

Episode 22. Kids and Safety

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parents, kids, practice, mom, gun, people, safety, important, house, question, kidnapping, taught, talk, pretty, jetta, safe, window, body, kira, adults

SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Future Focused Parenting, Kira Dorrian

- K** Kira Dorrian 00:04
What happens when two parent coaches, one a Christian and the other an agnostic Jew, sit down to talk about parenting?
- D** Deana Thayer 00:10
I'm Deana Thayer,
- K** Kira Dorrian 00:11
and I'm Kira Dorrian.
- D** Deana Thayer 00:13
Welcome to Raising Adults, a podcast about Future Focused Parenting. This episode of Raising Adults is brought to you by Jetta Anderson with Family First Midwifery. Jetta and her team bring comprehensive care and safe birthing options to women and families across the Greater Phoenix area. I know Jetta personally and I can tell you that she is amazing. If I had another baby, Jetta is who I would want by my side. For more information on Jetta and her practice, go to familyfirstmidwifery.com. Well, hi everyone. Welcome to today's episode where we are going to talk about kids and safety. And there's several different aspects to that topic that we're going to cover today but mostly just

looking at what kind of things do we put in place around personal safety, around bodily safety, around dealing with strangers, and all those kinds of things. And so yeah, we're going to kind of launch into that. Deana, do you want to start by talking about your why? Yes. And I have to say this is another one of those areas where it's just a pleasure to say my parents did a great job. And I wanted to do a great job too. But then when my children were very young, I mean, we're talking Marc was one, was the first time that I had a legal separation from my first husband. And so this became extra important to me, because I was also on a real heightened awareness of my own safety as now a single woman living alone with two little kids. So my why was really around also modeling well, because I had to be extra vigilant during that season.

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Kira Dorrian 01:43

You know, what I love is, so our listeners might not know this, but I do all the editing for the podcast, so I always get to listen to the episodes first before they go out to the world. And I love that all in almost every episode. You give this really like beautiful single sentence or two why. It's so succinct. And then you're like Kira, what's your WHY? And I'm like Babble Babble Babble about and like, I kind of eventually get to my why. And so I'm going to do that again. So my why. You have to understand that I, so I grew up in Florida until I was nine. And at that time in Florida, there were a slew of kidnappings. And so my parents were very overprotective, right? So, and my mom, my mom used to say, I'll pay for her therapy, but at least I'll still have her. And that was her outlook. And I think they made the right call given everything that was going on, but they were very overprotective. And then in other ways, too, so like, I wasn't allowed to plug anything into a socket until I was 12. And my mom called me in college once and she was like, what are you doing? And I was like, oh, I'm making spaghetti and she's like, you're not boiling the water alone, are you? I had very overprotective parents. And so I do think that that informs the choices that I make. But I also tend to live my life with the knowledge that people who are prepared tend to be the ones who survive. And, and that's sort of a general rule of thumb. Most people know about, the people who know where the exits are are the people who get out. And the people who have a disaster plan are the people who survive a disaster. So we do kind of think along those lines. I think some of that probably comes from the Holocaust survivors in the family, like my mom used to always say, Jews always have a bag packed. And I think that's true. Like we have seen the worst happen. We've seen what happens when you're a boiled frog. And so we tend to plan and prepare better because of it. And so that was my main why is I wanted to protect my kids, keep them safe, and also give them the tools to keep themselves safe in any situation that may present to them.

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Deana Thayer 03:46

That makes perfect sense. So what are some ways that you've done that? And the great thing is here again, we have a day where we're talking about a topic that's universal. It doesn't really matter how old your kids are, but it's going to look different based on ages. So with two seven year olds in your house, what are some things you've been doing?

K

Kira Dorrian 04:01

So well, let's start by just talking about some basic things. So from the time they were about three, I taught them a little song to memorize their, my phone number and their address, so that if they ever got lost, I always said, find someone who works there, or a mom, because I think you said that too. Right?

