

Episode 12. Survival Mode

Mon, 8/10 11:46AM 23:38

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

eat, parent, area, focused, chicken nugget, kids, survival mode, cook, life, day, food, week, important, future, babies, choosing, podcast, cheetos, choice, deana

SPEAKERS

Deana Thayer, Future Focused Parenting, Kira Dorrian

-
- K** Kira Dorrian 00:03
What happens when two parent coaches, one a Christian and the other an agnostic Jew, sit down to talk about parenting?
 - D** Deana Thayer 00:09
I'm Deana Thayer,
 - K** Kira Dorrian 00:10
and I'm Kira Dorrian.
 - D** Deana Thayer 00:11
Welcome to Raising Adults, a podcast about Future Focused Parenting.
 - K** Kira Dorrian 00:16
Okay, so today we have a very special episode for our listeners. Deana and I decided that it was really important that we do a whole episode on when we weren't future focused. When we weren't by choice, or when we weren't and looked back and went, oh, shit. I really wish I had been more future focused. And partly, we want to share it with you

because it's true. And all parents are going to experience failings, all parents are going to make mistakes. And we want you to kind of be aware that we do that too. We are parenting experts. We do have a whole podcast on parenting. But that doesn't mean that we didn't make mistakes. But also, I think it's important to know when it's okay to actively choose to be in the now, to actively choose to go, I need to put that future focused stuff to the side. And we never want our listeners to feel like we're saying this is the only way and you should be doing it our way. And so it's just really important, you know that there were times when we also chose to back off, to not be future focused. And so we wanted to bring you into that fold. So Deana, why don't you start with your why about either why you chose to back off from being future focused and or why you maybe weren't future focused in a situation that you looked back on and thought, oh, I really should have been?

D

Deana Thayer 01:34

Sure. Well, for me, this is interesting, because there are times where I offroaded and it wasn't on purpose. So then there wasn't much of a why. It was like, oh, I just did that. But I knew very early on that there were a few things I was going to intentionally off road on. And so the why for me is because I really do believe in moderation. But more than that, I believe in something being an exception and not the rule. And I wanted the rule for my kids to be consistency and to be that we're thinking ahead, and that I'm parenting in a way that teaches you to be an adult. However all that, all the time, is actually a lot even for me, and especially for a little kids so I was really wanting to create space for fun, space for oh things just didn't go how we were expecting. And so that was my why. I wanted space for that and I didn't want it one way all the time. That's just not even healthy in almost anything - diet, whatever. So that was really big to me. And I also think that there were times where I didn't have a why and then regretted it so I can't really say that was a big why. It just... sometimes you off road and you can even regret it.

K

Kira Dorrian 02:53

The why is life, right? Like, life is your why because life happens.

D

Deana Thayer 02:57

And yes, tiredness is also a why those ones for me. Sometimes I will literally say, I don't feel like picking this battle. I'm not interested. And I'm gonna give myself room to not pick it. I did do that, and not always with fantastic results.

K

Kira Dorrian 03:14

Yes, yes, this is it. There is a reason that future focused works, right. There is a reason.

D

Deana Thayer 03:20

How about you?

