

Episode 60. Fostering A Growth Mindset in Your Children with...

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SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Alexandra Eidens, Kira Dorrian, Future Focused Parenting



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.



Deana Thayer 00:23

Hi, everybody, welcome to Raising Adults! Kira and Deana here today. And we have a fantastic guest. We are really privileged to get to speak today with Alexandra Eidens, the co-founder of Big Life Journal. And she is going to share with us all about growth mindset and how we not only model that for our children, but help them develop it in themselves so that they can be successful. And the perspective shift that she talks about is such a game changer. So I'm really looking forward to all of you getting to learn from her. And what she brings to the table is so incredible. It's going to be wonderful.



Kira Dorrian 00:59

Yeah, and what a perfect topic as we're starting out our new year, right, to be thinking about, how do I maybe want to handle things differently, the things that she suggests are

so transformative, and really so important for parents to be thinking about. So I just think it's a great thing for us to be thinking about as we kind of move forward into this next year, 2020.

D Deana Thayer 01:17
Perfect timing.

K Kira Dorrian 01:19
But before we get to the interview, we do want to just kind of warn you listeners that we had some technical difficulties with this recording, especially at the beginning. It sounds a little funny. Your ears do adjust pretty quickly. But I just want to warn you that the start of this can sound just kind of funny to the ear. But that what Alexandra has to say is just so important that we really, really wanted to make sure that we aired it. So just bear with us through the initial bumps at the beginning. And hopefully your ears will adjust and you'll still be able to just get so much out of this interview. So let's go to the interview. Well, Alexandra, welcome to the show. Listeners. We have Alexandra Eidens, who is the creator and founder of Big Life Journal on the show today, we are so excited to have you here. Thank you so much for joining us.

A Alexandra Eidens 02:03
I'm so excited. Thank you for having me.

D Deana Thayer 02:05
Yeah, we're so glad to get to talk to you. And maybe you can start by just telling our listeners a little bit about yourself and how you came to create Big Life Journal.

A Alexandra Eidens 02:14
Yeah, sure. So I am a co founder of Big Life Journal, and my husband is my second co founder. And we have started in 2016. And that's where I was pregnant with our first son. And we had an idea for, you know, for a journal for children. And the reason why we were thinking about creating a journal is because we were kind of having those discussions on how we going to raise our son and what kind of things we want to teach him. And mindset was our top priority at that time. We'd just read, both of us listened to the audio book Mindset by Dr. Carol Dweck. And so we were so much like thinking, you know, about mindset, and how we can teach him those important things like, you know, having a

mindset of gratitude and abundance and growth? So we were looking at that time for children's resources and couldn't find anything. So where's that? Okay, well, let's create a journal. And we're going to start at that, you know, that time we had a Kickstarter campaign, which is like a crowdfunding campaign, which is a great way to validate your idea. So before you like, you go into business and something, you can just like, put it out there and see if anyone's interested. So yeah, so that's how it all started.

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Kira Dorrian 03:38

Wow. So I know it's exploded, and it's just become this unbelievable resource for parents. And so I'm curious if you can share with our listeners what exactly a growth mindset is, because I know it really focuses on that. And that's become such a hot topic these days with parents. I know at are school, it's huge. So what is a growth mindset? And how do parents and educators foster that in their kids?

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Alexandra Eidens 04:03

Yeah. So Dr. Carol Dweck, which I mentioned, she was the author of that book Mindset. And she is kind of a pioneer of growth mindset and fixed mindset. So kind of like fixed mindset work. She's still working, she's still doing a lot of things and doing a lot of research on that. And what she said was, she created two terms, growth mindset and fixed mindset. And she said that growth mindset is when you believe that you are capable of changing who you are, and you are not born a certain way. So let's say you don't have like a set, set abilities. You don't have set talents, you can develop your talents, you can develop your abilities, and you can essentially, you know, develop new skills. So you can do a lot to, to kind of like shape yourself. And it's not only about intelligence, it's about anything in your life. So let's say like, you think that you're not very good at friendships or relationships like those, the things that you can change about yourself, you can change anything. And fixed mindset was the opposite, essentially thinking that you are born a certain way. And you are either a math person or you're not a math person, you know, you just can't do much about your intelligence, you're kind of like limited with your abilities and talents, and you can just like, just look at what you have. And it's hard to work with that type of thinking. So. So those are like polar opposites, right? And what she does, waht Carol Dweck did was she created so much research, and she has done a lot of research in schools with children specifically showing that growth mindset, it's so beneficial, and it directly correlates with success and happiness and resilience and all the things that we want to teach our children and ourselves.