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Deana Thayer 04:22

Yeah. So I mean, I would say, find someone who works there if you're in a store, or find a mom with a kid, and those are the two people that you're looking for. And then you're gonna say, I'm lost. And we would rehearse this, of course, because we know. And then I taught them this little ditty, which I'm not going to sing because I'd be singing you my phone number, but it just had a little basic tune with my phone number. And so it actually happened once that I, in our neighborhood, I was in someone else's house. And they couldn't find me and so they went to another neighbor knocked on the door and started singing 4-2-5 before they said anything, so we were still working on it. But, and so that was important to me. If they ever got lost, they knew who to go to and they knew what information to give. And, and then we also had a code word, which is something I had when I was a kid. So I always said to them, if if I don't come to pick you up from school, it's not me or daddy or whoever supposed to be there, if it's someone different, I will give them our code word. If they don't have the code word, you don't go with them.

K

Kira Dorrian 05:22

And we would practice it. We'd practice little scenarios like, oh, someone shows up and it's someone you know, right? And what do you say, what's the code word? And then I'd make up like, oh, the code word is ice cream, you know? And they'd be like, no, and we would just kind of practice that a little bit. And then I also told them based on an incident that we had, so again, I'm a little bit of an extremist sometimes, but I actually staged a kidnapping at their preschool. And I told the teachers in advance, I'm going to send someone to pick them up. I want to see what happens. And it's a school where they wouldn't have actually released them to this person. But I said, will you release, today, I want to see what they will do. We've been practicing this for over a year. The only way I'm going to know how they're actually going to respond in the moment is by trying it. I sent

someone that they had met twice, because I didn't want it to be a total stranger. That would be really scary. And I told her, I want you to go and say, I'm here to pick you up. Mommy's really sick. And she told me to pick you up and take you for ice cream. And then if they ask you for the code word, I want you to say, oh, mommy was so sick. She didn't remember to tell me. But come on, let's go get ice cream. And then I said, and I will come in immediately after that. So she was, she was there for like, maybe 60 seconds. And so I warned the teachers I was going to do this and they thought I was bonkers, but and the kids were, think they were four. And so my friend Nadine goes in, she does the whole thing. And Rhys says, what's the code word? And she says, oh, mommy was so sick. She forgot to tell me, but let's go get ice cream. At which point Rhiannon was like okay, and went and grabbed her coat. And Rhys was like, no Rhiannon, she doesn't know the code word. We can't go with her. And I had also told them if anyone ever tries to grab you and like physically touching you, that's when you can fight, kick, scream, like all the things.

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Deana Thayer 07:15

Pull out all the stops.

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Kira Dorrian 07:16

Yeah, exactly. So I swoop in, right. So he's done it. He's kept them safe in the room. I swoop in and they're like, Mom, you tricked us. And I was like, I'm really sorry, but I needed to know what you would do. And you guys did so great. I'm so proud of you that you didn't go because she didn't know the code word. And I said in future, anything someone promises you, I will give you. They promise you a kitten. I'll get you a kitten. They promise you a puppy. I'll get you a puppy. You can say no. And know that I will get you whatever it is. So we're walking away. And Rhys looks up at my friend Nadine and goes, Nadine, I'm really glad that you didn't try to grab me because I didn't want to have to bite you.

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Deana Thayer 08:02

Okay, I have questions. Okay. So first of all, I just want to backtrack and quick comment. Because you mentioned finding someone who works there, which would be pretty identifiable, they might have a name tag or something, or a mom. We just hinted at this at a previous episode, but we should say it again. So the reason that we suggest that is unfortunately, even separate from I would say, when I was growing up, it's not the same world to always say, oh, go find a police officer or someone in a uniform. Unfortunately, there's people who will be imposters and do that just for the purpose of getting kiddos. So that's why we say that, just so you know. And my question, though, is why on earth did the teachers think you are bonkers? I think this is brilliant.

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Kira Dorrian 08:46

Well, so afterwards, they were like, that was a great idea. Oh, parents should do that. But I mean, imagine, right? If someone was like, I'm going to stage a kidnapping for my 4 year olds, like they would think you were cray cray, right. So I understood but at the end, they were like this was a really good idea. And the other thing that it granted me that was so amazing was I never worried again, I actually would let them more out of my sight after that. I was a much more relaxed parent because I knew they knew what to do. And I knew they knew that I was going to test them sometimes.

