

Episode 73. Parenting Kids With ADHD with Dr. Heather Maguir...

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SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Heather Maguire, 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

Hello FFPs. Kira and Deana with you again today for another episode of Raising Adults. We are both with you, but not both together. And so still missing each other, but really glad that we can continue to bring you content. And today, we have an important episode where we have a guest today, Dr. Heather Maguire. She is a behavior analyst, a professor and also a mom. And she's going to just share with us a little bit about how to navigate if you're in a family where maybe you have a child with a diagnosis, we're gonna particularly talk about ADHD today. But a lot of these principles could apply more generally to other behavior or learning diagnoses. And so we look forward to sharing that with you. And we're glad to have Heather's expertise. Also, we want to let you know that by the time you're hearing this, we will have been on Heather's podcast and her podcast is called Prism Parenting. So if you like getting to hear Kira and I elsewhere, you can check that out at the Prism Parenting podcast.

K

Kira Dorrian 01:25

Yeah, we had such a good time talking with her both times and it was kind of fun getting to, getting to speak with her, you know, close together, right? It was like we recorded ours and recorded hers. And, and you know, what I like about this episode is that a lot of the strategies that she talks about, I feel like even kids who maybe don't have anything behavioral going on, some of the stuff she talks about is really applicable. I feel like lots of parents are going to benefit from some of her strategies.

D

Deana Thayer 01:53

That's really true. Thanks for saying that. That's an excellent point. So many of these things could be helpful in any home.

K

Kira Dorrian 02:00

Yeah. All right. Well, let's get to the interview. So today on the show, we have Dr. Heather Maguire, who is a professor, a podcaster, and a mom, and she is going to talk with us about raising kids with ADHD. So Heather, can you tell us a little bit about yourself? And those three amazing parts of you?

H

Heather Maguire 02:21

Yeah, first of all, thanks so much for having me on the show. Yeah, so I am a professor, I teach school psychology and school counseling classes, as well as I'm what's called a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, a BCBA. You know, long story short, basically, I work with a lot of kids. Some of them have autism. And I provide behavioral strategies for them. And then also, I have my own podcast, Prism Parenting, and the basic idea behind like, why I started it and what it is, it's basically trying to help parents, you know, parents of, let's say, typically developing kids or I know we're going to talk today about ADHD, parents of kids with ADHD, you know, what, what does this look like? How can we use, you know, behavioral strategies, evidence based strategies in the home, even if our kids don't say, have a diagnosis of autism? So yeah, that's a little bit about me, professionally. And then personally, I have two kids. And Landon is my son. He is nine in the third grade. And then Addy is my daughter, Addison, and she is six in the first grade.

D

Deana Thayer 03:39

I'm wondering, Heather, can you maybe start at the beginning for us with the diagnosis piece? Because I think for parents, it's always challenging to get any kind of a diagnosis.

And you're right at the beginning, going, okay, now what? So can you tell us what that was like for you? And also, because you have this professional background? How did you go about tackling that when you have both of those hats?