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Deana Thayer 05:59

That's so interesting. And are there ways that parents then and teachers can help foster that in children?

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Alexandra Eidens 06:06

Yes, you can do a lot to help your child to develop growth mindset. And, I mean, there's so many things you can... first of all, we always recommend starting with your language and how you talk to your child, how you tell about yourself and about them and about the, you know, all other people. So let's say that, if you catch yourself saying that, well, I'm just not good at this or like, you know, I can't do this. And I'm just not born to do this, you know, things like that. That's a very fixed mindset thinking. And instead, you could model a growth mindset in front of your child. So you can say, well, it looks like I can't do this yet, or I made a mistake, and at what I can learn is that.... So those kind of things. So you can kind of model, modeling is number one parenting technique. Yeah, exactly. So model is number one. And then of course, how you talk about, you know them to themselves. And how you praise them. Praise is a very big topic in the growth mindset world, because the way you praise your child, you can, you know, directly contribute to the growth mindset and fixed mindset. And, you know, a lot of people or parents don't really think about praise too much. I mean, they, they just give out generic praises, like good job, and you did a great thing. And you're so smart. But unfortunately, you know, research shows that this is not the best way. And, you know, the common way of praising children, it's actually, it could be detrimental and to their, for their mind, to their mindset, and overall, how they think about themselves. And in the book Mindset, Dr. Carol Dweck, she specifically described a few experiments she has done with children in schools, to show that different types of praises can directly correlate to the way that they take on new challenges, or they what how they think about themselves, and how resilient they are. So it's just incredible to think that your just one praise, or like how you praise a child can make such a big difference.

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Kira Dorrian 08:21

So what are some examples of ways that we should be praising our kids?

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Alexandra Eidens 08:26

Yeah, so the examples would be, well, first, I mean, the whole praise conversation could last for the entire episode. But I mean, there are a few important things that you should remember is, first growth mindset way of praising is when you praise your, your, not your child specifically, but what they've done. So let's say like, you praise the process, you praise their hard work, you praise their effort, you praise how much time they spent on

something, and how they didn't give up and how they stayed focused. So you know, that you basically don't kind of label them as being smart, or talented or fast, or some parents even praise children for not making mistakes, which is, you know, the opposite. Like, you should celebrate their mistake. There's that well, that's so great, you just made this mistake, that, that means your brain is learning and it must feel very hard in your brain because the brain is creating new connections. And it's, it's creating new cells. And it's just you know, when you start talking to your child like that they transform, like we've seen so many transformations, it just by you know when you started talking like that in explaining to them that, you know, what they do is what matters. Not necessarily like who they are or like how they were born. And the other thing is with praise is you know, to take it to the whole other level is sometimes a praise is not necessary, and we forget that. We immediately jump in and start praising our children and just showering them with positive words with always the best intentions. But at the same time, what we do want to make sure is they develop internal motivation, which means intrinsic motivation, which means that they don't seek for external validation from anyone. Not a parent, not a parent and a teacher, not a friend, they should be able to kind of be satisfied with their own work, and know that they've done their best. And to know that, you know, this is what they wanted to create. And this is what they created, and not look for external validation. So if you really want to take it to the whole other level, you can, instead of praising your child, you can turn it around, you can ask them a question. You can say, well, what do you think about this? Like, how do you feel about your drawing? Painting? How do you feel about it? You know, how did you feel when you created it? And why did you choose it, choose these colors? So instead of immediately jumping into praise, and giving them that quick satisfaction of being praised and validated by someone, you can, like try to cultivate that internal intrinsic kind of, you know, curiosity and motivation and so that they can understand themselves and they can seek that validation from within rather than from without.

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Deana Thayer 11:14

Yeah, that's so, that's so important. And I love the, the talking about the actual activity, and not just the person because we talk a lot too about like progress over perfection, it's not waiting until everything is perfect, and just how you want it, it's noticing where there's been growth and some improvement. And that's so, so wonderful. And I can see where that would really help children as they're young, and with their schoolwork and even in how they interact with others. But would you also be willing to share how this mindset can help prepare children for success even once they've reached adulthood?