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Deana Thayer 09:18

Well, and now you'd seen it actually work in action. So imagine the little bit of a sense of relief that must have given you and I love your little added bonus of whatever they promise you, I'll get you just still don't go. I don't know that I've heard that before. And what a great thing to think about because there are people out there who will use things like that to lure. And so to be able to say, don't let that tempt you because we can solve that. I will get you that cat I'm allergic to because you will still be here with me. Yeah, you're here and safe. Now I will say it, for listeners who might be thinking about, that's a great idea. I'm gonna plan a kidnapping. My kids... I wouldn't say they were traumatized by it, but they have not forgotten it. Let's put it that way. They talk about it sometimes. And they have asked me never to do it again. I said, Mommy, we understand why you did that. But please don't do it again, it felt kind of scary. And I was like, yeah, it's fair. It's fair. But I also think, like, I actually think it was the right thing to scare them a little bit, because that is something that can happen. And it's important to be aware, and I think they do have a heightened awareness that, I'm not safe everywhere I go in every situation. So I will never do it again, because I will respect the boundary they set up around it. But I mean, it was for me, it was a really important exercise. I'm really glad about the the code word thing. I had that growing up too and ours was, I don't know if my parents just had a sixth sense, or, they're not even very techie, but ours was literally like a password. I mean, it was a series of letters and numbers. It was not a word. Oh, so they were on top of it. It was a tricky business. And so if you didn't know this specific thing, forget about it. And there was a time where my parents went out of town and I became ill in the middle of the school day. And I still, even though I knew I was staying with my aunt and uncle, when my uncle came, I still put them through the rigmarole. And I'm glad, because I knew my parents were out of town, and that it wouldn't be them picking me up. And I still, that was like the worst thing that can happen, you, when you're sick, you want your mom, so that was just lame. But I'm so glad that I was well prepared. I knew the questions to ask. And even when it was someone I was expecting, I still just, they had taught us to just go through those motions no matter what. So I think that is really huge. And I don't know why they were so brilliant with all this letter number, whatever. But it was great.

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Kira Dorrian 11:35

And ours wasn't quite that convoluted. But it was a word that no one outside our family would know. In fact, it was such a complicated word that when there's a couple times I've had to use it, where I've had to say, can you go pick up the kids, here's the code word. And it, the people had to write it down. Because it's not, it's not just anywhere.

D

Deana Thayer 11:37

It's not just a word you're going to use in casual conversation. No, exactly. And, and then the other thing that we did because again, you know, I love rehearsing. And I just think it like, here's the thing. This is what I know, from the mental health perspective, when we go into fight or flight, we go into an autopilot. And so it's really around training these kids in the muscle memory of the autopilot. So there's not a question. They don't have to think, they're just going through the motions of what we've prepared. Otherwise, you don't have the retrieval to remember what you're supposed to do Exactly. You're frozen, right? So the other thing we have practiced is calling 911. So I've taught them how to do it on my phone, and we practice the phone call, I will answer 911 what's your emergency? And they have to tell me what's happened. So it's kind of fun for them. They get to like makeup, what crazy thing, mommy's curled up in a ball rolling around on the floor, you know, they'll just make up some nonsense. And then I always say, can you tell me your name? And they have to tell me their full name. Can you tell me your address? And then they sing their address. Can, can you wait on the line with me and I'll have them, can you go check mommy and see if she's breathing? Can you... I like walk them through what they might get asked so that it's not shocking and then they practice just all the way through to hitting send on 911. So going into my phone, blah, blah, blah, all the things. And we've been doing that since they were about five. And they have been singing their, my phone number and their address since they were about two and a half. So you can actually start this a lot younger than you might think, especially if you make it just rote like a song. They catch it pretty, pretty quickly. Mm hmm. Our school actually has that as part of the curriculum that they have to give a presentation of, my name is, I live at, here is my phone number. So they get a little practice with their very first little bit of public speaking in kindergarten, but also now they've had to memorize it, they've written it down, there's a whole picture they draw with it. So I really, I think that's fantastic. And what I was going to say, on kind of piggybacking on that, with the whole 911 is, please if you're like us and you're in a two household family, don't let it slide. Make sure they know both addresses because I was sometimes unpleasantly surprised, especially with different moves and things that happened, that my kids wouldn't know my address, or they would maybe know mine, but not their dad's. So that's really important to make sure they know both because things can happen no matter what house you're at. So, um, let's talk a little bit about body stuff. So in terms of staying safe from sexual predators, because we've been having this

