

Episode 3. Chores

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SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Future Focused Parenting, Kira Dorrian

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What happens when two parent coaches, one a Christian and the other an agnostic Jew, sit down to talk about parenting?
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I'm Deana Thayer
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and I'm Kira Dorrian.
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Welcome to Raising Adults, a podcast about Future Focused Parenting.
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Deana Thayer 00:37

Welcome. We're excited to be with you again today and really tackling an issue that everyone will face at some point but everybody handles very differently too. So we're going to be talking about chores today. And just giving our children responsibilities around the house and what does that look like, and why do we do it? Should we do it? All of those different things. So, Kira, maybe you can start with your why around chores and then we'll dive in.

K

Kira Dorrian 01:01

Sure. So my why is based solely on my only child experience of not having any chores, which was really terrible of my parents. My parents did a million things right. I will say time and time again, how well set up for parenthood I was by watching my parents parent. This was one of their failings. I mean, we're all gonna have failings, I have many. And this was one of theirs. I think they got so tired of trying to push me to do it that they gave up. And especially once my parents divorced when I was 12, then it became this whole other, you know, oh, we've got it. She's, she's a divorced child, and you know, like, oh, we don't want to cause any trouble and, they would probably argue differently, they would probably say that I was just so obnoxious about them that it wasn't worth it. And I get that. I think that's, I totally get that. And so unfortunately, coming into adulthood, I really struggle with doing chores. I mean, it's, it's like noticeable. I don't like doing them. I don't like even just the day to day tasks of running my household get me down. I get frustrated by them. I feel like they're wasting my precious time. It's pretty terrible. And so I was really self aware enough to go, huh, that didn't work so well. And I looked around me and saw my friends who were just so much more capable of those things and felt, you know, oh, yeah, I don't like to do it. But it's part of getting things done. Some of them even feel really like they've achieved something when they've done chores around the house. And I thought I really want to foster that in my kids because I can see how that really hasn't been the best impact on me as an adult. So I wanted them to be responsible. Keep a clean and tidy home because I really believe that a clean and tidy home helps facilitate a clean and tidy mind and helps us stay clear headed and clear minded. And so that was really my why, was I wanted them to feel comfortable and confident with it in a way that I didn't, and also be able to live in a home that facilitated just good mental health. How about you?

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Deana Thayer 03:00

Well, this was a big one for me because I am actually a neat freak. And interestingly, that

made me extra cognizant of not wanting to push my kids in that direction. I didn't want them to be obsessive about is everything exactly where it goes and perfectly clean. I didn't really want to pass that on, because it can get a little neurotic, honestly. So I wanted to be careful. At the same time, I did want some structure around that. And one of the things that was a big deal to me is I wanted them to know that it takes everyone to have the house function smoothly. It's not a one man or one woman show. And in fact, that's not a good dynamic. When you set it up where one person's responsible for everything, everything's on their shoulder. That means if they're ever sick or out of commission, everything collapses, right? So you don't want that. I wanted them to be aware that we all pitch in and we all work together. But another thing I think that was really central is work ethic. There is, I think, almost inherent in us, we can have this kind of inherent laziness, it just... I don't want to, it doesn't sound fun, they're a lot of work, what you said isn't necessarily false. Sometimes it does feel like we can get to where these kinds of tasks do take away precious time from things that may actually matter more. And I think we do have to guard against that. I'll probably talk about that later. But at the same time, having intrinsic motivation was a big thing we were trying to cultivate, I think what I would actually call it is initiative. I wanted them to eventually grow to the point where they would just see the dishwasher was full and empty it. I see something needs done around the house, I should take care of that. And not have it have to come from all this external scaffolding we put around it. So those were big things for us, the teamwork piece, it takes all of us to have a functioning household, but also how do we cultivate and create this initiative and work ethic?