K

Kira Dorrian 03:21

I think for us the why was life. Right? I mean, like two babies at the same time, like come on. But also, as I've expressed before, we had a really rough five years between when the kids were born and my mom got sick and my mom passed away. And there was a lot happening in that time. And I just had to acknowledge my own humanity, and that sometimes meant going, I just can't, I can't do that today. And I had an amazing therapist at that time, who's local here in Seattle. Her name is Nancy Owen. Her website is fiercewaterfall.com and she is phenomenal. And who gave me this phrase at that time in my life. I love this phrase, this phrase is survival mode. And she said, survival mode should be a phrase that you learn, and that you define so that you get to whack that on your life anytime you're in it. So Dave and I got really clear on what survival mode means for our family. And for our family, Survival Mode means the following things: we eat more takeout, the house gets messy, and the kids watch more TV. And so whenever we've been in a little season, whether that's a month or a day, right, today's a survival mode day or we're in a stressful work week, we whack that phrase on. Hey, it's survival mode week. So we have to give ourselves, to use a beautiful Christian phrase that I love, some grace, right? We have to have some grace for ourselves, that we can't do everything. We can't be the world's greatest parents this week. So what can we do to just survive, to keep everyone healthy and loved and those bare minimum things. And so for us, that means yeah, we're gonna eat a little more takeout. The house isn't going to be as tidy, and the kids are probably going to watch a little extra TV because that's going to give us the space to still love on them and be patient with them and do all the things that were really important to us. We're going to sacrifice this future focused thing for the sake of survival mode. And it has been one of the greatest tools in our toolbox to just know, that's okay. That's okay. Life's coming at us. And it, also what I love about this label is it's finite. We don't live in survival mode. It's not forever and ever. But you know what, this next couple of weeks, we're in survival mode. And so we can make different choices just for this short period of time. And so bringing that back to the why cuz I'm waffling because I love to waffle. But bringing it back to the why I also wanted my kids as they come, become adults, to recognize that life is going to come their way too. And it's not always going to be pretty and they're not always going to be on top of everything. I kind of think it's like an 80/20 like 80% of the time you're totally on top of your life and 20% of the time life is on top of you. And so I wanted them to see us be flexible, and us be resilient when that 20% happened that like,

oh, look, Mom and Dad kind of shift, they let things go in that time to give themselves what they need. So that when they become adults, they're set up for those reasonable expectations of themselves as well.

D

Deana Thayer 03:24

Twins. Yeah, it's so wonderful that you've given that to them, because then they can utilize it later. And remember, oh, I now have a way to cope with that. But it also comes to an end. Like you said, we don't live there. It's temporary. And we should talk about some of the times that we use it. I know one of our real specific ones, and I even thought about this while, while I was pregnant, I had in advance decided that for us illness was a showstopper. I would not do regular life. Your regularly scheduled programming is on hold if somebody's sick, teething, whatever. And we also had a few surgeries for one of my children in the early years and so surgery days were another one. And I, I was a birth worker. So the day after a birth, interestingly not the day of the birth itself. If I got called at 2am, and they went with dad, it was all fine. But the day after when I'm recovering from potentially being up all night, holding somebody's leg for three hours, that was just a day for, we are giving ourselves room to just have it not look how it usually looks. And because I did parent in more of a routine, that meant even the routine would get a day off and it was okay, if that went out the window and baby didn't eat exactly every three hours or whatever, the naps looked goofy. So those were big ones for us. If somebody's not feeling well, they can have a nice day. Teething, those kinds of things. And I know you have a great one around travel.

K

Kira Dorrian 07:44

Oh, yeah, I mean travel. We go to the UK every year, which is like nine hours there and 10 hours back and I mean, it's a mess, right? Like, I'm not good on jet lag. So little people on jet lag is like, I mean, there are no words. So yeah, travel is, I mean, we just, all the rules go out the window. The other issue we have when we're traveling is that we're with family, who don't always align with our choices. And so initially, I was fighting that all the time. And then I reached a point where it was like, you know, for two weeks out of the year, maybe they can eat dessert every day. Like, you know what, like, maybe that's okay like, to let go of my hold on this situation. And as soon as I did that, like everyone had a better time including me, right, because I was just allowing it to fall by the wayside. But I think the difference and what I really want our listeners to get from this conversation, is that it's almost like you have to earn that right. You have to be in that future focused mindset most of the time, then that 20%, it doesn't have an impact, really. It's really a good healthy coping mechanism. Whereas if you live in that wishy washiness 80% of the time and 20% of the time, you're trying to instill boundaries and choices, that's going to work really against you. So it's being deliberate and putting a timeline around when you let go.

Knowing that then when we get back from the UK, we're the same. The day after, everyone watches TV all day long, and we eat McDonald's. I mean, it's like just disgustingness. But we feel really great about it, and there's no shame or embarrassment. But then we get right back on track, we get right back to our future focused kind of thinking as parents and our kids fall right back into that lovely routine, and everybody feels good. And then we've had a really great vacation, and a rest from all of that and it's just, we've allowed ourselves that flexibility.