conversation since a pretty young age as well. So I found this thing, this is not mine, an article that talked about tricky adults. So there's adult, so because you don't want to scare them, like there's adults that are gonna want to rape you like, let's not do that. Um, but talking about how some adults are tricky, and things that make an adult tricky. If an adult asks a kid for help, they're tricky. Adults don't ask kids for help, adults ask adults for help. If they're, if they have something they want to show you, and it's not where you are. They want to take you from the spot that you're at without you checking in with a parent, they're tricky. So those, some of the ways that we kind of described what you might be looking for to determine that someone's tricky. If they want you to touch them in a private part, or a place on your body that they want to touch you that doesn't feel good or that you know is your private area. That person is tricky. And then we also talk about because it's so complicated with kids around the concept of a secret. We've had a lot of conversations about someone else's truth, and that it's not for us to share someone else's truth. But the rule in our house is we do not keep body secrets. And we do not keep secrets that can hurt someone else. And so that's kind of been how we've talked about it that if anything ever happens to your body, and you're being told to keep it a secret, we don't keep any secrets. You come and tell me right away. That's a really good distinction to make. And I love the one about not hurting people. We made that distinction too that secrets, if it's going to help someone have a great surprise, okay, that's fine. And that's a really great little segue. Even with pretty young kids, you can start talking about results, when you think about the result of keeping the secret, is it good? Or is it maybe yucky or could hurt somebody? So really a great opportunity to start talking about processes versus outcomes. But those are really good distinctions to make. And I love the word tricky. What a great adjective, isn't it? I mean, again, it's less scary, but says, hey, this is different. Something's off here. Yeah. And I have one other thing on safety I want to talk about but I'm curious if you did anything different around the body stuff. No, actually super similar. And it was a pretty, I guess, maybe because I'm a birth worker. We just had a lot of body conversations in our house because I was always dealing with bodies. So we got to talk about it pretty young and pretty often, but all the end results were very similar in terms of reminding them to come tell me right away, not feeling uncomfortable at all saying no to things. But I didn't have access to this amazing adjective of tricky. I wish I had, that's pretty great. So another thing we did in terms of their body safety is we never made them hug or kiss anyone, they did not have to touch anyone, even if it was an aunt who hadn't seen them in four years. We never forced them to give hugs or kisses, we always said, you can give a hug or a high five or a polite Hello. But we just really felt it was important that they know that they're in charge of what they do with their body and no grown up can coerce them or pressure them. The situation shouldn't make them feel pressured. Because if you fast forward that to another situation, right? Where there's an authority figure, and they're asking you to touch them or do something inappropriate, you have this memory of well with my aunt, I had to give a hug or with this person, my mom

and dad didn't say no. And so we wanted that to be across the board. You always get to choose what you do with your own body. Yeah, we were really similar in that and even would sometimes ask, what are you feeling like today? Do you feel like a fist bump or a high five or a hug so that they could maybe even change it based on the scenario or who the person was. Yeah, I think I know, I don't know about you. But I know that we had a couple family members that didn't love that. You know, I think that's a different generational thing. It used to be absolutely that it was forced. And so we had to have that harder conversation of this isn't about you, but we don't force them blah, blah, blah. And it was interesting, because we had a couple family members who were still sort of ruffled the wrong way. And then we had a couple that were like, wow, I never thought about it like that. That's so great you're doing that. Wow. Yeah, we encountered the same thing. Mostly, to be fair, my parents some older, not that it's anything just based on age, but in our particular family, it does. It did seem to be generational, a little bit where they maybe, it doesn't mean they were ever unkind about it, but maybe didn't understand it as much or took it a little bit the wrong way. But we also had people who loved it and were very appreciative. Now I will say though, because it wasn't around safety, I did require my kids to greet people. So I didn't let them just hide away and not even say hello or learn to look people in the eye. Those to me fall almost under our manners episode.

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Kira Dorrian 19:10

Or assertiveness, right, learning to communicate with adults.