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Kira Dorrian 04:44

I love that. I love that. I mean, that's very much back to that....we talk in one of our episodes about being a team, and the team effort and identifying as a team, and I think that's definitely a part of it. And so my kids are still pretty little because they're at the time of this recording on the cusp of their seventh birthday. And so for us it - our how looked very much like starting young, kind of like everything we talk about. I mean, this is future focused, right? So I started at a very young age teaching them to clean up. We didn't go to bed until we cleaned up our toys. If they could be helpful, I wanted them to be helpful, and how can they help each other? How can they oh, your brother needs that? Could you go and get that for him? Just setting this tone for we all pitch in, we all contribute to a functioning household. But then when my kids turned four, I implemented the one new chore for every birthday. So Happy Birthday Rhys and Rhiannon, here's your new chore! And so every year they get a brand new chore added to their already nice list of chores. So when they were four, they had four chores. And I'm personally of the belief that brushing your teeth and getting dressed are not chores. Like you just got to do that.

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Deana Thayer 05:55

Let's have some hygiene.

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Kira Dorrian 05:56

Yeah, let's just not be gross. So I never put those as chores, those were just absolute expectations of everyone does it. But then also around the chores concept, my kids don't get paid for them, because I am of the firm belief that I do plenty of chores without getting paid. This is how we function as a family, we are all responsible for pitching in. And so it is my expectation that you do your chores. They're not optional, and there's no reward. It's just a part of running a functioning household. So when they were four years old, they had to clear their plates. They had to pick up their toys every night. They had to do an hour of quiet time because they weren't napping at that point anymore. And I really thought quiet time was extremely important. We'll probably talk about that.

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Deana Thayer 06:43

We'll probably do a full episode on that.

K

Kira Dorrian 06:43

So they had to do an hour of quiet time. And then they also had to make their beds. And those were there four chores when they were four years old. And then every year since then we've added a new chore. So like last year's new chore was they now strip their beds. I wash the sheets, but they strip their beds. The year before that we added, I fold the laundry, you put all your laundry away. So they're really doing more and more and more every single year. And I don't really, I don't really know how they feel about it, because they don't complain about it. But they also aren't like, exciting, my new birthday chore, which is fair, I don't exactly expect them to be. But yeah, so that's kind of how we've done, we've done chores in our household. How about you?

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Deana Thayer 07:26

Well, when they were young, we did an approach that was, I tried to make things age appropriate. So.. and I love that you said whenever they could be helpful, I would let them because I'm sure listeners know there's times where they will actually undo some of your hard work. And so you have to be careful about being selective what you have them help you with, right? But when I was doing laundry, for instance, even a one year old can just know what is white. So I would have even my little toddlers separate the white stuff out

and they can do a little bit of sorting or finding matching socks. That's also just a great matching game and it's good for their cognitive abilities. So we would do little things like that, or I would let them handle the unbreakable dishes when we were unloading or loading. So they didn't necessarily have a set thing. But I, but part of that was our philosophy too, in that I was training them in obedience. And so I really wanted this attitude of if mommy asks you to do something, the response is just "yes, mom" and we take care of it. So while we were instilling that, that translated well into some things around the house, so it would be maybe just whatever I'm working on, I'd ask them to pitch in and help. And another thing we did is - very early because they were so young - is we implemented this kind of three step system, where I did it for them first to just show them, then we would spend a little time, a little on ramping time I guess, with doing it together. And then they would do it alone. So the I do it, we do it, you do it.

K

Kira Dorrian 08:51

Oh, I love that!

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Deana Thayer 08:52

And so even with making their bed, the first week that we talked about that I actually did it, but I had them watch me really closely and look how I'm tucking this in over here and look how this goes, and then for a week, we did it together...wow, we're a team and you pull that side, and I'll pull this side. And then they were on their own. And another thing as a side note, but I know you would agree, and maybe you even have some great ideas for how to address this. But for someone like me, who is really particular, one of the biggest parts for me was getting okay with their version of the chore, and learning to be okay, that it's gonna be maybe crooked, or you're gonna have an oblique comforter, and that just needs to be okay, because they're learning and they're putting in their effort. And for me, that was a little bit of a learning curve on my part with the chores. Hey, I'm teaching them some great skills, and I need to grow in my skill of being able to tolerate things that aren't perfect.