H

Heather Maguire 04:02

Yeah, yeah. So let's talk about ADHD really quick. And so first of all, and I think probably people are aware of this to some degree. But ADHD looks totally different depending on the child. So some kids are predominantly inattentive, they have a hard time focusing. And other kids have more of like hyperactivity, impulsivity, right? So it's hard for them to sit still. You know, a lot of times it's hard for them to think before they act and then some kids have what's called the, you know, co morbidity or both of those things. Okay. And actually, so for my son Landon, he wasn't diagnosed until this year, so he's nine in the third grade. And, you know, professionally even though I knew he had a, I knew he had ADHD. I've known for a while. You know, we hadn't had him officially diagnosed. He wasn't diagnosed by a doctor until recently. And real quick too for him just to kind of give you guys a little bit of context, he's not really inattentive. He's pretty, you know, he's actually, the type that he has is that, so he's more hyperactive and impulsive. And that's one of the most, that's the most rare form of ADHD. So how it impacts him on a daily basis is like this. He has a difficult time like, if he gets into an argument with his sister, you know, he is the one who might become, you know, aggressive, right with his sister. He's the one who if you asked him to do a chore, he might, you know, it all of a sudden, it's a, he lacks what's called emotional regulation. So he'll like fall on the floor. It's the end of the world, have to feed the dogs. And I'm like, well, you do this twice a day. So yeah, ADHD, kind of like wrapping that part up. It looks different depending on the child, but for him, you know, he's predominantly hyperactive impulsive. And definitely, I was before I knew, you know, that I was, I had a son with ADHD. I already was a school psychologist. So I was working already in the field with kids with ADHD. And so it, you know, as Landon started to get a little bit older, when he was younger, I was like, ah, you know. I know there was a, I knew there'd be a chance, maybe he'd end up with that diagnosis. But it started to become more obvious to me. Because I mean, okay, let's face it, young boys, a lot of times, they have a lot of energy. And I think for the parents out there who are listening to this and might be like, well, my four year old has a lot of energy. How do I know he doesn't have ADHD? Well, in the toddler years, there is a wide range of what's normal, or what's considered developmentally appropriate. Right? And so, you know, but as time went on, for us, basically, what started to happen is that the gap started to widen. So, you know, previously, yeah, was he a little bit more hyperactive, you know, than the average kid? Sure. But what, then what started to happen is that, you know, we started to notice that, you know, other kids were kind of calming down and becoming a little bit more mature, if you will. And he was still struggling with those, with those things. And so, right from the get

go, you know, come when we went into kindergarten, I, being a behavior analyst, I reached out to his teacher, and I was like, you know, sometimes, you know, Landon struggles sitting still, if there's anything I can do to support you, let me know. So I kind of, you know, gave her a heads up. And we can get into, like, later, some of the specific things that, you know, you know, we help the school with and what we do at home. But, you know, initially I was like, Oh, you know, he's just a little bit hyperactive, and I was keeping my eye on it. And then fast forward, you know, I wasn't necessarily feeling like I needed a, quote, unquote, diagnosis. I knew he had ADHD, but I wasn't feeling like I needed it until we started to consider whether or not we would potentially be requesting medication. And so my son is on medication. He has been on medication since this fall. And what we did is, you know, I just reached out to his pediatrician now, just I don't know, where, where you guys are at or, you know, if you know, but still, most of the time, pediatricians are making the diagnosis of ADHD. There are obviously neurologists, and there are psychiatrists, things like that. And, you know, developmental pediatricians, there's, there are other individuals making that diagnosis and prescribing medication. But still, right now, the majority of the time, it's the pediatrician. So for us, when I knew that we were going to most likely be, you know, requesting and trying out medication, that was when we got the diagnosis through the pediatrician, and she was the one who prescribed the medication, if you will.

K

Kira Dorrian 09:03

So, okay, so you as a parent, you maybe start to see this gap widen. And I loved how you describe that, because I think that makes a ton of sense. Like, you know, when they're little we're kind of like, okay, well, a lot's normal. And then as it starts to, they grow, and they develop and they change, if we're still suspicious, it's like we should be listening to that, I guess, is what you're saying. Right?

H

Heather Maguire 09:25

Correct. Yes.

K

Kira Dorrian 09:26

So let's say that you know, that that gap has widened, and I'm suspicious. And so you're saying like, I would go to maybe my pediatrician and say, hey, here's what I'm seeing. What do you think? Is that like the next step for parents that are maybe like thinking, hmm?