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Deana Thayer 19:13

So I did make sure that happened. I felt that was just an issue of being polite and courteous, but it didn't have to be accompanied by some physical gesture, right? Oh, absolutely. We never, I mean, that's like a pet peeve of mine is my kids do not, they're not given the opportunity to not acknowledge someone. Like I will give them like you did. Here are your 18 choices of how you can acknowledge this person. But you get to pick which one, but kind of like we've talked about before. It's not a question of whether you're going to do it. It's how you're going to do it. Yes, and I can say this is still in process for me. I work in an office during part of the day with another colleague and my son had come in twice recently in a row without acknowledging my colleague and I had a little chat with him. When you walk in you will look at her in the eye and say hello, and with her name, so please greet her. And we fixed it quickly. We nipped it in the bud, but it's just an ongoing lesson.

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Kira Dorrian 20:08

I'm sure, but you didn't say and if she asks you for a big squishy kiss, you should just go ahead and give that.

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Deana Thayer 20:13

Definitely not. And in that setting, it would certainly not have been appropriate. So it's okay.

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Kira Dorrian 20:18

Love it. And then the other thing we've done in our house is a lot of disaster preparedness. And we've involved the kids in that and we've talked about it as you know, this probably won't happen, but it's something that it's important we're prepared for in case it does. So, for example, we have a disaster plan in our house. We have a stock of food, I keep a disaster kit in my car that would last us for three days. It's for four people, it has tents, and you can buy them on Amazon, they're like 200 bucks. And they have like sleeping bags and flares and food for three days and water for three days. So I keep one of those in my car. We keep one in the house. My dad has one in his car, Dave has one in his car. And so we have plenty of that around. And then in terms of fire, we do fire drills. And we have, we have a three story house. And we have actually climbed out of the windows and used our fire ladder. Because I heard a story recently from someone whose cousins died in a fire because they wouldn't go out the window. And I thought, wow, that makes sense. Because here's the thing when we practiced, my kids were fine. They went out the window. They were nervous. But daddy was at the bottom. And we explained this is, we have to do this now. So our bodies know what to do in an emergency. And we will practice it probably twice a year. We just did it about six months ago, but we're coming up on having to do it again. But here's the thing, my kids were fine. I didn't want to go out the window. It was really interesting. I was like, I can't. I think if it had been the first time and there had been a fire that I probably wouldn't have gone out the window. So it was really important to have that experience and be like, oh my gosh, so even though, I mean those ladders are terrifying. You're like, they sway, and you're convinced everyone's gonna die and like, why did we practice this you know, but it was so important. So we do fire drills. And we do, we do climbing out the window, we do hands and knees out the door. And then you know, they do all the earthquake and the goodness gracious, the lockdown drills at school. So I mean, sadly, they're getting it from all these different places. But I do really think that there's something to be said for that practice and preparedness. So you know what to do.

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Deana Thayer 22:31

It's sad and good, right? It's kind of two sides of the same coin. And we had, our disaster

kit was in a certain spot. I even taught my kids how to find it because it was under our staircase, and it had all of the food and all of, so we had to practice getting to it even, because it was pretty tucked away. But we also had the fire ladder and then when I was a single mom, I also had dowels in all my windows and doors. So again, living alone, a single person. I realize not everybody does that, but I had sticks. I had sweet, sweet friends who cut them all to the right size for me. So I had to teach them how to take those out if they ever did need to open a window, how to pop the screen out, they probably thought I was just over the top. But for me, I had little people and I was alone. And it was just not worth the risk. So we practiced all of those things, plus some because it's like, oh, and then you got to take the stick out. I mean, that was just a lot going on. But it was really good. And I also love that their school, we send in an emergency kit every year, and we can even include a note to the child. Now my kids are too old, they've asked me to dispense with the note and picture because it just makes them sad. But when they were little, I always popped a note in and you could include a picture. I mean, we have, they allow everything from the emergency solar blankets to gloves, they tell you what food to pack in there, and you write their name and their grade on it. And it's available if they ever were trapped at school and I couldn't get to them. So I really, I'm with you where it's like this is kind of hard and sad that we even have to practice these things, especially lockdowns or if there was an active shooter situation or something. But it's also good because the preparedness goes a long way. If your body has at least done it, there's some muscle memory of practicing.