K

Kira Dorrian 09:39

Yeah, it's amazing because I will say time and time again, I feel like children teach us far more than we teach them. I am constantly facing personal growth opportunities, because my kids just are who they are. And I think that's a great example because even though I wasn't, I'm terrible at chores and I don't like them. I also like a really neat and tidy home. Probably as a result of the whole chore thing, because one of the things I didn't say that I'll share with our listeners is super embarrassing, but in my teenage years, I think I lived

with my dad and I think that he just he really just gave up. I mean, bless that man, but he just was all done and I was a really good kid. So this was one of the few areas I think where he was just like, whatever. And my room, I mean, there are no words. Like my friends from high school still talk about my room. They still talk about how oh, yeah, you walk in there and you're knee deep in sh- and it's true and it was never food. I was really good about I never had like, old food in there, but it was just stuff everywhere. And so when I got to college, I think that I became a total neat freak because I think college I was in New York City and I felt really a little bit out of control. And so I think it became a really good way that I felt like, clear mind. I can focus, I can you know, I'm in a little bit of control of my personal space. So now I really like a neat and tidy home. It drives Dave absolutely bonkers because he doesn't need a neat and tidy home. And so all that is to say that yes, I have also had to deal with the, the messy comforter, that is the made bed. I'm making quotes with my fingers right now like, oh, I made my bed like yes, you sure did. But what's amazing is because we started bed making when they were four, and it was always, you know, just super askew and like, things like falling off the end of it. And they were so proud of themselves. And so honoring that, look how hard you worked, which I'm sure we will talk about in an episode, you know, switching from praising the outcome to praising the effort that was put in, this was such a great opportunity to say wow, you worked so hard at that. Thank you for contributing to the household. I am so grateful that you were helping me in this way. And now so we're flash forwarding three years, my kids make their beds beautifully. I mean, it's pretty impressive how well they make their bed. So you know, over time, they really did learn that skill with me sort of gently bolstering their ego as we went along.

D

Deana Thayer 12:03

And it's important too, to make that distinction between the character that they're building versus what the bed actually looks like, because they will feel such pride in that piece if we're pointing that out, the character side and the work ethic, and look how hard you worked. And thank you for your contribution. I love that too... the gratitude. And I would even name those character traits for them so they could start to have, just like we teach kids to name their feelings. What are you feeling right now? Well, I'm angry or I'm sad. It was the same thing. Wow, you are showing a lot of initiative. I didn't even remind you this morning. You did that all on your own. Or those kinds of things, or just look at your diligence, you couldn't get that corner straight and I saw you kept going until you got it - great perseverance. So being able to name for them, what is that character trait that I'm seeing them develop? And that is a proud moment for them...wow I showed diligence, some huge word. They might not even fully grasp what it means but then they grow into that, right, because we're speaking that over them and we're saying these things, and basically telling them I believe you can be that, even if you're not there yet, and then they

grow into that. And it's amazing. Like you've grown into having amazing bed makers.

K

Kira Dorrian 13:11

Amazing. And here's the other thing, right? Like, let's just, let's not overlook the basic thing that happens when your child makes their own bed. You don't have to.

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Deana Thayer 13:21

Yes!

K

Kira Dorrian 13:22

Like, can we just take a moment for that? I remember, I can't wait till they're 18 because then they'll have 18 chores, and I will do nothing. It's gonna be wonderful. But in all seriousness, you know, we've talked before about this idea of families that are surviving versus thriving. It is going to feel more and more like you're just barely surviving if you are still making their beds. It's like, oh, my gosh, I do everything around here. Right? Whereas not only are you fostering all these wonderful things that you just said, which I couldn't agree with more, but you're also helping yourself.

D

Deana Thayer 13:53

Absolutely.

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Kira Dorrian 13:55

Right? This is allowing you to be able to take a break. To sit down, to relax and not be in charge of everything, whilst also fostering all these incredible things within your kids.

D

Deana Thayer 14:06

And you know what, it's great modeling of delegation, because kids who watch a parent who tries to just take everything on themselves- it goes back to what I was saying, really at the top of the episode- you don't want a family and house structure that's dependent on only one person, it will collapse. And also them watching that isn't great. Oh, my goodness, mom just beats herself into the ground. And then she doesn't have time to go play, or go get ice cream or whatever, because she's doing all of it. So the ability to even say maybe even a bigger chore, maybe not even their own bed, which of course they should be responsible for. But something bigger...wow, I'm working on the bathrooms