D

Deana Thayer 09:40

Absolutely. And the only way you can have room for that is by having it look the other way most the time because then they can adapt and just go right back. It's amazing. I talk about this a lot with my sleep consulting clients. They maybe have guests coming in from out of town, which is another time I'm fine with veering off because that's gonna mess up your day and your schedule and, and whatever. And you want to be accommodating to people who are here from out of town and things like that. So they'll be worried, oh, we might be on a hike and it's normally baby's nap time. Well, let that happen for the day. As long as most of your days look this way over here, that one day is going to be pretty much a blip on the radar and not this huge, monumental thing. And it does seem a little bit oxymoronic because it's almost like planned spontaneity, right? But you have to, you have to have these happen by choice. If you just keep falling into survival mode, eventually, you're not a future focused parent. So it's really key to make sure they are finite, and that you know what scenarios constitute that. Otherwise it can kind of become a slippery slope, but it's pretty essential to just coping when things do happen, or life throws you a curveball.

K

Kira Dorrian 10:49

I think you nailed it when you said choice. The difference is you're choosing, you're actively choosing to go off plan instead of getting thrown off plan and then you're flailing, right. Even if life throws you off plan, because it's not like you're always going to be like, I can see this thing in the road coming down that I'm going to go off plan. No, it doesn't work like that. Life sometimes kicks you in the butt and kicks you off plan, but then to actively go, okay, I see what's happened here. I need to embrace this right now. That's okay. And here's when I'm going to pick myself back up again.

D

Deana Thayer 11:18

Yeah, and I think that's where illness is a great example. We don't know in advance when we're going to get sick. But if you've decided ahead of time, hey, when someone's under

the weather, especially if it's one of the adults who keeps things running, right, we give ourselves grace to eat garbage or have more screen time, or whatever that is... the laundry doesn't get done. And it's also kind of similar with food. We could probably do a whole episode on nutrition sometime, but I think of it that way. It's very different to say, it's my birthday. I'm going to have that cheesecake tonight, versus you just randomly fell into a bag of Cheetos and you were doing mindless eating. So it's that...

K

Kira Dorrian 11:52

Every night. Don't you eat a bag of Cheetos every night? I would. I would totally eat a bag of Cheetos.

D

Deana Thayer 11:59

Oh, I'm all about the orange fingers!

K

Kira Dorrian 12:02

I will say though, food is one of the areas where I failed miserably where it was, and it is a classic example of going, I just, I just can't. I'm too, I'm too.

D

Deana Thayer 12:15

This is a more than appropriate time for that. So that might be a place where your why wasn't as intact. So what happened?

K

Kira Dorrian 12:21

Well, so, I had, I don't know if I've mentioned this, but I have two babies. So I had two babies at the same time.

D

Deana Thayer 12:27

You might hav said something about that before...in passing.

K

Kira Dorrian 12:30

Yup. So I had these two babies at the same time. And it was at, the thing I most grossly underestimated about parenthood was meal prep. I know that sounds silly, but it really didn't cross my mind that I would be prepping like five meals a day.

D

Deana Thayer 12:46

And then like once you clean up from one it's almost time to make the next one.

K

Kira Dorrian 12:50

And so, you know, initially I made their baby food and my children eat everything. They eat everything. And then this one day, I was like, oh, they've never had a chicken nugget. Let's have a chicken nugget, and I microwaved a little chicken nugget. And they ate the chicken nugget. And I was like, wow, that was really easy. Um, and so the next day I was like, I'll just microwave that chicken nugget again. And then suddenly my children became people who eat chicken nuggets every day. And I just didn't, I'm not a big cook. And when I do cook, we tend to cook food that's spicy. And so we weren't a family, or I mean, let me put it this way. I didn't think I could just grind up that food and give it to them. Upon reflection, I should have tried. It's really like, I just had it in my head like kids won't eat spicy food, who knows? They might have. So I got lazy. It was an area, a battle I didn't feel I could fight, and I got lazy and as a result, my kids are very picky eaters. Now who knows? My husband and I were both picky, like maybe that's just inherited. They eat a lot of fruit. So this is our saving grace is that they eat a ton of fruit. So actually, actually, it's funny, they don't eat very much. But if you actually look at like the protein count and the fat count, and like, if you broke it down by nutrition, they actually get a quite balanced diet through chicken nuggets, and a lot of fruit. But anyway, the point being that it became, like you said, I mean exactly what we just described, it was something where I just got lazy, it was easier to just heat the chicken nuggets. And suddenly they were four, right, and I woke up one day, and I was like, man, that is like something I could have done better at. And I think for me, I was so busy focusing on some of the other things that all my energy, my bandwidth went to that and this just didn't feel as important, but now I'm having to work a lot harder to get them to try new foods. We're in what we call the summer of food fun, where everybody's trying everything, it's going really badly. And, and there's a lot of tears, you know, so I've sort of made my bed, right? And it's a great testament to why being future focused is important, but as a perfectly honest answer, that is definitely an area where I got lazy, and now I'm paying for it. And my kids are paying for it, which is even worse, right? I mean, and again, on the whole, they eat a balanced diet, but really, it could be better. And that's really unfortunate. And they're super tiny right now. But like, who knows, you know, we keep them running, they run those chicken nuggets off.