H

Heather Maguire 09:41

Yes, yes. So that's a good, that's a good next step. And again, you're, you're going to hear kind of a wide range of things. Some pediatricians aren't comfortable making the diagnosis or anything like that, but they'll give you, you know, typically what they'll do is they'll at least screen, it's not a thorough screening, but they'll you know, pretty much all pediatricians will give you some sort of screening, and then they'll give you next steps, right, in terms of who you would meet with, you know, to determine whether or not and again, unfortunately, there isn't a, you know, one size fits all approach. Right. So some, in our case, you know, they didn't do a comprehensive evaluation to make that diagnosis, right. But other individuals, you know, other professionals will do a more comprehensive evaluation to make the diagnosis. But, you know, there isn't actually a, you know, a protocol that everybody follows. So in our case, our doctor made a pretty quick determination. Now, for me, I was comfortable with that, because I already, you know, knew professionally, I knew that he had ADHD, but you know, you could always so, for example, sometimes what happens is the school comes to you. And they're like, oh, you know, we, you know, and they recommend that you meet with the pediatrician. And, you know, if parents out there like, Well, I think that I would like, you know, a more detailed, or, you know, thorough evaluation, you know, you could ask the pediatrician for referrals for that, you know, to get that. Although, you know, and I think you've talked about this before, on your show, those evaluations, if you get them done privately, they run several thousand dollars, typically. And so that could be, you know, challenging. So like, in our case, I was comfortable with it. I felt like it, you know, our, our pediatrician was knowledgeable. And she was able to take what I had to say into account. And so for us, it was a pretty quick process. But I think, like I said, it varies.

K

Kira Dorrian 11:49

So I have a quick follow up question. So if you know you've, because your your route was a little different because of the work that you do. So as a parent without, you know, your background, so I'm suspicious or the school comes to me, I go to my pediatrician, we get this, you know, this is what we think it is, official diagnosis or not. So as a parent, if you were in a sort of traditional parent's situation, without your background, how do you think then parents make this decision between medication and non medication? Because I'm curious that you've done both. And I'm interested, like, as a parent who maybe doesn't necessarily have all those tools right away? What do you think, what should they be asking themselves? What should they be considering once they get this diagnosis for that, then next step of do we medicate or not?

H

Heather Maguire 12:33

Yeah. And so the, I think that you, you kind of have to go through a few things in, you know, think about a few things. So first of all, ADHD oftentimes impacts kids socially, they have a hard time reading, like the nonverbal cues, because they're not picking up on them. They're not paying attention to them. And that's one of the things that I saw, my son was having a hard time socially. Right. And so, you know, that's one of the things that I would suggest that you consider. How is your child doing socially? And you know, that, by the way, what we ended up doing before, because we didn't just rush in to medication, we tried a lot of different things. First, one of the things we did is we did a social skills class. And so unfortunately, insurance did not pay for it. But I found a place offering social skills groups, and so I enrolled my son Landon into that. But, um, you know, so socially is one area, because if your child is not, is struggling socially, not connecting with others, that's going to have, you know, a significant impact, right? I think all these things, and I'll list a few others, I think you're thinking about, like, what is the impact right now for my child? And, you know, if, if it's a significant impact, you know, then you know, are there resources I can try? Different things I can try? And if not, then perhaps medication is something I want to consider. Right. So socially is one thing. I think the other thing, so for us, I'll kind of tell you like the breaking point for me this summer and it was, we kind of had a hard summer. There were two moments for me where, you know, it was kind of the breaking point. One we were visiting family, and my, my mother in law's amazing, she plays like a ton with my kids, and they have so much fun with her. And my son, you know, they were doing something. And I think she told my son, he had to get off of an iPad or something, because she was going to go play with him. And he was aggressive towards her. And you know, and he loves his grandma, right. And he's, you know, at this point, he's eight. And so, you know, developmentally eight year olds aren't usually striking their grandmothers, right? And so, you know, he did not hurt her, but the aggressive behavior was very concerning. So that was one instance. And then there was another instance, and then by the way for him, immediately, he felt awful about it. Right? You could tell like, it was starting to impact his, his view of himself, if you will, he did not want to be doing that. He loves his grandma. And then another thing, you know, happened. For me, I don't know, siblings can get a little bit, you know, aggressive with each other from time to time, even at an older age, right siblings, not to say that that should be happening. But you know, it's a little bit less eye opening. But we have another thing happened this summer, we were with a group of friends. And we're really close with these friends. And they have kids, our kids' age, and we hang out all the time. So sort of, they're sort of like a second set of siblings, but they're not, right. And what happened was our friend's daughter was on a swing, a tire swing that my son wanted to get on, and she wouldn't get off. And again, he, he struck her on the back of the head. And then he, he felt awful about it. Right, immediately after. And so, you know, that that impulsive behavior that he could not control? And that the, you know, of course, there's consequences. You know, I, I'm not to