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Kira Dorrian 11:45

I just, I just love everything that you just said, I love it so much. It's amazing. So okay, I want to give you an actual example. And I'm curious, like how you would encourage a parent to handle this, because as you're talking, I'm kind of thinking about some stuff with my kids. And so let's imagine that a child, let's say they're school age, so maybe 6, 7, 8 years old, right around there, comes to you with something that they've done, and are clearly, they're really proud of it. And so, you know, how do you incorporate what, everything you said about praise, but you notice that there's a mistake in it. So you want to sort of talk about the mistake and encourage that growth mindset and that they need to kind of learn something here. But you also don't want to teach them the validation comes from an external source. So how would you encourage a parent to handle a situation like that? So the kid's really proud of what they've done, and you notice a mistake.

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Alexandra Eidens 11:45

Yeah, I mean, growth mindset has so many benefits. I mean, we have even at Big Life Journal created a whole poster, which says what happens when someone has a growth mindset, to remind people and parents and teachers and, and children, like what actually, you know, what growth mindset does. And you, when the child has a growth mindset, when a parent, an adult has a growth mindset, anyone, you completely, the way that you look at the world and yourself changes, right? So you, the world is your opportunity and possibility, like you're striving for things that you never thought you would be able to do. And you take on new challenges if you're not afraid to fail, because you know that mistakes are actually a good thing. And mistakes help you grow. And, you know, literally grow, because what happens is in your brain, when you make a mistake, there's certain connection or there's some activity that happens in your brain, that doesn't happen when you get things right. And that activity is, you know, scientifically described as a brain growth. So literally, when you make mistakes, your brain starts growing and sparking, and all those connections start building a cell, building, creating. So you know, knowing that, it just empowers you, right? When you when something's really hard for you, when you learn something new, you just kind of have that visual in your head. Well, it doesn't mean that I'm just not good at it, it means that my, my brain is literally creating new cells that have never been there before. And that's why it feels hard, because it wasn't there before, like that, that kind of information was in my head, and I need to build new cells and I need to build practice. I need to practice because when I practice the connections between the cells, they become stronger and stronger. So all that kind of conversation and self talk is growth mindset self talk. So imagine if a child, when a child has that, right, imagine if that's the way, it's how they think about themselves and how they think about learning. It's so empowering. I mean, so empowering. I mean, there's nothing that they cannot do, and cannot learn. And so you know, when they have growth mindset it's just incredible to see the transformation. Yeah. I mean, it really depends on a child. I mean, I know that you

probably expect from me some generic answer, but it does depend on the child so much. I mean, you can start from like discussing with like, is this a child with perfectionism tends to be like, you know, perfectionist and gets very upset and doesn't take external feedback very well, or do they actually have a growth mindset, and they are happy to receive external feedback. And that's another benefit of developing a growth mindset is, you know, children start realizing that they actually, the feedback they're receiving is just helping them to get better, right, because it's not about them, it's about what they've done. And the thing is, with the mistakes, you know, I actually, or our community at Big Life Journal and as a company, we recommend celebrating mistakes and turning it to be a positive thing. And instead of just like, because the way you put a question was, you know, they were proud of the work but they had a mistake. As a, as a mistake was a negative thing. But it is not a negative thing it is, it's a good thing. And the thing is, what it shows is that they, this is something, there's something that they don't know yet, or they haven't perfected yet or they haven't learned yet. And there's an opportunity to learn. And the, the reason why they made a mistake is because, you know, now they know what they can practice more, now they find out, found out that, you know, this is the area where I need to improve. And that's, to me, that's a great thing, because sometimes, like we don't even know what we don't know, right? So you know, when you can turn the conversation about mistakes to be positive thing, you can even say, oh, hey look, like, you know, this is, it looks like this must be a mistake. Some people go to the extent of high fiving their children's mistakes, and, and turn it absolutely completely upside down from what the conventional, you know, kind of wisdom is around mistakes, right? Be negative, or being something to be ashamed of. I mean, make it a positive thing, make it something, you know, an indication that they're learning and they're, you know, improving. Like I said, when they make a mistake, something happens in their brain that doesn't happen when they get things right. When they get things right, it means that, that they really got that, they got that subject, they got that information, like they're ready to move on. And when they move on to new things, they will be making mistakes. They will be making mistakes until they get the, get you know, those things, right. So, I mean, I wouldn't necessarily position it that way. Like I would, I would just have it like, like conversation, and I'll have them notice it, or point it out but have it to be positive by something that hey, looks like here, you can learn more like, looks like your brain needs to grow. And, you know, what else can you do to maybe practice this? Or something like that, you know, have it as kind of a light conversation.