today. And mom needs some help. Can you come in and I'll just give you just this part or you can just do the mirrors or could you shine the chrome on this sinks for me? Being able to admit, I can't do it all alone. I think that's an important thing for them to see. Now, technically, we probably could, but I just feel like there's some modeling there that can happen with setting an example. It's okay to delegate. It's okay to ask for help. It's fine to say this can be a team effort. And it actually gets done faster. That was one of the things we talked about too, many hands make light work. We talked about that a lot. And, and of course, I have to mention, just recently, I said this...many hands make light work. I said it recently, I don't remember what we were working on. And my son without missing a beat, and now he's a teenager, of course, 14. He said, well, but too many cooks spoil the broth. Trying to get out of it! But on the flip side, yeah, I have this. Yeah. So that was super funny. But no, it's really true. They can see some of those benefits. Oh, yeah. You know what, when we work together, we actually get to move on and play sooner or whatever it might be. And so it's worth it to pitch in.

K

Kira Dorrian 15:40

I also think there's something interesting, I'm very aware of the example I'm setting for my daughter for when she becomes a mother. I'm very, very aware that she is going to set some expectations for herself around what she sees me do. And so if I do everything, she is going to go into motherhood, thinking that's what it's supposed to look like. And that's going to, I mean I would drown under that, and I wouldn't want her to drown under it either. So I think there's something interesting about that. And then also for my son, and, you know, whatever kind of relationship he ends up in, that his partner, whether that's male or female, that he is aware of this expectation that he pitches in. I'm really big on making him put the seat down. I'm like, that's just, that's just nice. I want to raise a son who puts the seat down. C

D

Deana Thayer 16:29

Common courtesy, right there.

K

Kira Dorrian 16:31

Right? Just a little bit of common courtesy everywhere he goes, you know. Or he really doesn't like going grocery shopping. Like he cannot stand it. I don't know why, but he doesn't like it. And I'm really diligent about trying to make him come with me because you know, this is, I want him to be the kind of partner who is able to go to the grocery store and fill the cart and knows the stuff that we need in our household to be fed and nourished. And so those kinds of things, like looking at what example are we setting for

our children. I want to talk and ask you about, what about when they don't want to do it? Because this is the thing. It's like we talked about this before. It's all great to put all these great ideas out there, like here's our wonderful ideas. But the truth is they're not going to work every time. You're going to hit walls. Right? So how did you handle it when they were like, no, I don't want to do that.

D

Deana Thayer 17:21

Well, there's three things that I can think of offhand is.. also we're in a blend, as you know, and so we had a little bit of pushback, particularly around what if it was the week they were with the other parent? And they're just coming in on the weekend, and all of a sudden, they have to do chores on Saturday. Well, I wasn't even here. I didn't make the mess.

K

Kira Dorrian 17:38

Wow.

D

Deana Thayer 17:38

So that was an argument that we got and still hear from time to time. I didn't do that. Well, guess what? I'm over here cleaning up after all y'all all the time, and I didn't do it. So that's, for one thing, it's just, the argument's null and void. We all work together. But what I also wanted them to see is well, still these jobs have to get done. For the house to stay tidy and for us to be able to have people over too. I love the freedom of knowing at any time, it's okay to have someone over and I'm not going to go running around like the Tasmanian devil because my house looks like a disaster. So we would phrase that to them too. Now our house will be ready for your friends anytime. So we all want to do this together. And even if you didn't make the mess, this is your job for this week. And one of the ways we said it, and again, not my phrase, everybody's heard it, but we would do the... you get what you get, and you don't throw a fit. So we had a jar and they drew, we drew chores, and there were 21 of them to get our whole house clean. And there are seven of us. So yes, you heard right, the parents drew three chores as well! And I love that, it helped us identify with our kids and they saw us as participating too. It wasn't... because I love, what I said earlier is true learning to delegate... what you said earlier is true; now you're not making the bed. But I also wanted to avoid this sense of you are my child slave labor. You're doing it, now I don't have to. It's we're all doing some jobs so our house can stay clean. So I love that they saw us too. And sometimes we would draw one we didn't like, and this you get what you get and don't throw a fit thing really helped. So I would say the first one is it doesn't matter who made the mess, we really, we really harped on that. And

the second one is, you get what you get. So we were rotating the jobs, which I also loved, because people couldn't just stay with their cushy one if they got a real easy one. It's like, well, next week, you don't know what's gonna happen.

K

Kira Dorrian 18:53

Yes. You could have toilets next week!