say, you know, I wasn't compassionate, but you know, there, there were consequences. We talked about it. You know, we took away a few privileges, things like that. But we could talk about, you know, things about discipline with kids who have ADHD later. But, you know, so I guess all that to say, you know, for us, for our situation, it was starting to understand and consider this level of impact. And we were trying all, you know, lots of things at home and at school, but it just wasn't enough. And so I was starting to be concerned kind of like the long term impact of, you know, what my son was going to think of himself and how, and whatnot. And so for us, that was kind of the, the breaking point. Now, he is not really inattentive. But for your listeners out there, you know, that, you know, in terms of level of impact, it could be, for example, that they're crying to you every night, when they're trying to do their homework, they can't concentrate, or things like that. So, you know, those are all like levels of impact, where you're trying different things, and just, they're not working. And it's starting to have just kind of a large impact. At that point, I was starting to feel ready to try something else. And that's why, you know, we thought about medication, because here's the deal, using, like, proactive strategies is really helpful. But what the research says is that for many kids with ADHD, you know, using, let's say, strategies, and reward systems, things like that they're helpful, but in and of themselves, they might not be sufficient for kids, some kids with ADHD.

D

Deana Thayer 17:58

Yeah, that makes sense. And I'm curious if you would be willing to share some of what you did in advance of getting to that point where you saw some kind of, kind of events that were the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak. Because I know there's probably families out there who maybe are at the beginning, or just got a diagnosis and might want to try some other things first, or just, just want to set up their home in a way that could be helpful, you know, before going to that, or in addition to including medication. So are you willing to tell us a little bit about what you had done before this point? Or still do? I mean, that's welcome as well.

H

Heather Maguire 18:36

Yeah, so I would definitely say, you know, whereas medication can help, it wasn't the first thing we did. And I, you know, I think that, you know, parents out there, trying a lot of proactive things before going to medication is definitely advised. So, I like to think about it this way. Like there's, in terms of behavior, your kid's behavior, trying like an 80/20 approach, where you're doing, let's say, putting in 80% of your effort into kind of the prevention side of things. And that can look, you know, like a few different things. So, things that we put into our home beforehand, were these schedules. So my son thrives on a schedule, he loves the schedule, he loves to help create schedules and, you know,

schedules, you know, lower anxiety, and they, they help so, you know, having a schedule in the mornings and afternoons are very helpful. So just, you know, writing down a schedule, and again, having the child participate in creating the schedule will go really far because you want to increase buy in and give back some of that control, right. You don't want to be like here's exactly what you're doing. No, like together let's develop a schedule of, let's say, you come home and then you have snack Then we work on homework, then you have outside time, then you know this, that and the other thing. So schedules can help a lot. And the next thing I want to say is that reward systems are really, really helpful. So reward systems look different at different ages. So in our home right now, with our kids who are in elementary school, we actually use a, what I would call, like, a quarter system, where we had the, our kids have piggy banks, and, you know, for certain activities that let's say, doing their homework without complaining, you know, getting ready on time in the morning, things like that. So basically, what we do is we write out specific things that we're working on, and our kids actually earn quarters every time they do those things. And then, right now, it's at the end of the month, but you know, initially, it was like, at the end of the week, you know, basically, they turn into quarters, and by the way, we tried to make it so that there was, you know, we're always trying to teach our kids about, you know, financial responsibility, too. So that's one of the reasons why I liked using quarters with kids in elementary school, because at the end of the month, I had them put, you know, some in their savings account, we gave some away to our church, and then we had them spend some as well. So kind of like that, you know, spending, saving, giving model. And so, you know, just by using that, it's, it's interesting, I'm not saying this is true for all kids with ADHD, but like, with my son, he is just like, really easy to motivate, he has his eye on the prize, if you will, he loves it. And you know, my daughter is a little bit, you know, she has, she struggled with her behavior less, and she just kind of goes with the flow a little bit more. So, you know, quarter system, she's, she likes it, but my son is all about it, it's been very successful. For younger kids, by the way, you might use, let's say, a star system where you know, they earn and, by the way, the younger the child, the shorter the amount of time, that should go by before they earn something, because they aren't able, you know, to understand that what I'm doing now, you know, I'll get a reward for it later. So you want to make it much shorter. But you know, it could be something simple, by the way, so I always, one of the things I tell parents is like, you know, we want to stay away from like, it's funny, because as we're recording this Disneyland is closed. But, um, you want to stay away from those kind of like Disneyland type things, where, you know, you do these things, and you get Disneyland. No, like, good, good luck next time. So I, you know, once you've given away Disneyland, you know, your kid won't want to work for anything but Disneyland. And so, no, but I'm being silly, but you know, you could, it could be something simple for the little kids, it's like, you know, you get to have a certain treat, you get to watch a certain TV show, or, I mean, you could even do something, what some parents do is they get like a bin. And they put some of their kid's like, you know, some unique favorite

