opposed to

seeing it as like an opportunity to learn and grow and, and to model that for our kids.

Cara Goodwin: Yes, exactly, yes. I also have a post on apologizing to your kids and how important it's, and it's like, well if we never messed up, we would never get the opportunity to model apologizing. , and I always think it's so funny whenever I apologize to my kids, cuz I'm like so upset about what happened and I'm like, I'm so sorry, I really messed up.

And they're like, what are you even talking about? You know, they've like moved on. They're like, oh, you're still worried about that. Like what?

Yael Schonbrun: Oh, your kids are forgiving

Cara Goodwin: yes. It's so, I mean, but it's, I think

Yael Schonbrun: have short-term memory, I dunno.

Cara Goodwin: Yeah. Short, you know, kids in general are very resilient kids are very resilient and, um, it's important that we, that, you know, we know that all of us, even the psychologists of us, you know, we all mess up and we need to repair the relationship and.

And if we were perfect, we would be setting an unattainable example for our kids. So that not, shouldn't even be the goal to be the perfect parent. Cause that is not what we need to model for our children. We need to model being human and up and repairing our mistakes.

Yael Schonbrun: Totally. I'll actually share. I recently had an experience. It was a few months ago actually, where I was, um, it was a very stressful day and I needed to, like, I was supposed to meet my oldest kid with my two younger kids for his final soccer game, and my husband had taken them, and then we were going to take my oldest kid to Bar Mitzvah and it was his first one.

And so I'd been collecting like all the fancy clothes and I had all the things, and we were like on our way to the soccer game, and I realized he didn't have a shirt. So I had my two younger kids, it was his final soccer game, the bar Mitzvahs in like two hours. And I realized, shoot, I have to go buy a shirt with my two younger kids in the car who were very excited to see the soccer game, but there was no time to go and drop them off.

I had to take them to the mall. At the mall. There was no parking. So, and my youngest was so upset, he refused to come in. So I was like, fine, stay in the car. I'll run in with my middle child. We ran in the department store, had like the, first of all, the elevator wasn't working and it was on the second floor, so we had to like go find this.

The stairs, the escalator also wasn't working, so we had to like go in this back way. We get upstairs, the cashier, there's like one cashier, she's very old and she clearly has arthritis, so she's moving through the people really slowly. I'm sending my 10 year old to like see if there's any other cashiers.

I'm in line, I'm kind of hyperventilating. This woman in front of me actually said, do, are you okay? And I was like, my youngest is in the car. This is taking so long. She said so kindly. Do you need me to go out to see how your son is? And I was like, no, it's okay. I felt really bad. I was making such a drama.

So finally we get back out and my youngest son is super upset. We're like stuck in traffic on the way and he was complaining and I like lost it with him. Poor thing had been like dragged around, disappointed, was really hot from being in the car, was so confused and I. I took out my anxiety and stress on him, and after we successfully got the shirt to my oldest son, I apologized to both my two younger kids and my youngest son, who's just six said to me, and it was such a great moment.

He said, you know, you're always telling, I think I said something like, You know, I was a really, I was not a good mom today. I didn't handle myself well, I shouldn't have taken out my anger on you, I'm really, really sorry." And he said, "you always tell us that it's okay to make mistakes and it's okay for you to make mistakes too."

And I was like, this is like the best parenting win after like the worst parenting day ever, because he'd really absorbed that message.

Cara Goodwin: Yes, I think my kids love it when I talk about mistakes I made, you know, cuz they just find it so validating that like even these adults that seem to have it so together, like, you know, if, if it's something that happened, you know, in my work or something, I'm like, oh, I made this huge mistake today.

I can't believe I did that. Like, and they love it cause they're like, oh, now it's okay for me to make mistakes. Cause like even my mom is making mistakes, you know? So I think it's. So important for parents to point that out and to not be perfect.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. And the research does support this.

Cara Goodwin: Yes. it does, it definitely does support it.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah It's consistent with the growth mindset. So I wonder if you have any other tips on starting a social media account that can share good information in a way that is engaging? So don't screenshot the abstract and underline the take home. Note to self.

Don't do that anymore. Do make it simple. Do offer a take home message. What else do you do to try to make it engaging?

Cara Goodwin: I think myth busting of any type is engaging. So anything that people have heard, either on social media or from just general parenting lore, anything that you can bust related to that. You know, something I heard constantly is, when my kids were little is you get sleep, you know, and that if they don't take a good nap, then they won't have a good night.

And like, it just creates so much stress, you know? And I did a post that. Dispelled that that actually, you know, for toddlers at least if they don't have a good nap, they actually sleep better at night. Um, so I think that things like that, that are myths that are out there that, you know, people just say and you're like, is that true?

, I think that tends to get a lot of interest. But also again, just, you know, making sure that you are. Mostly focus on what is like the quality of information that I'm getting out there. So, you know, have these fun mythbusting posts and, , have these posts that, are validating to parents too as well, I think can be really helpful.

So I did a post recently on the research showing that pregnancy can be as hard on a body as like a really intense endurance for like a marathon. And I think information like that is so validating for people who are, you know, in our, in the United States at least, like, I think pregnant women are just expected to like, you know, keep going with your everyday life and, you know, no acknowledgement of.