D

Deana Thayer 15:22

I actually couldn't agree more. But it's partly, food thing is an area I've offroaded more

than I would like to but partly just because I don't enjoy it. And so it is hard for me to take time, meal plan, go grocery shopping, do the prep, I don't like it. And I've actually semi-retired. Shout out to Scott because he cooks most of the time already. And part of that was a function of me returning to work full time and having five teenagers and being everybody's chauffeur. Literally there, I'm not even always home at the time I would need to be to make dinner. But even when I am, let's be honest, I'm not always making dinner. And what's a bummer about that is then there was again that missed modeling. And so my kids don't cook a lot for us. They've made dinner for the family a few times. I would have really loved by this point for them to be maybe responsible for dinner one night a week. And I just will fully admit I didn't just drop the ball like, I purposely set it down, because I don't enjoy cooking. And so I think that can be a temptation too, that's an area where I wish I hadn't fallen off of that future focus, because I'm seeing that they're maybe a little bit, a little bit more ill equipped in that area to just know how to cook a variety of meals... maybe to be able to cook for the whole family. I'm, I don't have as much trouble with the balance stuff. They tend to like a lot of produce which is great. But again, if it's not readily available, when you open the fridge and you see produce, your fridge is full of ingredients but to a teenager it is not full of food. So they will say, there is no food, because there isn't something already made ready for me to put in my mouth. And so that is really a challenge and just an area where I can just say, boo hiss. I didn't do my best.

K

Kira Dorrian 17:09

Yeah. And I think the bottom line is everyone's gonna have this area. Right. So I guess the moral of the story is let it be an area that you're okay with, let it be an area that you feel like either helps you because this was the thing is for me, what I will say is, of course, I regret it. I wish I had done it differently. But I do really look back and recognize that that was, it was necessary. It was necessary for me to be able to focus on the other things that I focused on. It was necessary for my mental health and wellness. I think I really would have driven myself into the ground if I had tried to be cooking and dealing with all of that. And I have, my son has a dairy sensitivity. And that was a whole factor in all of it at a certain point. And so I think it's about recognizing the cost benefit analysis, right. What are you giving up, you're not going to be a perfect parent. It does not exist, right? It doesn't exist. So if you can't be perfect, which failings are you okay with? Which failings can you live with at the end of the day?

D

Deana Thayer 18:11

I totally agree. And that's why I haven't made a huge effort to right the ship on this because this is one I'm okay with. Partly because I had a rule that by the time they were in third grade, they made their own lunches. So the strategic trade off for me is I know in a

pinch, if my kids are hungry, they can assemble something and eat it and it will resemble a food product. So I knew they had the capability to not come to me every time...can you make me something? Can you make me something? They can make their own food, and they're not going to starve. Now if my kids weren't eating, I would view this as a serious red flag emergency and it would need different attention. But in this case, they had been taught and the foundation have been laid. They know how to look in the pantry, look in the fridge and figure something out. And so they at least have those basic skills and so I was okay with oh, they're not a gourmet chef cooking for me once a week? I can let go of that. So sometimes it is about choosing your sanity over this beautiful picture of wow, here's what it would have looked like if it were perfect.