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Deana Thayer 17:56

That's so good. And it's so important that we remove the negative connotation. I think connotation here is what's so important. It's coming through in so much of what you're saying is that we've assigned mistakes as bad or, you know, a great piece of schoolwork as good, when those might be actually entirely opposite, like one is maybe not

representative of growth and learning. And so it's so important to really think about and I'm wondering, are there I mean, we as parents, I'm sure don't always get this right as well. So what are some habits we would want to be careful of that parents maybe fall into that kind of go against the growth mindset, and we want to watch out for?

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Alexandra Eidens 18:36

I mean, that your own growth mindset, if you start working on your mindset yourself, and the way you talk to yourself in front of your children, you know, the way you talk to them about themselves, I mean, all those things, kind of your language, your conversation with your children, that's where it all starts. And you know, kind of when you, when, if you try new things, let's say if you try to learn a new hobby, if you're trying to learn a new language, and you'll be making lots of mistakes, but that's again, a good thing because you're growing, right? And if you do it in front of your children, kind of like I'll show them the learning process. And first of all, they see you doing new things and taking on new challenges and out, stepping outside your comfort zone. And you know, kind of you demonstrating this enormous kind of challenge right in front of you. So they will learn so much from just watching you because I even, I remember my parents when I was growing up. They were in their 40s. And then suddenly, both of them decided to change their professions and go into banking, and they all, both of them went to school to study banking, and I was just so, they would come home and we would have dinner and then they would start doing homework. So I was just you know, at that time, I was like why do my parents do homework? That's so weird. But, but I still remember that, like, it's incredible because I saw them struggling. I saw them like, studying for tests, I saw them doing this thing. So it was just, I think it was incredible that they've done it. So I feel like you know, the way that kind of you manage your life, and the way that you accept challenges and try new things, and, you know, maybe something you've never done before and talk about it, how you feel like, you feel scared, which is, you know, still a valid emotion and valid feeling. But you do it anyway. So, all these things, like so important.

K

Kira Dorrian 20:39

I love it so much. So I'm wondering what your like, favorite go to phrases are that parents could take away today, just from listening? I know you mentioned, I can't do it yet. I know both my kids say that, which I love to pieces. But are there other ones that you, that you found are particularly helpful for parents to kind of have in their back pocket?

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Alexandra Eidens 21:02

Um, let me think. Well, I mean, there's so much phrases, maybe, but well, I mean, one thing

which we say in our family is that for affirmation, which is, we can do hard things. And so it's kind of like, became our motto, our family motto. And so much so that my son who's only three, he says that, and it's just so hilarious too, hearing him say that. But it, it's just like when we're struggling, and we're both, my husband and I were very conscious, like in front of him, like we're struggling with something. And I always remember to say that I was like, I can do hard things, I can do hard things. So he can like, watch me, right, he can watch me struggling and talking to myself, trying to like encourage myself. Because that's what I want him to do, right, to, to have that skill of, you know, perseverance and encouraging yourself and keep going and have, having that kind of like saying or motto, it's very helpful. Because you know, you can just immediately fall into, it kind of like primes your brain to get into the courageous state and keep going. So, you can prime your brain with like a specific affirmation or say like a certain word, as soon as you say it, you can get into specific state, emotional state. So that, you know, we usually recommend to, to, you know, choose some kind of motto for your family. And, and again, like I said, instead of jumping into praising your child, you know, ask him questions, ask her questions. I mean, when my son started saying, like, recently, he would just ask me, he was for example, like, he was singing a song like, singing a song, or like dancing or whatever. And he was like, do you like this? Do you like this? Mommy, do you like this? And I like, continuously asking me if I liked it. And then I would say, well, I said, do you like this? And he'd say, you know, yes, I do like it and he stops. And he's not, he's doesn't even like, he doesn't even care anymore if I like it. So kind of like catching yourself instead of immediately you know, saying yes, or yes, I do like it or, you know, I love what you do. And I love this, which is, you know, I understand parents want to say that because they you know, they believe that they're building self esteem and confidence by saying that, but at the same time, turn it around, so that they can, you know, look inward and understand if they like it. And, and I usually finish that by saying, well, that's the most important thing if you like it or not, you know, nothing else matters really. And then, because I want him to think, so I want him, you know, to sing and to dance and like it and not care if I like it, or his dad likes it, or anyone else likes it. So, um, you know, so that's kind of like the way if you can, if you can, you know, kind of train yourself or remember doing that, I think that would make a big difference.