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Kira Dorrian 24:00

Right. Well, it's the same. I'm glad you brought up the active shooter thing because we've also talked about what you do if you see a gun, and we do not have a gun in our home. We're very anti gun as you can imagine being the raging liberal that I am. And but I think this is different for families where the children are taught how to use a gun, it's completely different. Obviously, they would know what to do if they saw a gun and how to use it properly. But because we don't have a gun in our home, our kids would have no idea how to safely use the gun. And so we've talked about if you see a gun, you go straight to a grown up and let them know you've seen a gun. If someone, a kid wants to show you their gun, you leave immediately and you go and find a grown up. If a kid you know wants, is pointing it at you or wants you to play with it, you do not, you never touch a gun. And again, I think it would be so different if it was, if you're a family where the kids are learning to shoot, totally different but I think for families that like mine that don't own guns, it's also important to be teaching gun safety.

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Deana Thayer 24:53

Sure, because they're not around it at all. And I will say that I think we all could use the reminder that that never goes away. Mine, my mom has a gun and has a permit to carry it. But still and I'm well into adulthood... I'm not gonna announce my age, but I'm well into adulthood. If I'm going to stay at her condo and she's not there, she tells me if the gun is there.

K

Kira Dorrian 25:14

Good for her.

D

Deana Thayer 25:14

Just so I know and I wouldn't be surprised by it. She tells me where it is, whether it's loaded or unloaded, whether it's locked or unlocked, if the safety's on, and I'm a grown up. But she wouldn't want me to come across it and be surprised or have an accident. And I appreciate that. And I think we sometimes need that reminder that just because you've learned about something once doesn't mean you set it to the side. Just like you said, you're practicing this regularly. You don't go oh, we've tried that. We're good.

K

Kira Dorrian 25:36

Yep. I love that your mom does that. And that's another thing that we've done. And I remember the very first time I had to ask it, playdates we asked, is there a gun in the house? And I don't say no if there is, but I always ask to see it and see that it's locked up. And you know that, and that's kind of been the conversation. Is there a gun in the house? Is it locked up? You know, and not being afraid to ask and I think responsible gun owners like your mom are not...

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Deana Thayer 26:02

They won't have a problem with that. Because they're like, absolutely, we responsibly lock them up. But I remember the first time I had that conversation, the kids were little, they were like four. And I said, you have a gun in the house? And the mom was like, oh my goodness, I never even thought to ask that question. And my parents did that. Growing up again in Florida a lot more guns and also, but that was weird at the time. No one did that. But my lovely overprotective parents were like, nope, not gonna, not gonna send her over there. We do, we don't know what's going on. Well, and having an awareness of those things and even making parenting choices around it is smart. You're talking about playdates. But for us, even my parents' school decision was around this. We are Christians, but we're not Lutheran, and I was at a Lutheran School. And we'd often get questions

about that. And my parents said, well, it's because in the public school system where we were one in four students were armed. And this was before metal detectors and all of that were so commonplace. So they chose to put us in a private schools that didn't even exactly match our faith paradigm for safety reasons, and I really respected that. Yeah. Alright, so I hope that you guys got some good ideas around safety and you can find your own place in this wherever feels good to you. Obviously, everybody's going to be a little bit different about what they feel is important. There's some obvious things like holding hands crossing the street and all that I'm sure all of our listeners are doing. But some of those more detailed things like code words, and gun safety, and all those things are things to think about as you're future focused in your parenting. These things could happen, and we want to make sure that our kids are prepared. Absolutely. And I think I've mentioned this before, but I love what Kira just said about the practicing too. We've said this little easy phrase, inspect what you expect. So if you expect your children to respond well and come out the ladder, say in a fire, you have to inspect that by seeing it. You're inspecting...hey, does someone own a gun? So inspect what you expect when you come up with those expectations. Make sure you're seeing them enforced. And my closing thought for today is while Kira and I think would both agree, I hope, correct me if I'm wrong, that we don't really encourage battles. So we don't talk about pick your battles, because we're not about creating a battle dynamic with our children. But I do think it is okay to pick your important issues. So you might hear parents say pick your battles, but when you pick one, you better win. I would say, pick your important issues and when you pick them, you really need to stay firm. And I think safety is one of those issues. Pick this one, people. It's important. Yeah, absolutely. So if you have any questions, you can email us info@futurefocusedparenting.com. And for more information, you can go to futurefocusedparenting.com and check out all the stuff we've got on there, including our workbooks, which became available this year. So that's pretty exciting. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer, and recorded in my laundry room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 28:48

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