K

Kira Dorrian 19:08

Well, and I think you've nailed it because so often what I see are women especially, you know, we, we beat ourselves up for not being perfect. And we work so hard to be perfect that we're not doing ourselves any favors. And I'm a huge advocate of self care, you know, you have to put your oxygen mask on first. You have to be well and healthy for your kids. They need you far more than they need the gourmet meal, than they need any of the stuff we're talking about. Honestly, all of it can go by the wayside. You know, all of it is optional, if you are a healthy, mentally well, capable parent. So whatever the thing is that you have to let go of, making peace with that in order for you to really be the best parent you can be and win all the other battles that are important to you. And what matters to you is going to look different although I guess for us, we both dropped the same ball, which is really interesting. But you know, whatever the ball is that you need to drop to get all those other balls in place, just recognizing that everyone's dropping a ball. No one gets through parenthood perfectly, it doesn't exist. And if they do, if they're a perfect parent, then they're probably not caring for themselves very well.

D

Deana Thayer 20:15

Yeah. And another big kind of helpful thing I think when you're choosing where to off road is prioritization. So another area where I've done an intentional ball drop is taking the phone to bed... with my teens. And that's because they are allowed to take their phone to bed at their dad's and I still had them turn theirs in on our kitchen island at a certain time each night. And that was part of their cell phone contract that we had and, and all of that. But what I noticed is the quality of sleep for them actually was going down because they would fall asleep to music with their earbuds in their phone. And so falling asleep in the stark silence actually wasn't working, in particular for my son, and we tried everything. He was on melatonin and we were rubbing lavender on his feet and he just went through such a season of insomnia that for me, I had to say, okay, I don't love the idea of going to bed

with your device. But you need a full night's sleep for your health, for your development, for you to continue to grow, for you to be functioning the next day at school, and I'm going to let that win. So you might also find when you're kind of choosing where to go to survival mode that you're just making a priority choice and that's okay to say for my values, sleep matters more than the phone or whatever that might be.

K

Kira Dorrian 21:24

I love that. I love that. And I think like for us, one of the places we go to survival mode is in the summer. Summer is tricky because I do a lot of my work from home. And so when the kids are home, I can't do a lot of my work. And I think for anybody who works from home that summers can be very tricky. I mean, I think it's summers are tricky for everyone, right? Like honestly,

D

Deana Thayer 21:46

They're a challenge.

K

Kira Dorrian 21:46

They're a challenge because for working parents now what do I do with my kid who's been in school? And so, last year we had at our house, movie camp. We watched a different movie every day. It was educational. Right, we're exploring. You know, and I've talked about the fact that in our house movies to me are an education and I'm, I am much more inclined to put on a movie that I feel they're gonna, like, learn great cinematography or animation or whatever from, than just some random TV show. But you know, it was like, I just had to make peace with that, like, we're gonna have to watch a movie every day for this week, because that is the only way I'm gonna be able to get my work done. And they're going to be happy and I'm going to be happy and you know what, that's a little extra screentime but so be it. That's our survival mode for the week.

D

Deana Thayer 22:32

Excellent and important for them to see too that we're going to have, they got to have this fun week, right? Film week! Super fun, movie camp, but it's okay. I think that's another thing when you're saying don't be afraid to be the parent. It is okay to also say I have some things I need to do and then to make it so that can happen.



Kira Dorrian 22:50

Right? Absolutely.



Deana Thayer 22:51

All right. Well, I have a great quote for you today. This one is by Michelle Dockery. The journey matters as much as the destination. And of course we're thinking about Raising Adults. So we always have our eye toward that destination. But today was about talking about when is it okay to just enjoy the journey and let that be.



Kira Dorrian 23:09

Raising Adults was produced by Kira Dorrian and Deana Thayer and recorded in my laundry room. Music by the Seattle band Hannalee. For more information on us, you can go to futurefocusedparenting.com or raisingadultspodcast.com. Please rate and like our podcast. Positive ratings and reviews really are the key to a successful podcast. So if you like what you hear, then please give us a five star review so that we can bring you more of it. Thanks for listening.



Future Focused Parenting 23:34

Enjoying these transcribed episodes of Raising Adults? Consider receiving the Future Focused Parenting newsletter, where you'll receive sneak peeks, parenting tips, special offers, exclusive early access to podcast information, and more! Simply go to bit.ly/raisingadultspodcast to sign up. You can also connect with us on social media! We're on both Facebook and Instagram: @futurefocusedparenting. Our channels include podcast episode announcements, so you'll never miss new topics. We look forward to sharing more Future Focused Parenting content with you!