D

Deana Thayer 24:02

I love that. And I love that then it removes, it can already kind of lay a foundation for removing this always caring what other people think and using that for validation. And I mean, it just sets the stage for so much more positive. Hey, if I like it, I'm good. If I like this outfit I have on or this dance I'm doing or whatever. It's just, that's really game changing. So for our listeners who want more, tell us more about Big Life Journal, where our listeners can get your resources, how do we find all that you're doing?

A

Alexandra Eidens 24:31

Yeah, so you can go to biglifejournal.com and we just released our second episode of, second season of Big Life Kids podcast. It's the podcast for children which I highly recommend. It is growth mindset podcast, but it's done in a fun way. So it's, you know, we have real actors that play the characters and the, the writer for this podcast, she is a comedy writer for kids. So she makes everything very fun and, but it has the important messages like that, you know, the two characters, they interact with each other, and they kind of like uplift each other, take turns uplifting each other and encouraging each other and then talking about things like, you know, you know, persevering and, you know, being confident and things like that. So, I highly recommend, try to, you know, play this podcast for kids in the car, it's free, right? So it's, it's like any other podcast. You can find it anywhere on Apple podcasts, Google Play, Spotify, and try to play it for your kids and see if they like it. Because, you know, you know, the more they get messages from different sources like it, you're not, you don't have to be the only source. So it tries to instill growth mindset in your child, you know, introduce them to other things, like, you know, podcasts, and, you know, we have journals, so they can do things in the journals. And so there are multiple sources of kind of, you know, communicating that information to them. So, so they slowly, their brains and mindset, so it's just slowly change. And, you know, lean towards growth mindset, it will never be 100%. This is something you you know, all of us should remember. Carol Dweck talks about it. She says, no one, there's no person in the world who has 100% growth mindset, it's always going to be a mixture of both. So you can just kind of, you know, plan for helping your child be more growth mindset than fixed mindset.

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Kira Dorrian 26:28

So we basically have to have a growth mindset about our growth mindset. I love it. Alexandra, thank you so, so much for being with us today. What an amazing topic to be discussing, and how incredible just to hear the theories that are out there. And all the work that Big Life Journal is doing to support this concept. I just think it's amazing.

A

Alexandra Eidens 26:47

Yeah, well, thanks so much for having me.

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Deana Thayer 26:51

Wow. So that was a lot to unpack in half an hour.

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Kira Dorrian 26:54

I know, I just, I loved it so much. And it made me think a lot about some of the things that you know, I mean, I could be doing differently, like just little things, because I really have always felt like I parent with a growth mindset. But there were a couple little things that she said that I was like, oh man, I do that. I need to stop doing that.

D

Deana Thayer 27:09

So interesting, because this is, I lean personally toward a growth mindset. But I think I can see where I can do better parenting with it, if that makes sense, helping my kids have it. And even though they're older, and now getting probably a lot of their own ideas, I can see where that could, because I'm, I'm this way kind of a little bit more naturally, like I'm always like, what now? Like, what can I work on now? But, and see things you know, not going great. I can see them as positive. But I, I learned a lot because this already is teaching me things I want to say differently to my own people.

K

Kira Dorrian 27:43

Well, it's funny because my kids I'm, well, I should change this, I was about to say I'm a terrible artist. I am not a great artist yet. And I have said such to my children in a kind of like no big deal. You know, like, it's okay, we're not, not everyone's good at everything. Like it's okay to not be good at everything. And they've been like, Mom, you're just not a great artist yet. And because they get all this at school, their teacher, teachers in general at our school have this philosophy, but their teacher this year is big into growth mindset. So it was kind of interesting to hear that and be like...

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Deana Thayer 28:12

Oh, your kids are schooling you.

K

Kira Dorrian 28:14

Yeah, they do that. Just amazing. So thank you, Alexandra. We love you.

D

Deana Thayer 28:22

Kids are great teachers.



Kira Dorrian 28:23

Yes, yep, totally. So we hope that was helpful for all of you. And don't forget to follow us on Facebook or Instagram @FutureFocusedParenting and if you haven't checked out our online courses and resources and our entire shop page, which is filled with stuff now, do that. [Futurefocusedparenting.com slash shop](https://futurefocusedparenting.com/shop) or click on the shop tab.



Deana Thayer 28:44

Yeah, we are so glad to be back with you launching into the new year. Please use your growth mindset to continue to listen, tell other people about us. I mean, you're, you're essentially our marketing team.



Kira Dorrian 28:56

So you are our growth mindset.



Deana Thayer 28:58

Yes, we want to grow with you. So thank you so much for tuning in today and we hope it's been helpful and we look forward to bringing you more next week. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer, and recorded in Kira's laundry room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 29:14

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