How hard it is to, you know, grow another human being. , and I think things like that, that are validating to parents of, you know, this is hard, this is challenging. , and anything that helps take away the shame I think is really interesting to parents.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. A hundred percent. So when you started Parenting Translator, did you have any sense of where it was gonna go, that it would turn into something so, so big and popular and, and that it would kind of feed itself as, as like a new career for you?

Cara Goodwin: Yeah, I had no idea. I really had no idea. I, you know, This was during the pandemic that I started in and I wasn't really seeing any people, so it was like also a social outlet. And I had emailed my friends, I'm like, just follow me. And I thought my friends would be the only ones who were following me and they enjoyed it.

So I was like, this is enough for me to do as long as like I'm being useful to my friends who are struggling through the pandemic right now. And, I never thought, you know, once I had, I think once I had like a hundred followers, I was like, ok, this makes it worth my time. , you know, cause I'm like, I'm helping a hundred people, this feels good.

But you know, as it grew, I think I realized that this was something that was so needed. , and that I felt like I had to keep going because, you know, I know from my day-to-day life as a parent, like just how hard it's, and that. How much we need the resources and we need the confidence to get through our everyday lives.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. I love that. I love that it started as like just, you know, a way to socialize, but also to like, you know, really feel helpful to people that were already in your inner circle. But then it kind of, it really did. It really has exploded. So what has been your favorite post?

Cara Goodwin: Oh, that's so hard to say. , I really enjoy any posts about raising kind children. I think all of us parents like our goal at the end of the day, although we worry about all these. Random things like pacifiers and breastfeeding and you know, like what my children are eating.

But I think at the end of the day, like what we really care about is raising kind children. And I think any post about how to raise, you know, kinder, more generous children. I think those posts are really like what I'm most interested in as a parent myself.

Yael Schonbrun: Okay, so my final question for you is how do you do it all as a mom of three young kids? Because. It looks easy, and I'll say this again, I really struggle with social media. It takes me so long, like the, that their short

pithy is actually even more time consuming than writing something that is very detailed for me at least.

And I'm guessing for most people who do it well, which is not me by the way, but how do you manage to maintain an account that not only dives deep into research, but is short and pithy and engaging on such a regular basis with three young kids.

Cara Goodwin: The only way I could do it is being completely like crazy, passionate about it. So I love doing this. I do it every chance I get. Like my husband makes fun of me cause at night I'm like working on parenting translator. Instead of watching Netflix like a normal person. you know, I just, I love it and I would honestly prefer to do it over watching Netflix or whatever else I could be doing with my free time.

So it's really a huge passion project for me and. Um, and it does apply to my everyday life, with little children. So it's, it's, it helps me to be a better parent and to step back and like have a bigger perspective on parenting rather than just like trying to survive the day, which is my focus on some days.

But, you know, I think it really helps me to be a better parent and to think about how I'm parenting as well. So, it's just such a passion for me.

Yael Schonbrun: I actually do have one more question, which is how do you manage your screen time? Cuz I imagine it's very tempting to check. Like, you know, you post and then you're with your kids in mom mode. How do you manage the pull to be on your phone or on a screen when you're with your kids?

Cara Goodwin: I think that's really challenging. Um, I, I mean it's, it's really hard for me to have the times that, because Instagram is 24 7 that to have the times like, okay, this is when I'm with my kids. This is work time. But being a little bit more structured about that. I do have, somebody who helps me with some of the engagement during the times I'm with my kids, which is usually in the afternoons.

But I think it's, it's so challenging and I think, you know, sometimes you have to put your phone in a different room. It's really hard not to be, distracted. But I think, you know, right now my kids are little and there's three of them. So, part of it is just like I can't really be on my phone cause somebody would be potentially in danger somewhere in the house.

So I'm like, you know, it's, at this stage it's a little bit easier just because there's a lot going on for my kids. But it is a challenge.

Yael Schonbrun: Yeah. Well, I just wanna say thank you so much. This was such a fun conversation and I, you know, we often talk about books, but I think social media more and more is where people are getting information and so to know how to consume it. How to generate it, if that's of interest. How to interpret the data, how to engage with social media.

As somebody interested in parenting, science and wellbeing I think is so valuable. So thank you so much for sharing your wisdom. I highly recommend that people follow your social media account at Parenting Translator. And where else can people find you?

Cara Goodwin: So I also have a newsletter on Substack, which is Parenting Translator, where I dive deeper into these research topics if you're interested. , I'm also on TikTok at Parenting Translator. I'm pretty new to that. And I blog for Psychology Today, which is Parenting Translator, and my website is parentingtranslator.org, which has a lot of free resources for parents and all my posts as blog posts, which makes it a little bit easier to search, for different topics.

Also, all of my newsletters and interviews that I do are on my podcast, which is Parenting Translator, and that's available on your favorite podcast app.

Yael Schonbrun: Awesome. Well, I hope people follow you cuz there's such good, amazing content. It is very validating. It is all science-based. It is really fun to engage with. So thank you for sharing your time and I can't wait to see what your next post is.

Cara Goodwin: Thank you so much for having me.

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