toys that, that they don't play with, except when they've earned let's say, their stars, okay. And then they get to play with this really cool bin of toys for a certain period of time. And then it goes up till the next time, right? So basically, it's kind of like that scarcity principle, where, you know, you increase the value of what it is they're playing with, so that, you know, so that they don't have access to it all the time, if that makes sense.

K

Kira Dorrian 23:36

Yeah. Oh, absolutely. It's, we talk a lot about like finding a kid's currency. And using that for both reward and for discipline. And so that's exactly it. Right? Like, oh, you're almost creating currency that way. That's super smart. I love that.

H

Heather Maguire 23:50

One thing I try to encourage parents to stay away from is this. So it's very tempting, and I mean, I've been there, okay, to start taking away quarters, let's say like, you did this, now I'm taking your quarter away. Actually, from a technical perspective, what you're doing then is you're basically turning your reward system into a punishment system. Okay? And it's not to say that, you know, you might be, there can still be, you know, specific decided upon consequences for acting out, okay. But I always encourage parents to not incorporate the, different people might have different opinions on this, but to not incorporate punishment into their reward system. So you know, you might still use some sort of like, time out or something if the child acts out, but try to stay away from taking away the quarters or stars or things like that. Because then what happens sometimes is that your kid, you kind of like lose your kid's buy in, if you will, to the system. And then they're like, I don't care. I don't want to earn quarters, I don't want to earn stars. So you want to keep that as positive as possible, so that you keep their, their buy in, if you will. So one of the things that we did that was really successful too is that we incorporated our reward system at school as well. So even though Landon doesn't receive special education, and by the way, this year, him being on medication, he doesn't have a, you know, reward system at school, he doesn't need one. But in the past, we've had the teachers help with that reward system, so that there's kind of like continuity at home and school, which is helpful.

K

Kira Dorrian 25:33

Yeah. Oh, I love that he was able to get that continuity. And that makes perfect sense. Because then everybody's kind of working together to help him navigate this.

H

Heather Maguire 25:43

Yes, yes. It let his, helped his teachers, you know, actually change their behavior a little bit as well. So his teacher in kindergarten was a little frustrated with him, and was kind of, you know, being more punitive, if you will, but by, you know, by saying, like, hey, let's work together with this reward system, it actually changed her behavior a little bit, too. And she was much more positive with him, which I thought was really cool.

K

Kira Dorrian 26:10

So I have a question for families that are most of us. Um, you know, we've been in this very unusual time with kids home for extended periods of time. And it's, you know, April 20, is when this episode airs. So we will have been in that for quite some time. But I'm curious, are there any things that parents who have kids with ADHD should be doing or should not be doing while the kids are at home for this great length of time? Like you mentioned a schedule? Should I assume they should try and create an at home schedule, to give them that support? Are there other things that parents can be doing that might look different? Because they have a child with ADHD at home?

