

Spin Cycle - After School Meltdowns

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SPEAKERS

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Future Focused Parenting 00:03

What happens when two parent coaches, one a Christian and the other an agnostic Jew, sit down to talk about parenting? They take their listeners from surviving to thriving. I'm Deana Thayer, and I'm Kira Dorrian. Welcome to Raising Adults, a podcast brought to you by Future Focused Parenting.



Kira Dorrian 00:23

Well, hi, everyone, and thanks for tuning in on the holiday break. We hope you all are having a lovely winter festival season, we are going to just answer a listener question on this little bonus spin cycle. And we had a question from Julie. And Julie has a five year old little boy who has just started school like five days a week for the first time, and is really having some trouble transitioning when he gets home and is just having those meltdowns. And she's curious, what do I, what do I do? How do I fix it? Because I think it's very challenging when your child's melting down every single day. And they do need to go to school. So how do you cope with that? So we're going to just speak to that a little bit today. And for any of you that are still dealing with some of those meltdowns. Hopefully, it'll be helpful for you, too.



Deana Thayer 01:12

Yeah, this is actually a great time to talk about it. Because it's a really wonderful time of

year to maybe recalibrate. You can kind of check in with what's going well in the school year, what maybe isn't, what do we need to do differently come January? So it's actually great timing for the question from Julie. And there's a lot to unpack here. And this might sound obvious, but I want to just start with making sure to mention that it's really worth checking for physiological causes to meltdowns, because sometimes it's really not just an emotional or behavioral issue, sometimes, there's a real reason for that, especially with these younger ones who are just getting used to that long, full day, every single day. And you could be dealing with things like legitimately being tired, you know, they may be only depending on the child, they might only be about a year removed from discontinuing their naps. So this is a really long day. And I know when I'm tired, I'm more cranky. So it's true. Yes, it's a real thing. And, and other things to think about is like hunger, the school day, depending on where their lunch falls, it may have been several hours since they ate. So I know in our house, we really looked a lot at after school snacks as being an actual important thing. And setting them up well, if they have homework, like a snack that has protein so their brain can work well or some carbs for energy, and then making sure they get rest. And I'm outing him here, but he won't mind because he loves his naps. But my 16 year old still naps after school sometimes and, and that's partly by necessity, because a lot of his activities are in the later evening. And so if he's gonna make it all the way until that rehearsal is over, or that sports practice is done, he's gonna have to kind of recharge, but also I think just as they're growing and developing, they need it. And so, as a sleep consultant, this became really important to me, because I really, for a while, was stressed out about the late bedtime, and like always bringing his phone to bed because he wants to listen to music. But then is he just on screens all night, and even younger kids, they sometimes have a Kindle or an iPad. And, and so a really good way to think about this for the tired piece is look at the whole 24 hours. And in the 24 hours, are they getting enough sleep? And so that really helped me let go of like, oh, I don't love when the bedtime is happening. But going oh, but you know what, he's falling asleep for a couple hours after school. So in that whole 24 hours, we really are getting enough sleep. So I just, there are behavioral things we want to address and things that you can do as a family too, but I just wanted to at least pipe in and say like, make sure there isn't a real problem that you can solve with a nap or a snack.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:43

Yeah. And really nothing can't be solved for me with a nap or a snack. No, I think that's spot on. I mean, those are just some really simple things that could be causing it. I also think, you know, Deana and I talk in our online fundamentals program about the concept of expecting big feelings. And when you're dealing with emotional intelligence, when you're dealing with boundaries and discipline, that it's just important that you're not shocked when big feelings happen. And this is one of those areas where I would say it's

important to be expecting them. It's not shocking that a child that little is struggling with back to school. Honestly, I think all kids go through a back to school shuffle for the first couple of weeks. And I know I was told that the very first foray into school, so whether that's five days of pre K or five days of kindergarten, the first time a child is really out of the house consistently every single day, that you should expect it from September all the way through January, that it's not uncommon. So I think part of it is to be aware of that, like what you're seeing Julie is really totally normal. You're not doing anything wrong. And it's absolutely appropriate that a child who is away from mom and is expected to sort of hold themselves together all day long and learn and be stimulated is going to come home with some big feelings. So just know that that's very, very normal looking at nap, looking at snack, but also knowing that there's something really magical at that young age that tends to happen over the winter break that we're in right now. And a lot of kids make a giant leap in January. So being aware that that's probably coming. And that can, can be contributing too. They are learning and growing and growth, times of growth for kids are just fraught, right? Like, oh, my goodness, and I tell my kids all the time, if you think about growing pains, like if you remember having growing pains when you were a kid, remember how much they hurt? Well, growth hurts, and even physical growth hurts, but emotional growth hurts, too. So I think kids are in these massive periods of emotional growth, mental growth, and they're gonna show symptoms of that, once we get through that major leap that happens when they've had a break. Because oftentimes, you know, when we're in the thick of it, we're not learning. But then we take a pause, and it percolates, and then the growth happens. So a lot of times kids go back to school in January, and it's like, boom, they are like hitting the ground running. And they're so much more confident and secure. And then we have this really nice ride till about end of April after spring break. And then everything goes south.