D

Deana Thayer 19:23

That's right, you don't know what's coming for you. And then our our third one was really around a more comprehensive idea, which was that we, again are building character, so you have the freedom to not do the job. But what does that say about you? And we gave some options for that. So here's how we usually handled it logistically. Oh, you don't like that one? Totally fine. You're welcome to pay one of your siblings to do it, or pay myself or your stepdad or your dad or your stepmom to do it for you. So they are learning already with chores, this is one of the things I love, because as adults we see this. It's usually time or money, right?

K

Kira Dorrian 19:36

Yep.

D

Deana Thayer 19:37

You either spend your own time cleaning or you hire a maid. You spend your own time doing yard work, or you hire a landscaper. They were getting to see, I could spend my time doing this, and I don't like it. But if I don't, there's going to be a financial cost. Now for littler kids who don't always know the value of money, that might not mean as much to them. But then what we would do when they were littler, and this didn't happen as much in our blend, because they were a little bit older, is I would let Cienna and Marc say, that's totally fine. You can pass on this one today. But then you're going to do an extra one the next time. And so they did understand that because they knew about chores, and how many there were and so we gave that freedom, but then they had to think about, do I really want to pick that, right? If it means I lose some money or if it means I lose some time, next week, or next time I get asked? And that really helped us a lot.

K

Kira Dorrian 20:48

So the way that we handle, I don't want to do my chores. We come at it a little bit like our

job is to love you. Our job is to feed you and provide a roof over your head. And our job is to keep you safe. And everything else is a privilege. So your television is a privilege, and your playdates are a privilege and going to birthday parties is a privilege, all these things are privileges. And so you earn privileges. And so one of the things that we will say is, well, if you don't do your chores, you don't get your privileges, right? Privileges are something extra. And so if you're participating in our household, we all get our privileges. But if you're not gonna participate, I'm not going to give you all your privileges. And so my kids, because we limit TV, they love TV. And so as soon as we threaten, well, then you don't have to watch a show this afternoon. Boom, chores are done.

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Deana Thayer 21:41

Isn't that amazing?

K

Kira Dorrian 21:41

Yeah. Because, you know, I think that's perfectly reasonable. And again, back to that idea of surviving versus thriving. It is a lot easier to just let them have their afternoon show because oh my gosh, that's my 30 minutes to myself in the afternoon. But the few times that they've tested that boundary, and sorry, well, your, your sister did her chores. So she gets to watch her afternoon show. You don't. Right? Not, not good. Never, never was that mistake made again.

D

Deana Thayer 22:08

No, it's really true. And I think it's also so nice when that happens because then you've, you've hit on it. Okay, so for your kids that almost seven TV is a big deal right now. It really is kind of about finding their currency.

K

Kira Dorrian 22:19

Yeah.

D

Deana Thayer 22:20

And I have teenagers. So currency is their currency. So they know, oh, if I have to pay someone else to do it. No, thanks. I don't want to lose out on my money to be able to go out with my friends or...

K

Kira Dorrian 22:30

Yep. Exactly.

D

Deana Thayer 22:31

put gas in my car. We have a few that are driving and that's an issue or whatever. So it is, it's about finding what matters to them. And then what I love about what you said is, look how calm you're able to say that. That's okay. Well, then you can't watch a show. Just like I can say no problem. You can pay your sister to do it. But you've removed the propensity for it to become a battle. Like there is nothing to fight about when it's just, you are welcome to choose this. But with that choice comes this. And that's a big thing we talk about is when you make a choice, you're also choosing those consequences. And so you got to think about what comes with that? And that's kind of how we parent, right? We're thinking about what comes with it.

K

Kira Dorrian 23:03

I was gonna say like, now you're teaching your children to be future focused as well. I just want to say quickly before we finish up because you have a daughter, and your daughter is older than your son. I noticed and I don't know if you fell into this, but I noticed that at one point, because Rhiannon was just naturally more helpful. I don't know if it's a girl thing or what, but she was just from birth, always been just naturally more willing to help, more willing to do that thing. Not that Rhys isn't, but it doesn't come to him as naturally. Just the willingness to go do that favor, do that chore. I found that I was leaning on her more and more. And Rhiannon actually commented on it once. She said, you know, Mom, you ask me for a lot more favors than you ask Rhys. And I thought, oh, my gosh, I do. And I was very concerned about it, not just because obviously, that's no bueno. And we need to not do that. But it was also very concerning, because I didn't want to set up this gender bias that because she's female, she's more likely to do the chores and more likely to be helpful, and so it was a real, like check for me to kind of look at my own bias and my own what was happening and go, oh, wait, we got to we got to remedy that. So that was long winded. But I don't know if that happened with you.