H

Heather Maguire 26:48

Yeah, that's a good question. And so I definitely think that, you know, incorporating a schedule, incorporating a reward system is, is helpful. You know, I do think it's kind of a unique period of time, because I think socialization is super important. But it's, socialization looks a little bit different right now, obviously. And so trying to create that, you know, continuity and structure for them, it might be, you know, more, let's say FaceTime meetings with friends, but you know, allowing them to still continue to have socialization, work on their social skills is important. I also think, you know, involving others in their life. So, for example, what we're doing right now, is that my son's grandmother meets them on zoom, and helps them with some of their academics every day as well, since, you know, being around people like grandparents is, you know, we're not doing that right now. Right. And so, I think, trying to find ways for them to socialize in a unique way. And then, you know, allowing those, those pillars in their life, who they might not be able to see all the time, you know, incorporating them into the schedule, gives them a sense of purpose, and it allows you, you know, takes some of the burden off of you as a parent to do everything, and allows us all to collaborate. I don't know, those are just two ideas off the top of my head.

D

Deana Thayer 28:18

No, those are great, really, really helpful, because this does look super different. And families need to have creative, I think, ideas of how to navigate. I think we all have to get a little bit good at thinking outside the box right now. So that's wonderful. And, and please, please, please, before we finish up, make sure to tell our listeners, like where they can find you, your website, your podcast, again, and all of those things so they can connect with you social media handles, if you have those. Just tell us how we can find you.

H

Heather Maguire 28:47

Yeah, well, first off, I have a great resource for all of your listeners. So they can go to prismbehavior.com, prismbehavior.com/freeguide. And they can actually download a resource where it walks you through kind of the basics of setting up a reward system with kids of different ages. So hopefully, that will be really helpful. And then on my website is prismbehavior.com, and on Instagram [@prismbehavior](https://www.instagram.com/prismbehavior). And then my podcast is Prism Parenting.

K

Kira Dorrian 29:21

Awesome. Heather, thank you so much for being with us today. I feel like a lot of our listeners who have children with ADHD are going to benefit a lot from this episode. But I also feel like parents with kids that don't have ADHD are going to benefit a lot from this episode, like so many great tips and tools and just really appreciate your knowledge. Thank you so much for being with us. Thank you, Heather.

H

Heather Maguire 29:44

No, thanks so much for having me. I appreciate it.

D

Deana Thayer 29:47

All right. Well, we hope that that proved helpful to you whether you're dealing with ADHD, something else, or maybe not and just needed a couple other strategies for consistency across home and school, whatever you might be facing. We're hoping that there were some helpful nuggets that you could take away in there. And we're grateful that Heather took the time to speak with us. We did also want to remind you listeners that we've recently released our anxiety course. It's an online course all about navigating anxiety with children, although there's probably some tips adults can definitely use too. We literally talk about everything from the science of anxiety, to how to identify it in your children, what kind of things might you be watching for, all the way to some really helpful tools in terms of navigating that. What are things you should be doing? What are things

you maybe should be trying to avoid as you help your anxious child or teen? And so we really recommend that to you. But we also want to recognize that not everyone has the bandwidth for taking an online course right now. But if you are interested, if you go to our Online Courses tab on our website, futurefocusedparenting.com, you can find it there.

K

Kira Dorrian 30:53

Yep. So be sure to check it out. I'm really proud of it. I mean, I'm proud of all of our courses. But this one, this one just strikes a chord with me for some reason, I think it's really helpful. And I think there's a lot of parents out there that are, that are looking for this right now. And so if we can be helpful we want to be.

D

Deana Thayer 31:08

Anxiety certainly is an important and relevant topic right now. And we're seeing a lot of it in general, but also in young people. And so parents having the tools to navigate that I think is so important. So yeah, I'm really pleased with how it turned out. And we're excited to make that available to all of you.

K

Kira Dorrian 31:26

Yeah, so don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Instagram @futurefocusedparenting. We've got lots of great stuff on social these days and you do not want to miss it. And if you haven't yet subscribed to our podcast, please click subscribe. We love all of you subscribers and loyal listeners out there.

D

Deana Thayer 31:43

And then you don't miss any episodes. And that's so great too, when you get all, all the stuff. So definitely hop on that subscription train if you haven't yet. Raising Adults is produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer, and recorded partially in Kira's laundry room and partially in Deana's bonus room. Music by Seattle band Hannalee. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 32:03

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