D

Deana Thayer 06:09

Yeah, you know, the school year is almost over. So hard to focus.

K

Kira Dorrian 06:13

So just being aware, expecting those feelings at the start of every year and being prepared every single year that those after school meltdowns are probably going to happen for the first few weeks, even the first few months, but then also kind of being ready for that giant leap forward, that's probably going to happen after the break.

D

Deana Thayer 06:27

Yeah, so smart to just have that reminder that it's normal, because I think we can feel like

am I the only one dealing with this? And so that that's so helpful. I'm really glad you said that.

K

Kira Dorrian 06:38

And I think the last thing I would add is to if, if you've done all of that, right, you've given room for the feelings and you've made sure they you're getting enough sleep and they've got a snack, and you're sort of prepared for it. And you're still seeing it come January, then, and I could say you could even do this well before January. But I would be asking some pointed questions at that point. Because it could be that there's something going on with the teacher relationship, it could be that there's something going on with classmate relationships that they're not sharing with you. So just asking good questions. Do you feel safe at school? Who's your favorite person to spend time with at school? What do you do if you have a problem at school? Do you feel comfortable asking your teacher? How does your teacher respond when you share a problem with them? Just asking some pointed questions to see if maybe there's actually something else going on.

D

Deana Thayer 07:21

That is really smart. Because even in friend relationships at these younger ages, they don't always volunteer because they don't even know what to volunteer. Yeah. And so it can take some questioning to kind of draw that out, you know, about who are they playing with? And how are those people treating them and what happens when they don't like how that's going and all of that. So important. And another just kind of practical thing you can look at is your own home and schedule setup. Because if you're not seeing this start to turn a corner and see that big, like spurt of maturity, and just the stamina that starts to come as they develop and grow and have a break, then it is worth saying, do we need to maybe shift bedtime at our house? Or are we eating too close to bedtime. Sometimes kids who are digesting will be a behavioral nightmare, just because their body is still processing their dinner, and then they're bouncing off the walls and they're not tired. So making sure that you're not eating within about three hours of bedtime can be really helpful for some kids or looking at things like your activities. Are you running around all the time to gymnastics or soccer or piano or whatever it is? And maybe you have the kind of child who, in general because of their personality, or perhaps just for this season really can't be running around on a school night. And they need their weeknight to look more consistent. I come home and maybe do my little worksheet, I have my snack, I get some time to play, we have dinner and then I have this predictable bedtime routine. And that's all that particular kiddo can handle. And that's fine. But you need to look at that if you're not seeing this start to resolve. Does that make sense?

K

Kira Dorrian 08:48

Oh, yeah, I have one just like that. I mean, Rhys actually verbalized that last year. There are too many activities after school. I need time to play. Okay. Well, yeah, thank you for articulating yourself so well, no problem.

D

Deana Thayer 09:01

Way to be self aware.

K

Kira Dorrian 09:02

You know, so but I am aware of it. And so I'm very cautious. I try not to schedule things for him after school because he just needs to come home and play. That's just who he is. Whereas Rhiannon loves to have things after school, which makes for an interesting, yeah, makes it a fun combo. But um, yeah, I think that's, I think that's so so true. And I think we talked about this on the back to school episode, but I usually don't schedule anything in the fall. Like, you just go to school, and you come home and then we start activities in January. So I think looking at activities is super, super smart.

D

Deana Thayer 09:31

Yeah. And you might even have a child who's kind of a combo pack, where, and I have one like this. Absolutely. Activities are fine, but not right after school. Because the need for that transition is really important. This one just can't go, go, go, go go. It's like I need some downtime, then I can go to my thing, whatever it is, but I can't just go 12 hours straight or I'll collapse.

K

Kira Dorrian 09:55

Yeah, totally. So I hope that's helpful, Julia and for any of you that are dealing with those after school meltdowns, they're totally normal. Remember to expect those big feelings, and then think about maybe some of these things that might help you kind of offset that transition. But they're, they're normal. It happens every year. And it's good for parents to kind of be aware of that and be prepared.

D

Deana Thayer 10:12

Thanks again so much for listening to this spin cycle. We love the chance to address listener questions and we're also really looking forward to being back with you in the new

year. You can keep your ears out and watch your podcast platforms. We'll have our first episode of 2020 out on January 6th.



Kira Dorrian 10:29

And until then, if you haven't followed us on Facebook or Instagram, we're @FutureFocused Parenting. 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 10:42

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