D

Deana Thayer 24:11

I haven't seen that exact thing. But it's such great insight. I like that you were self aware enough because we have to catch ourselves a lot on that I think in parenting to go, oh, wait, what am I doing here, right? And be really cognizant of that. And even with our chores now into the teen years, that is why we shuffle around. I want my daughter taking

out the trash, and I want my son cleaning the kitchen because I don't want them to be so stringently defined that it feels like well, that's not my area. I don't do that.

K

Kira Dorrian 24:38

That's women's work. That's men's work.

D

Deana Thayer 24:39

Yeah, it's huge. They've got to know these other things. And so while I haven't seen that directly, it is something I've had to keep aware of. We have to. That's a, that's an ongoing thing, I think in parenting for me. Ongoing lesson in self awareness and kids. I think marriage is a really huge mirror, holds up a lot of your imperfections to you, you get to see your character flaws in a whole new way, because you're seeing them reflected in your spouse. And then you have kids, and it's like a wall length mirror and it's just over the top. You will find all the problems rising to the surface. And so that ability to be self aware is huge. And, and then catch it, say, oh, here's what I'm doing. Of course, correction, rewind. Right? And how wonderful for kids to watch us do that, because I do, I see that too. I mean, I'm human, right? Like, I'm gonna make mistakes. I make them all the time despite having a podcast about parenting advice. I make those mistakes all the time. And so I think that self awareness allows us to just continue to grow and for our kids to watch us do that is setting that great modeling for them too. It really is. And I just want to say one last thing on that, that this has been a growth area for me because I already have that natural propensity toward neatness, and being really tidy and caring a lot about that, is that my own kids called me out recently on kind of putting tasks before people. And what they said in particular that I've really been working on is that sometimes they would come downstairs and I would be telling them their chores for the day before I even said good morning. And that just cut me to the quick. It was so poignant of a moment to say, wow, I have an opportunity to make a course correction. And so of course, I had to apologize. And I love that my kids get to see that I make mistakes, and then do apologize and turn that around. And I even put a sticky note on my bathroom mirror that said, connect before you correct. Because I needed the reminder that yes, keeping the house tidy is important. Yes, this work ethic, all the things we've talked about today are important. But you know what, the who is more important than the what. So I've got to be letting my kids be people first before they are chore doers. And that's just an area of growth for me. So just know - you as our listeners too- just know that if there's an area of this that you struggle with, whether it's, whether it's the crooked comforter, or you don't do as well with even doing chores yourself, or whatever it might be, we do all have those little speed bumps along the way, but it's worth pushing through them and doing that good modeling even when we need to say, Oh, I was wrong about that. Let me, let me make a tweak here so that it can

be better.



Kira Dorrian 27:09

Absolutely.



Deana Thayer 27:10

Yeah. Well, thank you. And I appreciate your insight so much. I love listening to it. Even though we've been friends for years, I still get to hear new things. That was a new one today, I never knew about your teenage bedroom. And just thank you to all of you for listening in today, and just hearing kind of how we've tackled chores, if you have great ideas or systems that have worked for you, we always welcome that and love hearing your feedback. And you can find us at raising adults podcast dot com.



Kira Dorrian 27:35

So we've talked a lot about chores today and giving you some, maybe some ideas of how you can implement chores in your household. So we want to finish with a quote by Ann Landers. And she says, it is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do themselves that will make them successful human beings. So as we think about being future focused as parents, thinking about the adults that we are trying to raise. Teaching them what they can do for themselves is really the key to that. So we hope that today's podcast was helpful in you figuring out how to do that for your children. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer and recorded in my laundry room. Please if you like what you hear, give us a five star rating, tell your friends. Sharing and positive reviews truly are the key to us having a successful podcast. So if you like what you hear and you want more of it, give us those reviews and we can bring you more. Thanks so much for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 28:31

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